Presence of the Body

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Presence of the Body

Awareness in *and* beyond *Experience*

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Introduction: Presence of the Body—Awareness *in* and *beyond* Experience

Gert Hofmann and Snježana Zorić

This volume was initially inspired by a conference which we organised in 2012 at the University of Zadar on the wider thematic field of "Body and Awareness. Embodiment in Anthropology, Literature and the Arts." While numerous participants at the conference, along with several newly invited authors, also contributed to the book publication, its topical focus has been conceptually sharpened and recalibrated on the *presence* and *experience* character of the body-awareness relationship as a transformative and creative dynamic. We aim at investigating the analytical capacities of categories such as body and embodiment, mind, consciousness, and awareness, without relying on fixed and commonly used definitions. In this context we eventually suggest a perception of 'awareness' from a double perspective beyond objectifying cognitive fixations: (1) a body-centred *touching* of the world which inspires life as a creative 'writing' process prior to definitive subject-object delimitations, and (2) in line with Buddhist thought an empty space of 'pure presence' from which all conscious processes originate. Awareness thus includes both "being aware of" as a cognitive act which in its intentionality relates to the past, and "awareness" as a cognitive void, as touching blur and empty space which makes the conscious condition of 'being aware of' possible. As such it is pre-predicative and "pure presence."

Consequently, this book intends to foster critical thought and dialogue on current theory, practice and aesthetics of anthropological, literary and performative reflections about the basic relatedness of body and awareness in embodiment. This dialogue benefits from the neuro-systematic integration of "embodied" knowledge, which defines the field of relevance of cognitive sciences, but it also suggests alternative dynamics of a metamorphic experience of embodiment, which, beyond conceptualisation, emerges from lived enactments of a mutually differentiating body-mind interference, e.g. in sophisticated acts of writing, performing and meditating.

The current body-debate of cognitive science challenges the boundaries of scientific knowledge by investigating how the 'mind', while on one hand relaying the semantics of social and cultural reality, is on the other hand firmly conditioned by neuro-somatic processes and programmings. The crucial step of cognitive science has been to acknowledge that mind, understood as

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an integrated neural circuit, "is embodied, in the full sense of the term, not just embrained" (Damasio 2005: 118). Such "embodiment of mind" seems to overcome the Cartesian categorical opposition of mind and body in order to establish a new philosophical tradition of "embodied realism," which does not rely on the spontaneous provision of purely intellectual concepts as instruments of thought to be applied to the base matter of bodily experience, but rather taps into the permanent flow of sensory perceptions procured by the body. Embodied realism processes such perceptions into independent units of neural connectivity with abstract value, so called "metaphors" that allow conscious mind to transform the neural connections used in sensory-motor activity into forms of abstract reason. "What our bodies are like and how they function in the world thus structures the very concepts we can use to think." (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 78) Consequently, our conceptual thinking cannot be simply understood as a "direct reflection of external, objective, mind-free reality," but as basically procured by our sensorimotor system that "plays a crucial role in shaping them." (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 44)[1]

In this approach the Cartesian ontological body-mind dualism and the traditional epistemological subject-object opposition of the cognitive act seems to be defused. The *objectivity* of philosophical truth, which since Kant's transcendental turn of thought has been subjected to the fundamental *criticism* of "pure reason," has been replaced by an experiential entity of neuro-systematic functioning, which in modern scientific approach ultimately defines the cognoscibility of what William James called "pure experience." Knowledge, according to James, lives only "inside the tissue of experience" (James 1904: 7).

James's theorem of "pure experience" or "sciousness" (James 1890) provided the strongest tool for analytic and cognitive philosophy's assault against the tradition of a-priori thinking in transcendental idealism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and de-constructivism.[2] James' basic philosophical entity of "pure experience" establishes a category of non-distinction amidst the polarity of thought and being, of *Erkenntniskritik* and ontology, or representation and presence. Both "the unity [of experience, GH] and the disconnection [of thought, GH]" is allotted its "own definite sphere of description" while

1 Complementarily, "it is the involvement of the sensorimotor system in the conceptual system that keeps the conceptual system very much in touch with the world." (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 44).

2 "Throughout the history of philosophy the subject and its object have been treated as absolutely discontinuous entities; and thereupon the presence of the latter to the former, and the 'apprehension' by the former of the latter, has assumed a paradoxical character which all sorts of theories had to be invented to overcome." (James 1904: 6).

nevertheless the steady flow of experience assures that "the transition from the one to the other" can always be perceived as fundamentally "continuous." (James 1904: 4)

In contrast, a sense of both experiential discontinuity and reflective polarity had in all traditions of European thought ensued an intrinsic awareness of fragility of knowledge, a fundamental attitude of (transcendental) self-criticism, and a basic 'principle of uncertainty' in their approach to truth, which crucially imbued philosophical discourse with an ineffaceable impulse of creativity and fiction. Both radical empiricism and cognitive science in a contemporary sense suppress this component for the sake of a proposition of factual, if provisional, cognitive precision even in matters of a human lived experience that, however, in moments of creative inspiration or revelation would often be described as unexpected, eventful, emotionally confusing and conceptually ambivalent.

The traditionally aesthetic category of the metaphor, to give an example of this development, has been reduced, in the discourse of cognitive science and neuro-linguistics, to the affirmative function (thus establishing a continuous relation) of a closed neural circuit to perform an abstractive reduplication ('reflection') of a series of sensorimotor experiences. Since "an embodied concept is a neural structure that is actually part of, or makes use of, the sensorimotor system of our brains" and because therefore "much of conceptual inference is [...] sensorimotor inference" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 20), Lakoff's and Johnson's concept of "embodied realism" suggests that

> metaphorical structuring of thought does not imply an inability to discuss stable truths in the world and to engage in rational scientific reasoning, but rather that the commonalities of responding to the physical environment that we share, allows for the shared explorations of truth.
>
> DE ROO and SILVA 2010: 244

If metaphors are, in accordance with Lakoff and Johnson, nothing but instruments of embodied conceptualisation in such an identifying sense (as "commonalities"), the "philosophical consequences" are indeed "enormous": The locus of reason and metaphorical inference "would be the same as the locus of perception and motor control, which are bodily functions." (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 20)

In the hermeneutic approach of the transcendental tradition, however, the metaphor, as an aesthetic core structure of thought development, articulates the opposite; it dwells on the split reference of a creative event of signification, torn between established and originary meaning, and bridging the gap without assuming continuity, circumscribing consciously the paradoxical union of

spontaneity and historicity in a lived tradition.[3] Here metaphors enable us to propose the spontaneous emergence of willed acts, which defy to acknowledge reality as a mere context of total necessitation, and which become the germs of imaginative acts of creativity. Kant's categorical imperative provides the abstract *formula* of the basic metaphorical quality ("as if") of such a freedom proposition in its referential split between freedom and necessitation. This formula constitutes a relationship between act and proposition ("maxim") that is fundamentally metaphorical, instead of functional, and mutually critical, instead of affirmative. It establishes a conceptual difference that appears at the same time linguistically diffused and marks a core quality of irrevocable discontinuity in human lived experience, which can only be mended in acts of intellectually stimulated imagination. Kant's categorical imperative, as a categorical metaphor, requires an infinite regress of lived narrative responses—linguistic ambiguity seems to match the narrative of life better than analytic accuracy.

Cognitive science undercuts the traditional 'Cartesian' body-mind dichotomy through establishing a discourse of "embodied realism,"[4] based on a proposition of "pure experience" and understood as a continuous stream of "embodied" consciousness that secures the complete "metaphorical" transition of neural impulses from sensorimotor (body-centered and world-embedded) to encephalic (brain-centered and self-referential) circuits. "Embodied realism" makes a strong case for the immanent "flow" character of reality perception, and for both the momentary uniqueness and full determinedness of every entity that is part of it. However, it is not able to respond to the evidence of those *non-coherent* moments in human experience, ecstatic or traumatic, which often hold a potential of either sublime or abject significance, and which ignite a desire for either creation or dissolution. These are also moments of transcendent outlook that cannot be captured through the immanent flow of "embodied realism" but nevertheless belong to the phenomenological constitution of basic human experience. Such moments engender a sense of 'oneness' of body and mind, mental detachment and sensual immersion, which is neither functional nor definitive but merely touching, suggestive and ambivalent in a

3 James Fernandez (1991) highlights the "pre-conceptual, pre-predicative basis" (8) of metaphorical thinking. In cultural anthropology the metaphor qualifies as "a mode of understanding which focuses on the role of the figurative imagination and rhetorical forces in social life." (2) It is anchored in body images and therefore experienced pan-humanly.

4 "Embodied realism rejects a 'Cartesian separation' of body and mind. Instead it is 'a realism grounded in our capacity to function successfully in our physical environments'." (de Roo and Silva 2010: 244).

trans-cognitive sense, i.e. both *in* and *beyond* experience itself. The essays in this book explore poetic, narrative, performative and meditative approaches that undertake to stimulate a "synoptic" (Snježana Zorić) awareness of this oneness, beyond cognitive appropriation, as a trans-logical union of identity and difference, presence and representation, continuity and discontinuity. 'Experience' is here not the analysable object of cognitive interpretation, but the eventful, often rupturing presence of a metamorphic happening in lived reality, requiring not just abstractive reflection, but enactive and authoritative commitment.[5]

Within the discourse of neuroscience and cognitive science, it was mainly Francisco Varela who tried to combine both approaches, the cognitive based on James' concept of "pure experience" and the phenomenological based on Merleau-Ponty's category of lifeworld-"perception." Taking one decisive step further onto this path of integrative thought Varela ventured to initiate also a dialogue with Buddhism. Consequently he related to "embodiment" in a "double sense:" first, existentially, as "a lived, experiential structure" that potentially ensues advanced degrees of "mindful" meditative practice,[6] and second, empirically, as "the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms" (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991: XVI)—always implying that cognition is an "enactive," i.e. embodied action.[7]

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5 Ralph Yarrow, Franc Chamberlain, William S. Haney II, Carl Lavery and Peter Malekin have described such *presence* as "pure consciousness," which "exceeds the material mind, just as the actor in entering a dramatic text exceeds the text, adding [...] the presence of a new life that the text does not exhaust" (William S. Haney II, 95). See also Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2003 and Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: Referring to a tradition of "Vedic science," he suggests that "pure consciousness is at the basis of all creation. [...] Since the artist creates from the level of pure consciousness, and thus from the level of nature, the processes of inspiration and creative activity mirror the processes of creation overall." (30–31).

6 "The main idea" of Varela's project is "that the analysis of mind undertaken by certain traditions of mindfulness/awareness provides a natural counterpart to present-day cognitivist conceptions of mind" (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991: 37).

7 Inspired by Merleau-Ponty, Varela configures embodiment as a circular dynamic of metamorphosis between inner and outer experience: "We hold with Merleau-Ponty that Western scientific culture requires that we see our bodies both as physical structures and as lived, experiential structures—in short, as both 'outer' and 'inner,' biological and phenomenological. These two sides of embodiment are obviously not opposed. Instead, we continuously circulate back and forth between them. Merleau-Ponty recognised that we cannot understand this circulation without a detailed investigation of its fundamental axis, namely, the embodiment of knowledge, cognition, and experience. For Merleau-Ponty, as for us, *embodiment* has this double sense: it encompasses both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms." (XVI).

The more recent discourse of "somaesthetics," understood as an interdisciplinary philosophical field,[8] has re-interpreted Varela's rather categorical notion of the "double sense" in live-world embodiment as a merely medial "ambiguity" between our "subjective sensibility that experiences the world" on one hand, and the perceived objectivity of everything cognisable "in that world" on the other. (Shusterman 2008: 3)

Performing its mediating function, the body constitutes, according to Shusterman, the "very centre of our experience" and becomes the *conditio sine qua non* of all "somaesthetic" productivity:

> the body must be recognized as our most primordial tool of tools, our most basic medium for interacting with our various environments, a necessity for all our perception, action, and even thought.
>
> SHUSTERMAN 2008: 3

Emphasising the identifying function of the body, Shusterman's discourse of somaesthetics thus reinforces the structural propensity of cognitive science and privileges a conceptual proposition of continuity and identity over any lived experience of dis-continuity and transcendant significance. Firmly in line with James's fundamental critique of transcendentalism, he suspends "the stubbornly dominant dualism of our culture" through establishing as a "principle [...] that the body constitutes an essential, fundamental dimension of our identity." Also for Shusterman, the body "forms our primal perspective or mode of engagement with the world" and determines "the structuring of our mental life." (Shusterman 2008: 2–3)

Relying like Varela on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception,*[9] Shusterman's "pragmatist insistence on the body's central role in artistic creation and appreciation [...] highlights and explores the soma—the living, sentient, purposive body—as the indispensable medium for all perception." (Shusterman 2014) However, emphasising the all-pervasive medial quality of the body he proposes body perception pragmatically as the "tool of tools" of all aesthetically conscious soma-practice. For Shusterman the body fulfils primarily an integrative function between the basic provision of

8 Which has been established and dominated since by Richard Shusterman: "Although I introduced the term 'somaesthetics' to propose a new interdisciplinary field for philosophical practice, 'somaesthetic' (or as it is more frequently spelled, 'somesthetic') is a familiar term of neurophysiology, referring to sensory perception through the body itself rather than its particular sense organs." (Shusterman 2008: 3).

9 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1986. *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, London: Routledge.

a proto-reflective, somatic perceptivity and the proprioceptive reflections of an aesthetically conscious, body-focused mind. At this point, the secession of Shusterman's pragmatist and cognitive approach from Merleau-Ponty's transcendental allegiance as a phenomenologist becomes obvious.

While Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological critique investigates the perceptive possibilities *and limitations* of our somatically conditioned, proto-reflective and therefore structurally vague "primordial subjectivity," Shusterman aims at developing a fully integrated, affirmative and sharply cognitive "body consciousness," which would be able to "absorb our attention, unify our consciousness, and engage our emotions, then increasing our powers of awareness, focus, and feeling through better mastery of their somatic source." (Shusterman 2014)[10] Thus Shusterman's discourse of "body consciousness" functionalises aesthetic awareness as the perfect tool of reflective body-mind integration in an advanced cognitive mind-set that seeks to overcome the phenomenological "polarizing dichotomy" of "'lived experience' versus abstract 'representations'" in an attempt to establish "lived somatic reflection" as the integrative modus of "concrete but representational and reflective body consciousness." (Shusterman 2008: 63). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of body-induced "primordial subjectivity," however, whose perceptions are intrinsically vague, suggestive, structurally metaphorical and therefore potentially multivalent, complements an aesthetic practice and art of creative signification and experiential spontaneity that decisively points *beyond* the sphere of cognitive determinacy. In this regard, and fully in line with Merleau-Ponty's initial findings, contemporary phenomenologists have further developed the argument against the cognitive reduction of pragmatist views about "body consciousness." Gernot Böhme, e.g., wants to keep up the dichotomy of experiential "Leib" and representational "Körper" in order to establish the basic phenomenon of embodiment as a condition of "betroffener Selbstgegebenheit" (affective self-reference; literal translation: 'the affective sensation of being given to oneself') (Böhme 2003: 95), which ensues

> einen Leibbegriff […], der nicht nur die Prädikate einer bestimmten Art von Leibphänomen bestimmt—also im Kognitiven bleibt—sondern gerade dieses Selbstverhältnis mit in den Begriff des Leibes aufnimmt.
>
> BÖHME 2003: 56[11]

10 "Conscious body sensations are therefore not at all opposed to thought, but instead are understood as including conscious, experiential body-focused thoughts and representations." (Shusterman 2008: 53).

11 Trans. GH: "a body concept […] which not only determines the predications of any particular body phenomenon—thus being confined to the cognitive—but includes this very condition of self-reference within the conception of the body."

Against the background of cognitive science, Paul Crowther's study on *Art and Embodiment* had also pursued the argument of Merleau-Ponty.[12] He explicitly acknowledges the "ontological reciprocity" (Paul Crowther, 2) and the "primordial intertwining of human subject and world, which precedes analytic and scientific thought" (Crowther: 63). This leads to an artistic practice that does not suspend the bipolar twist in human perception, but rather renders it benevolent and productive in as far as it "*reflects* our mode of embodied inherence in the world" and consequently brings about "a harmony between subject and object of experience—a full realization of the self." (Crowther: 7) It is strikingly obvious that Crowther decisively relies on a tradition of aesthetic theory that is rooted in German idealism, mainly Schiller and Hegel, a tradition, which, however, according to Crowther, "reappeared [...] in the work of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and Adorno." From a viewpoint of contemporary continental philosophy, phenomenology, existential ontology and critical theory, it may be a challenge to tolerate that Heidegger and Adorno are listed here as representatives of the same tradition of philosophical aesthetic. Nevertheless, from a perspective of Anglo-American pragmatist and analytic philosophy, and against the background of cognitive science, it becomes clearer what Crowther's agenda is. The dual, internal-external or subject-object reference of embodiment is not to be *integrated* in a pragmatic attempt to achieve a higher degree of objectifying cognitive reflection, but needs to be "ecologically" *harmonised* in an effort of the human subject to reach a heightened awareness of his existential-environmental bipolarity. Only then, it develops aesthetic forms of further enlightenment and ultimate self-realisation.

Crowther's critical juxtaposition of the integrative theory of embodiment in cognitive science with differentiating views about the "dual nature" (Schiller) of humanity in a discourse of aesthetic enlightenment and world-conscious self-realisation, which is inspired by idealism, transcendental criticism and phenomenology, is valuable. However, he does not take into consideration more recent developments of postmodernist aesthetics and critical theory, which do not dwell on the synthesising, harmonising powers of aesthetic beauty in order to create a static image of ultimate truth, but, on the contrary, investigate the unforeseeable dynamics of the *split* reference of the experiential moment between established knowledge and envisioned act. In postmodern art, such investigation has become aware of the creative possibilities of an artistic practice that constantly re-negotiates its aesthetic

12 Cf. Paul Crowther. 1993. *Art and Embodiment. From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

principles in the ongoing performance of its own articulation. *Experience* means here awareness of the *presence* of the ever-metamorphic forces that reconfigure life as individual embodiment in every significant moment of passing time.

Uncommented by Crowther, a development, parallel to the re-focalisation of postmodernist aesthetics to the performative character of artistic reflection, has also taken place in the humanities discourse, and particularly in cultural anthropology since Clifford Geertz's defining monograph on *The Interpretation of Cultures* and James Clifford's and George E. Marcus's edited volume on *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*.[13] "Geertz's (1973) concern with culture as text was complemented by interest in [...] phenomenology" based on a "distinction between experience-near and experience-far concepts" (Csordas 1993: 136), which eventually leads to "anthropology of experience" (Bruner and Turner: 1986) in a committed sense and recognises "embodiment as the existential condition in which culture and self are grounded" (Csordas 1993: 136). This important school of anthropology has made a difference by taking the "lived body as a methodological starting point rather than [considering] the body as an object of study." (Csordas 1993: 136). Even though subsequently criticised,[14] the school appears important in our context because of its focus on the production of cultural texts. Overcoming the conceptual positivism of former anthropological writing traditions *Writing Culture* develops a certain affinity with deconstructive philosophy. The creation of a cultural world within *and* beyond the opposition of body and awareness not only opens up our perceptivity, but also remains embedded in the continuous flow of their respective contradictions and ambivalences. Arguing that the dualism of body and mind is transcendable, we do not imply the suspension of these categorical distinctions (the subject-object opposition) of object-related thought.

Culture understood as "text" or "writing" consequently leads beyond the interpretive reflection of hermeneutic appropriation and enacts experience as a *presentive* reflection *in situ corporis* that simultaneously affects with the objective act also the subjectivity of the agent who, initially defining himself as an observer, finds himself eventually immersed in the event itself—the classical

13 Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books; Clifford, James and George E. Marcus (eds). 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

14 Cf. Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. 'Writing Against Culture' in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (ed. R. G. Fox). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press: 137–62.

condition of a cognitive 'uncertainty principle'. Embodied subjectivity thus marks the "methodological field"[15] of a lived practice which makes interaction in a lived world—i.e. an active 'being in the world'—the experiential grounding for a heightened sense of existential presence. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty's notion about the "pre-objective" nature of basic human perception and suggesting an inextricable "indeterminacy" in the relationship between representational and existential discourse Thomas J. Csordas attempts to "provide the grounds for a reflection on the essential ambiguity of our own analytic concepts, as well as on the conceptual status of 'indeterminacy' in the paradigm of embodiment." (Csordas 1993: 137) "In any event," he concludes, "it is necessary to elaborate the finding that the attempt to define a somatic mode of attention decenters analysis such that no category is privileged, and *all categories are in flux between subjectivity and objectivity*." (Csordas 1993: 146)

"Writing" has been understood as a performative model of such a categorical "flux between subjectivity and objectivity." Pointing beyond mere representation and reconstruction of authentic meaning, it appears as an infinitely performed act of signification, always delayed and "decentered" within the performance itself, procured by "experience" as "creative process of self-transcendence" (Turner 1986: 93) which conveys a shared, 'ex-centric' presence of lived embodiment in both self and other, subject and object. Consequently, according to Edward M. Bruner, in the anthropological discourse "narrative structures serve as interpretive guides" (Bruner 1986: 147) not in terms of a fixed data base of cultural semantics that could be applied to any given empirical case, but as a lived process that conjures up the excitement of a signifying experience *in concreto* that captures the present moment in order to make sense of both past tradition and future vision. At this point the "flux" of the categories of reflection equals the fugacity of the *nunc stans* of embodied experience in passing time.

"Writing" has also been the core focus of post-phenomenological philosophy since Jacques Derrida's epochal *grammatologie*.[16] Derrida explores how every act of writing at the same time constitutes and undercuts (*deconstructs*) the semantic function between essential presence and categorical representation, thus redefining, speaking in our context of embodiment, the split reference between experience and reflection in a constant modus of *deferral*. While

15 "[…] embodiment can be understood as an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world." (Csordas 1993: 135).

16 Derrida, Jacques. 1967. *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit; cf. also Derrida, Jacques. 1967. *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris : Éditions du Seuil.

the graphic line, as trace and sediment of the writing process, enacts the "flux of categories" as fleeting dynamic of the ever deferred distinction between presence and representation, Jean-Luc Nancy inaugurates his philosophy of "writing the body" in an attempt to capture the dynamic of embodiment as an act of "touching" upon sense.[17] The *touch* of the skin enacts a flux of categories in the same way as the line of writing does: it connects and separates, enables and undermines in the same act every clear distinction of self and other, subject and object, experience and reflection. The *touching upon sense* disables the categorical appropriation of meaning and replaces the subject of cognitive authority with an existential self, an *intimate* self that only emerges into the open space of its *exposedness* to the world:

> This spacing, this departure, is [the body's] very intimacy, the extremity of its separation (or, if we prefer, of its distinction, its singularity, even its subjectivity). The body is *self* in departure, insofar as it parts—displaces itself right here from the *here*.
>
> NANCY 2008: 19

In its genuine exposedness the intimacy and impenetrability of the body is neither suspended nor betrayed, it never appears expressed, "translated or incarnated," "on the contrary" it "means that expression itself is an intimacy and withdrawal." (Nancy 2008: 33) Writing the body therefore insinuates a recessive kind of subjectivity where the subject of writing withdraws itself in the very moment of its emergence, where *experience* does not guarantee continuity of perception, but brings about an awareness of the metamorphic contingencies of lived embodiment:

> Hence the impossibility of [...] writing 'the' body without ruptures, reversals, discontinuities (discreteness), or trivialities, contradictions, and displacements of discourse within itself. [...] Which is why fragments are necessary, here more than anywhere else. In fact, the fragmentation of writing, wherever it occurs [...], responds to the ongoing protest of bodies in—against—writing. An intersection, an interruption: *this breaking of language, wherever language touches on sense* [*cette effraction de tout langage où le langage touché au sens*].
>
> NANCY 2008: 19–21, trans. varied by GH

17 Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2008. *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand. New York: Fordham University Press.

Following the trace of Csordas' anthropology of embodiment, Bruner's and Turner's anthropology of experience, and Nancy's theory of "writing the body," and extending the debate beyond the discourse of both cognitive science and phenomenology, we would like to address 'experience' and 'awareness' as phenomena that we consider pivotal in understanding and deconstructing the common dualities of body and mind, object and subject, presence and representation, knowledge and meaning. Examining processes of embodiment in literary, artistic and performative practice, we pave the ground for an extended anthropology, aesthetics and narratology of embodiment, which reflects on the human body not just as the *object* of an expansive cognitive science, social production and cultural symbolisation, but as the genuine *subject-position* of a human consciousness that also enables new potencies of artistic creativity and spiritual transcendence, concentrating on the *presence* character of human experience through and beyond sensations, feelings and thoughts.

This triangle of body, awareness and consciousness will take into account experiential processes in various dimensions:

(1) the cognitive process of integrating an external data complex into human consciousness as a neuronal system of internal responsivity, remodulating streams of neuronal connectivity and thus rendering the external 'objective';
(2) the interpretative process of cultural experience, re-interpreting the 'Other' in acts of embodiment as a sensual and emotional stimulus of meaningful self-constructions within an interferential dynamic between cultural memory and creative self-expression;
(3) envisaging a new kind of body-rooted awareness and exploring the possibilities of a discourse that keeps the reflective dualities of internal vs. external, self vs. other, etc. open, but without conceptually cementing them, and focusing particularly on the creative dynamics of artistic and religious practice in literature and performance in order to constantly undermine, suspend and rearticulate them.

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The human body as interferential space of both artistic and societal agencies of political power and resistance is in the focus of the first section of the book.

Leonida Kovač discusses the bio-political implications of the politically calculated public presentation of human corpses, both of victim and perpetrator, in the context of global terrorism, juxtaposing them with the ideological propositions about humanity communicated through the globally successful

exhibition *Fascinating + Real: Bodies Revealed*. Claiming to respond to a traditional enlightenment "imperative of education," the exhibition renounces the individually "problematic idea of identity" of the human individual and suggests instead the cognitive universality of the "human specimen" in terms of a perfectly preserved and anatomically revealing human corpse. Kovać explores how the public presentation of such "real" body images exploits imaginative impulses in a way that "dehumanizes the living human body, reducing it to waste," parallelising their approach to the scandalising journalistic presentation of the dead bodies of executed or suicidal terrorists, such as Ulrike Meinhof or Osama bin Laden. It becomes manifest how the *bio-political body* as the "new fundamental political subject" floats in a space of "indistinction" between *quaestio facti* and *quaestio iuris*, thus becoming subject not just of artistic imagination, but to the arbitrariness of political decisionism.

Investigating further the artistic consequences of this imaginarily potent loss of distinction in processes of embodiment, Franc Chamberlain highlights the indeterminate nature of body-centred awareness in performance art and theatre. Pointing with Michael Chekhov at the *real* dangers of "blurring [in the performative act the] boundaries between the fictional and the real, so that actual violence takes place," he raises the ethical issue "that it is possible for us to become possessed by fictions and live those fictions out with dire consequences for our relationships with others—not simply on the stage" but in our societal and political reality.

The ethical implications of politically initiated and socially sanctioned approaches to define the boundaries of corporeality are also being discussed in Milica Ivić's essay on "Body limits," which explores the "limits of performativity of the body" and examines "the question of limits and borders of bodily inscriptions that are connected with the ambivalence of pain as a social construct." Selected examples of literature and performance art raise the question whether the body as a social construct suggests identity of the human condition "cross-culturally and trans-historically." Tapping into the critical discourse about "bodily inscriptions" presented by Judith Butler she exemplifies how the body could become a "source of resistance" to historical and cultural impositions, using Franz Kafka's narrative *In the Penal Colony* and Philip Auslander's theory about the transformational process "from acting to performance" as reference texts.

Analysing examples of contemporary Croatian art, which endeavor to reinterpret shamanic and ritual practices, also Josip Zanki highlights the subject-character of the art-producing body as an agent of rather metamorphic than cognitive processes: artistic objects "experience their own negation and transform themselves into a different value, i.e. a body-subject that is able to bear a

process of metamorphosis" (referring here to the artistic practice of Vladimir Dodig Trokut). Other examples include Maja Rožman, Marijan Crtalić, Marko Marković and Martina Mezak. They all represent a strong movement in contemporary art that aims at presenting the body as genuine source of energy in an artistic process of transforming "the order of reality."

The essays in the second section of the book analyse aspects of corporeality in processes of writing beyond performative practice. The 'body' manifests itself as both subject and object of a narrative dynamic which creates an experiential sense of open awareness in a metamorphic 'Self' beyond cognitive identity constructions, providing a sense of lived perseverance and convalescent power even under the traumatic conditions of corporeal violation and illness.

While Lidija Štrmelj, in a historical approach to Chaucer's *Wife of Bath*, analyses the gender profile of body-conscious sexual self-determination in the context of social power-dynamics in the Middle Ages, Karin Bauer examines the poetic ambivalences of 20th century German terrorist Ulrike Meinhof's poem *brief einer gefangenen aus dem toten trakt*, written during the first phase of her imprisonment. This poem seeks to accomplish two things: exploring the existential tolerance limits of the human condition when confined to a space of almost complete isolation, and at the same time staging her writing as an act of political resistance against the torturous effects of her solitary confinement. However, instead of re-enforcing the neo-Marxist revolutionary rhetoric common in the political dispute of the time, she represents isolation as an "embodied experience" which parallels symptoms of mental and linguistic decomposition. Parallel to Ivica Ivić's findings in her analysis of Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, in Meinhof's writing, according to Karin Bauer, the body of the prisoner does not appear only as the ideologically oppressed "*object* of science and penal discipline" but instead as the "experiencing subject" of a trans-political human awareness that is able to resist—and survive?

Focusing on the interface of language between "propaganda and poetry" Anja Seiler's research centers on the bodily effects of an experience of linguistic alienation in situations of both migration and ideological persecution as elaborated in the writings of two highly reputed contemporary German authors, Terézia Mora (*Alle Tage*) and Dimitré Dinev (*Engelszungen*). Highlighting their narrative commitment to the experience of linguistic alienation and social isolation, Seiler suggests the body-centred state of an open, not culturally confined awareness that infuses the protagonists' culturally depleted or fragmented 'selves' into the "empty spaces" of mere *now* and *here*.

In the following chapters Elisa Primavera-Lévy, Sara Strauß and Tanja Reiffenrath critically adopt the body-discourse of cognitive science and neurolinguistics, which has in recent years dominated the discourse on aesthetic and literary representations of somatic phenomena. The act of writing and the

modus of narrativity seem to test the limitations of the cognitive approach to explain the relations between body and awareness. Elisa Primavera-Lévy explores "narratives of chronic pain patients," which "generally do not follow a 'restitution plot'" but rather "protocol" the ongoing metamorphic processes in their lives as unredeemed pain patients. Primavera-Lévy challenges the oftenstated "unshareability" of the chronic physical pain experience and suggests with Heshusius the possibility of a meditative transformation of pain awareness focusing on the presence of a lived world experience instead of the painful presence of proprioceptive body experience. Such transformations could be carried by acts of "writing" as a form of "lived creativity that detracts from pain, and writing as mediation of one's own story in order to affect the lives of others."

Sarah Strauß develops paradigmatic neuroethical reflections on the body-awareness dichotomy in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, examining "conflicting priorities of moral values and advances brought about by neurobiological insights." Challenging the neuroscience proposition of "mind as pure matter" Strauß's approach criticises how neuroscience defuses the ethically relevant ambiguity of embodied experience and imaginative awareness.

Also Tanja Reiffenrath, in her interpretation of Oliver Sacks's *A Leg to Stand On*, works towards the distinction between "object-body," constructed by medical and neuroscience, and the narrative-borne, body-focused subject of shattered self-awareness as presented in Sacks's novel. Engaging Thomas Csordas's anthropology of experience, Reiffenrath suggests, "that narratives focusing on the experience of illness are particularly interesting. Illness can push language to its limits (…), but, more than that, shift the representational boundaries of experience as such." Here, in its narrative environment, the body bears the mark of subjectivity, and "storytelling" manifests itself as an embodied practice "that extends beyond the obvious sense of the physical nature of writing: the body as the entity which tells the story is prominent in the language, style and rhetoric of the narrative." Reiffenrath emphasises the therapeutic quality of the aesthetic approach, which is also thematised within the novel as the "consubstantial" (Sacks), creative effect of music, seen as a "powerful metaphor for the unity of thought and action, mind and body." Sacks's narrative projects a *neurology of identity* and "Neurology of the Soul" which ultimately "aims at reconciling the dichotomy between objective classical neurology and individual subjective experiences."

Sabine Wilke eventually widens the scope of our investigation through searching for the "eco-poetic" challenge of triggering an environmental awareness of the "interconnectivity" between human and non-human life in Ilija Trojanow's climate change novel *Eistau* (Ice Melt). Such environmental poetics

and their ethical implications in the "Anthropocene" rely on a trans-cognitive human ability of *affectively* and *sympathetically* engaging with natural reality (here with a "dying" alpine glacier), which is rooted in a basic human sense of lived corporeality. "The interconnectivity between humans and nature in the Anthropocene requires us to think differently about human psychology. In the condition of interwovenness of human and natural history and facing extreme environmental degradation, the approach of eco-psychology can perhaps reestablish a prior existing primordial bond between humans and their environments, a bond that is experienced [...] in the eco-poetic configuration of Zeno's affect where bodies react to their environments in physical as well as psychological ways."

Gert Hofmann finally extends the discourse on body-agency of *writing* beyond the conceptual limitations of neuroscience, neurolinguistics and somaesthetics, taking into account the post-phenomenological discourse on writing established by Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy. "Writing the body" (Nancy) delineates the fundamentals of a body-centred but conceptually *open* awareness of "touching" which triggers creative moments of contiguity between self and other and suspends the dichotomy of subject and object without disposing it. Touching awareness transcends the cognitive confinements of science's object-related possessiveness into a sphere of non-referential presence and conscious yieldedness to the world. How touch operates "as extra-conceptual, artistic form of awareness," and "corporeality" marks the genuine "subject ground" of writing, is then demonstrated in more detail through an analysis of J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* writings.

In the final section of the book Graham Parkes and Snježana Zorić consider somatic theories and practices from the Asian perspective. Parkes illustrates them taking the Chinese philosophers Confucius and Zhuangzi as well as the Japanese Buddhist thinkers Kukai and Dogen as an example. Zorić takes *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* as vantage point of her discourse, which explores the possibilities of the textual focus in the cultivation of mindfulness. While Parkes puts his fourfold approach in the larger context of the global environmental crisis, emphasising how awe and humility lack presence in the dominating contemporary habitus, Zorić focuses on the importance of inner cultivation of mindfulness and examines how it is being applied in modern medical therapies. In both texts particular weight is put on the question "What is the way?" and less on typical theorising issues arising from the question "What is the truth?" While Parkes takes the fact of embodiment for granted, Zorić puts it in a wider perspective ascribing it to the conception of clear boundaries within which the interplay of somatic practices, including an aware and conscious touching of objects and things can take place. Additionally, in accordance with Buddhist

philosophy, Zorić emphasises the moment of emptiness in the phenomenon of awareness (bare awareness as absence of thoughts), which is fundamental for each experiential process of *Bewusstwerdung* of embodiment and the rising of thought.

In both essays is emphasised the fruitfulness of intercultural encounter between various worldviews, and their input in cultural practices as well as cultural theory.

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Our volume searches the potencies of embodied awareness through touching, experiencing and writing, i.e. of embodiment as an awareness stimulating and generating process that appears not confined to the conceptual frameworks of either cognitive science or phenomenology. Based on this search, a further outlook also suggests a new bio-ethical thinking taking into account both the corporeal finitude and the environmental openness of human existence (cf. Hofmann, Strauß, Zorić, Parkes, Wilke).

In such a context, 'body' becomes both agent and receiver of processes of awareness, while 'awareness' remains the witness of both bodily and conscious, somatic and mental, epistemological and practical motions. Embodiment as lived experience is being investigated as a cultural act of writing, performing, and spiritual exercising which can be perceived neither as affirmative of a cognitive and self-conscious mind, nor as categorically renouncing it. It opens, however, a way of transcending its structural dualities.

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PART 1

Presentation and Performance

CHAPTER 1

Bodies and Their Matter

Leonida Kovač

Abstract

The article examines the modalities of cultural representations of dead bodies in the context of the Foucauldian approach to biopolitics. It is concerned with the discursive, i.e. media production of human body's meanings within the actual neo-liberal rhetoric. It focuses on the quasi-scientific discourse and educational purpose of the exhibition *Fascinating + Real: Bodies Revealed* produced by *Premier Exhibition Corporation*. This show spectacularises plasticised human corpses that are "legally" acquired in China. Considering the format of an exhibition both as medium and as statement, the article contextualizes it with the discourse on terrorism and particularly with the modalities of visual representation of the most wanted terrorists' dead bodies since the 1970s. The referential framework of such reading is defined, on one hand, by well-known works of art, namely, Gerhard Richter's series of paintings entitled *October 18th 1977*, Alexander Kluge's film *Deutschland im Herbst*, and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*, and, on the other hand, by the actual discourse on national security practiced by USA authorities.

If the pre-discursive reality really does not exist, as we learn from Lacan, Foucault and Butler, and if the New World Order is defined by terrorism, as W.J.T. Mitchell argues, then it is necessary to give consideration to certain intermedial images that have come into existence between 18 October 1977 and 2 May 2011. The first date received its rendition as an image in the series of paintings of the same title made by Gerhard Richter in 1988. The paintings were acquired for the collection of New York's MoMA seven years later, but due to the lending contract with Frankfurt's Museum für Moderne Kunst they stayed in Germany until November 2000, when, on the eve of the emblematic 11 September 2001, they were transferred to New York. The second date, 2 May 2011 was deprived of its own image by the decision of the President of the USA.

In 1995, when MoMa acquired the series, Richter was criticised by the German public for selling a crucial chapter of German history to a country whose audience, not knowing anything about that history, was incapable of understanding the meaning of the paintings' subject matter. However, Richter was convinced that it was the German audience that misunderstood the meaning of the series, as they were so affected by the paintings' subject matter that they

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viewed them in exclusively political terms—as a grist for the old state/terrorist binary. He saw the transfer of fifteen canvases to America as an opportunity for them to find a different kind of reception, one that would allow their meanings to develop into the future (Silverman 2009: 220f.). Partly, he was right, the meanings of his photo-pictures have been developed, but undoubtedly in the political context, within the complex relationship of visual culture and biopolitics, or more precisely, the development of their meaning is still taking place within the discourse on terrorism that shapes the actual image of reality.

The paintings from the series *October 18th 1977* are oils on canvases, but the author uses the term photo-pictures to designate a technology of their execution, for they are based on the photographic images published in newspapers. Due to the specific procedure of working over the painting's surface with a squeegee while the paint was still wet the image motif shows itself as blurred and this blurred image refers to the maculature that appears in the printing process of newspaper photographs. The referent of the newspaper photographs, that is, the photographs from the police archives that became the referent of Richter's paintings, are the live imprisoned, and dead bodies of Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Enslin and Andreas Baader, members of the leftwing militant group the Red Army Fraction, their arrest and the funeral after the alleged suicide that Enslin, Baader and Raspe committed on 18 October 1977 in Stammheim prison. Ulrike Meinhof was found hanged in her prison cell one year earlier, and the photograph of her corpse was published in the German weekly *Stern*. Kaja Silverman writes that

> *Stern* did even more then put Meinhof's lifeless body into specular circulation; when it published the photograph of her corpse, it spread it across two pages, so that the center fold divides her head from the rest of her body, slightly above the gash on her neck. In effect, the newspaper hung her all over again—an act of violence made possible by virtue of the rectangular size of the photograph.
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> SILVERMAN 2009: 194

On 2 May 2011 the United States Navy SEALs liquidated Osama bin Laden. Official reports claimed he was killed by shots to the head and chest. The identity of the dead body was confirmed by a full biometric analysis of facial and body features. In an interview broadcasted by CBS TV network, Barack Obama said he would not release the post-mortem images of bin Laden as evidence of his death:

> It is important to make sure that very graphic photos of somebody who was shot in the head are not floating around as an incitement to

> additional violence or as a propaganda tool. We don't trot out this stuff as trophies. The fact of the matter is, this is somebody who was deserving of the justice that he received.
>
> OBAMA; cited in Montopoli 2011

He also said that given the graphic nature of these photos it would create a national security risk (see Montopoli 2011).

Reflecting on the performative function of printing or not printing the photographs of the dead bodies of the most wanted terrorists from the 1970s, and that of the most wanted contemporary terrorist, Obama's use of the word "justice" raises a question on the meaning of the syntagm "national security." We should consider this meaning in the context of Foucault's notion of biopolitics, that is, the increasing inclusion of human natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power. Relying on Foucault's postulates on the technologies of biopolitical production, Giorgio Agamben concludes that

> the constitution of politics as a totalitarian politics to a degree hitherto unknown became possible because politics in our age had been entirely transformed into biopolitics. In the notion of bare life, the interlacing of politics and life has become so tight that it cannot easily be analyzed. Until we become aware of the political nature of bare life and its modern avatars (biological life, sexuality, etc.), we will not succeed in clarifying the opacity at their center. Conversely, once modern politics enters into an intimate symbiosis with bare life, it loses the intelligibility that still seems to us to characterize the juridico-political foundation of classical politics.
>
> AGAMBEN 1998: 120

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It is within this context that I will offer my reading of the blockbuster exhibition *Fascinating + Real: Bodies Revealed*, that was, among other venues, presented in Klovićevi dvori Gallery in Zagreb in 2010. The exhibition was produced by the Premier Exhibitions company headquartered in Atlanta. The company's web site describes its corporative profile as follows:

> Premier Exhibitions, Inc. is a major provider of museum quality touring exhibitions throughout the world. A recognized leader in developing and deploying unique exhibition products, the Company's exhibitions contain authentic artifacts presented in stunning environments using compelling stories. Established in 1993 Atlanta's company revolutionized the

> value of museum quality. Premier Exhibitions success lies in its ability to produce, manage and market exhibitions. In addition the Company authors and publishes catalogues and educational materials.[1]

The "authentic artifacts" on display in the *Bodies Revealed* exhibition are plasticised human corpses—organs and tissues that had once been integral parts of living human organisms. *Bodies Revealed* are in reality corpses revealed, and what is truly fascinating in the process is the rhetorical deception whereby the exhibition's title substitutes a term that designates lifeless matter with the linguistic signifier of a living body. There is a sentence printed on the first catalogue page, right below the title, and it reads: "With a deep appreciation to those who donated their bodies so that others may learn."[2] Furthermore, the impressum on the following page contains the statement:

> All of the anatomical specimens [...] are legally received and painstakingly prepared by the medical experts for the purpose of study and education. The end result is a human specimen that can be viewed without deterioration due to normal decomposition.[3]

Perceiving the exhibition as a theatricised spectacle whose protagonists are both the plasticised human corpses and the exhibition's audience, I am interested in a concept of education emphasised by the introductory text written by the medical director of the show, Dr. Roy Glover, Associate Professor Emeritus at the Departments of Anatomy and Cell Biology at University of Michigan. He stresses the contribution of artists such as Leonardo, Rafael and Rembrandt to our understanding of the human body, he mentions the efforts of philosophers and physicians from Aristotle to Vesalius and argues that although we have been studying the human body for thousands of years, we still do not know much about it, and too many people abuse their bodies by getting far too little sleep, by eating far too much of the wrong food, by smoking and drinking alcohol, by getting far too little exercise, and so on. He does not fail to mention that such abuse of one's own body results in exorbitant costs of medical insurance and hospital care. Consequently, he concludes that the best prevention against all these evils is to learn about one's own body (Glover 2007). Glover's opening gambit about the increasing cost of medical care is a commonplace of neo-liberal rhetoric resulting from the abatement of the welfare state, the privatisation

1 http://www.prxi.com/prxi.html (consulted 07.05.2011).

2 Catalogue *Fascinating + Real Bodies Revealed*. Premier Exhibitions, Inc. 2007.

3 Catalogue *Fascinating + Real Bodies Revealed*. Premier Exhibitions, Inc. 2007.

of public goods and commons, the financialisation and medicalisation of culture, the culturalisation of politics and above all, from the adjustments of the education systems to the labor market. Substituting the English word *corpse* (as 'cadaver', which is the real exhibit of this "scientific-artistic-culturological" spectacle) with the word *body* in the rhetorical deception performed by the exhibition title, conceals an etymology which puts the terms for corpse and corporation in a relation that reveals the contemporary biopolitical paradigm of the discursive production of the body. Namely, both words, *corpse* and *corporation* derive from the Latin word *corpus* that designates a living body.

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The control of society over individuals is not conducted only through consciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body. As Foucault (1994) writes, for capitalist society biopolitics is what is most important, the biological, the somatic, the corporeal. Relying on his research of biopolitics, Hardt and Negri (2001) argue that the huge transnational corporations construct the fundamental connective fabric of the biopolitical world. Capital has indeed always been organised with a view toward the entire global sphere, but only in the second half of the twentieth century did multinational and transnational industrial and financial corporations really begin to structure global territories biopolitically. They directly structure and articulate territories and populations and tend to make nation-states merely instruments to record the flow of commodities, monies, and populations that they set in motion (Hardt and Negri 2001: 31).

> The central role previously occupied by the labor power of mass factory workers in the production of surplus value is today increasingly filled by intellectual, immaterial and communicative labor power. It is thus necessary to develop a new political theory of value that can pose the problem of this new capitalist accumulation of value at the center of the mechanism of exploitation, as well as a new theory of subjectivity that operates primarily through knowledge, communication and language.
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> HARDT and NEGRI 2001: 29

Furthermore, they say that the political synthesis of social space is fixed in the space of communication. This is why communication industries have assumed such a central position. They not only organise production on a new scale and impose a new structure adequate to global space, but also make its justification immanent.

> Power, as it produces, organizes; as it organizes, it speaks and expresses itself as authority. Language, as it communicates, produces commodities but moreover creates subjectivities, puts them in relation, and orders them. The communication industries integrate the imaginary and the symbolic within the biopolitical fabric, not merely putting them at the service of power but actually integrating them into its very functioning.
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> HARDT and NEGRI 2001: 33

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Dr. Glover's emphasis on learning about one's own body as the best remedy for all diseases, transfigures the message that was, according to the legend, inscribed on the pronaos of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi: "know thyself." Such an imperative of self-knowledge requires the identification of the self, that is the idea of one's own life, with a plasticised cadaver. Under which conditions can this be possible? We will concentrate on the key words of the statement printed in the impressum of the catalogue published by *Premier Exhibitions, Inc.* and discuss them in relation to Hardt and Negri's notion of power that produces and organises, and, in organising, speaks and expresses itself as authority, while language, as it communicates, produces commodities, but above all subjects, putting them in relations and ordering them. The statement reads:

> All of the anatomical specimens at the *Bodies* exhibition are legally received and painstakingly prepared by the medical experts for the purpose of study and education. The end result is a human specimen that can be viewed without deterioration due to normal decomposition.[4]

If we put the term *anatomical specimens* next to the term *the end result*, the process of subjectification becomes apparent as determined by the body of knowledge guaranteed by the authority of bio-medical sciences. As such it needs to be considered in terms of biopolitics. *Premier Exhibitions* corporation as a "major provider of museum quality touring exhibitions throughout the world" takes upon itself the task of disseminating that body of knowledge.

The first question: Why was it necessary to state that all "the anatomical specimens [had been] legally received"?[5] Maybe because of the question posed by Peter Manseau in his text 'Plasticize me', published in *Guernica* magazine for art and politics in March 2011: "Will recent advances in human tissue

4 Catalogue *Fascinating + Real Bodies Revealed*. Premier Exhibitions, Inc. 2007.

5 Catalogue *Fascinating + Real Bodies Revealed*. Premier Exhibitions, Inc. 2007.

preservation change the way we think about bodies, death, God … and China?" (Manseau 2011) He concludes that

> ostensibly the exhibition is scientific and educational in character, but given that there are no longer many mysteries within human anatomy, the most pressing questions it raises are ethical: Is posing a dead man with a tennis racket wrong? Is a failure to make specific provisions for the treatment of one's remains the same as giving one's body to science? Does the education offered by an anatomy exhibit offer the same kind of public good as organ donation? And finally, what are the dead for?
>
> MANSEAU 2011

Manseau reminds us that the exhibition is produced by a USA-based company primarily for American and European audiences, but the human remains featured have come exclusively from the People's Republic of China, a nation and a culture that has its own history of ethical and religious reflection on the body. Asking the question "whose conception of the body matters more, that of the Western living or the Eastern dead?" he also informs the readers that all the exhibited bodies had formerly been in the possession of the Chinese government as they had died in hospitals with no kin to take responsibility for their disposal (Manseau 2011).

Manseau's question leads me, on the one hand, to the rhetoric of recent media coverage of bin Laden's liquidation, and, on the other hand, to the film *Germany in Autumn* released in 1978. The film is a collective work by eleven German film directors among whom are Alexander Kluge, Reiner Werner Fassbinder, Volker Schlöndorff and Katja Rupé. The Nobel prize winner Heinrich Böll also collaborated on the script. Namely, on 2 May, official Washington announces that bin Laden was buried at sea the same day he was killed. The urgency is argued by the Muslim tradition according to which the deceased has to be entombed within 24 hours. In order to prevent his grave becoming a shrine, bin Laden's corpse was sunk from a deck of an American war ship in an unidentified location in the North Arabian Sea. The urgent burial at sea was also explained by the fact that none of the Arab countries gave permission for the most wanted terrorist to be buried on their territory.

The narrative structure of the film *Germany in Autumn* focuses on two funerals that took place in Stuttgart in Autumn of 1977. One of them was the state funeral of Hans Martin Schleyer, a former SS officer, postwar industrialist and the president of the Confederation of German Employers' Association, who was assassinated by the RAF. The other was the funeral of three members of the RAF—Enslin, Baader and Raspe, whose dead bodies no German graveyard

wanted to receive ten days after their death. By the decision of the Mayor of Stuttgart, Manfred Rommel, the son of Hitler's Feldmarschall Erwin Rommel, they were buried in a common grave at the edge of Stuttgart's cemetery Dornhalden. The terrorists and the industrialist were killed on the same day, on 18 October 1977. The Red Army Fraction, among other things, demanded the denazification of Germany.

The two funerals that define the framework of the film are structurally connected by an episode about censorship in the educational program of West German television. The censored drama was Sophocles' *Antigone*, and the threat to the national security was detected in the possibility of understanding the actual German terrorist as Antigone's prefiguration. Her act of civil disobedience—the burial of her dead brother in spite of the ruler's interdiction—could have provided a moral excuse for the act of the German terrorist.

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Now I'll go back to China whose citizens have, for the purposes of the *Bodies Revealed* exhibition, "donated their bodies so that others may learn."[6] There is nothing illegal in the act of donation, as stated in the exhibition catalogue's impressum. Comparing the terms in which the German scientist Dr. Gunther von Hagens, ideator of musealisation, culture-industrialisation and spectacularisation of human corpses discursively amputated from the notion of death and his American follower Dr. Glover designate their exhibits, Manseau writes that unlike von Hagens, who claims that the exhibits, while still alive, personally donated their bodies, Dr. Glover claims that the corpses that served for the fabrication of his exhibits were earlier the property of the Chinese government. The statement about legally received anatomical specimens, that is the fact that the American corporation acquired the remains of Chinese citizens with the help of the Chinese government, supports Agamben's conclusion that "only because politics in our age had been entirely transformed into biopolitics was it possible for politics to be constituted as totalitarian politics to a degree hitherto unknown" (Agamben 1998: 120).

In their biopolitical mission the *Premier Exhibition* corporation and the totalitarian, declaratively communist government of the recently emerged global capitalist superpower The People's Republic of China are connected through the same visual sign: the five-pointed red star. In his text 'China's Valley of Tears' subtitled 'Is Authoritarian Capitalism the Future?', Slavoj Žižek discusses the common view of democracy as the "natural" accompaniment of

6 Catalogue *Fascinating + Real Bodies Revealed*. Premier Exhibitions, Inc. 2007.

capitalism comparing the actual Chinese party totalitarianism with the genesis of European capitalism. He concludes that

> what is happening in China today is not an oriental-despotic distortion of capitalism, but rather the repetition of capitalism's development in Europe itself. In the early modern era, most European states were far from democratic. And if they were democratic (as was the case with the Netherlands during the seventeenth century), it was only a democracy of the propertied liberal elite, not of the workers. The conditions for capitalism were created and sustained by a brutal state dictatorship, very much like today's China. The state legalized violent expropriations of the common people, which turned them proletarian. The state then disciplined them, teaching them to conform to their new ancilliary role.
>
> ŽIŽEK 2007

Reminding the readers that in Western Europe, the move from the welfare state to the new global economy has involved painful renunciations, less security and less guaranteed social care, he concludes that the actual Chinese authoritarian capitalism may not be merely a remainder of our past but a portent of our future (Žižek 2007). That could also be the reason why the Chinese corpses exhibited as *Fascinated + Real: Bodies Revealed* have had to lose their racial characteristic in the process of "painstaking preparations" for their educational mission to be presented as *human specimens*.

The second question: How do the painstakingly prepared *anatomical specimens* become *human specimens?* To answer this question it is necessary to make clear that the exhibition is a medium. In his book *What Do Pictures Want: The Lives and Loves of Images*, W.J.T. Mitchell argues that a medium is not just a set of materials, an apparatus or code that "mediates" between individuals. It is a complex social institution that contains individuals within it, and is constituted by a history of practices, rituals and habits, skills and techniques (Mitchell 2005: 213).

The history of photography, a medium that makes images endlessly reproducible, is also a kind of history of production of the *human specimen*. Namely, the invention of photography historically coincides with the development of the new sciences of identity: phrenology and physiognomy. Allan Sekula writes that

> physiognomy analytically isolated the profile of the head and the various anatomic features of the head and face assigning a characterological significance to each element. Individual character was judged through the

> loose concatenation of those readings. In both its analytic and synthetic stages, the interpretative process required that distinctive individual features be read in conformity to the type. Phrenology sought to discern correspondences between the topography of the skull and what were thought to be specific localized mental faculties seated within the brain. Physiognomy, and more specifically phrenology, linked an everyday nonspecialist empiricism with increasingly authoritative attempts to medicalize the study of the mind. The ambitious efforts to construct a materialist science of the self led to the dissection of brains, including those of prominent phrenologists, and to the accumulation of vast collections of skulls.
>
> SEKULA 1986: 11

Sekula analyses the application of the photographic image in the work of the French police official Alphonse Bertillon, who invented the first effective modern system of criminal identification, as well as the work of English statistician and eugenicist Francis Galton, who devising a technique known as composite photography created typology; he argues that they visually produced the abnormal "human specimen" which is the "physiognomic code of visual interpretation of the body's signs—specifically the signs of the head—[…] intersected" with the "technique of mechanized visual representation" in mid-nineteen century (Sekula 1986: 16).

> This unified system of representation and interpretation promised a vast taxonomic ordering of images of the body. […] The camera is integrated into a larger ensemble: a bureaucratic-clerical-statistical system of 'intelligence'. This system can be described as a sophisticated form of the archive [where] [t]he central artifact […] is not the camera but the filing cabinet.
>
> SEKULA 1986: 16

"In structural terms," Sekula writes, "the archive is both an abstract paradigmatic entity and a concrete institution." (Sekula 1986: 17) The systems of description of the criminal body applied in the last decades of nineteenth century aimed to embed photographic evidence in the more abstract methods of social statistics that emerged in the 1830s and 1840s. Sekula concludes that although Bertillon's and Galton's "projects […] constitute two methodological poles of the positivist attempts to define and regulate social deviance, [b]oth men were committed to technologies of demographic regulation." (Sekula 1986: 19) Furthermore, he argues that the nineteenth-century scientific disciplines of phrenology and physiognomy,

> serv[ing] to legitimate on organic grounds the dominion of intellectual over manual labor [...,] contributed to the ideological hegemony of a capitalism that increasingly relied upon a hierarchical division of labor, a capitalism that applauded its own progress as the outcome of individual cleverness and cunning.
>
> SEKULA 1986: 12

In our analysis of the production of the *human specimen*, or rather the biopolitical production of the idea of the subject, as manifested in the *Bodies Revealed* exhibition in relation to the technologies of demographical regulation, it is essential that we pay attention to the notion of the cultural stereotype. In her book on the photographic origins of realism in British nineteenth-century literature, Nancy Armstrong (1999) writes that various visual media and modes of visual representation have been developed in the course of nineteenth century to endorse and foster colonial domination. Photography, producing cultural stereotypes, was one of the numerous means by which Europe subjugated other cultures. Cultural stereotypes are real, she concludes, not because they refer to real bodies, but because they allow us to identify and classify bodies, including our own, as image-objects with a place and name within a still-expanding visual order (Armstrong 1999: 31). In contrast to the stereotypes supported by nineteenth-century photographic discourse (and its contemporaneous normative sciences) whose performativity was activated in the way people came to visualise themselves and others not only in terms of gender, class, race and nation, but also in terms of intelligence, morality and emotional stability, the *Premier Exhibitions* corporation, protected by the authority of science (medicine and museology), as well as the politically correct imperative of education, offers a paradoxical unifying and globalising stereotype that cancels even the problematic idea of identity, i.e. the concepts of racially and culturally specific differences. The legally received anatomical specimens molded into painstakingly fabricated *human specimens* legitimise the conditions of the precariousness of life which the cultural logic of financialised capitalism equates with lifeless matter: the raw matter of ever profitable spectacle.

⁘

On 12 May 2011 the British newspaper *The Guardian* published a text entitled 'US senator views "grotesque" Osama bin Laden photographs', from which we learn that a senator James Inhofe was allowed to see fifteen secret photographs of bin Laden's corpse in the CIA headquarters in Virginia. The Senator, who

had previously pressed Obama's administration to publish the photographs, was not so convinced of this after having viewed them himself. He said that the photographs were "pretty grotesque" and some of them "gruesome": "One of the shots went through the ear and out through an eye socket, or through the eye socket and out through the ear and exploded, that was the kind of ordinance it was. That caused the brains to be hanging out of the eye socket," he told CNN (McGreal 2011). He also said that he had no doubt that the pictures were of bin Laden, adding: "Absolutely no question about it. A lot of people out there say: 'I want to see the pictures', but I've already seen them. That was him. He's gone. He's history." (McGreal 2011)

The senator employs the term *image* which, in this case, not being a visual fact but a narrative, implies the agency of imagination. Addressing the public, Inhofe produces his own status as eyewitness. In so doing, he claims the exact same position of authority from which he demands the right to pronounce the irrefutable truth. The public does not need to see the pictures for he has already seen them. It was necessary to activate the collective imagination in order to materialise the desired image of a massacred body as a substitute for the withheld photographic image as a function of the archival document—a visual testimony of a real event: the event of the death of the Other. In this speech "already seen" implies the past tense that connotes a notion of history and because of that the senator claims the right to state that bin Laden is "history"—in so far as "[h]e's gone." But Inhofe's statement connects the notion of history not only with the format of a story, but first and foremost with the idea of duration—of the past as contained in the present, and the forthcoming contained in the past. But, what is history, or, to be more precise, whose history is bin Laden, or rather, the history of what is being discoursively produced in the image of his brain hanging out of his eye socket? The picture that must not be shown.

Maybe the answer to the question why it is permissable to hear the description of the image while the image itself is forbidden, lies in Baudrillard's statement according to which

> the image in itself is bound neither to truth nor to reality. It is appearance and bound to appearance. That is its magical affiliation with the illusion of the world as it is, the affiliation that reminds us that the real is never certain—just as we can never be certain that the worst will happen—and that perhaps the world can do without it, as it can do without the reality principle.
>
> BAUDRILLARD 2005: 91

Senator Inhofe's statement is auto-referential, and as such, it is a performative utterance—the performative takes itself as its referent thereby indicating a reality it itself produces. It is worth asking what kind of reality is produced by the minutious description of the shot's trajectory that expelled bin Laden's brain through the eye socket and made itself available to the gaze of the strictly controlled photographic camera.

⁘

The following statement is from *120 Days of Sodom, or the School of Libertinism* written in 1785 by the imprisoned Marquis de Sade: "It is commonly accepted among thoroughbred libertines that the sensations communicated by the organs of hearing are the most flattering, and those whose impressions are the liveliest […]." (cited in Hassan 1982: 39) In the text, in which the pornographer de Sade overtly imagines an orgy as a massacre, the four master libertines gathered in the Fortress of Silling, duke Blangis, his brother the bishop, president Curval and the banker Ducret are listening to four "woman-historians" enumerating 150 Simple, 150 Complex, 150 Criminal and 150 Murderous Passions which they then put into practice by torturing 42 people, some of whom were children. Writing on de Sade, Ihab Hassan concludes that

> a society of omnipotent beings can be charted only in pornographic fiction. In the apocalypse of *120 Days of Sodom*, where the final authority rests with Thanatos, the human organism is conceived not as energy but as waste; behind the scatological comedy and delights of Sodom, scarcely disguised, appears hatred of life, for at Silling the life and fecal economies of the community unite under the strict control.
>
> HASSAN 1982: 41

Almost two centuries after de Sade's text was written, Pier Paolo Pasolini resemantised his pornographic discourse in his script and film *Salò or 120 Days of Sodom.* The film was premiered twenty days after Pasolini's brutal and still unclarified murder on 2 November 1975. The film was immediately banned in most of Europe and in Australia. Despite the fact that *Salò* is considered one of the key works in the history of cinematic art, the film practically remained banned until the beginning of this century. It was never labeled as pornography, and it is certainly not pornography, but was banned due to its explicit scenes of extremely brutal sexual violence on minors, mental and physical

torture, massacre and coprophagia. Pasolini's film visualises the act of narration itself and stages the performative of speech which "by the organs of hearing" communicates "the most flattering" sensations and the "liveliest" "impressions" to the "thoroughbred libertines." (Sade 1966: 218)

In *Salò or 120 Days of Sodom* pornographic description is materialised explicitly as a criminal act.

Counter to the notion that performativity is the efficacious expression of a human will in language, Judith Butler considers performativity as specific modality of power as discourse:

> For discourse to materialize a set of effects, 'discourse' itself must be understood as a complex and convergent chain in which 'effects' are vectors of power. The historicity of discourse and, in particular, the historicity of norms (the 'chains' of iterations invoked or dissimulated in the imperative utterance) constitute the power of discourse to enact what it names.
>
> BUTLER 1993: 187

In the particularly significant opening credits, Pasolini presents his own film as an intertext. The credits include the category "essential bibliography," under which are listed the theoretical readings of de Sade by Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, Simone de Beauvoir, Pierre Klossowski and Philippe Sollers. Pasolini inserts citations from these theoretical texts into de Sade's fictional text and uses them as elements of the film's dialogue. In the opening credits he also textually specifies the place and the time of the plot: "1944–45 in Northern Italy during the Nazi-Fascist Occupation," and in so doing he emphasises the historicity of de Sadian fiction, that is, the material enactment of the performances of libertine desire signified by the fantasmatic objects—fetishes—pertaining to that desire. As opposed to de Sade's "liberating prose," Pasolini's moving images, constituted through the embodiment of text, deny the spectators the pleasure of the scopophilic gaze.

Hassan writes in 1971:

> The works of de Sade prefigure the destructive element of our world, and the claims he makes upon us are hard, perhaps impossible, to meet. Yet we dare no longer ignore these claims. There can be no life for men until de Sade is answered.
>
> HASSAN 1982: 47

Four years later, Pier Paolo Pasolini really did answer de Sade with *Salò or 120 Days of Sodom* where he resemantised de Sadian pornographic discourse and

designated the Marquis' hellish orgy as the *Nazi-Fascist Occupation.* It is an occupation that dehumanises the living human body, reducing it to waste—as does the exhibition *Bodies Revealed*.

∴

The etymological proximity of the verb *reveal* and the noun *revelation* activates a metonymical chain that allows the contextualisation of the *Premier Exhibitions* corporation's show with the biblical term of apocalypse. What kind of Bodily Revelation is at stake?

By the end of April 2011, the international media had reported widely about the extremely inhuman working conditions of *Foxconn* in Shenzhen, southern China—an electronics company where, among other things, Apple computers and mobile phones are manufactured. Workers who step out of line, talk loudly, or talk among themselves, those who do not work fast enough are publicly humiliated. While Apple made six billion dollars profit in the first three months of 2011, 500 000 miserably payed workers, who are allowed a day off every thirteen days and whose dormitories are equipped with anti-suicidal nets, were forced to sign a document promising not to commit suicide and pledging that if they did, their families would not claim compensation above the legal minimum (Chamberlain 2011). Are there amongst the exhibits of the *Bodies Revealed* exhibition also the bodies of those who did not have to sign? And what is the difference between the *Foxconn-Apple* Chinese factory and the concentration camp that Pasolini re-figures and stages in *Salò or 120 Days of Sodom*? In one of the last sequences of Pasolini's *Salò,* the adolescent female victim immersed in a barrel full of excrement cries: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The same cry is uttered by Jesus in Pasolini's 1964 film *The Gospel According to St. Mathew*. It is exactly this cry-question that connects these two seemingly conceptually utterly opposed films. One of them was banned due to its obscenity, the other won the award for best film with a Christian theme. Yet both films problematise the same question: How is the word rendered flesh?

Every sentence in Pasolini's *Gospel* is a literal citation from the Bible, and there are no professional actors in the film. The Apostle Philip's role is played by young Giorgio Agamben. In his seminal work *Homo Sacer*, at the very end of the twentieth century, Agamben wrote that it is impossible to grasp the specificity of the National Socialist concept of race as well as the peculiar vagueness and inconsistency that characterise it, if one forgets that the *biopolitical body* that constitutes the new fundamental political subject is neither *quaestio facti* nor a *quaestio iuris*, but rather the site of a sovereign political decision that

operates in the absolute indistinction of fact and law (Agamben 1998: 171). He concludes that

> the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West today is not a city but a camp, and there is no return from the camps to classical politics. In the camps, city and house became indistinguishable, and the possibility of differentiating between our biological body and our political body—between what is incommunicable and mute and what is communicable and sayable—was taken from us forever.
>
> AGAMBEN 1998: 188

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CHAPTER 2

Losing the Plot: Inappropriate Fictions and the Art of the Theatre[1]

Franc Chamberlain

Abstract

Beginning with a description of two Moscow Art Theatre actors, M. Chekhov and E. Vakhtangov, playing a theatre training game that gets out of hand this article explores some risks of players losing themselves in the flow of the game if there isn't a simultaneous awareness that the game is a game. This potential paradox is avoided by noting the difference between a pragmatic focus on the game's action from any concern with the ontological status of the game. This is discussed with reference to Polanyi's distinction between focal and subsidiary awareness and Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow. Drawing on personal, embodied, experiences there is an attempt to re-imagine the situation in which Chekhov and Vakhtangov find themselves and ask questions about the relationship between actor and character and what it means to be 'possessed' by a character. Other types of possession, by ideas and stories, are then discussed before a conclusion which asserts the importance of playfulness in theatre and in life.

In the first of his two published autobiographies, *The Path of the Actor* (1928), the Russian actor and teacher Michael Chekhov (1891–1955) mentions a game that he and his colleague, Evgeny Vakhtangov (1883–1922), used to play when they were both young actors at the Moscow Art Theatre. The game was called "trained monkey" and they each took turns to be the monkey. Each day the person who was playing the monkey would have to move around on all fours and prepare the morning coffee. The other person was the monkey's master and could criticise and punish the monkey if he failed to come up to the required standards (which were made up on the spur of the moment at the whim of the master). The monkey was not to complain about the punishment he suffered but would inevitably take revenge the following day when it was his turn to

1 An earlier and significantly different version of this essay was presented as the opening keynote at the *Body and Awareness* conference in Zadar in May 2012. I am very grateful for the generous support, positive criticism and great patience shown by Gert Hofmann and Snježana Zorić in the preparation of this version. Needless to say I take responsibility for any errors or weaknesses in the essay.

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be the master. Chekhov reports that the punishments escalated until, one day, "the 'monkey' rebelled and a cruel battle began" (Chekhov 2005: 66). In the process of this struggle, Vakhtangov broke one of Chekhov's teeth "but [...]," as Chekhov put it:

> [...] the battle did not stop, and after a few seconds I managed to get Vakhtangov's head under my arm and squeeze it firmly. Capitalizing on his powerless situation, I decided to take a breather. By chance I glanced at my victim's face: Vakhtangov had turned black and was gasping for breath. I let him go.
>
> CHEKHOV 2005: 66f

The moment of rebellion is the point at which the closed and repetitive pattern of the game is broken. The structure of the game allowed the aggression between the two actors to be acted out in relative safety and Chekhov notes both their difficult relationship and that there was often "a good deal of merriment and youthful enthusiasm" in their conflict (Chekhov 2005: 68). Once the monkey fought back, however, the safety of the container was removed and there was no referee or umpire to ensure that the laws of the game were upheld and that the violence was kept within acceptable limits. Not that games usually require external referees to enforce the rules as games cannot be played unless the players are aware of the rules and they can appeal to them in the breach. The role of the referee can be internalised amongst all of the players and activated as necessary allowing the game to be paused and attention to be drawn to an injured player, for example, or an infringement. But if the players are constantly placing their attention on the fact that they are playing a game and considering each action in relation to the rules, then they will not lose themselves in the flow of the game. A self-conscious concern with *doing it right* is a subjective position which inhibits participation in the game and involves placing focal awareness on a (disturbed) sense of self rather than on the action to be carried out. Massumi describes this sense of self in playing as an "interference that must be minimized for the play to channel smoothly" (Massumi 2002: 74). Concern with the rules is not self-consciousness because attention is not directed towards oneself, but towards a pattern that is both immanent and transcendent in relation to the game being played. In each case, however, concern with one's self or concern with the rules, the player is deflected from full involvement in the game. Yet this desired intensity of complete engagement might seem to require that the players lose themselves in play (Gadamer 2004: 103), and this appears to be what happened between Chekhov and Vakhtangov: they lost the awareness that they were playing a game. But perhaps to lose such an awareness is to no longer be playing, to lose the *as if*, or the "subjunctive

mode" as Victor Turner called it (1988: 101). Indeed, Gadamer considered the players were always aware that it was "only a game" (Gadamer 2004: 103). But this awareness of the nature of the activity does not exclude taking the game seriously, as Gadamer notes: "someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport" (Gadamer 2004: 103). Taking a game seriously, however, is not the same as completely forgetting that it *is* a game.

It seems, then, that to be seriously engaged in playing a game is to lose the sense that one is playing a game whilst simultaneously being aware that a game is being played. To put it more starkly, it seems that in order to play well we must be both aware and not aware that we are playing a game. This appears to be a paradox but perhaps it is a question of where we focus our attention: when we are playing a game we are focused on carrying out the activity necessary to achieve the goal of the game, not on any concern about the ontological status of the game as game. Whilst we may be reflexively engaged in the performance of our actions and evaluating them in the flow of our involvement in the game, we are not caught up in a critical consideration of the nature of the activity. We perform our actions within an implicit game frame which, generally speaking, is not open to explication without stopping the game.

We might say that our focal awareness is on our action and goal and that our sense of playing a game is in our subsidiary awareness. As Michael Polanyi put it:

> Subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are mutually exclusive. If a pianist shifts his attention from the piece he is playing to the observation of what he is doing with his fingers while playing it, he gets confused and may have to stop. This happens generally if we switch our focal attention to particulars of which we had previously been aware only in their subsidiary role.
>
> POLANYI 1974: 56

The effect of this shift of focal attention from the music being played to the fingers is similar to, but not identical to, the interference described by Massumi (op. cit.). What they both draw attention to is the fact that we can choose to place our awareness and that some of our choices can be to the detriment of the work. For Polanyi, bringing the fingers into focal awareness whilst performing a difficult piano piece would be to interfere with the process of playing. It is not clear, however, that this is necessarily the case. Polanyi seems to be setting up a simple binary between attention on the piece being played and on the fingers in the process of playing, but does that match our experience of playing the piano? I am a very poor piano player but am reasonably comfortable playing a descant recorder, although I am by no means a virtuoso. In response

to Polanyi's example, I played a tune on the recorder and noticed what happened as I placed my attention on different aspects of the process. I found that I could be aware of my breath, the movement of my fingers (including differentials of pressure and speed), the texture and weight of the instrument, the distribution of weight in my body and the feeling of my feet in contact with the floor. I made mistakes, as it had been some time since I had played the tune, but there did not appear to be any connection between the errors and any particular placing of my attention. In the flow of playing, which included my mistakes, I could place my attention at different points within a field of awareness without breaking the relationship between fingers, breath, music, or instrument. In addition, I was aware of strengths and weaknesses in my performance and able to make adjustments to it.

If I had wanted to give attention to my fingers outside of the network of body-tune-instrument, then I would have needed to have stopped playing. Paying attention to different nodes of the network did not involve stepping outside of the act of playing the recorder. If, on the other hand, I had become fascinated by something outside of this assemblage or, more subtly, become caught up in feeling embarrassed by my dirty fingernails rather than anything that was related to the action of playing the recorder, then the flow of playing may have been broken.

Polanyi goes on to say, however, that inhibiting "self-consciousness" is a result of giving attention to the subsidiary elements of an action and that a

> serious and sometimes incurable form of it [self-consciousness] is 'stage-fright', which seems to consist in the anxious riveting of one's attention to the next word—or note or gesture—that one has to find or remember. This destroys one's sense of the context which alone can smoothly evoke the proper sequence [...].
>
> POLANYI 1974: 56

Such a destruction of context and a fixation of attention on the next item rather than an openness to an unfolding sequence, would seem to be the opposite of what Csikszentmihalyi (1996) lists as key elements of flow. Polanyi's sense of a smooth evocation of a sequence, for example, is akin to Csikszentmihalyi's observation that, in the flow state, "the musician knows what notes to play next" (Csikszentmihalyi 1996: 111)—or the actor knows what words to speak next or which actions to carry out. Self-consciousness inhibits flow and prevents the merging of action and awareness (Csikszentmihalyi 1996: 112).

The example of the musician in both Csikszentmihalyi and Polanyi could be taken to refer to a previously practiced and prepared tune or, at least a score that was being read at the moment of playing. In improvisation, however, the

piece of music, or drama is emergent and, although there may be a set of rules, as in a game, the breaking of the rules may be a creative act which opens new possibilities that can immediately be followed rather than bringing the game to an end.

When the "monkey" rebelled in Chekhov and Vakhtangov's game, it was part of an escalating sequence of punishments. This sequence was not a predetermined aspect of the game any more than the rebellion, but both were emergent patterns which, if they did not change the frame of the game itself, at least led it into new territory where there was actual interpersonal violence and a possible threat to life.

Michael Chekhov took "a breather" and, for a few moments, was unaware of the seriousness of Vakhtangov's predicament. In Chekhov's version of events it appears that he only becomes aware of the problem by chance.

Another way to describe the same moment would be to read Chekhov's "breather" as a way of disconnecting mind and body, that Chekhov becomes dissociated from his physical action. Until Chekhov had Vakhtangov in a restraining hold he was engaged in the flow of an intense psychophysical conflict. The moment the restraint is secure he is able to pause and, leaving the body on hold, so to speak, put his thoughts elsewhere thus removing his awareness from the life-threatening force that is being applied to Vakhtangov's neck.

Yet, following Polanyi's distinction, it would make sense for Chekhov, once he has achieved his goal of restraining Vakhtangov, to put his focal awareness elsewhere and leave the process of maintaining the hold to the subsidiary awareness. By presenting his discovery of Vakhtangov's asphyxiated features as a chance occurrence, Chekhov ignores the possibility that he was receiving signals from Vakhtangov through his subsidiary awareness. These signals would have increased in intensity until a threshold was reached and what was in the margins of awareness moved into the centre. The experience is one of a chance occurrence because there is no conscious decision to change focal awareness; the information is processed at a pre-reflective level. It is possible that the events did not unfold in quite the sequence that Chekhov reports and that the action of releasing Vakhtangov's head is what drew his attention.

By holding Vakhtangov in a headlock, Chekhov brings a pause to the game. It is not simply Vakhtangov's head that is held in this breather but also the game that was in the process of escalating. There is no interference in the playing of the game, and no indication, until the pause, that the focal attention is placed anywhere else than in the playing. The game is played to the full but is on the verge of getting out of hand when a pause is enforced. A "breather" is something we take when we have been engaged in intense activity. We stop to catch

our breath. In the activity itself we may not be aware of our breath, but, when we take a break, our attention is called to the breath. We may notice its speed and pressure, a soreness, perhaps, as we recover, or the feeling of coolness as the air enters our nostrils. As our breathing slows down we tend to look around us. The pause enables a moment of reflection on what has just occurred and allows a decision to be made on whether to continue the game or not. A quick look at Vakhtangov's face and Chekhov is clear that they need to stop.

Rather than Chekhov and Vakhtangov forgetting that they were playing a game and the rules being broken, perhaps it is more appropriate to consider that the game had a relatively open score and that the rebellion was still part of the game and emerged from the playing, that the intensity of the playing led to injury does not mean that an awareness of the game and playing was lost.

The idea that the game was played so intensely that the two actors forgot that they were playing a game, however, connects with the view of theatre that is often attributed to Stanislavski: that the actor must become the character and that the performance must come as close to reality as possible. Chekhov repeats this view:

> When we are possessed by the part and almost kill our partners and break chairs, etc., then we are not free, and it is not art but hysterics. At one time in Russia we thought that if we were acting we must forget everything else.
>
> CHEKHOV 1985: 102

The actor who becomes lost in the character loses awareness of the difference between actor and character and becomes disembodied at precisely the same moment that the character becomes embodied. What does it mean here to say that the actor becomes disembodied? The implication is that there is something that can be *disembodied*; where would this "disembodied" something go? It is perhaps more the case that the actor's identity is pushed into the background and the character becomes the foreground. The character moves, thinks, speaks and the movements, thoughts and actions are not those of the actor. In a rehearsed play there is a relatively fixed score which the character might follow, but in an improvised piece of theatre there is not necessarily a score to follow, or at least there may only be a very open one. Chekhov and Vakhtangov's game has a very basic score: each day the person who was playing the monkey would have to move around on all fours and make the coffee, and the master would chastise the servant for his inadequacies. One thing that is not clear from Chekhov's account is whether, when the monkey rebelled, the

character was maintained or the actors broke out of role to have the fight. The context seems to suggest that it took place in character.

But, in any case, can we assume that the loss of awareness of difference is a loss of awareness as such? The actor possessed by a character is still animate, still aware in the sense of responding to stimuli (albeit stimuli which may be given a non-ordinary interpretation). In such circumstances does it make sense to say that it is the character who is aware and not the actor? But this would be to take seriously that it was Stanislavski's aim for the actors to be possessed by the characters, but Stanislavski makes it clear in *An Actor's Work* that the actors should not lose themselves in the character. Chekhov himself goes on to say:

> Then some of our actors came to the point where they discovered that real acting was when we could act and be filled with feelings, and yet be able to make jokes with our partners.
>
> CHEKHOV 1985: 102

Although this appears to be a criticism of Stanislavski by his pupil, the two views aren't very far apart at this point. Stanislavski devotes thirty-two pages to the question of an actor's concentration and attention in *An Actor's Work* and gives attention to the importance of focusing on stage action. For Stanislavski, actors who are too concerned with the audience do not have their attention in the right place.

The danger of actors becoming possessed by the characters they are playing is dramatised in *A Double Life* (dir. Cukor, 1947), where Ronald Coleman becomes possessed by the part of *Othello* or simply loses the distinction between fiction and reality, and actually does kill once and almost kills again. Chekhov does not claim that actors killed each other but that they almost did so.

Do we know what Chekhov is talking about? Is he just talking about acting here? When I search my own experience, I can remember when I was also someone who thought that the actor should become the character, that I should, in a naïve sense, forget that I was acting. I was playing The Dauphin, Charles, in a production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan.* In Scene v there is a moment where Joan is giving a speech about being alone and Charles (in this production at least) was just listening to her and he has a line at the end of the scene: "If only she would keep quiet, or go home." During one particular performance my thought pattern changed. These are the kinds of thoughts that were in my mind (or should I say the character's mind). "I'm the Dauphin. She can't talk to me like that. Who does she think she is? She's always going on and on like this. Well I've had enough. I'm not going to listen to her." A cue came; I stayed silent. A prompt came (does anyone work with a prompter any

more?) and then another. On the second prompt, it was as though I woke up. I suddenly realised what I was doing.

As I reflect on this moment, I notice that, in my memory, there is a different sense of embodiment in the section when I seem to be thinking *as* the character and the later moment when I returned to the performance score. I can not be sure how accurate my memory is, over thirty years later, but, in my memory, I am more aware of myself, my fellow actors, the stage, and the audience after that point of return. To an extent, I could simply say that the first part was an example of bad acting, but it is the possibility of losing the actor's awareness and the apparent replacement of it by a character's that is puzzling.

Do you know the example of cigarette counting from Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*? This is the idea; I am counting the cigarettes in my case but I am only pre-reflectively aware that I am doing so—but if at any moment someone were to say "what are you doing?" I would be able to say: "counting." So the idea is that I may not be reflectively aware of what it is that I'm doing but I could, in principle, become aware of it at any moment. And for Sartre it is the "non-reflective consciousness which renders the consciousness possible" (Sartre 2003: 9). Yet, it is not at all clear that this is what happened in the example above. If I had been asked "What are you doing?" what would have been my reply? "Acting," might have been the equivalent to Sartre's "counting." It is perhaps the case, however, that we are simply dealing with a more extreme case than Sartre's example. The insistence of the prompter eventually restored my reflective awareness and enabled me to restore my actor's awareness and carry out the necessary actions. In Sartre's example, the person could be doing any action at all non-reflectively, but actions such as counting cigarettes in a case have no implications for identity, unless the response from the person counting is one of shock: they have never been a smoker, never owned a cigarette case, and have no idea of where it came from, for example.

This could also be true of those moments when we can become aware of what we're doing, that it is the wrong thing to do (not necessarily 'wrong' in an ethical sense)—perhaps driving past our exit on the motorway. Our passenger asks "what are you doing," and the answer is: "oh gosh, I don't know," but, of course, a little reflection is likely to let me know what I was doing—perhaps I was following a route I often take, or used to take. Or perhaps it was the opposite of that, maybe it was my first time driving to this place and I hadn't learned the route properly and I missed the sign or the landmark or whatever. So, in that moment in *Saint Joan*, I suddenly become aware that I have not been following the route we laid out for the performance—the prompter's voice triggering my reflective awareness and enabling me as an actor to take action. An "oh no!" moment.

This was not an important production of *St Joan*, but the memory has stayed with me over four decades. When I recall those moments, that incident, into my awareness, however, there is something different from a usual case of doing something without being reflectively aware of what I'm doing and then becoming reflectively aware. In this case my sense of I was different. It was as if I wasn't thinking those thoughts but the character was, that I "woke up" or returned to the scene and took the necessary action. I wonder, of course, whether that's just passing the buck, denying my own responsibility for the action in order to avoid criticism, shame or ridicule.

I will offer another anecdote from a little earlier than the previous one. It is a slightly different context. My acting teacher was also involved in experimenting with practical magic, out of the body travel etc. One evening, I can't remember exactly what we'd been exploring, but I noticed that the rest of the group were looking at me in a particular way—they were seeing someone else sitting in the chair where I was, a young woman: I moved my arm and became aware that it moved differently. It had a different character or quality. I hadn't been aware of anything different before, but as soon as it was brought to my awareness I could sense this figure, a character from my imagination perhaps, the interpretation of the rest of the group was that it was the appearance of a spirit figure. I lacked the technical or personal skills to investigate further and the moment didn't last long. The appearance of the young woman was unplanned, spontaneous. Now I would understand better how to allow the figure to manifest more fully, to allow my body to adjust to the movements, to walk and allow my voice to change/be changed. But that would be something else. I wouldn't be possessed by the character (see Chamberlain in Yarrow et al., 2007: 22). And I'm still not sure whether what happened to me (and by saying "happened to me" I still deny agency in some way) is what Chekhov means by being possessed in the above passage. Perhaps it's similar, but I'm wondering if there's a subtle but important difference. When I was the Dauphin at the moment where my thought processes changed, I had left the play we had rehearsed and was doing something different, but I think that what Chekhov is getting at is that the desire to be more and more "real" within the performance score as rehearsed could lead to a blurring of boundaries between the fictional and the real so that actual violence takes place—that is the violence he describes would not be a break from the score but its most real actualisation. But I also imagine that if someone else had walked into the scene with St Joan and asked the Dauphin a question, I would have answered in character.

Of course, if we'd been improvising around some ideas in *St Joan* there would have been nothing at all unusual in the choice I made, at whichever level of awareness it was made—no one was going to be harmed (although

refusing to listen in an improvisation has to be done with some care so that the improvisation isn't harmed). But the game or improvisation that Chekhov was involved in when he almost strangled Vakhtangov, was much more dangerous.

So, do we know what Chekhov's talking about? My personal anecdotes might reveal a little about the processes of acting and the actor's awareness but they do not seem to get close to the extremity of Chekhov's own actions or the concerns he had. It's not simply the lack of a reflective awareness, because it's clear that in all of the cases mentioned above, Chekhov's and mine, reflective awareness was able to be present before any harm was done. But it is the last bit that I think is important, even though Chekhov does not mention it: before any serious harm was done.

Sheets-Johnstone makes a similar claim to Sartre, although she frames it in a very different way by drawing us further into our bodies, and not only our bodies but the whole animate continuum of which we are a part. As she puts it: "corporeal awareness is a built-in of animal life" (Sheets-Johnstone 2009: 188). It is that simple. We have corporeal awareness because we are animals and we are alive. But, whilst I agree with this basic position, it does not help us understand how such a corporeal awareness conditions or is conditioned by the stories which we tell ourselves: how we can come to believe in the fictions we create. If we all have corporeal awareness by virtue of being alive, it can not be a lack of such an awareness that leads to violent crimes against the person. Such actions may be the result of a distorted, deficient or disturbed corporeal awareness, but I suggest that these actions may have some relation to the fictions we create for ourselves and map as closely as we can onto our world. We live in fictions and are compelled to blur the boundary between them and the world as much as we can, like a Stanislavskian actor.

The fictions we create need not be negative, of course, and by bringing our awareness to the story we are telling when we are experiencing unavoidable discomfort or pain in a dentist's chair, for example, we might notice that we are telling ourselves a story of suffering and anguish. But what happens if we tell a different story? During a sequence of difficult dental extractions, for example, I noticed my aversion to the pain and the fear associated with it. I decided to experiment with *tonglen* practice (Chödrön 1997: 93–97) to see what difference it made; imagining that I was breathing in the pain of all those suffering in a dentist's chair and breathing out compassion. This relaxed tensions in my body allowed me to accept the discomfort willingly rather than fighting it, and created a very different experience. I am not presenting this as a case of mind over matter but rather as a way of pointing out that our fictions matter.

Another personal story. This time not a theatre one. I had a friend who had become very emotionally and psychologically disturbed. He was lost. We did

everything we could to help him and he did receive specialist help but nothing really worked although we had no idea of the real danger. One summer evening, late summer, I think, I came out of the bar and he was sitting outside. There was something strange about him: it was as if his body was there but he wasn't inhabiting it any more, there was a dislocation somewhere, a disintegration of awareness. It's very hard to describe the shock and, in the light of what happened next it's also difficult to trust my memory of this event, it seems to have more significance. That night he went to his mother's house with a knife and stabbed her to death—he later said that the only way in which he could free himself from the Devil was to kill his mother.

Chekhov, it seems to me was precisely concerned by this kind of extremity that if, in the theatre, we are going to play pathological and violent characters, the there is a risk not only for the actor's health but also that of the audience. If we aim to push to make things more and more real, then we might forget that we're playing and run the risk of losing the awareness of the consequences of our very real actions.

My story about my old friend is shocking and it may have seemed a little gratuitous but it is relevant on a broader level. When Chekhov moved to the US at the outbreak of the second world war, he worked with his students and the writer George Shdanoff on an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed* and was concerned with how people become possessed by ideas of politics and destiny and live out those stories without awareness of the harm they are causing—their ideals may be good but they take no account of human bodies and persons (and even fail to ascribe humanity to those who they see as opposed to their views). The Possessed are not free even if their aim is to free others they have been unable to free themselves and the end result can only be the enslavement of others.

So the claim I am making here is that Chekhov saw this issue of becoming possessed by the part and becoming possessed by an idea as related—that it is possible for us to become possessed by fictions and live those fictions out with dire consequences for our relationships with others—not simply on the stage. What starts out as an aesthetic question becomes an ethical one.

I wonder if this makes Chekhov's concerns easier to understand? The actor needs to remember that theatre is play, and in that play we may explore difficult and dangerous desires, but we always have to remember that we are playing and that attitude will affect our behaviour not only in terms of our reflective awareness, but also, and I think that this is important, in terms of our pre-reflective awareness. Not only does this playful attitude need to inform the process of theatre making but also the way we live our lives—Chekhov does

not want us to be possessed by old and destructive scripts—and also modelled ways of playfully resisting unwanted projections. Jack Colvin, who studied with Chekhov in Hollywood, gave an example of this at *Acting on the Threshold*, the Third Michael Chekhov International Workshop at Emerson College (UK) in 1994. Meeting Chekhov to go for a walk, Colvin noticed that he was carrying an umbrella. "Mr Chekhov," he asked, "[i]t's such a beautiful day, are you sure you need your umbrella?" And Chekhov, who was no longer as fit in body as he once was, replied: "If I walk using a stick, people will see a frail old man and pity me. But if they see me carrying an umbrella on such a beautiful day as this, they will look upwards and wonder whether I know something that they don't."

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CHAPTER 3

Examining Body Limits

Milica Ivić

Abstract

The defining impact on human self-perception comes not just from the limits of the body itself, but also from the limits and conditions of our cultural perceptions and the constructions of the body and the limits of possible bodily performances within society. We explore these performative limits through the analysis of bodily inscriptions that are connected with socially constructed notions where regimes of discourse, and power inscribe themselves (Judith Butler). In such a discourse, literary texts, which themselves reflect on the power of the narrative to construct the body, such as Franz Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, can be a powerful resource, just like pieces of performance art, where the limit between life and art, as the limit between "private" body and "performing" body tends to disappear.

This work will focus on body limits and borders—not just limits of the body itself, but limits of the body's performativity: the body/mind and inner/outer limit, the body perceived as a whole/divided into parts, which, layer by layer, become detached entities for the libidinal quest, and the limits of possible bodily performances within one society. The intention is to examine the question of limits and borders of bodily inscriptions connected with the ambivalence of pain as a social construct. We will start from the idea of the body as a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves (Butler 1989).

Evidence can be found in works of literature and performance art that rely on the body as their main and indispensable agent, such as Franz Kafka's narrative *In the Penal Colony* (1919). In the penal colony (constructed around and based on European laws, by European colonial empires, yet distant enough to represent the European Other reflecting its own limits), there is a machine which punishes convicts by inscribing text onto their skin, literally writing it into the flesh. Without even having performed a trial, the machine does *not* inscribe the convicts' sentence, but the rule that they have transgressed. The complicated system of needles and blades repeatedly engraves the same words for 12 hours, until the convict becomes able to "read" them through his body. Through the physical castigation of his body the convict has to become aware of his guilt. The whole execution ritual is presented to an "explorer,"

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someone who represents the cultural background of colonising Europe. The question, which is raised here is (cf. Butler 1989): Can the body, and other social constructs related to it, serve as a common identity cross-culturally and trans-historically?

The body in performance art, however, is explicitly both subject and object of the act of examining limits and tracing the border between life and art, which, similar to the border between "private" body and "performing" body, tends to disappear.

1 Introduction

This work began with a desire to reflect on the body and its appearance in the fields of culture, particularly in art. How have the body and its limits been examined in recent theoretical and practical discourses on art? We could start with the view that the body, or rather, opinions and thoughts about it, is essentially discursive in nature. Body unity, completeness or incompleteness, its organs, both interior and exterior, its health, materiality, duality of body and mind, are all constructs that reveal something about the culture that produces them. The process of civilisation is changing not only the way the body is presented in the society, but also the physiology of the body. There are also numerous questions raised in current debates about the body that will be considered in this examination: Do we perceive the body as a mechanism that is, in its entirety, granted by our material existence, independent from spiritual existence? Do we perceive it partially, through fragments that detach themselves layer by layer for the libidinal quest? Or do we see it as a basis for social constructs, not only including race and gender, but also sex itself?

Recent works about the body, especially in the field of performing arts, still question the key philosophical concepts which have determined thought about the body since the last century, such as Nietzsche's organic body, Foucault's suppressed body, Bataille's erotic body, Merleau Ponty's perceptive body, Freud and Lacan's erogenous body, Artaud's body without organs, and Žižek's "organs without body."

Focusing on the body and the problematic nature of its limits, we will first question the limits and borders of bodily inscriptions related to the dominant comprehension of body ontology (through Butler's critique of Foucault's bodily inscriptions); then, through the example of Kafka's narrative *In the Penal Colony*, we will examine the ambivalence of pain as a social construct; finally we will demonstrate how performance art, as a practice, examines body limits from several, different aspects, such as the body/mind and inner/outer limit,

the body perceived as a whole/divided into parts, which are understood as libidinal fragmentations, and the limits of bodily performances within one society.

2 Cultural Limits

Ever since Foucault's *History of Sexuality,* it was taken for granted that the body is a site or platform that culture and regimes of power produce by inscribing themselves into the world. In 'Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions', Judith Butler points out that, in a number of texts, Foucault clearly asks if there is a "materiality" of bodies which could be separable from cultural meanings and he answers that even the most factual aspects of the body, such as "sex," are fully invested with ideas. The basic paradox consists in the fact that even if we accept that 'body' is constructed, the question of whether or not a body existed before these inscriptions remains unresolved. This is an ontological paradox, which is most concisely condensed in the problematic of "this body" as an object or surface of construction, meaning that there is some previous ontological level in which "body" exists prior to construction. My intention is to show that for Butler, the starting point of talking about the body is the question of limits, of delimitation. In the very beginning of this essay, Butler asks:

> What is it that circumscribes this site called the "body"? How is this delimitation made, and who makes it? Which body qualifies as "the" body? What establishes the 'the', the existential status of this body? Does the existent body in its anonymous universality have a gender, an unspoken one? What shape does this body have, and how is it to be known? Where did "the body" come from?
>
> BUTLER 1989: 601

The question here seems to be: What is the consequence of marking a border between the preexisting body substance and the cultural construction that comes *a posteriori*, and how is this border erected? Thus, the issue of delimitations arises in the very foundations of theoretical discourse about the body. Although Foucault claims that there can be no materiality of the body outside of culture and regimes of power, which means that there is no ontological independence of the body, Butler argues that Foucault's genealogy conceives body as a surface repressed by forces that are external to it. She concludes that, contrary to Foucault's stated program, he "appears to have identified, in a prediscursive body, a source of resistance to history" (Butler 1989: 607).

This ontological delimitation is just the first one in Butler's understanding of Foucault's bodily inscriptions, because examining bodily inscriptions will result in a cascade of subsequent delimitations. Inscriptions produce limits within the body structure and its divisions, as in the case of body/mind or body/soul division.

> The figure of the interior soul understood as 'within' the body is produced through its inscription on the body; indeed, the soul is inscribed on the surface, a signification that produces on the flesh the illusion of an ineffable depth. The soul as a structuring invisibility is produced in and by signs that are visible and the corporeal. Indeed, the soul requires the body for its signification, and requires also that the body signify its own limit and depth through corporeal means.
>
> BUTLER 1989: 605

Contrary to the initial belief that the body is just a construct, Butler raises the question as to whether there is a body "external to its construction, invariant in some of its structures, and which in fact, represents a dynamic locus of resistance to culture *per se*" (Butler 1989: 604). There is something alarming in Butler's response to this question. It is a response that once again conveys the idea of limit. However, she also emphasises that if a body can be a locus of resistance to culture, it is in fact "not culturally constructed," but rather as such represents limits and failure of cultural construction, which is a big turnaround. Ever since Foucault, limits were connected to cultural inscriptions and powers imposed on the body, but here, Butler turns that notion on its head. This seems important because it shows that the question of limits is key to our conceptualisations of the body. Whether it is culture that sets limits to the body, or the body that poses a threat to culture and thus limits it, their inseparable relatedness, and their inter-determination marks one of the key points dealt with in recent theory.

When the body appears through inscriptions made by culture, they are present in the form of history. In Franz Kafka's narrative *In the Penal Colony*, on an unnamed island, there is a machine that punishes convicts by engraving the text of the rule they defied into their flesh. The machine is meant to make them "read" the text after six hours of torture and then spend the last six hours of their lives in a peaceful bliss of revelation caused by this 'reading' of a cultural text. As the convicts do not even stand trial, the machine does not inscribe the sentence rather the rule, which they have broken. Even without a trial, however, the convict is supposed to become aware of his guilt by virtue of having this inscription performed on his body. Thus, just as the legitimisation

of the convict's guilt through this punishment is part of the social contract, so too is the self-realisation of this same guilt, equally resultant from the punishment. Internalised guilt can only appear in one way and that is literally through embodiment, by which an internalised, invisible law of the society becomes evident only at the moment of death. This could mean that one cannot be aware of social inscriptions that constitute one's own body, except at the very moment of its decomposition into non-being.

It is important that the entire penal installation is being presented to an "explorer," someone from a different culture, for review. He comes at the beginning of an execution, so he witnesses all of the preparations. At one point, he is given the text that is about to be inscribed onto the body of the delinquent, but he is not able to read it. Texts from other cultures are unreadable and incomprehensible to us. This rule, which is unreadable to the explorer, is at the same time the punishment of the convict.

> 'He doesn't know his own sentence?' 'No', said the Officer once more. He then paused for a moment, as if he was asking the Traveler for a more detailed reason for his question, and said, 'It would be useless to give him that information. He experiences it on his own body'.
>
> KAFKA 1919: 5

There is no other punishment apart from the rule, 'embodied' as torturous engraving into the flesh of the convict. Someone from another culture cannot read what the cultural context is writing, but the body, the flesh and bones can. This would also prove that the materiality of the body is, in some way, existent before its cultural inscriptions, it precedes them. As in this case, this is the final revelation to the body. Meeting culture within itself means the body's death.

The fact is that the process is culturally programmed and bodily reactions are totally predictable. The period of time during which the body senses the pain, the point at which the pain disappears, the point at which the body starts to read the cultural code, and the point at which it finally dies are all known. This tells us that notions such as pain are biological *and* cultural.

But how do we know this story? It is told by a foreigner, a person who was supposed to be involved in the local debate about the machine and the executions. Following a recent change in power, there are new governing forces opposed to this old tradition, but still, there are some remnants of the old regime keeping this ritual alive. As is said in the story, if the European traveler were to simply make an innocent comment, such as that his culture is different, that they used to do this in the Middle ages or that there are punishments other than the death penalty, that would be enough to put an end to this machine.

By his inability to judge or interfere, and by the fact that at the end of the story he actually runs away from the island, back to his safe surroundings, and does not want to take two people who are trying to save their own lives by getting on his boat with him, he proves that the colonising subject is actually himself. He is being colonised by his prejudices, while the colonised subject remains imprisoned in his "otherness," without getting the chance to show himself as a differentiated self (Šuvaković 2011: 552). This would seem to answer the question of the potential of a body to serve as a common identity cross-culturally and trans-historically with a categorical no. Yet we must remember that we are talking about Kafka and cannot take anything for granted, as is evinced by the fact that in one of the previous versions of the story the traveler becomes a dog in the end.

There is another reason for which it is interesting that Judith Butler should connect this narrative with Foucault's theory, and that is the fact that the bodies in this story are those of prisoners. As Butler says,

> in the context of prisoners, Foucault writes, the strategy has not been to enforce a repression of their criminal impulse, but to compel their bodies to signify the prohibitive law as their manifest essence, style, and necessity.
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> BUTLER 1989: 605

For Foucault, bodies are involved in the political field; they are there to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies. With regard to the latter, the connection between this story and performance art is of particular significance in the field of body limits. In the end, the officer in charge of executions who demonstrates the use of the machine releases the prisoner and transforms himself into the "performer." That is one of the key characteristics of performance art—a live event in which the author, who is at the same time the performer, performs in front of an audience. However, in the case of the penal colony, there is no more audience. Executions formerly had huge audiences; they were quite popular. Here, however, there is only one traveler, an explorer, who was expected to judge the validity of the machine. The officer subjects his body to the inscription "Be righteous/rightful." As there is no transmission of the punishment in a symbolic sense, but the punishment is at the same time the broken rule itself, the officer operating the machine eventually becomes the one subjected to it.

No matter who is the one to be punished, there is no punishment without a body. In this case, punishment is not a set of conventional activities which make the body suffer the consequences of its actions, rather the rule is inscribed onto the body itself. The rule is the punishment. There is no other

punishment apart from this performance of the broken rule. With this machine, death, the ultimate delimitation of the body, becomes a performance.

We will continue with examples from performing studies, particularly the body in performance art, because this post-disciplinary[1] practice, in which the human body is in the central position, (its vulnerable, violent, ideological, erotic, sacred or self-forming reality) can be taken as a symptom or cultural sample for examination. Examining the body in performance art began in the 1960s and 1970s, and then developed together with the development of cultural studies, gender studies and feminist, lesbian and queer theories. We will present performance art as a practice in which limits between the material and the "mimetic" body[2] tend to disappear, which becomes manifest when we examine specific bodily problems such as pain.

3 Body and Pain

We will examine pain from the perspective of body limits. In performance art, the question of pain is crucial in order to diminish the painful effects of the dual position of the body being simultaneously "real" and "performing." It is well-known that John L. Austin, in *How to Do Things with Words* (1976), has presented his famous theory of "performatives" that could, for this occasion, be summarised in the claim "to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it." (Austin 1976: 6) Accordingly, he rejected the possibility of real performatives in the theatre: "a performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy." (Austin 1976: 22) In contemporary performing arts theory, however, Austin's classical speech act is expanded to the domain of the visual, i.e. the physical and bodily act, the graphic act, the gesture etc.—in short, non-verbal yet still performative acts.

> As in the classic performative, where 'utterance is neither truthful nor untruthful', we could extend this assertion by paraphrasing Austin and say that to delineate the erasure (in the appropriate circumstances, i.e. in

1 The idea of post-disciplinarity implies a method that overcomes former division into academic disciplines.

2 In this context we use the term "mimetic" body to mark a difference between classical theatrical situation, where the actor's body never fully becomes the character's body, and performance art where the duality between performing body and body itself often disappears.

> direct action) is not to *describe* their doing [by delineating their doing in order to produce a *corpographic* image of the erasure (and thus utter it)], but it is to do it.
>
> MILOHNIĆ 2005

As Aldo Milohnić would argue, Austin's theatre is a classical *literary* theatre, while *performing* theatre dissolves the distance between an act performed on the stage and "reality."

This leads us to the question of the mimesis of pain and the dual nature of pain itself, conditioned at the same time by nature and culture, physiology and acquired social impulses, which in turn brings us to the connection of the "activity" which is causing pain with other social narratives in which the body "suffers."

The physical presence of a living body traditionally determines one of the main features of performance art. The problem with a living body in that situation is that it is always simultaneously the performance artist's body and a simple body in itself. This duality has always accompanied the performing body. Even in the most mimetic forms of modern Western theatre, a performer's body never totally becomes the body of the character he or she is playing. The most obvious and most extreme example, as Auslander (1997: 90) induces, is the death of a character on stage, which is never or almost never, at the same time, the death of an actor, or the death of his body. The actor/performer is turning his or her body into a representation of the condition of fight, pleasure, death, pain. In performance art, however, there is no such duality of the body that is representing pain and that is suffering pain. Pain is "real" in a physical and not artistic way (Jovićević and Vujanović 2007: 103).

However, the lost duality of the body, which represents and suffers pain, does not erase the duality inside pain itself. David Morris, upon considering the culturally conditioned notion of pain, suggests a bio-cultural model for understanding it, which points out that pain is always biological and always cultural. There is no pain without neurotransmitters, cell receptors and other biological bases. But there is also no pain, except with new-borns, that is not mediated by a conscious or unconscious process of learning that comes from culture (Moris 2008: 161).

4 Body Limits

Finally, we come to the question of limits in performance art. Performance art is based on changing the situation, which is physical and often based on

a performer's self-transformation. Transformations can be either verbal or indeed discursive. They are temporary and partial, however some surgical and permanent transformations test the limits. The author/performer performs actions that involve his or her own body or invites others to perform actions on his/her body. The inevitable physicality of the body, operating the body as artistic material, invites certain meta-commentary and tests the body in terms of its limits. Performance art, in its history so far, has had to accept that some insurmountable limits of the body are not beyond practical or reasonable manipulation, such as the death of the body. Unchangeable body limits can be also regarded as physiological laws, e.g. you cannot make the liver take over the function of the lungs, or produce enzymes produced by adrenal glands, except perhaps after serious surgical or bio-chemical modifications. Other body limits connected to their performances and cultural limits, such as appearance, shape or form, gender and the distinction between body and machine, are transformable and artists do not hesitate to break socially accepted limits of the body, turning them into live acts performed in front of an audience.

One body limit, which is very much culturally determined, is the untouchable division of the internal and external part of the body. Performance art not only includes external, visible parts of the body, but also the micro world of the inner organs that are approached with a medical technology that allows their examination.[3] The body is exposed in its external part (naked body) and its internal part (the womb, for example). This is not only a question of body limits, but also of the limits of our ability to perceive the body: we only know about its interior through such discursive formations as the names of organs, their structure, their hierarchy and their order, which creates the harmony of their mutual interaction while they all create the organism together. Performance art opposes the taboo of the untouchable and the "unopenness" of the body towards its interior. Contrary to the solid notion of the body as a complete, closed unit, performance art brings about the vision of a grotesque body, the interior of which becomes visible, the body that is a process, a formation, unlike the classic stable, complete and closed body. The grotesque, inverted perspective of high and low, presents the social and political through the material.

3 For example, Stelarc, an Australian performance artist, used endoscopic techniques to show a sculpture which was made for the inside of his stomach, or he just showed voids in between organs. As Auslander (1997) explains in the chapter 'The surgical self. Body alteration and identity', a trend involving the performance of the medical body appeared within performance art in the 1990s. The most famous and most extreme examples are the French performance and multi-media artist Orlan, who contextualised plastic surgery for her performance, and Kate Bornstein, who used her postoperative, transsexual body in her performances (Auslander 1997: 127). However, other artists also used medical techniques for the examination of internal organs as the object of their performances.

Another important aspect of the border between high and low relates to the materiality of the body and the division between body and mind, which was also a concern of Foucault's: he presents the soul as just another inscription onto the body surface that creates its interior. The low physical processes produce excrement and take away time needed for artistic production, which is of course also in the field of the sublime possibilities of the body. This aspect of the body was used in the surgical performance by the French performing artist Orlan, when she read the passage from Artaud in which he calculates how many times a poet has to chew his food and perform other physical activities in order to keep his body in good condition so that he is able to write poetry. There is an entire sequence of very low, primitive activities the body has to deal with in order to sustain itself (breathing, sleeping, eating), yet at the same time, these activities provide amazing potential for creating. The turnaround introduced by performance art consisted in the levelling of what is considered "low" about a body in the light of its creative potential.

To conclude we will briefly point out to what extent physicality and its presupposed limits are culturally conditioned through the paradigm change that occurs with the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Postmodernism brings a change in the perception of the space of art and culture. A modernist artist could still believe that ideological and cultural codes can be transcended or destroyed, while a postmodernist artist recognises that he has to operate within codes determined in the field of culture. When applied to the question of the body, this means that in postmodernist artistic practice the body would be perceived as a discursive product coded in an ideological way, which could become a space for deconstruction and reconstruction of given codes. The modernist belief that limits can be transcended no longer exists; there is only a postmodern playing within the limits. Or, as Auslander would put it:

> A body that is understood to be discursively produced and ideologically encoded can also be seen as a site of resistance where hegemonic discourses and codings can be exposed, deconstructed, and, perhaps, rewritten.
>
> AUSLANDER 1997: 140

5 Conclusion

We began this certainly non-exhaustive examination of body limits with the idea that the body is determined by its discursive surroundings, that it remains on the one hand an anatomic machine, as Foucault would describe its pure physical existence, and on the other hand an element of social control, i.e.

through the roles it plays, which are not just based on pure mechanics and the body's ability to perform certain actions, but also on certain regulating features, such as to be clean or dirty, beautiful or ugly. The problematic was not situated in this dual positioning of the body, but in Foucault's denying of the universality of the body and giving universality only to cultural inscriptions. The ontological delimitation of what is pre-cultural, or whether there is a pre-cultural substance of the body as opposed to its cultural meaning remains unresolved. Butler claims that for Foucault

> not only that the body constitutes the material surface preconditional to history, but that the deregulation and subversion of given regimes of power are effected by the body's resistance against the workings of history itself.
>
> BUTLER 1989: 607

Only the space in which we can question our body limits appears to be the space of freedom. Only here we can, for the first time, become aware of limits, such as in performance art (through playing different roles, the construction of genders, plastic surgery and cyber identities), where the question not only of material, but also of social, ethical and sexual body limits arises and their unfounded, arbitrary character manifests itself; this seems to be the freedom that Judith Butler gives the body, when she puts it in a position of power, the power to represent the limit for its cultural constructions. Further exploration of this question is still to be done.

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CHAPTER 4

Ritualised Corporeality in Contemporary Croatian Art

Josip Zanki

Abstract

The performance of Tomislav Gotovac "I love you Zagreb," performed at Zagreb's Republic Square in 1981, signifies the commencement of using the artist's body as both subject and object in the work of art in this region.

After a period of exploring body art practices in the eighties and nineties, in Croatian contemporary art the relation towards the body started to be redefined both through interdisciplinary art practices as well as through research processes of artists themselves. This process corresponds to developments in world art, reinforcing radical body practices, as they can be found in the works of Orlan, Oleg Kulik or Ron Athey.

Three artists' works are particularly important for the following approach to rethinking the body within contemporary theory: Maja Rozman, Marko Marković and Martina Mezak.

The article will attempt to determine and explain the potential connection of awareness, interaction, initiation and body, as can be found in traditional and contemporary art in Croatia.

The attitude of artists towards their own physical body has been changing over time, conditioned by various cultural frameworks. The aim of this essay is to analyse contemporary art in Croatia, which is based on the redefinition of the artist's body or indeed of the observer of the work of art. I will also illustrate the connection between ritual actions and performance and interactive installations in the works of Maja Rožman, Vladimir Dodig Trokut, Marjan Crtalić, Marko Marković and Martina Mezak. In the twentieth century, defining body as an art tool, but also as a work of art per se, culminated within the performance medium in which the artist, not producing a work of art anymore, "turned his/her body towards the viewer" (Belting 2010: 288).[1] The path was defined by the modern and industrial revolution, by enabling a technical

1 All citations from Belting are the author's translation from the Croatian edition of *Kraj povijesti umjetnosti*.

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reproduction of a work of art. The purpose of a work of art was now to be an aesthetic object accessible to all.

Walter Benjamin says:

> The mass is a matrix from which currently all customary responses to works of art are springing newborn. Quantity has now become quality: the very much greater masses of participants have produced a changed kind of participation.
>
> BENJAMIN 2008: 32

The ritual character of a work of art, as well as its aura that, according to Walter Benjamin, disappeared in the age of mechanical reproduction and modernism (Benjamin 2008: 9), was in time replaced by the physical body as a tool of the artist. In 1960, twenty-four years after Benjamin's essay, Yves Klein created *Anthropometries*, a work based on imprinting naked female bodies on canvas, which had been covered in blue paint (monochrome). During the performance and the imprinting process Yves Klein was imparting the instructions, thus changing the concept of the artist's tool. The most important incentives for a change in the attitude towards the body definitely came about through classic anthropological research into cultures of the *others*, especially through research done on what we call *shamanic* and *totemic* practices in the so-called primitive societies; from Bronislaw Malinowski's research in the Trobriand Islands in 1918, Margaret Mead's research in Samoa in 1924 and Claude Levi Strauss's research in Brazil in 1935.[2]

The world of the romanticised savage, which we came to know in Huxley's novel *Brave New World* in 1935, disappeared during the time which M. Hardt and A. Negri defined as *biopolitics* in their book *Empire* (2000). It is not just about replacing the mode of production defined by the assembly line (Fordist society) with production processes defined and controlled by computer programmes, but also about creating new forms of industry based on leisure, such as film, computers and the entertainment industry (Hardt and Negri 2000). The world of the romanticised savage was replaced with the age of a completely organised reality and spectacle, described by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (2002). Writing about the antimoderns, Bruno Latour does not only introduce the concept of the world, but also defines postmodern society:

2 Descriptions of the rituals and customs of the societies founded on totemic norms directly inspired this new artistic poetics. Body as such became the tool of a work of art, just like it is the tool of the shaman in communication with the divine.

> The antimoderns firmly believe that the West has rationalized and disenchanted the world, that it has truly peopled the social with cold and rational monsters which saturate all of space, that it has definitely transformed the pre-modern cosmos into a mechanical interaction of pure matters.
>
> LATOUR 1993: 123

It is precisely this world of rational monsters where new artistic practices, which I have covered in my research, appear. In my work I have used the statements of the artists themselves, their interviews published in the newspapers and theoretical texts that deal with contemporary art as well as exhibition reviews.[3]

After the period of Body Art, which started with the works of Viennese Actionists in 1965, and the new shamanism, which culminated in Joseph Beuys' performance *I like America, America likes me* in 1974, the attitude towards the body in art began to change. Radical body practice inspired by science, plastic surgery and rituals, such as in the works of Mireille Suzanne Francette Porte known as Orlan, Oleg Kulik, Ron Athey and Stelios Arcadious known as Stelarc,[4] established itself in the postmodern era. The relationship between the physical body in contemporary art and theories of ritual can be analysed through various examples.

According to his own statement, the works of Vladimir Dodig Trokut are not only based on the folk tradition of witchcraft and herbal medicine of central Bosnia, Dalmatia and Dalmatian Zagora, but also on manipulations, fabrications and interpretations of those traditions by the author himself. Vladimir Dodig Trokut became known to the general public after the famous action of painting the Peristyle, by the Red Peristyle Group in 1968, as one of the first public art performances in Yugoslavia. Although it has never been proven that he actually participated in that performance, Vladimir Dodig Trokut presents himself as a member of the fraction of the group. The majority of sculptures, installations and ambient art in Vladimir Dodig Trokut's artistic practice have

3 I have also referred, in various publications, to comparative examples from different cultures, covering the *anthropology of experience* or the *theories of ritual*.

4 With a number of plastic surgeries French artist Orlan tried to make her face resemble the *proportions of the face* of Botticelli's Venus. Russian artist Oleg Kulik is best known for his performances in which he takes over the character of a dog. The artist barks, bites and walks on all fours and *simulates* intercourse with a dog. In his performances, British artist Ron Athey sprays audience with blood, staples *his own testicles* to a wooden base and pulls the American flag out of his anus. Australian artist Stelarc examines the relationship between man and the possibility of future evolution. In his most famous work, an artificially created ear made of human tissue was surgically implanted into his arm.

been created as a part of this spiritual tradition and unexplored and undervalued heritage.

According to him, his starting point is a spiritual alchemy through which discarded or used everyday objects were transformed into works of art. Very often he uses ancient pastoral or alchemical materials such as wax, wood, shells, wool, hair, glass and iron. Through the act of transmutation, as the artist calls it, the objects experience their own negation and transform themselves into a different value, i.e. a body-subject that is able to bear a process of metamorphosis. In the installation *Sarcophagus of Joan of Arc*, created for an extensive exhibition of New Croatian Art, which was curated by art historian Igor Zidić in 1993 and held at Modern Gallery in Zagreb, the artist shows his vision of the *sarcophagus of lost love*. The work is dedicated to his never-forgotten ex-girlfriend Ivana. For Vladimir Dodig Trokut the sarcophagus represents the initiation site of a cleansing of emotions, pain and death, which leads to a state of higher consciousness. The sarcophagus represents a central place in the rituals of passage, called liminality, transition and initiation. It is the mythological adventure of the hero, a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation—initiation—return (Campbell 2008: 23). The installation is composed of an empty, rustic wooden chest made of irregular, construction planks very roughly nailed together with large nails. The author's Joan of Arc also does not exist as a physical body any more, only the sarcophagus, empty and without the body, remains, which preserves the essence of love, or maybe it was the initiation site. *The magic box* into which Joan of Arc, just like the god Osiris, entered, only to wake up as a changed being.

Upon returning, she joins the real world, is incorporated into society (Turner 1969), now giving it a new quality. The installation *Sarcophagus of Joan of Arc*, as well as a number of Vladimir Dodig Trokut's other works, from *Zimnica za intelektualce*[5] at Solve Exhibiton held at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb in 1984, to numerous sculptures at Wunder Camera Exhibition held at the Gallery of Extended Media in Zagreb in 2013, are based on the various states of transformation from a discarded, everyday object into a work of art. The artist thus draws upon the principle of ready-mades defined by Marcel Duchamp in 1915, who transformed everyday objects. The most famous work is *Fountain* created in 1917, composed of a urinal which Duchamp recognised as a sculpture. Such a transformation process can affect the object as well as the artist and also the onlooker.

In 2009 in Vladimir Nazor Gallery, the artist Maja Rožman made a work entitled *Directions for Rapprochement*. She was sitting naked in a completely dark gallery, which visitors were allowed to enter one by one. Through the sense of

5 Food for Winter for Intellectuals (TN).

touch, each visitor could experience the artist and her naked body, which, at the same time, represented a *social sculpture*, just as it was defined by Joseph Beuys in 1960, and according to which all of society represents a large work of art. The artist's body (sculpture) was shaped by every touch, but also by the space of darkness. The dark room itself symbolises temptation and the descent of the hero to the underworld. Campbell writes: "Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials." (Campbell 2008: 81)

This work is based on the interaction between the gallery visitor and the artwork itself. The artwork is composed of the artist's naked body and the hands of all the people who come into contact with her. According to the author, the majority of visitors approached her body very carefully, literally showing fear and confusion. Maja Rožman's naked body in Vladimir Nazor Gallery represented a spiritual and aesthetic object in the consecrated space that the gallery had been transformed into. The gallery visitor felt uncomfortable in his/her own body and s/he was placed in this *ritual of touch* like the hero placed in the way of temptation.

Marijan Crtalić creates artworks using his own skin. This author has been present on the Croatian art scene for quite a number of years. He is known for a number of provocative video works and public performance actions. He often refers to his own body and sexuality, questioning the line between the normal state of mind and madness, as well as the line between auto-eroticism, fetishism and nihilism. From his earliest childhood, Marijan Crtalić has been recovering various archaeological artefacts from the Kupa River, ranging in origin from Celtic times to the time of the Roman City of Siscia. In addition to these items, the artist has also been collecting various objects from consumerist everyday life, from plastic reptiles to superhero figures. His huge collection is neither arranged nor catalogued, but it occupies each and every part of his birth house in Sisak. The author uses the same working principle in all the media he works with. As he occupies the space with archaeological objects, he also uses his own body as a medium to create, but also to discover new spaces. One example of this is when for a period of over four years, the artist collected the sebum from his own skin every morning, using it to create the sculpture titled *Living Dead* (*Globalization of the Subconscious*).

After four years he collected an enviable amount of hair, water and sebum residue, now the size of a tennis ball. The material used in the process of creating the sculpture is a "greenish brown mud that could easily cover the entire scalp" (Crtalić cited in Ostojić 2009). After daily recording of the amount of sebum, he also made a documentary that shows the very act of creating the ball. The belief in wizards, witches or *shamans*, i.e. people with supernatural

abilities, runs through cultures in different parts of the world. We are familiar with the dances and rituals in which the souls of these *holy people* take on animal forms in order to find answers by using their powers to guide them through the other worlds (Marjanić 2007). In his work, Marijan Crtalić uses elements of shamanic practices transformed into the language of contemporary art. The creation of many of his artworks was aided by his being in a state of shamanic trance, which he would achieve through the use of traditional narcotics or the so-called magical plants, such as henbane.[6] Discussing the difference between the aesthetic and the intellectual, as well as the artist's work, Victor Turner claims: "The artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object he is producing that they merge directly into it." (Turner 1986: 38)

Marijan Crtalić's work does not only directly merge with his thoughts, but in the case of the *Living Dead* it also represents a part of his body. In a conversation I had with the artist he often made references to the state of transition from one reality to another, the transformation of the body, but also to the transformational power of sexual energy. In his dreams, visions and hallucinations, the author often identified himself with semen, which allowed him the possibility of symbolically entering the female vagina. The sebum from his scalp, which he had been collecting for years, represents the semen of his extended consciousness, but also the multiplication of the author's physical body into an alchemical material. In that way Crtalić makes reference to Joseph Beuys' famous story of the plane crash during the Second World War (Denegri 2003). After the crash, Beuys ended up among the shamans of Crimea who nursed him back to health using fat. This was precisely the material used as one of the basic elements of Beuys' creative principle, along with felt. Unlike Beuys, who obtained fat as a material for creating art from shamans, Marijan Crtalić obtained it from his own body. The relationship between the aestheticised male body and folklore is especially visible in *Sitni vez,*[7] a performance by Marko Marković. This artist is known for his way of expression through politically subversive performances and happenings, which often include marginal body art practices, such as wounding, cutting and even self-cannibalism. The work was premiered at My Country, Štaglinec Performance Festival in 2011.

6 When a doctor once asked him "why did he take henbane," Marijan Crtalić replied that he took it for scientific reasons. To which the doctor greeted him with "Good evening to you, Castaneda."

7 In Croatian, the expression Sitni vez can mean both 'fine embroidery' and 'tiny-knit dance' (TN).

The artist used a sewing needle to stitch traditional Slavonian embroidery onto his skin. During *Sitni vez* performance a band is playing tamburica.[8]

Marko Marković plays with the Balkan stereotype, using the figure of a man who can endure great pain and at the same time be sensual and romantic. The symbol of embroidery stitching comes from a traditional culture. Embroidery used to be done in the houses of girls who were preparing for marriage. After marrying, the embroidery would be used to decorate pillowcases, sheets and bedspreads. The motifs are mostly related to the symbol of the bedroom in which the bride would bring her virginity and bring fertility to the future family. Future brides would keep their embroidered work in chests or trunks, which they would then bring into their new home as a dowry. In Ukrainian culture, one would put an embroidered scarf under the child's pillow at birth. That scarf adorned the house in which the person lived, and after death it would be put under the person's pillow, thus following him/her into the afterlife in heaven.

Marko Marković sews embroidery on his skin. By perforating his skin, the artist refers to the world of savages, as in initiation rituals of transition from the world of boys to the world of men. There are such examples in a myriad of cultures. When writing about the Aboriginal ritual that marks the transition from boy to "young man," Mircea Eliade says: "Circumcision is practiced with a stone knife because it was thus that their ancestors taught them to do" (Eliade 2007: 21). Besides referring to embroidery, the expression *Sitni vez* also describes a special method of playing folk instruments such as the accordion or *tamburica*, in the form of solos. The artist Marko Marković is spilling his own blood accompanied by the tiny-knit *tamburica* playing style. He uses needles to embroider the symbol of traditional culture and the ritual of transition on his chest.

Yoni, an installation by Martina Mezak, exhibited at the Temple Exhibition, Prsten Gallery, Croatian Association of Artists in 2009, refers to the initiation rituals from different shamanic, religious and alternative practices. *Yoni* in Sanskrit means the divine passage, personified in the physical world through the vagina. The interactive installation was composed of a sculpture in the shape of *vesica piscis* that in various traditions represents an almond, vulva, fish, Mother of God and the Trinity. The installation was covered in red plush, and at the end of the sculpture was the artist's video work. The scene showed the artist, Martina Mezak, sitting, naked, and drinking from the chalice, referring thus to the legend of the Holy Grail. The form of *vesica piscis* or author's vulva thus became the hall of the Fisher King, who keeps the secret of the Holy Grail.

8 Traditional Croatian string instrument.

Like in Wagner's opera *Parsifal*, one enters the initiation hall with a pure heart, free from Kundry's curse. The artist made the following statement about her work:

> The work is about the relationships between polarities (and their uniting, neutralising) in the process of their unifying. In the installation this union is discerned through the relationship between the work and its participants.
>
> MEZAK 2009

On the difference in understanding the symbol in different spiritual practices the author explains that in Christianity *vesica* is shown vertically, like *mandorla* (lat. 'almond'), and then it serves as the frame for Christ in Majesty or for the Last Judgment (Mezak 2009). It is the symbol of the passage between heaven and earth. In other mythologies, the symbol of *vesica* usually refers to a completely different type of passage, i.e. the birth canal.

Nevertheless in her theoretical assumptions, the author remained within the dualistic concept of thought. She based her assumptions on active and passive forces and on the symbols of divine passage to spiritual levels. Incorporated into this concept is the actual material passage through which children come into the world. The work contains several important elements. It consists of the internal experience of the observer who enters the installation and also the author's intention to build a temple within the gallery space. In the form of secret idea, the temple is dedicated to one person's vagina, and that person is the author Martina Mezak herself. Using her sexual and reproductive organ, Mezak builds a temple which one day the Knight of the Grail will make pilgrimage to and discover the secret of eternal life. Thus the artist magically copulates with every visitor who enters the installation, toasts him/her in the *video image*, and foretells what awaits him/her at the end of the journey.

Martina Mezak's work contains the symbols of initiation. It is the transition from one state to the other, transition from one body to the other, or journey, pilgrimage to a holy place, after which nothing remains the same. In her work, Martina Mezak certainly draws upon symbols and rituals of the transition ceremonies. Every visitor who enters the darkness, similar to one who makes his way to the top of a mountain, passes through a shady forest, waits in the deep cave chambers or enters Mezak's plush form, has no idea of what awaits him/her at the end of the road. First s/he can face his/her own fear, then him/herself and in the end his/her own physical body. According to the author, the shape of installation is "like a temple as a place of encounter and passage between various levels" (Mezak 2009). The visitor, whose being had

been changed, would share the experience of this work "with the community s/he came from" (Campbell 2008).[9] The artists Vladimir Dodig Trokut, Maja Rožman, Marijan Crtalić, Marko Marković and Martina Mezak use their bodies to create new uncanny worlds. The body is always a tool, be it as a part, like a hand, or as a whole. The artist's energy only is able to transform the order of reality and create the composition of what we call a work of art—because a wooden trunk, a naked female body, embroidery on someone's chest and a huge plush vulva call for lust, secret instincts, protection and the return to a mother's tender care. Illusions are being abolished by the purity of intention which the road follows. One thing that all recipients of the revelation through physical and metaphysical transformation of the body have in common is that their lives are irrevocably changed, regardless of whether they return to their everyday life or traverse to unstable mental conditions. In contemporary art, the relationship towards the body also becomes part of a *pseudoworld*. Guy Debord defined it in his book *The Society of the Spectacle*: Fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudoworld that can only be looked at (Debord 2002: 1). Fragmented reality creates an improved visual perception, which can adopt more visual contents, such as in the Middle Ages, scenes on altarpieces were the only visual world besides nature and the landscape.

The world of images transformed all of reality, becoming more trivial, just like its heroes. Back in the seventies, Andy Warhol said that "in the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes."[10] Social networks have enabled complete exposure of privacy, transforming it into a spectacular series of images. At the same time, this privacy is stylised in such a way that it becomes a completely fictional, parallel second life, similar to the computer game *Second Life*. In such a society Debord defined culture in the following words: "In the struggle between tradition and innovation, which is the basic theme of internal cultural development in historical societies, innovation always wins." (Debord 2002: 8) Precisely this idea of innovation and progress is one of the foundations of modernism, which in postmodernism was pushed to the absurd.

The last exhibition that shocked the public with its innovativeness was the exhibition of British art called *Sensation*, organised under the patronage of Charles Saatchi[11] in 1997. This exhibition also showed Damien Hirst's

9 Translation from the Croatian edition of the book (TN).

10 Programme for a 1968 exhibition of his work at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden.

11 Charles Saatchi became famous thanks to the marketing campaign for the conservative politician Margaret Thatcher which featured posters showing workers standing in line,

installation which consisted of a shark in formaldehyde, or the famous *My Bed* by Tracey Emin, on which one could see semen stains. There are two reasons why this exhibition was the last one that truly shocked the public. The first reason is because within western culture there is a complete saturation of sensations based on questioning the body, sexuality or death.

The second reason is that after 2000, the transfer of information was exponentially accelerated by the use of the Internet. The speed of information transfer itself led to limitless distribution of shocking images and films into almost every home. This produced indifference towards any form of physically explicit and extravagant display, and on the other hand, it opened up new processes in artistic practices based on the body as a tool. Stelarc thus uses the Internet to establish communication with *bionic* parts of his body, and Orlan to broadcast plastic surgeries. Croatian artists do not take extreme body practices as their objective or platform; they use them as a part of an already constructed artistic language and as a means of communication with the audience, just as they use video or photography. The works of Vladimir Dodig Trokut, Maja Rožman, Marijan Crtalić, Marko Marković and Martina Mezak are not based on ideas of innovation, progress or breach of tradition. The artists are aware that sensation is an already exhausted form. They are also aware that "the artwork is a specific entity that enables its own form of storytelling: interpretation." (Belting 2010: 25) Their works are based on the fact of experience with only one interpretation, and that is the change of consciousness of the artist or of the observer of the work. That change happens through a direct physical experience of Vladimir Dodig Trokut's sarcophagus, Maja Rožman's body, Marijan Crtalić's secretions, Marko Marković's skin perforations and Martina Mezak's vulva.

This direct experience is precisely what represents the difference in relation to the dominant twentieth-century conception of aesthetic experience, and that, in itself, is a formalist one (cf. Crowther 1993: 31). According to Paul Crowther (1993: 31), formalism arises when we perceive a painting in relation to its qualities of line and colour and their interrelations, rather than in relation to the content which those lines and colours represent. Artworks based on ritual practices do not only create a relationship with the content, but also with the personal inner experience of both the artist and the observer.

with a cynical slogan above "Labour Isn't Working." However, precisely the victory of Margaret Thatcher in the elections led not only to the loss of jobs, but also to the disappearance of largest mining unions, privatisation of water resources and huge class differences in the British society.

In these works, formalism has been completely rejected, ceding its place to the experience of *embodiment* and physical presence in the ritual act. The above given examples lead to the conclusion that contemporary Croatian art questions and redefines relationships between bodies and ritual practices, through media sculptures, installations, performances and interactive installations. Unlike in Modernism, when due to its technical revolution the artwork lost its romantic aspect defined by the *divine inspiration* of the artist, the postmodern processes imposed new body-rooted spiritual references on the act of creation and the work of art.

Contemporary media practices, within which these relationships are being questioned, are much simpler and more open than the ones in so-called traditional media and social forms of creating works of art. The artistic act has been turned into the *ritual of transformation* of the artist him/herself and his/her work taking the shape of an object or artist's body as well as all those who observe and experience it through direct contact. This changes the emotional states and mental images of what art *may or may not be.*

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PART 2

The Act of Writing

CHAPTER 5

Body and Awareness as Reflected in the Wife of Bath: A Historical Study Based on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Lidija Štrmelj

Abstract

The Wife of Bath is one of the best known and most remarkable of Chaucer's characters in the Canterbury Tales. What makes her so distinct and different from all others is not the story she retells to the audience but her awareness of her own body, as clearly manifested in the Prologue of her tale.

In this article we highlight some of the aspects of this awareness in order to elicit an answer to the question in what way awareness based on bodily experience has changed over the centuries, or whether it has changed at all.

First some of the Wife's characteristic ideas, attitudes and feelings will be pointed out and then illustrated with selected quotations from the text. Second we will elaborate on the main features of her body awareness as they determine her as a self-conscious agent within society and compare them to those of modern women within Western culture. In this context, concerning the matter of sexuality, we will refer to Marcuse's philosophical essay *Eros and Civilization*, based on Freud's theory.

1 Introduction

Having lived in the fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer, in his Canterbury Tales, offers interesting views for the current gender discourse on literary criticism. We find that the Wife[1] of Bath possesses and expresses an awareness of femininity, based on her personal experience, more typical of modern women than of mediaeval. In this essay we aim to highlight some of the aspects inherent in this awareness in order to elicit an answer to the question in what way awareness based on bodily experience has changed over the centuries, or whether it has changed essentially at all.

The storyline of the Canterbury Tales is well known. On a spring day a group of twenty-nine pilgrims gather in an inn in Southwark, near London, all set

1 The word *wife* in Middle English meant both 'wife' and, simply, 'woman'.

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to go to Canterbury the next day and visit the shrine of Thomas Becket, as we read in the General Prologue. Very soon after they have been made comfortable, they start a conversation and agree to entertain themselves on the way to Canterbury and back by retelling stories. The best story-teller is to be rewarded with supper, paid for by the other companions. The pilgrims are all from different walks of life and represent a cross section of English feudal society based on its typical, tripartite hierarchical structure: aristocracy at the top, the masses at the bottom, and the new urban class in the middle. A number of the pilgrims belong to the clergy and thus represent a strata of society connected to the most powerful organisation within society at the time, the Church, which had overall importance in the lives of people of all social backgrounds. In the General Prologue, Chaucer appeared as an observer, who found himself in the inn with the other pilgrims, and who, sitting aside, described the outlook and behaviour of each of them, before he himself joined the company.

From about thirty lines dedicated to the Wife of Bath in the Prologue, we do not learn much about her: only that she was trained as a weaver, coming from a district[2] which was known for cloth-making, and, as a professional, paid very much attention to every detail of her garment, which was rich and of the finest texture. Chaucer also mentioned two details that might have had a certain influence on her future life, as will be analysed further down: that her face was "bold and fair" (460),[3] and that in company she was a pleasant and enjoyable person since she "laughed and talked a lot" (476). Further on, we find out that she had made numerous pilgrimages in England and abroad, as was then the custom, and thus visited Boulogne, Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Cologne, Rome and even Jerusalem three times. From this information we would conclude that the Wife of Bath was just a typical, middle-class, mediaeval woman if our attention was not drawn to quite an interesting remark telling us she was "all her life a worthy woman, having five husbands" (461f.). Five husbands is an impressive number, judging even by today's standards. Such a number poses certain questions such as: How was it possible? How was a commoner, a deeply religious woman able to marry so often when we know that English mediaeval culture was based on Christian religion and tradition which was not very open to the notion of multiple marriages? The Wife of Bath's Prologue is very revealing in many aspects. Here, she alone, in a combined form of debate and confession, skilfully interweaves general reflections on marriage with her own memories.

2 I.e. the district of Bath.

3 Abbreviated Modern English translation, adapted for this occasion, done by the author of the essay, on the basis of Chaucer (1965a).

In the following two chapters we shall point out some of her most interesting ideas, attitudes and feelings, and illustrate them with selected quotations from the text since the language of the Wife, colourful and full of humour, contributes to a better understanding of her thoughts and behaviour. Generally speaking, her narration is very convincing not only because of her particular choice of words, but because it is full of rhetorical questions, metaphors, allusions, proverbs and exclamations.

Further on, in the discussion, we shall try to elaborate the main features of her body awareness and compare them to those of modern women, at least within Western culture. However, it must be clearly stated that it is not possible to draw firm and definite conclusions about the topic, primarily because the essay is based on two different subjects of research. On the one hand, there is a work of literature which is always the product of the author's imagination (although it cannot be excluded that Chaucer might have had actual people in mind when creating his characters), and on the other hand there is a study of present-day women's body awareness, based on pure, and not systematic, observation. Thus, the article is not supported by precise and exact scientific (psychological) methods, such as experiments, questionnaires, scales and so on. Indeed, what psychological techniques could we use in the historical study of female personality, taking as a starting point the period of the late fourteenth century? What we know about that period, or rather what we can assume, is based mostly on contemporary popular literature, and it is, by definition, subjective. In view of this fact, this essay simply aims to better understand the topic from a diachronic perspective.

In the elaboration of the topic, we shall also, mostly in the matter of sexuality, refer to Marcuse's philosophical essay *Eros and Civilization* (1966). We find it useful for the very reason mentioned by Marcuse himself in the Preface to the First Edition: "The traditional borderlines between psychology on the one side and political and social philosophy on the other have been made obsolete by the condition of man in the present era."

2 Reflections on Marriage

From the very beginning of the Prologue it becomes clear that the main occupation of the Wife of Bath is marriage and marital sexual love. Since she is a mediaeval woman, one cannot expect her to speak about her merry life before marriage although Chaucer gives a hint about it in the General Prologue, mentioning her "other company in youth" (463), but immediately afterwards, adds that there is no need to talk about it at that moment.

In her typically direct and matter-of-fact style the Wife of Bath starts her narration with the claim, quite paradoxical in her case, that marriage is nothing but extreme sadness. She seems to be completely convinced of its truth since her own experience and knowledge had proved it: "Experience, even if no other authority / Were in this world, would be good enough for me / To speak of the woe that is in marriage" (1–3).[4]

However, having read just a few more lines, one discovers that her disturbing complaints about the pain she has suffered in marriage should not be taken seriously since it turns out that she has enjoyed marriage regardless of all the trouble she has had with her five husbands. Otherwise, she would not gratefully declare, "Blessed be God that I have wedded five [...]" (43), and a little later, with solemnity, "I have studied five husbands. / Welcome to the sixth, whenever he is ready!" (44f.)

But the Wife of Bath is aware of the world in which she lives. She knows that many people, as Christians, deny the validity of so many marriages, and therefore she tries to defend herself against all accusations. So she puts a serious question to the audience: "How many could she [a woman] have in marriage?" (23), and, before anyone can answer, adds: "Yet I have never heard in all my life / An explanation of that number" (24f.). Indeed, she has tried to find the answer in the supreme authority, the Bible, but has found none. What she has found there is: "God told us to increase and multiply" (28), and this she understands very well and accepts with all her heart. She finds, in the Bible, many other fragments on marriage and virginity, but, interestingly, after she had discussed them at great length, all of them seem to favour of her personal stance. In her opinion, the most instructive, and therefore worthy of remembering, are the examples of biblical figures whose behaviour fit into her own lifestyle, such as, for example, Lamech, the first man mentioned in the Bible as having two wives, as well as Abraham and Jacob, for the same reason. However, her favourite is King Solomon, who had seven hundred wives and yet was considered very wise. She admires him for his potency, which was, according to her, a real blessing, and exclaims: "What a gift of God he had with all his wives!" (39) She believes that his wives give him energy and strength, refreshing him very often, and the very thought of him makes her sigh: "Would God it were allowed to me / to be refreshed half so often as he!" (37f.). Further on, she feels that she can rely on Saint Paul, the first of the apostles, who, aware of the needs of the body, did not dare to command virginity, but only recommended it, and wrote in one of his Epistles: "It is better to be married than to burn" (52). Here

4 The Modern English translation is taken from Chaucer, Geoffrey. 1975. *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: The Wife of Bath's Tale* (ed. Sidney Lamb). Toronto: Coles Publishing Company Ltd.

he means *to burn with passion.* So, since she felt supported by these examples from the Bible, the Wife of Bath could conclude this case, saying: "[…] there is no blame / If I wed when my mate dies" (84f.).

Surprisingly, she is not ashamed of her sexual appetite, as one might assume. On the contrary, she finds it natural, providing arguments based on the very structure of the world, created and ordered by God. Therefore, she tests those who potentially might like to oppose her with the question: "Tell me […], to what end / Were the organs of generation made, / And a person so perfectly designed? / Trust to it, they were not made for nothing." (115–18) "[…] Experience tells us it is not so" (124). Actually she expected no answer, but gave one herself, completely certain in her own judgement: "I say this, that they are made for both, / That is to say, for function and for pleasure / Of generation, where we do not displease God." (126–28)

So, relying on God's plan, the Wife declares boldly that she would freely use her body in marriage, and promises without any shame that her husband could have it whenever he wanted, "both night and morning" (152). However, in return, he would pay hard for it with his own flesh. Becoming her husband, he would not be only her debtor but her slave: "I have the authority through all my life / Upon his own body, and not he" (158f.). Strangely enough, while she elaborates in detail her reflections on this topic she did not hesitate to use very vulgar expressions, such as my "instrument" (149), his blessed "instrument" (132), "both our little things" (121), and occasionally also "my belle chose" (447) in French, as was the custom in her time.

Although a passionate woman, as shown, the Wife of Bath is not irrational and knows that in the prevailing worldview she was not a saint and that she cannot boast about her situation. She believes that some people were born to live in perfect chastity, but she knows she was not one of them. Nevertheless, she is satisfied how God has created her, and wants to remain that way.

Unfortunately, life goes on and the Wife begins to perceive that she is growing old and that the best part of her life has passed. But although nostalgic for youth, she still feels very much alive, and confesses: "I will bestow the flower of all my years / In the acts and fruit of marriage" (113f.).

3 The Wife of Bath's Memories

Of all the five husbands she has had, three have been good and rich, and two have been bad and poor. Unfortunately, she was married to the good ones, who were old, while she was attractive and young. So they were only partly good,

as she sarcastically puts it: "In dried meat I never had delight" (418). Sex with them was not good, and when she thought of it, she could only laugh. However, the disgust she felt toward them did not prevent her from gaining complete control over them and their land and money. Her ability to gain control was due to the instrumentalisation of her attractiveness,[5] and then used by her as a form of torture. Besides, as a woman she had a natural talent for cheating and lying: "For half so boldly can no man / Swear and lie as a woman can" (227f.).

The tactics she applies have been tried and trusted. When she herself feels guilty about something, she starts nagging and complaining. Thus she claims she does not have clothes like her neighbours' (236f.), she is not allowed to have a friend (243–47), she is locked in the house (238), she has been falsely suspected of flirting with her husband's apprentices (303–06) and she has no money (308–10). She is lying, and what is more, she is taking a great deal of pleasure in it. When married, she would swear at her husbands and curse, never forgetting to mock their age and foolishness. Expressions, such as "Sir old fog" (235), "old Sir lecher!" (242), "wretch" (273), "evil old dotard!" (291), "old barrel, full of lies!" (302) and "Sir old fool!" (375) made up just a small part of her vocabulary. Usually, when her temper has abated, her husbands apologise, although they are guiltless, and she has got what she wanted.

Sex was just one means amongst others to achieve a goal, based on the maxim of 'no prize, no sex', since: "everything is for sale" (414); for a good prize, she could make an effort and "feign an appetite" (417). But she feels no remorse for her possessiveness, asking: "Why should I take pains to please them / Except for my own profit and pleasure?" (213f.)

Paradoxically, at the same time that she is trying to subdue her husbands, she struggles for her own independence and freedom. She feels young and needs to see other people and to be seen, and does not want to be questioned or spied on; so she swears that: "You shall not, even though you rage / Be master of my body and my property" (313f.). By her own account, it is not difficult to outwit her husbands. The only way they might have held her is through her consent.

The fourth and fifth husbands of the Wife of Bath are not old, but they are bad. In spite of that, the Wife of Bath has loved them passionately in her own way. The former was a reveller and had a mistress, and, as she was still "young and full of passion, / Stubborn and strong, and merry as a magpie" (456f.), she punished him with suspicions of her own betrayal.[6] Now she is

5 It has been already mentioned that Chaucer described her in the General Prologue as pretty *fair*.

6 The Wife of Bath herself has never tolerated male jealousy and tells her old ex-husbands: "If you have enough, no need for you to complain" (336).

the one consumed by jealousy and cannot stand it. Nevertheless, before her fourth husband dies, she has already cast an eye on a young Oxford student and begun to flirt with him. He is a handsome and desirable youth of twenty, and she is forty. And when she watches him walking behind the coffin of her late husband she "[…] thought he had a pair / Of legs and feet so clean cut and fair / That all my heart I gave to him" (597–99). She openly admits that she has loved him very much because "he was so fresh and gay in bed" (508). He himself, however, does not love her much, and a woman, the Wife of Bath believes, wants just the very one she cannot easily get.

However, her young husband begins to torture her very soon, reading, day after day, a book full of examples of evil and weak women. One day, when she becomes enraged, she tears a few sheets from the book and throws them into the fire. He, outraged, hits her so hard that she falls on the floor and becomes deaf afterwards. After the fight, they succeed in reaching an agreement, to the effect that she will gain complete control over him, the house and the land. Only then, when she has got all sovereignty in marriage, do they begin to live happily.

When her fifth husband passes away, she is not too upset. But, aware that she is ageing and that the pleasures of the body will soon pass, she declares: "The flour is gone, there is no more to say, / Now must I sell the bran as best I can; / Yet to be right married I will try" (477–79).

So, in spite of memories both delightful and painful, she loves to be married. Marriage is like a game full of excitement in which she always tries to win. Even when she, having passed her forties, became aware that the "flower" had passed away, her optimism remains. She does not give up marriage, planning to use the *bran*, constantly longing for more joy, and so welcomes the sixth husband, whenever he might come.

4 Discussion

From what is presented so far it appears that the Wife of Bath is not an idealised woman, but a real one, full of life and energy, ready for all the pleasures that life can give her, and among them the most important one is love. However, her view of love is not romantic, but material, since it is based primarily on the satisfaction of her sexual instincts. It is fairly obvious that she cannot love the three of her husbands, who are old and therefore unable to satisfy her physically, however kind, attentive and generous they might be, and conversely, that she loved her two young husbands because they were sexually potent, although they neglected, tortured and humiliated her in various ways.

She basically punishes the former for the absence of pleasure and rewards the latter for giving it, since the primary instincts know "no values, no good and evil, no morality."[7] Sexual satisfaction makes her fresh, young and vigorous, so she instinctively longs to repeat the same experience and get more joy. Even when she, in her forties, begins to realise that her sexual attractiveness is waning, she continues optimistically to search for a new affair and is convinced that it is something she deserves. Herbert Marcuse, paraphrasing Freud's formulation[8] describes such a state as follows: "The memory of gratification is at the origin of all thinking, and the impulse to recapture past gratification is the hidden driving power behind the process of thought" (Marcuse 1966: 32). Thus, the behaviour of the Wife of Bath fits in with Freud's theory that man is an essentially biological and irrational being, ruled by the principle of pleasure.

As already pointed out, the Wife of Bath is neither ashamed of her sexual desires, nor feels guilty about them, but considers them a natural part of her personality and therefore confesses openly her rich sexual experience all the while offering many spicy details. Subconsciously, she feels that the repression of natural instincts is imposed not by God, but by humans. Interestingly, Freud expresses a similar opinion, claiming the repression of instincts to be a historical phenomenon, since "[…] the history of man is the history of his repression. Culture constrains not only his societal but also his biological existence, not only parts of the human being but his instinctual structure itself" (Marcuse 1966: 19).

In spite of such an attitude toward repression, the Wife of Bath cannot completely reject dominant societal and cultural influences, established in the Middle Ages chiefly by the Church, whose doctrines generally neglected the body as material, and therefore subject to decay, and favoured the soul as immaterial and eternal. She, however, tries to interpret these doctrines as it suits her, representing what she has experienced as pleasure, as the pure necessity of procreation, by pointing out that God wants people to multiply.[9] Nevertheless, such a statement is intended primarily for the general public. Later in her narration she sincerely admits what she really believes, namely that the organs of generation "are made for both, […] for function and for pleasure" (126–28). This stands in stark contrast to the contemporary worldview, but, it should be noted, is fully consistent with Freud's theory of the instincts as presented by Marcuse:

7 Quoted by Marcuse (1966: 30) from Freud's *New Introductory Lectures* (105).

8 Quoted by Marcuse (1966: 30) from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (535).

9 Strangely enough, there is no mention in the text as to whether she herself has had children of her own from her five marriages, or what her feelings about children are.

> The sex instincts bear the brunt of the reality principle. Their organization culminates in the subjection of the partial sex instincts to the primacy of genitality, and in their subjugation under the function of procreation.
>
> MARCUSE 1966: 41

According to Freud, the primary content of sexuality is the "function of obtaining pleasure from zones of the body," but this function is only "subsequently brought into the service of that of reproduction."[10] Such a view, in the time of the Wife of Bath, as well as generally in the history of civilisation, was considered perverse. Elaborating Freud's theory, Marcuse states: "The societal organization of the sex instinct taboos as perversions practically all its manifestations which do not serve or prepare for the procreative function," since "the perversions uphold sexuality as an end in itself," and he adds: "they threaten to reverse the process of civilization which turned the organism into an instrument of work" (Marcuse 1966: 50f.).

However, the instinctual side of the Wife of Bath exists parallel to that of her conscious awareness, or her *ego*, to cast it in the terms of Freud's theory. The perception of the world in which she lives forces her to be practical, to adapt to reality and, whenever possible, to manipulate it in her own interest. Hence, aware of the material needs of her body, and knowing that, in a typical masculine society in which women are the subjugated, she is dependent on her husbands' income, she tries to permanently secure her existence by taking over her husbands' land, money and other property, as well as attaining her freedom. In this venture, she relies on her reason or, as we might call it, her feminine wit. But at the same time she wants to preserve her freedom, which implies primarily the freedom to use her body when, or if, she wants to, since it is hers and not her husbands'. As shown, she has no problems in implementing her will over her old husbands, since they are weak and afraid of her, but while she was married to the two of her husbands whom she claims to have loved, it was not very easy to get control and establish her sovereignty. Her instincts and desires for bodily pleasures are obviously dominant in comparison to the rational side of her personality; otherwise she would not give her fifth husband all the land and property that has been given to her. But subsequently she repents, having seen that he is neglecting her wishes.

Therefore, one can conclude that the Wife of Bath shares many similar features of body awareness with the average modern woman, at least within Western culture. Of course, it is possible to perceive a number of obvious

10 Marcuse (1966: 42) quoting Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (26).

differences, mostly due to social and cultural conditions that have greatly changed from the fourteenth century to the present day.

Modern women, for example, although fully committed to life, do not acquire their sexual experience only through marriage, but also before and out of marriage. Moreover, some experienced and body-aware women never marry. Indeed, the significance of the institution of marriage has changed in the course of time. We witness today an increase in the number of cohabiting couples, especially in the West, where partners postpone the marriage mostly in order to test whether they can function as a couple on a long-term basis. Of course, this was impossible during the Middle Ages where the rules were set by a Church that forbade pre-marital or extra-marital relationships as a violation of Christian moral beliefs against the sanctity of sexual relationships between a man and woman. The authority of the Church has declined in the meantime.

There is no doubt that, for modern women, the physical side of love is equally important as it is for the Wife of Bath, only it seems to us that, across the span of six hundred years, the freedom to express individual desires and feelings has greatly increased.

Sigmund Freud would certainly not agree with the latter part of this assessment, judging by his philosophical reflections, as Marcuse presented them. Discussing the relationship between culture and civilisation on the one hand and subjugation of human instincts on the other, Freud claimed: "Free gratification of man's instinctual needs is incompatible with civilized society: renunciation and delay in satisfaction are the prerequisites of progress." (Marcuse 1966: 4) Starting from the premise that freedom was a necessary condition of happiness, he pessimistically stated: "Happiness is no cultural value" (Marcuse 1966: 4). To put it briefly, he considered that, throughout civilisation, people had struggled against scarcity and tried to procure the means for satisfying material needs. In a permanent effort to achieve a higher technological and industrial level, work became the main necessity. But the discipline of work as the full-time occupation of the greatest number of adult individuals, requiring most of their energy and leaving little free time for pleasures, resulted in the methodological sacrifice of sexual instinct, as predominant within instinctual structure.

Although acknowledging Freud's theory, Herbert Marcuse seemed to view progress and the struggle for a higher standard of living in a more favourable light. He believed that it was possible to create societal organisation with reduced material scarcity and less repression of instincts. According to him, the problem of repression is not caused by scarcity, but is a consequence of a specific organisation of scarcity, since "the distribution of scarcity as well as

the effort of overcoming it, the mode of work, have been imposed upon individuals—first by mere violence, subsequently by a more rational utilization of power"; scarcity is inextricably bound up with and shaped by the interests of domination (Marcuse 1966: 37). Further on he explains: "[…] domination is exercised by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged position." (Marcuse 1966: 37) Therefore, in Marcuse's view, the repression of instincts might differ in degree, "according to whether social production is oriented on individual consumption or on profit; whether a market economy prevails or a planned economy; whether private or collective property." (Marcuse 1966: 38) In other words, societal organisation might modify the degree of repression and at the same time might increase gratification in accordance with individual needs.

Marcuse's philosophy of the development of civilisation might seem utopian to some, but the fact is that in the second half of the twentieth century, exactly between the sixties and eighties, and especially in America, having achieved the greatest progress and standard of living, young and middle-aged generations experienced what was called the "sexual revolution," also referred to as "sexual liberation." It resulted in new modes of sexual behaviour, freedom of sexual speech and a changed view of female sexuality as well. Significantly, this social movement affected the most numerous part of society, the middle class. Although the movement was later subject to criticism as deviant in many ways, it has definitely left its traces. We mentioned earlier the increase in extramarital and pre-marital relations, but equally popular was complete rejection of marriage as an obsolete and unnecessary institution, not to mention same-sex marriage.

Freedom of sexual speech exploded then, too, so today women definitely do not feel obliged to justify their feelings and attitudes about sex and do indeed speak or write publicly about their sexual experiences or fantasies if they want to. Moreover, in doing so, they quite often use what is considered vulgar or rude vocabulary, just as the Wife of Bath did in a, of course, much humbler way.[11] Of course, there are many modern women who do not want to speak about sex, not because they are afraid of, but rather because they simply consider it a matter of intimacy.

Freedom, in general, is nowadays an essential condition to be or remain in marriage, and society itself guarantees by law the same rights to both partners. However, it seems that complete freedom in marriage is possible only if there is total economic independence of the partners, and that is often the case

11 The fact is that in the last few decades the vocabulary of the subject has greatly increased in its number of items.

today. Of course, the mediaeval situation was completely different since women were in every way subordinated in marriage and society.

Furthermore, today it is not uncommon for middle-aged women to marry much younger lovers, but in the Middle Ages, according to some contemporary, mostly ecclesiastical sources, the accepted marriageable age of women was between twelve and fourteen (and, as we read in the Prologue, the Wife of Bath married for the first time when she was twelve), while the grooms were as a rule somewhat older, sometimes considerably so. Thus the Wife of Bath, whose fifth husband was twenty years younger than her, was, apparently, a forerunner of modern trends.

As for the desire for sovereignty, we might say, today it depends on the person. Some modern women want to be sovereign over their partners, and some do not. The latter often perceive sovereignty as a weakness in their partners' characters.

Here we must point out that so far we have focused chiefly on the sexual aspect of body awareness, simply because it appeared that that was the predominant feature of the Wife of Bath. Of course, it would be wrong and too superficial to reduce body awareness only to that side of female personality. In the domain of bodily pleasures, we perceive various types of hedonism today, such as those in gastronomy, wine, sport, dance, the arts etc., and they are not (necessarily) related to sexuality. Moreover, not only pleasures are perceivable, but also other qualities like the striking occupation with body aesthetics, health-care and pain-relief, to mention just three, in the omnipresent intention of prolonging the quality of life and generating necessary creative energy.

Interestingly, there is almost no mention of anything like this in the Wife of Bath's Prologue. Even when we find a few lines about the Wife's pleasure in, for example, drinking sweet wine, it is again because "after wine on Venus must I think" (464). In another place we read that, as a young woman, she liked very much to have fun, dance and move around, but immediately afterwards it was emphasised that she used to wear, on such occasions, her "gay scarlet gowns" (559), which might again be Chaucer's allusion to her need to attract male attention. However, we wish to point out that it does not mean that a woman like the Wife of Bath could not possess aspects of body awareness other than sexual; it is simply the case that Chaucer was not interested in presenting them. As stated in the introduction to this essay, we are dealing with a piece of literature; so what we know about the Wife of Bath is only what the author wants us to know.

Finally, getting back to the issue raised at the beginning of the essay—*how much feminine self-awareness based on bodily experience has changed over the*

centuries, or whether it has changed essentially at all—we can conclude: on the whole, not much. The arguments that go in favour of this thesis are based on the fact that the Wife of Bath:

- was fully committed to life and wanted to experience all available pleasures and emotions,
- acquired experience in love in several marital relationships,
- achieved happiness only in those relationships which were based on physical satisfaction,
- considered the repression of instincts not to be natural, but imposed,
- did not accept sexuality as only a means of procreation, but deemed it a source of pleasure,
- did not hesitate to marry much younger men,
- could not completely reject social and cultural influences, including morality,
- wanted freedom and sovereignty in relationships,
- relied on her own experience in everything, but especially in the matter of sex and love,
- was not afraid to talk publicly about her sexual experience, often using vulgar vocabulary.

The question, however, remains: Why do we find it hard to believe that such a character as the Wife of Bath, the very embodiment of sexual desire, could exist in the fourteenth century? We think that it is so because we have, in a way, a distorted picture of the Middle Ages. It was created on the basis of our insights into the then dominant Christian worldview and, even more, contemporary popular literature.

Christianity, within mediaeval Europe, did not insist on the dignity and rights of women, nor did it have a preoccupation with gender equality, neglecting thus the attitude of Jesus Christ, who, according to the Gospels, showed the greatest respect for women and compassion for their suffering, or Saint Paul, among others, who held: "[…] there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:28). Thus it is all the more surprising to find that anti-feminist attitudes were firmly grounded in Christian doctrines. So it is not strange that right at the beginning of the prologue we find a few references, made by the Wife, to Saint Jerome (347–420), one of the most important Early Church Fathers, and his Epistle against Jovinian, "which became one of the best known medieval denunciations of worldly, sensual pleasure, and supports chastity against the 'evil' of marriage" (Chaucer s.d.: 19). As we read further,

> the anti-feminism of Jerome's Epistle is only one example of a large anti-feminist literature […]. The sermons of the period, delivered to the general populace, were full of reminders that Adam fell through Eve's sin and that women […] were the root of all evil.
>
> CHAUCER S.D.: 27

So the attitude of the Church towards women has not changed much in the course of more than one thousand years.

On the other hand, English and European literature in the Middle Ages was romantic and chivalrous, full of notions of courtly love (Alexander 2000: 39–42; Spearing in Chaucer 1966: 1–81), and as a rule represented women as unreal beings of divine beauty and behaviour but with no human feelings. In Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* we can recognise a mediaeval stereotype of a beautiful young lady who roams in her garden, picking mayflowers and making garlands, and knows nothing about the world around her and the knights who adore her and suffer because of her. Of course, since she does not speak at all, no one knows her feelings and thoughts. There is nothing surprising in that, when we know that popular literature was almost exclusively written by men and thus from a man's point of view. Therefore, we may justifiably pose the same question as the Wife of Bath, with regard to the scant praise of women in mediaeval literature: "Who painted the lion, tell me who?[12]/ By God, if women had written the stories, / […], / They would have written more evil of men / Than all the race of Adam can redress." (692–96)

Chaucer's Wife of Bath testifies that mediaeval women and wives were completely different to what one might think, and so possibly we are today more shocked by the Wife of Bath's sincere discussion than her contemporaries would have been. Only a few authors, like Chaucer, for example, dared to portray the other, more realistic type of mediaeval women who, as we have seen, possessed and boldly expressed bodily awareness.

5 Conclusion

Although social and cultural circumstances have greatly changed since the end of the Middle Ages, when the Wife of Bath was composed, we can see that female personality, and female self-awareness, based on bodily or sexual

12 (Chaucer/Lamb s.d.: 46): The reference is to Aesop's fable of the lion, who looked at a painting of a hunter slaying a lion, and said, "Yes, but who painted the picture? A lion might have done it differently."

experience, has not changed as much as one would expect. False assumptions about it might have been created on the basis of a small number of mediaeval popular writings regarding courtly love, which presented an unrealistic picture of women created by men and from a man's point of view and acquired knowledge about the then dominant Christian worldview, which tended not to be in women's favour.

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CHAPTER 6

Lost in Isolation: Ulrike Meinhof's Body in Poetry

Karin Bauer

Abstract

This essay investigates the political and strategic deployment of somatic vocabulary in Ulrike Meinhof's letter/poem which she wrote while incarcerated in solitary confinement in Köln-Ossendorf Prison in 1972. It links the bodily dissociation described in the poem with the breakdown of syntax, identity, and self-perception. Meinhof's poem brings the fragmented body into language—a language of repetitions, syntactic disruptions, parataxis, fragmentation, linguistic disorientation, and violent disassociation. The physical and psychic pain experienced in isolation and the imagery of the suffering body conjured up in the poem, suggest—especially to a German post-war audience—haunting associations with the Holocaust and the National Socialist treatment of unwanted persons and prisoners.

> The feeling your head is exploding (the feeling the top of your skull should really tear apart, burst wide open)—
> The feeling your spinal column is pressing into your brain—
> The feeling your brain is gradually shriveling up, like baked fruit—
> The feeling you're completely and surreptitiously wired, under remote control—
> The feeling the associations you make are being hacked away—
> The feeling you are pissing the soul out of your body, as though you can't hold water—
> The feeling the cell is moving. You wake up, open your eyes: the cell is moving; in the afternoon when the sun comes in, it suddenly stops. You can't get rid of the feeling of moving. You can't figure out if you're trembling from fever or from cold—you can't figure out why you're trembling—
> You're freezing.
> Speaking at a normal volume requires efforts as if you were shouting, almost yelling—
> The feeling you're growing mute—
> You can no longer identify what words mean, you can only guess—
> The sounds sibilants make—s, tz, z, sch, ch—are absolutely unbearable—
> Wardens, visitors, yard, all seem to be made of celluloid—
> Headaches—

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> Flashes—
> Sentence structure, grammar, syntax—are out of control. When you write, just two lines, you can hardly remember the beginning of the first line when you finish the second—
> The feeling of burning out inside—
> The feeling that if you said what is going on, if you let that out, it would be like splashing boiling water into another person's face, boiling drinking water that would scald him for life, disfigure him—
> Raging aggression, for which there is no outlet. That's the worst. The clear awareness that you don't have a hope of surviving; the utter failure to communicate that; visits leave no trace. Half an hour later you can only mechanically reconstruct whether the visit took place today or last week—
> But having a bath once a week means thawing for a moment, and can last a few hours—
> The feeling that time and space are encapsulated within each other—
> The feeling of being in a room of distorting mirrors—
> Staggering—
> Afterwards, terrifying euphoria that you're hearing something—besides the acoustic difference between day and night—
> The feeling that time is flowing away, your brain is expanding again, your spinal column slipping back—down for weeks.
> The feeling you've been flayed.
>
> MEINHOF 2008: 78f[1,1]

Above poem was written by Ulrike Meinhof, the journalist-turned-terrorist, co-founder of the Red Army Faction (RAF), and one of the most-wanted women in German history.[2] Meinhof was captured in June 1972 after two years on the run and an intense wo/man hunt. She was incarcerated in Cologne-Ossendorf prison in an isolation cell located in a special isolated wing of the prison where no sounds from the outside or inside of the prison could be heard and no one could be seen. Meinhof was excluded from prison activities, was not allowed contact with other prisoners, and was subjected to visual controls by guards through a peephole every 15 minutes. The furnishings in her cell were almost

1 For the German original, please see the Appendix at the end of this chapter and Brückner (2001: 152f.).

2 Founded in 1970, the RAF was a terrorist group that grew out of the militant segment of the 1968 protest movement. Its violent activities included murder, kidnappings and bank robberies. By 1972, the major protagonists—the so-called first generation of RAF—were captured. The second generation escalated the violence, culminating in the violence of the German autumn 1977. For a history of the RAF, see Aust (2009) and Peters (2011).

entirely white and the lights were on "practically twenty-four hours a day in an indistinguishable environment" (Krebs 1988: 241). Accusing the state of torture, Meinhof and her lawyers protested against the solitary confinement and the sensory deprivation, but it took eight months, three hunger strikes by Meinhof and other prisoners, a four-day hunger strike by lawyers, petitions signed by doctors, public protests, and much judicial wrangling until conditions were eased.

Meinhof wrote about her experience of sensory deprivation in a series of letters, some of which were later published as *briefe ulrikes aus dem trakt* ('ulrike's letter from the wing'). Seeking to instigate public debate on the prison conditions under which RAF members were incarcerated, Meinhof's lawyers were looking for texts that could be used to mobilise protest against the solitary confinement. In protesting against her isolation, Meinhof did not produce one of her usual tracts citing Mao, Lenin, or the Tupamaros, but the above cited poetic letter initially circulated under the title *brief einer gefangenen aus dem toten trakt* ('letter by a prisoner from the death wing').[3] In contrast to previous writings, the letter is devoid of ideological dogmatism, contains no Marxist analysis of fascism and capitalism or a critique of colonialism and imperialism. Into the highly politicised and polarised debate about 'isolation torture' (*Isolationsfolter*) and 'extermination custody' (*Vernichtungshaft*) in the 'dead wing' (*toter Trakt*) of the prison, she injected a text that deviates decisively in style, form, and content from the apodictic tone of her earlier journalistic texts, as well as from what Elfriede Jelinek (2008: 9) called "the pitiless barked commands" of the communiqués Meinhof authored as scribe of the RAF. Instead of engaging in 'rational' debate and arguing against her isolation in political terms, Meinhof's letter/poem unfolds isolation as an embodied experience rather than a political cause.

The terms of Meinhof's solitary confinement varied somewhat throughout her stay in Cologne-Ossendorf from June 1972 to February 1973. In addition to being subjected to silence and constant lighting, Meinhof was only allowed visits from her lawyers and immediate family members. She had no contact to other prisoners and had to take her walks in the prison yard by herself. Her mail was censored, family members were not allowed to send books, and Meinhof's punishment for breaking rules—she repeatedly removed her shoes during her daily solitary walk in the prison yard—was that her cigarettes would be taken away. She had no access to newspapers and magazines and was permitted a typewriter and radio only after a lengthy battle with the courts. After each visit to Meinhof, her lawyer, sister, and aunt grew increasingly alarmed

3 In RAF texts and later texts by Meinhof, nouns are not capitalised. This was a common practice amongst the radical left to indicate its rejection of linguistic normativity.

about the deterioration of Meinhof's physical and mental health (Ditfurth 2007: 373).[4]

Meinhof's letter/poem was widely circulated in the 1970s, garnering considerable sympathies for Meinhof and other RAF prisoners. Publicity surrounding Meinhof's prison conditions included an array of polarising political discourses that saw human rights advocates, liberals, radicals, feminists, and leftist groups who criticised the state's treatment of the prisoners being suspected of belonging to the so-called swamp of sympathisers[5] lending support to the RAF. This fuelled an intense anti-left and anti-democratic climate in Germany in the 1970s. Like the image of the emaciated corps of RAF member Holger Meins—who died of starvation during a hunger strike in 1974 and whose image surely invoked in a postwar audience the images of starved Nazi prisoners—Meinhof's poem drew attention to the conditions of RAF members' incarceration, and like Meins' corpse, Meinhof's poem served to radicalise leftist fringe groups and recruit members for prisoner support groups, such as the Red Cells, and militant and violent groups, such as the RAF.[6] However, the critiques of the letter/poem's functionalisation as propagandistic tool tend to deflect from or ignore the issues at its core: the somatic and psychic effects of sensory deprivation on a human being and the cruelty of the conditions under which Meinhof was imprisoned in a democratic society grappling with violent, left-wing opposition.

Despite its wide circulation and considerable impact on political debates, Meinhof's letter/poem has received scant attention from scholarship. While it is frequently cited, it is rarely discussed beyond cursory remarks about its function in public debate. Colvin's study on language, violence, and identity in Meinhof's writing partially cites the letter as an attempt "to describe her physical and linguistic symptoms" of isolation (Colvin 2009: 152), but provides no further discussion of it. Similarly, in his study on Meinhof's performance of terrorism, Leith Passmore (2011: 75) does not engage the letter/poem, although he provides a pertinent discussion on the uncertainties surrounding the timing and circumstances of its production.

Gerd Koenen (2006) delivers an informative—and highly problematic—examination of the discourses surrounding the scientific experimentation with isolation and sensory deprivation in the 1970s. With scant reference to Meinhof,

4 Of all the RAF-prisoners, Meinhof had to endure the most extreme conditions—only RAF member Astrid Proll had been held under similar conditions, albeit for a much shorter period of time.

5 It was the minister-president of Baden-Württemberg Hans Filbinger who spoke in 1977 of the need of having to dry out the swamp of the sympathisers of terrorism.

6 Widely reproduced, the image of Meins is iconic. See, for instance, Proll's tablebook of photographs *Hans und Grete: Die RAF 1967–1977*.

Koenen investigates the ongoing *camera silens* experiments conducted at the Psychiatric Division of the Hamburg-Eppendorf University Clinic since 1967.[7] Emphasising the potential benefit of the experiments with total isolation in the medical treatment of various mental disorders, such as depression and schizophrenia, Koenen (2006: 998–1001) seeks to distance the experiments of the *camera silens* from discourses on torture and from the fervent debates in the 1970s on 'isolation torture' and the inhumanity of depriving human beings of social and sensory contact with the world outside the prison cell.[8] Koenen largely dismisses the discourses surrounding solitary confinement, including those instigated by Meinhof's letters, as propagandistic tools creating 'isolation torture' as myth and phantasma. Thus, while Koenen sheds light onto the history of the *camera silens* experiments, he clearly aims to discredit criticism of the conditions of confinement to which RAF members were subjected, thus minimising the impact of prolonged sensory deprivation and the political implications of submitting prisoners to these conditions.[9]

However, treating the letter/poem as suspect because of its publicity value, as Koenen does, amounts to a short-sighted short-circuiting of the issue of isolation. As Passmore notes, Koenen leaves open the question whether the letter is a "poetic transcript of a prison experience or a literary complaint composed for the purposes of the campaign" (Passmore 2011: 161f.). The letter/

7 The *camera silens* is a sound-proof isolation chamber known to induce hallucinations, fear, and anxiety in those who are isolated in it. It was also described as a means of brainwashing and of so-called 'white' torture. Psychiatrist Sjef Teuns's 'Isolation/Sensorische Deprivation: Die programmierte Folter' (1973) is the programmatic text that linked isolation and torture.

8 However, as Friedrich Nietzsche already affirmed in his *Genealogy of Morality* (1967), the origin and the utility of a thing and phenomena stand in no teleological or cause and effect relationship—origins say nothing about the multiple, complementary, and contradictory heterogeneous usage. Driven by various scientific, political and economic interests, the intentions and interests behind the *camera silens* research project may be assumed to be as manifold as the potential use of its research results. Thus, contrary to what Koenen's investigation might suggest, neither honourable scientific intentions nor the Jewishness of the experiment's research director, Jan Gross, can offer insight into how research results are used and how they are debated in the public sphere.

9 For instance, Koenen cites intimate knowledge of the effects of isolation by test subjects who spent 40 minutes in absolute isolation without feeling negative effects. "Eine Session in der 'Camera Silens' war unter Hamburger Medizinstudenten des Jahrgangs 1969/70 (darunter meine Schwester und mein späterer Schwager) beliebter als Blutspenden, aber weniger beliebt als eine Nacht im Schlaflabor […]" (Koenen 2006: 1001). Meinhof spent 8 months—not 40 minutes—in isolation and did not do so of her own accord and without the possibility to interrupt the 'experiment'.

poem is dated "From the period between June 16, 1972 and February 9, 1973" and Meinhof wrote to her lawyers that the poem had not been written with the intention to publish it. She was uncertain whether the letter/poem could be useful as "counter-information" to the "obscene mess" created by the proliferating scientific discourses on isolation in the media (Passmore 2011: 75). The "obscene mess" referred to Meinhof's assessment of state of the contemporary discussions on the RAF. Debates increasingly focused on the physical and mental health of RAF members, thus seemingly pathologising the RAF and precipitating the displacement of political debates onto scientific and pseudo-scientific debates about the body of the prisoners.

Behind the open question about the date of creation and the timing of the release lurks the concern about the author's intention and the text's authenticity. Its legitimacy is thought to hinge on whether it was written for a purpose other than self-expression and whether it is either an authentic "poetic transcription" of a lived experience or a "literary complaint" (Koenen 2006: 1005) composed after the fact with a specific purpose in mind. Meinhof's text, we may assume, might be both. It may have been written during her period of total isolation, it may have been written at a temporal distance as a recollection of the somatic and psychic effects of isolation, and it may have been edited and revised at various points in time. While not dismissing the relevance of the author's intention, the following discussion of the letter/poem will assume it to be an indeterminable mixture of an immediate expression of a contemporaneous experience, a retrospective recollection of a traumatic experience, and a literary reflection and product of the imagination.

Meinhof's text crosses strictly conceived genre boundaries: it is a letter written in the form of a poem and a poem sent as a letter. As a letter it suggest the intimacy of a personal communication between writer and recipient, although in Meinhof's case, no particular addressee is named. Initially, anonymity is preserved, too, on the side of the sender. The letter was first circulated anonymously as *a* letter by *a* prisoner. With her foray into writing letters from prison, Meinhof places herself within a rich tradition of letters from political prisoners, one may only think of Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Martin Luther King. Prison letters inevitably draw attention to the writer's predicament, lamenting explicitly or implicitly the injustices and inhumanity of incarceration. Implied, too, in prison letters are the personal, political, and ethical dimensions of writing as an act of defiance, a refusal to give up one's voice, belief, and political agenda.

The immediacy of communication implied by a letter is augmented and complicated by the poetic form Meinhof's letter takes. To be sure, Meinhof is not known as a writer of poetry, but as a writer of magazine columns, radio

features, a television script, and radical political communiqués. Although the letter shares stylistic traits with her magazine columns, such as the frequent use of repetitions, anaphors, parallelisms, and parataxis, the letter's deployment of poetic language and form is unique within her oeuvre. Why did Meinhof turn to poetry? One answer might be found in Meinhof's above cited aspiration to supply "counter-information" to the scientific discourse of isolation—although as noted, she was all together unsure whether the letter/poem could achieve this. Consciously or intuitively, Meinhof also recognised the power of poetic language not merely as a means to provide "counter-information," but for its potential as counter-language. The aesthetic and rhythmic quality of poetry offers an alternative to the reified language of science and the objectification of the subject through language. The language of poetry allows her to map the body as the site where isolation, silence, pain, suffering, oppression, violence and injustice are experienced.

Imprisoned, isolated, and without other means of communication, Meinhof and other RAF-prisoners engaged in several hunger strikes, thereby deploying their bodies as a means to further their political agenda. Inscribing their bodies with the signs of malnourishment and starvation, the RAF sought to make visible their plight as prisoners of the state. In turn, their bodies were increasingly subjected to medical intervention, becoming objects of debates by medical and psychiatric experts about the physiological and psychological effects of hunger and isolation. Discursively, the prisoners were turned into patients—none more so than Meinhof, whose political radicalisation was often attributed to the brain surgery she had undergone in 1963.[10] As Michel Foucault (1979: 195–228) points out, in isolation the prisoner becomes object and not subject of information, communication, and observation; Meinhof consistently fought against her objectification and medicalisation, which she rejected as an attempt by the state (and the prison) to depoliticise the RAF. Meinhof's letter/poem can be read as enacting resistance against the negotiations about her body by others. It redirects the medical and penal discourses about the body of the prisoner as *object* of science and penal discipline and, instead, writes the body as experiencing subject. Against the scientific ambition to probe, assess, and evaluate, Meinhof reclaims the body as the site of feeling, distorted perception, and pain. The body is the medium through which suffering is expressed.

In its depiction of somatosensory dysfunctionality, the poem/letter gives voice to suffering as an embodied experience, marking it as a form of 'bodily writing'—a term I am drawing from Adorno's notion of embodied thinking. According to Adorno, thought is not fundamentally divided from visceral experience

10 For a thorough discussion of the discourse of the brain and female political agency, see Amanda Third (2010: 83–100).

and affect; on the contrary, thought is driven and motivated by the physical and emotional experience of suffering. In *Negative Dialectics* (1973), Adorno reflects on the subject as a body that thinks and on thinking as an embodied experience, determining embodied thought as the only legitimate and morally viable way to approach physical suffering. Dealing discursively with suffering would be an "outrage" (Adorno 1973: 365). Instead of deploying conceptual language and logic, moral and critical consciousness calls for alternative ways to articulate suffering (Lee 2005: 133). "Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream" (Adorno 1973: 362). Conceptual language cannot communicate suffering, but can only re-enact the violence exercised on the body. Isolated and cut off from the environment, the prisoner has no possibility to communicate her suffering to the world outside the prison—her scream will not be heard, gestures will not be seen (except by the guards' gaze of panoptic surveillance), her writings will be read by censors. If the primal language of the body—its gestures, facial expressions, and sounds—cannot be seen, heard, or otherwise perceived, then it must be transposed into another language—not of speech, but of words on the page of an unknown fate. The somatic impulses are transformed into poetry through the bodily act of writing.

Meinhof's bodily writing describes the psychic damage of sensory deprivation as physical disintegration and dissociation. Somatic hyper-awareness, disorientation, and confusion are symptomatic of the inability of the body in pain to be in command of somatosensory modalities, including sight, hearing, touching, proprioception, and nociception: Her head is exploding, her brain shriveling, she experiences the sensations of burning and shivering. The sensory distortions described in the poem suggest the alienation of the subject from her environment, from herself, and from her own body. The body turns into a site of distorted spatial, temporal, sonic, and visual perception, a fragmented entity out of touch with the environment and reality. The body registers extreme and opposite sensations: hot and cold, extension and compression, shriveling and flooding, contraction and expansion. Affecting a profound destabilisation of the subject, these sensations are experienced simultaneously, while the body has lost the ability to clearly differentiate between sensation, symptoms, and their possible causes: Does one shiver from fever or coldness?

As control over the body is lost, so is control over mind, identity, and selfhood. There is the feeling that one is controlled remotely, by outside forces. The self becomes violently disassociated, associations are "hacked away," the skull "bursts wide open," and the "soul"—reasonably assumed to stand for individuality, interiority, and the essence of a person—is "piss[ed]" out of the body—expelled as bodily discharge. The cell is in motion and only stops moving for a short time when the rays of sunshine illuminate it. As much as the subject of isolation is starved for sonic, visual, and tactual input, the bodily

sensations and distorted perceptions of temperature, touch, movement, and sound are physically exasperating as a result of the visual monotony and silent environment in which they are experienced. Equally alienated and alienating is the subject's own voice; within the silence of the isolated wing, sounds become unpleasant and grating as the measure and tolerance for volume and pitch are lost; *s*-sounds become as unbearable as silence itself.

The distorted aural and visual perceptions precipitate the destabilisation of the self and its displacement in time and space: the surroundings appear surreal—like a film on celluloid. Somatic perception and phantasmagoria, reality and delusion are indistinguishable.

The use of language is impaired, words and the command of grammar get lost along with connections, associations, and the ability to think and remember clearly and to express oneself. Reminiscent of another letter, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Letter of Lord Chandos*, in Meinhof's letter/poem, language disintegrates, the sentence structure falls apart, and words—to use Lord Chandos' phrase—seem to dissolve like rotten mushrooms (Hofmannsthal 2005: 121). In Meinhof's letter/poem, the production and comprehension of language is a somatic failure, an inability of the body to communicate and to cope with and in isolation. As Elaine Scarry points out, "[p]hysical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it" (Scarry 1985: 12).

Because of the 24-hour light in the cell, day and night are indistinguishable and the subject loses the sense of time. The temporal-spacial disorientation contributes to a general physical and psychic burnout. Disintegrating into nebulous non-sequential perceptions and images, memories appear lost in time, fragmented, surreal. The burning face and a sensation of excessive heat are symptomatic for the flare up of temper: A loss of control over the environment translates into a loss of control over emotions, building up aggression for which there is no discharge. The pinned up anger and the inability to release and communicate it, robs the subject of the hope for survival.

Only physical interaction with the environment can bring temporary relief. In water, the body relaxes during the weekly bath, providing moments of integration by allowing for a short-lived physical and psychic reconstruction of the self: sounds are perceived and the flow of water brings back a sense of the flow of time. The bath—with its association with embryonic nurture and comfort—brings the body back to itself, back from the edge of "bare life" (Agamben 1998).[11] Water, like poetic language, allows for moments of sequencing and rhythmical integration and for the temporary reordering of the body and its environment.

11 Analyzing bare life as the target of sovereign violence, Agamben offers a multitude of examples for bodies reduced to "bare life," including refugees, illegal immigrants, inmates of camps, prisons, and mental institutions.

According to Adorno, "the need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition for all truth" (Adorno 1973: 17f.). However, as a precondition of truth, suffering needs not only a voice, but also a voice that is heard. Intentionally or unintentionally, Meinhof's letter/poem responds to Adorno's statement that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric (Adorno 1981: 34). In Meinhof's case, it is not the act of writing poetry that is barbaric, but it is the very conditions under which she writes that are barbaric. It is precisely poetic language that allows her to lend a voice to suffering. As no conceptual language could, poetry provides her with the linguistic tools to signify the disintegrative power of isolation and to articulate and enact on the page the disruptions, somatic and linguistic dysfunctions, and the contradictions arising from her distorted sensory perceptions.

With the breakdown of syntax implying the breakdown of identity and self-perception, Meinhof brings the fragmented body into language—a language of repetitions, syntactic disruptions, parataxis, fragmentation, linguistic disorientation, and violent disassociation. In a challenge to Adorno's statement, the letter/poem becomes the inscription of barbarism into poetry—much in the way of Walter Benjamin's contention that every document of civilisation is, simultaneously, a document of barbarism (Benjamin 1969: 256). Writing poetry in prison resonates with Adorno's—seemingly contradictory—addendum to the statement about writing poetry after Auschwitz, namely, that "the abundance of real suffering permits no forgetting" (Adorno 1992: 252). Learned, well read in German literature and thought, and deeply scarred by the German Nazi past, Meinhof was surely aware of Adorno's declaration about poetry after Auschwitz, and her recourse to poetic language while imprisoned may well be connected to her familiarity with the issue.[12] Through the defiant act of writing poetry (after Auschwitz), she connects her writing to the topos of Auschwitz.

To her lawyer Horst Mahler, Meinhof wrote "the political term for the dead wing, and I say this quite clearly, is the gas chamber. I can only say that my Auschwitz fantasies when I was in there were realistic" (cited by Colvin 2009: 233). These "Auschwitz fantasies" have been interpreted as a sign for Meinhof's overwrought sense of victimhood and as a delusional presumption of victimhood (Colvin 2009: 233f.). However, rather than attributing the Auschwitz fantasies merely to delusion, the need to compensate, and self-deception, there might be different ways to understand Meinhof's historically—and morally—unjustifiable association of her own suffering with that of the victims of the Holocaust.

12 Adorno's declaration should not be misunderstood as a dictum, prohibition, or condemnation of poetry after Auschwitz. Rather, it should be understood as a theoretical reflection on the aestheticisation of suffering and the moral implications of post-Holocaust culture.

As a cipher of barbarism and post-war trauma, Auschwitz took on a central role in the postwar German imagination—as it did in Meinhof's writing. Her journalistic writings of the 1960s are surely driven by an anti-Fascist zeal and by what Adorno established as the new categorical imperative displacing the old Kantian one. This new imperative has been "imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen" (Adorno 1973: 365). Meinhof's writings subscribe precisely to this mission.[13] While Meinhof makes no explicit references to Auschwitz in her letter/poem, it is nevertheless permeated by "Auschwitz fantasies": The violence exercised on the body, the bodily disintegration and disorientation, the physical and psychic pain experienced in isolation, and the starving body of the prisoner all suggest—especially to a German postwar audience—haunting associations with the Holocaust and the National Socialist treatment of unwanted persons and prisoners.

In *Haunting Legacies* (2010), Gabriele Schwab speaks of a transgenerational memory of fascism as a postmemory, a "memory without memory." Postmemory, a concept borrowed from Marianne Hirsch (2012), is an encounter with a past that one has never lived, yet while it is "not identical to memory, it approximates memory in its affective force" (Schwab 2010: 109). Similarly, Michael Rothberg argues for the multidirectionality of memory; postwar public memory of Nazism "emerged in relation to postwar events that seem at first to have little to do with it" (Rothberg 2009: 7). Multidirectionality thus provides a framework for understanding how the affectively charged relationship to German fascism surfaced to form multidirectional networks of associations, crossing spatial-temporal lines and cultural sites, connecting the past with the present, the here and now with events far removed in time and space. This back-and-forth movement, Rothberg explains, is "convoluted, sometimes historically unjustified" (Rothberg 2009: 17).

In light of postmemory, Meinhof's Auschwitz fantasies and the evocation of the suffering body in her poem might not easily be explained as delusional. In the poem, the body of the prisoner struggling with the effects of sensory deprivation becomes visible as the site of multidirectional postmemory, and Meinhof's depiction of the deprived body and the claim that her fantasies are "realistic" may well be read as the symptom of a convoluted, "historically unjustified" postmemory of great affective force. The letter/poem suggests an enactment of multidirectional postmemory: "The clear awareness that you don't have a hope of surviving [...] the feeling you've been flayed" (Meinhof 2008: 79). These lines from the letter/poem project images of extermination,

13 See a selection of her columns published in Karin Bauer (ed.). *Everybody Talks About the Weather: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof* (2008).

torture, and destruction, marking Meinhof's body as an overdetermined site where historical suffering and the current experience of isolation, pain, oppression, and injustice converge.

Oscillating between thinking and writing 'bodily' to express suffering, multidirectional postmemories, the demand that "real suffering permits no forgetting," and the imperative that Auschwitz must not repeat itself, Meinhof's letter/poem suggests to its readers—as do many of her journalistic writings in the 1960s that 'something similar' to Auschwitz may already be happening in the Federal Republic. The question whether the despair rendered in the letter/poem is authentic and "realistic," whether the bodily experiences are rendered realistically and accurately or are literary constructions, whether postmemories are conjured up or arising unconsciously and spontaneously must remain unanswered, and it could be argued that the uncertainty heightens, rather than diminishes the complexity of Meinhof's poetic experiment. Like Meinhof's defiant act of walking barefoot in the prison yard, her poetic composition may have been an attempt to stay grounded and to connect her body to the environment. Simultaneously, it may be a product of calculation instrumentalising poetic language and the body to communicate real or imagined sufferings. Meinhof's letter/poem engages the body in the complex negotiation of images, associations, and traumata of postwar German society. Literally and figuratively, Meinhof deployed her own body as a political weapon. Meinhof's body became one of the great challenges to the system against which she fought. At the very least, Meinhof's letter/poem seems to achieve to remind its readers "that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different" (Adorno 1973: 203).

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Appendix

Aus der Zeit: 16.6.72 bis 9.2.73:
Das Gefühl, es explodiert einem der Kopf (das Gefühl, die Schädeldecke müßte eigentlich zerreißen, abplatzen)—
das Gefühl, es würde einem das Rückenmark ins Gehirn gepreßt, das Gefühl, das Gehirn schrumpelte einem allmählich zusammen, wie Backobst z.B.—
das Gefühl, man stünde ununterbrochen, unmerklich, unter Strom, man würde ferngesteuert—
das Gefühl, die Assoziationen würden einem weggehackt—
das Gefühl, man pißte sich die Seele aus dem Leib, als wenn man das Wasser nicht halten kann—
das Gefühl, die Zelle fährt. Man wacht auf, macht die Augen auf: die Zelle fährt; nachmittags, wenn die Sonne reinscheint, bleibt sie plötzlich stehen. Man kann das Gefühl des Fahrens nicht absetzen.
Man kann nicht klären, ob man vor Fieber oder vor Kälte zittert—man kann nicht klären, warum man zittert—man friert.
Um in normaler Lautstärke zu sprechen, Anstrengungen, wie für lautes Sprechen, fast Brüllen—
das Gefühl, man verstummt—
man kann die Bedeutung von Worten nicht mehr identifizieren, nur noch raten—
der Gebrauch von Zisch-Lauten—s, ß, tz, z, sch—ist absolut unerträglich—
Wärter, Besuch, Hof erscheint einem wie aus Zelluloid—Kopfschmerzen—
flashs—
Satzbau, Grammatik, Syntax—nicht mehr zu kontrollieren. Beim Schreiben: zwei Zeilen—man kann am Ende der zweiten Zeile den Anfang der ersten nicht behalten—
das Gefühl, innerlich auszubrennen—
das Gefühl, wenn man sagen würde, was los ist, wenn man das rauslassen würde, das wäre, wie dem anderen kochendes Wasser ins Gesicht zischen, wie z.B. kochendes Tankwasser, das den lebenslänglich verbrüht, entstellt—
Rasende Aggressivität, für die es kein Ventil gibt. Das ist das Schlimmste. Klares Bewußtsein, daß man keine Überlebenschance hat; völliges Scheitern, das zu vermitteln; Besuche hinterlassen nichts. Eine halbe Stunde danach kann man nur noch mechanisch rekonstruieren, ob der Besuch heute oder vorige Woche war—
Einmal in der Woche baden dagegen bedeutet: einen Moment auftauen, erholen—hält auch für paar Stunden an—
Das Gefühl, Zeit und Raum sind ineinander verschachtelt—
das Gefühl, sich in einem Verzerrspiegelraum zu befinden—torkeln—

Hinterher: fürchterliche Euphorie, daß man was hört—über den akustischen Tag-Nacht-Unterschied—
Das Gefühl, daß jetzt die Zeit abfließt, das Gehirn sich wieder ausdehnt, das Rückenmark wieder runtersackt—über Wochen.
Das Gefühl, es sei einem die Haut abgezogen worden.

CHAPTER 7

Foreign Language—Foreign Body: The Embodiment of *Sprachfremde* in Dimitré Dinev's *Engelszungen* and Terézia Mora's *Alle Tage*[1]

Anja K. Seiler

Abstract

In this article, we trace the language biographies of the protagonists in both Dimitré Dinev's 2003 novel, *Engelszungen* and Terézia Mora's 2004 novel, *Alle Tage*. The mutual dependency and entanglement of body and language are key aspects. Drawing upon the linguistic concept of language biographies, we will show that this reciprocal dependency of body and language reveals itself in how the authors enact protagonists who discuss their different experiences of *foreignness* as a common thread. Both novels introduce protagonists who face conflict or trauma because they are physically located in *foreign* transcultural environments that leave them stateless and, even worse, speechless. *Sprachfremde*, the *foreignness of language*(*s*), a term introduced by Snezhana Boytcheva (2010), can be read as the supporting narrative that challenges a positive perception of a globalised multilingualism.

Everyone who has learned a foreign language and tried to express him/herself in a language that is not his/her mother tongue can relate to the feeling of being incapable of speech—when one's thoughts are prepared, but the words lie leaden in the mouth. The search for the right words while stumbling over alien grammar structures makes us aware that our own body has not yet incorporated the *foreign*. The inability to understand a proverb makes one aware that one learns meaning in a specific cultural context and that one constructs what one considers to be *reality* with words. Inspired by the image of the knotted tongue, the essay will deconstruct the common duality of the body as physical and language as nonphysical reality. I suggest that the dependency upon and the entanglement of body and language are key concepts in both Dimitré

1 I would like to thank Luanne Dagley for her thoughts and help in reading and editing my essay.

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Dinev's 2003 novel, *Engelszungen,*[2] and Terézia Mora's 2004 novel, *Alle Tage.*[3] Through discussing the modalities of embodiment and their appearances in the language biographies[4] of the protagonists, we are able to show how these linguistic interactions demand, trigger and even force embodiments. The body acts as the means of language production and expresses the dual status as subject and object, producer and product of language.

This reciprocal dependency of body and language reveals itself in how the authors enact protagonists that discuss their different experiences of *foreignness* as a common thread in their language biographies. How do the protagonists deal with feeling like an alien (speech) body in a strange place?[5] One possible answer can be found in the figure of Svetljo in Dinev's novel *Engelszungen*, whose voicelessness, stemming from his shattered relationship with his father, also reflects his experience of foreignness. Can language simultaneously perform a somatic transformation and transgression since it possesses the power to inscribe, even injure, body and mind, while, at the same time, the body itself inscribes more parallel language? Such is the case for Abel Nema, the main protagonist in Mora's novel *Alle Tage,* who, after being brutalised by a gang, suffers from aphasia, a language disturbance caused by brain damage that affects his ability to communicate.

Both novels introduce protagonists who face conflicts or trauma because they are physically located in *foreign* transcultural environments that leave them stateless and, even worse, speechless. Although the main protagonists are "transnational figures," as Anke S. Biendarra points out for *Alle Tage* (Biendarra 2011: 46), unwillingly moving from one country to another because of war or hostile political systems, the novels in this essay should not be designated as *migrant* or *diaspora literature.* "Transnational literature,"[6] one of "the

2 Dimitré Dinev's novel *Engelszungen* is not translated into English. In the following I will provide my own translations in the continuous text, as well as the German original quotes in the footnotes.

3 English translation: Mora, Terézia: *Day In Day Out* (2007).

4 I am using the term according to Eva-Maria Thüne's distinction between "empirical and literary language biographies" (Thüne 2010: 59).

5 Hannes Schweiger (2004) establishes the idea of a *Schattenexistenz* ('life in the shadow') that escapes from forced upon norms.

6 The great interest in contemporary German literature written by authors whose native languages are not German, such as Mora and Dinév, has brought new insights to what is considered to be transnational or transcultural literature. Anke Biendarra states that "most authors with a migratory background functionalize spoken language in a highly reflexive, innovative way, and their aesthetic decisions are often influenced by a tradition of oral narration and multilingualism, which leads to hybrid forms of literature" (Biendarra 2011: 47).

emerging literary categories in the novels of German-speaking countries at the turn of the millennium," is globalised and challenges static concepts of identity in its outlook (Marven 2011: 1). It is notable that many of these novels place their protagonists in global settings represented by European cities and that many of these novels deal with the conflicts that arose in the Balkan countries in the 1990s (Marven 2011: 4f.). Established theorists have already come up with a new discursive label for contemporary German literature focusing on German-Balkan encounters and using the Balkan countries as a projection surface: Boris Previšić uses the label the *Balkan Turn*, which mimics the so-called *Turkish Turn*, a term coined by Leslie Adelson (2005) (Previšić 2009: 189). I, therefore, along with scholars such as Anke S. Biendarra (2011), Hannes Schweiger (2005) and Wolfgang Müller-Funk (2009), read the novels as literature that is testing given concepts of identity possibly tied to national boundaries, and going beyond notions of body and language awareness as separate entities. Our primary concerns, however, are neither literary categories nor the biographical histories of the authors. Instead, our focus on the aesthetic enactments of instances of language(s) opens up a way of reading these works in the context of the protagonists' language biographies. The breaking down of narrowly defined language barriers in the text may be interpreted not only as a special medium of communication, but also as an outcome of a shifted grid in the perception of the entanglement of body and language. *Sprachfremde*, a term used previously by Snezhana Boytcheva (2010), the *foreignness of language*(*s*), can be read as the supporting narrative. Within this setting, Dinev and Mora enact protagonists that must face a painful awareness of the materiality of language.

1 Dimitré Dinev's *Engelszungen*

In Dimitré Dinev's 2003 novel, *Engelszungen*, the two protagonists, Svetljo Apostolov and Iskren Mladenov, "find themselves stranded in Vienna in desperate circumstances." The two characters accidentally meet on 30 December 2001, in front of the grave of the former Serbian criminal Miro (Schweiger 2004), who has become an *angel for the Vienna immigrants* and a last port of call for many of them (Dinev 2003: 11). As a "Gesellschaftsroman" ('social novel'), as Wolfgang Müller-Funk points out, the novel reveals not only the stories of three generations, spanning over fifty years, but also the socio-political structure of twentieth-century, socialist Bulgaria and the relationship of the Bulgarians to their communist system (Müller-Funk 2009:

404f.).[7] The text contains "a complex net of motifs of the tongue," negotiations of (speech) identity and dialogues with dead persons, which show the "painful remarks of a nomadic life" on the protagonists' language biographies (Schweiger 2004). Iskren's father, Mladen, is a party member who has acquired the ability to talk about political matters with *angels' tongues* and who writes his speeches with the help of the prostitute Isabella (Dinev 2003: 333). Svetljo's father, Jordan, works for the Bulgarian militia and spends his days interrogating and forcing confessions from political prisoners. He "can even make iron talk," as his collegues say about him (Dinev 2003: 53).[8] The two family stories intertwine when their fathers accidently meet in the hospital the day Svetljo is born. Although both sons are from Plodiv, they will not meet again until their encounter at Miro's grave (Dinev 2003: 587). By that time, Iskren has already slipped into crime. Vienna, at the interface of east and west, has become his new home where he struggles for legal status and a possible future (Hielscher 2006: 205). Svetljo's life as a refugee revolves around his 'voicelessness', which Hannes Schweiger reads as a negative reaction to the language of propaganda used in his country of origin, Bulgaria (Schweiger 2004).

In the title of the novel, *Engelszungen*, as often pointed out by the research, we encounter the idea of the tongue as an instrument of language production as well as a reference to the *Song of Songs* (*Hohe Lied der Liebe*).[9] The titel refers to the "power of language," which can create both "propaganda and poetry," as Martin Hielscher states (Hielscher 2006: 202). The novel also illustrates "the erotic and religious properties of language," when the prostitute Isabella is "assigned the features of a guardian angel," because "her atticism when she helps Mladen to write his political speeches *wings* them" (Hielscher 2006: 202). The angels' tongues established in the novel are themselves drawing upon the language of heritage and link the meaning of the "oral narrative tradition" (Hielscher 2006: 202) to "oral history" (Müller-Funk 2009: 409).[10]

7 Martin Hielscher calls *Engelszungen* a "picaresque novel" that shows how in the socialist states with the falling apart of the traditional society also the traditional families fell apart. (Hielscher 2006: 201). Also, Wolfgang Müller-Funk elaborates the complex family constellations in the context of the political and historical background as well as the "collective memory" (Müller-Funk 2009: 405–07).

8 "'Er kann sogar das Eisen zum Reden bringen', sagten die Kollegen voller Bewunderung und doch nicht ohne Abscheu von ihm." (Dinev 2003: 53).

9 1. Letter of the Corinthians, Book King Salomon.

10 The first sentence of the novel makes the symbiosis of rational and mystical elements obvious: "Miro had a cell phone and two wings." (Miro hatte ein Handy und zwei Flügel.) (Dinev 2003: 7).

In *Engelszungen*, the grandparents' transmission of their past experiences to their grandchildren serves as an "identity-establishing element" for a new generation (Hielscher 2006: 206). Narrating tradition helps Svetljo to find self-assurance in a new world, especially since his voicelessness, which occurs as a result of his conflicted relationship with his father, carries over into his life as a refugee (Hielscher 2006: 206).

The protagonists, like Abel Nema in *Alle Tage*, demonstrate the painful adjustments made necessary by a nomadic life that is lived physically without the foundation comfort of a familiar environment. "This not only shows the creative and sociopolitical potential of being positioned in a simultaneous *here* and *there*," Hannes Schweiger points out, "but also the precarious situation of refugees, hounded by financial and existential uncertainty, as well as by an uncertainty of identity" (Schweiger 2004). Snezhana Boytcheva analyzes the "alienated speech areas" (*verfremdete Sprachräume*) and emphasises Dinev's propensity to adopt a "body-related language." Boytcheva reads this as "holding on to an idea of what might feel like *home*" (Boytcheva 2010: 155f.). She further interprets the strong identity forming entanglement between body and language as a way of dealing with the distressed "identification with the Self" (Boytcheva 2010: 157). When Svetljo, as a boy, participated in a biking contest, a girl fell off her bike. Without hesitation, Svetljo helped the girl. People in the audience started laughing. Although the little boy thought he had acted correctly, his father was disappointed and told him that he should never feel sorry for the enemy. Inspite of his father's heartless words, Svetljo longs for praise and understanding. Frustrated, the boy finds his cry for help literally silenced in his mothers lap:

> 'No worries … no worries. You did it right', Svetljo heard and felt his father's hand on his head. But why did the good words come so late, why did the father always have to hurt him first, that is what he did not understand. […] He was lucky that he came home before his father did and there he could look for shelter in his mother's lap. 'Never have I heard a good word from him, never', he repeated, his face buried in her dress, and as if his words would be affixed (glued on), wet spots evolved on the plaid fabric.[11]
>
> DINEV 2003: 285F.

11 "'Ist schon gut … ist schon gut. Du hast richtig gehandelt', hörte Svetljo und spürte die Hand seines Vaters auf dem Kopf. Aber warum kamen die guten Worte so spät, warum mußte der Vater ihm immer zuerst weh tun, das verstand er nicht. […] Er hatte Glück, daß er vor seinem Vater nach Hause kam und sich mit all seinem Kummer in den Schoß

2 Language of Propaganda and Language of Love

Boytcheva gives an example of the "alienated speech areas" in the novel in the *word for word* translation of a political speech of Todor Shivkov, head of state of the People's Republic of Bulgaria from 1954 until 1989 (Boytcheva 2010: 160):

> The radio was turned on loud, out of it rumbled the voice of comrade Shivkov. 'Dear comrade Breschnjew! Dear members of the party and delegation of the Soviet government! In this moment, our homeland and its capital city Sofia greets happily and eventfully you, the emissaries of the great Sovietland, like its brothers, like faithful allies in the battle for the prosperity of the people…'[12]
>
> DINEV 2003: 57

Depending on the cultural context of the reader, as Boytcheva states, this "political discourse" could confront him/her with a sense of "foreignness" due to the direct takeover of the Bulgarian semantic wording and structures by the ideological vocabulary of the Soviet system (Boytcheva 2010: 10f.). To illustrate this *foreignness*, I have translated the quote directly one to one into English. All other quotations from *Engelszungen* were translated by me according to their context. This also makes obvious the fact that translation always is interpretation and dependent upon cultural embedding. Through this "Sprachfremde," the reader might automatically be aware of a certain "distance from one's own *reality*," or what one would describe as *reality*, as created by the specific language tools available (Boytcheva 2010: 161). The oscillation of formal and thematic linguistic variations challenges "fixed norms" of what is considered to be "standard language" (Boytcheva 2010: 164).

The relationships among power, speech and violence are complex. As already mentioned, Svetljo Apostolov's life as a refugee is shaped by his voicelessness. This state of being weaves like a thread through his entire language

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der Mutter werfen konnte. 'Noch nie habe ein gutes Wort von ihm gehört, noch nie', wiederholte er, das Gesicht in ihrem Kleid begraben, und als ob seine Worte dort aufgeklebt wären, bildeten sich auf dem karierten Stoff nasse Flecken." (Dinev 2003: 285f.).

12 "Das Radio war laut aufgedreht, aus ihm donnerte die Stimme des Genossen Shivkov. 'Teurer Genosse Breschnjew! Teure Mitglieder der Partei und Regierungsdelegation der Sowjetunion! In diesem Augenblick begrüßt unsere Heimat und ihre Hauptstadt Sofia bewegt und glücklich Sie, die Sendboten des großen Sowjetlandes, wie ihre Brüder, wie treue Verbündete im Kampf für den Wohlstand des Volkes…'" (Dinev 2003: 57).

biography. When he was a little child, he once had to listen to a speech of the party leader Shivkov that devastated him: "In his desperation, Jordan stuck his finger into Svetljo's mouth to give him air, and he realized that Svetljo swallowed his tongue." (Dinev 2003: 151)[13] The tongue here serves as a metaphor for his internalised coping with the trauma. The boy's silence can be read, as mentioned earlier, as a reaction to what is for him a foreign and threatening propaganda language (Schweiger 2004): "'Shivkov', repeated Svetljo silently, but his Opa didn't hear him. 'Comrade Shivkov shits from below and from above', Svetljo said and laughed" (Dinev 2003: 160).[14] The adult Svetljo lives a "hidden existence in the shadows" and possesses no "outer identity" (Schweiger 2004). He has no visa and has only worked odd jobs in Austria since he flew in from Bulgaria in December 1990 when the communist system collapsed. But Svetljo does possess an "inner identity" (Schweiger 2004), which articulates itself through silence and later through his transformative experiences with the "language of love," as Iris Hipfl points out (Hipfl 2008: 101). As a 'foreigner', he at first finds it impossible to be responsive to interpersonal relationships (Hielscher 2006: 206). When he meets the Austrian woman Nathalie, he feels helpless to communicate with her. He refers to his unspoken words as stones:

> He had the feeling that he carried around stones instead of words; stones which somebody forced him, like back then in the Army, to sew in. They were hard; they were gray, and if he were to open his mouth, they would roll out and kill and crush and hurt. He was afraid to show her the poverty of his apartment and his life. He did not even have a dream about which he could tell her.[15]
>
> DINEV 2003: 555

13 "In seiner Verzweiflung steckte Jordan die Finger in Svetljos Mund, um ihm so Luft zu verschaffen, und so merkte er, daß Svetljo die Zunge verschluckt hatte." (Dinev 2003: 151).

14 "'Shivkov', wiederholte Svetljo leise, aber sein Opa hörte ihn nicht. 'Der Genosse Shivkov kackt von unten und von oben', sagte Svetljo und lachte." (Dinev 2003: 160).

15 "Er hatte das Gefühl, daß er statt Worte Steine mit sich schleppte, Steine, die jemand ihn, so wie damals in der Armee, gezwungen hatte, einzunähen. Hart waren sie, grau waren sie, und würde er seinen Mund aufmachen, würden sie hinausrollen und erschlagen und drücken und wehtun. Er hatte Angst, ihr die Armut seiner Wohnung und seines Lebens zu zeigen. Nicht einmal einen Traum hatte er, von dem er ihr erzählen hätte können." (Dinev 2003: 555).

In his laudation of the 2005 Adalbert of Chamisso Advancement Award winner Dinev, Jochen Hörisch claims that the novel depicts a "'romantic motif in post-romantic times': Wherever we go, we go home. Such in the sense of Novalis, author of German romanticism: *Where are we going? Always home*" (Hörisch 2005).[16] Not until he encounters "the language of love does Svetljo literally loosen his tongue" (Hipfl 2008: 101) and experience feelings of what might be called *home* (Müller-Funk 2009: 413). He is stretched to his limits when he has to try to speak in two tongues (Hielscher 2006: 206): "Svetljo spent the next day thinking alternately of his past and Nathalie" (Dinev 2003: 597).[17] Language seems to be a potential barrier when Svetljo first gets to know Nathalie, but by the end of the novel, emotions supersede language barriers and connect two souls. When Nathalie says to Svetljo: "I fell in love with you" (Dinev 2003: 598),[18] he at first feels alienated since he has never heard these words in German, but then the body language of love materialises the language as a means of immaterial communication, and adds another dimension to his body-language biography:

> It was the first time that he heard it in this language, therefore the words appeared to sound so foreign. Immediately afterwards, the tongues in his mouth became two, and it was good this way, because never before was a human being able to speak with two tongues. Every word suffers from it, one's own as much as the foreign, every word that comes in between and that tries to kill all joy of two close souls.[19]
>
> DINEV 2003: 598

Svetljo's father, Jordan, is punished symbolically for the violence he uses in interrogations in two ways: His son does not speak, and his wife cheats on him with the bus driver and decides to leave her husband for good. Unable to deal with this humiliation, Jordan kills the rival and cuts out his tongue,

16 Jochen Hörisch (2005) took this quotation from Novalis's text *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

17 "Den nächsten Tag verbrachte Svetljo, indem er abwechselnd an seine Vergangenheit und an Nathalie dachte." (Dinev 2003:597).

18 "Ich habe mich in dich verliebt." (Dinev 2003: 598).

19 "Es war das erste Mal, daß er es in dieser Sprache hörte, deswegen schienen ihm die Worte so fremd zu klingen. Gleich danach wurden die Zungen in seinem Mund zwei, und es war gut so, denn mit zwei Zungen hatte noch nie ein Mensch sprechen können. Jedes Wort leidet darunter, das eigene wie das fremde, jedes, das dazwischen gerät und das Spiel zu verderben sucht, zweier einander sehr nahe gekommener Seelen." (Dinev 2003: 598).

the instrument that brought sexual exaltation to his wife. Emotionless, he preserves it in a glass as a trophy:

> Every Tuesday night he locked himself into the bedroom, got a small glass can, that he normally keeps hidden in the wardrobe, and looked at the tongue, that made his wife fortunate. It was canned in spiritus like a precious animal.[20]
>
> DINEV 2003: 397

Not only does Svetljo fall silent, but so does Jordan. Unlike his son, Jordan can not overcome or escape the *Sprachfremde*. For him, it is indeed the second period of silence. The first time he withdrew from his role as a husband and stopped talking to his wife was when he discovered on their wedding night that Marina was not a virgin (Dinev 2003: 49; 52). His second silence results from his wife's infidelity (Dinev 2003: 392). She manages to overcome the silence in their marriage by finding a new lover. Jordan punishes her by making her lover literally incapable of speech (Dinev 2003: 397).

3 Terézia Mora's *Alle Tage*

A speech exile in silence comparable to Jordan's can also be found in the language biography of Abel Nema, main protagonist of Mora's 2004 novel *Alle Tage*. Abel, the nomadic and displaced character is not only a translator and linguist, but also something of a phenomenon. As a person who speaks ten languages fluently, his journey sounds like, as Albrecht states, the story of a modern *Kaspar Hauser* (Albrecht 2010: 265). His father Andor leaves the family silently and without warning. When searching for him, Abel gets injured in a gas accident: he lost his sense of orientation but gained the ability to learn an unlimited number of foreign languages. Counter-intuitively, Abel's native language is never mentioned when he answers Professor Tibor's question about his facility with languages:

> What to do with this new ability was not quite clear. There were high points—words, cases, syntagmas—but the languages kept getting mixed

20 "Jede Dienstagnacht sperrte er sich ins Schlafzimmer ein, holte eine kleine Glaskonserve, die er sonst versteckt im Kleiderschrank aufbewahrte, und betrachtete die Zunge, die seine Frau so glücklich gemacht hatte. In Spiritus war sie eingelegt, wie ein wertvolles Tier." (Dinev 2003: 397).

> up: I start out in Russian and end up in French, That doesn't matter, he realized now: he couldn't prove or demonstrate anything; it was one big muddle. And then he said, my mother tongue, my father tongue plus three international languages.
>
> MORA 2007: 87

Professor Tibor, fascinated by the young man's language capabilities, provides a fellowship at a university in a city called B., which then enables Abel to learn ten languages in the language lab (Biendarra 2011: 49).[21] As the novel avoids a concrete designation of the languages Abel acquires, it eludes an "unambiguous assignment" of the "nationalities" and the relationships of the "figures" (Kegelmann 2011: 422). Abel, since fleeing from his Balkan homeland (Biendarra 2011: 48), is surrounded by various people: the young woman Mercedes, whom he marries more or less as a means to cover up his homosexuality, the locals who frequent a night club and his fellow students (Kegelmann 2011: 415). People are fascinated by him and feel attracted to him. His rigid work in the language lab turns out to be successful. He is fluent in all ten languages and speaks them without any accent at all. He is isolated, however, and does not use his language competency to communicate and to establish a social network. He has the capacity to learn many languages but somehow, because of it, is robbed of his roots, language and identity, as often pointed out by the research, and as the book cover of the English translation words it: "for all his languages he has little humanity to put into words." His language acquisition is not "polyglot," but rather "manic and paradoxical"; the more languages he speaks, "the more isolated he is from society" (Albrecht 2010: 267f.). He wanders through "empty spaces" (Czeglédy 2010: 315)[22]—there is no topographical placement, as the novel sets the stage with the often-referenced sentences:

21 Previšić interprets that Abel's economic situation stands against a reading of him as a poor and "homeless migrant." He has certainly money and is integrated in the academia: "Sobald der Roman nicht mehr einfach als Abbild eines heimatlosen Migranten verstanden wird (denn dazu hat Abel Nema—ehrlich gesagt—zu viele Privilegien, kann sich einheiraten, sichert sich finanziell ab usw.) sondern als Tiefenstruktur einer globalisierten Wirklichkeit, werden Eigenschafts- und Ortslosigkeit zu bestimmenden Faktoren, welche sich bezeichnenderweise auch auf die Zeitlosigkeit übertrage" (Previšić 2010: 8).

22 Still after ten years, his paths in the city called B. are limited and he frequents the same places over and over again. For a detailed analysis of the motif of the metropolis in *Alle Tage*, see Kegelmann (2011), Chiarloni (2009) and Orao (2011).

> Let us call the time *now*; let us call the place *here*. Let us describe both as follows. A city, a district somewhat east of the center. Brown streets, warehouses empty or full of nobody quite knows what, and jam-packed human residences zigzagging along the railway line, running into brick walls in sudden cul-de-sacs.
>
> MORA 2007: 5

His persona "gains its contour lines" (Kegelmann 2011: 415) not from a localisation or chronological order, but rather from the "polyphonic structure of the novel," pointed out unanimously by the research (Kegelmann 2011: 415; Previšić 2010: 4; Biendarra 2011: 53). The reader's impression of Abel is largely formed through the eyes and opinions of others (Kegelmann 2011: 415). Abel is the only character who never really speaks up (Previšić 2010: 7), which makes us question why he is a linguist at all if he has nothing to say. This young man from the Balkans is an alien who seems to have nothing of note to define him: "He carries a world of silence in himself" (Albrecht 2010: 266). His language biography enacts the dependency of language and body. His "inner identity" (Schweiger 2004) stays hidden from the outside world. His name is the label *Nema*, an anagram for amen. "Nema stands in Slavic languages for silence and as a denotation for a German (Nemec) or all that do not speak Slavic languages, and are considered as silence." (Albrecht 2010: 266) *Abel*, in the Hebrew language, as Terry Albrecht points out, means "indifference or inanity" (Albrecht 2010: 266). Anke S. Biendarra offers a reading of the figure of Abel Nema as a victim of "transnational trauma," who is suffering from and marked by "migration and displacement" (Biendarra 2011: 47). However, *Alle Tage* can also be read in more complex layers that undermine the assumption that national borders cannot be transgressed that easily. Boris Previšić suggests the reader should not see Abel as a "victim of globalization" (Previšić 2010: 2) but rather should focus on the "narrative polyphony" of the diversity of voices (Previšić 2010: 6). I, furthermore, see a certain performative strategy in the language homunculus that Abel creates to cover up his unsolved sense of *Sprachfremde*.

4 Abel Nema's Homunculus of Languages

Abel builds his language system on memorisation of vocabulary and sounds. Like a mathematical formula, he grasps languages as formal constructions (Mora 2007: 98) but does not use and perform them as a means of social connection. It seems as if he carries dead languages in his body and mind. The concept of languages as a metaphor for transcultural competence does not

get established through Abel. He never learns semantic connotations, sayings or how languages influence ways and modes of thinking (Biendarra 2011: 50). Instead, he is a master of the organs of articulation:

> […] now the inside of his mouth was the only land whose landscapes he knew to the last detail: lips, teeth alveoli, palate, velum, uvula, tongue, apex, dorsum, larynx. Voice onset time, voiced, voiceless, aspirated, distinctive or non-. Stops, fricatives, nasals, laterals, vibrant, taps and flaps. For four long years—years redolent of the male dormitory, of linoleum and neon lights—he followed one and one route only: dormitory to language laboratory and back.
>
> MORA 2007: 98

Abel's competency in language acquisition seems to come at the expense of his ability to engage with others. His language talents are a "paradox": his survival strategy of incorporating physically more and more languages only results in "social isolation" (Albrecht 2010: 268). The image of the mouth functions as a metaphor. Depicted as a familiar, not foreign, country, the oral region and the places of articulation come to serve as a topographical placement for somebody who is out of place:

> What makes the whole thing even more unbelievable—no, uncanny—the Modern Languages people said, is that he learns sound by sound, analyzing frequency charts, rummaging through phonetic codes, painting his tongue black to compare imprints. It's starting to look like a punishment: drinking ink or eating soap powder. The word *laboratory* appears in a new light: the technological comes first, the human second. You'd think he was creating a homunculus there in the night, except that his consists exclusively of language, the perfect clone of a language between glottis and labia. What kind of life is that?
>
> MORA 2007: 99

Abel creates his own "homunculus" that consists of languages. His distinction from the other protagonists and, at the same time, isolation from them ultimately begets the homunculus as a replacement body inscribed by formal language structures but lacking the physicality of language that should emerge through the communication with other human beings. In this context, Boris Previšić (2010: 8) remarks that after learning his tenth language, Abel almost has to throw up, but he also notes that this passage is one of the very few in

which Abel makes an appearance as speech-acting subject. Because imbibing foreign languages is a form of self-torture, Abel experiences bodily pain, but he also "squeezes out the *I*," the grammatical subject in the first person singular, as a product of embodied linguistic awareness (Previšić 2010: 6):

> At a certain point of the palpitations, the nausea, the sweating, the sensitivity to light receded: the tenth language was complete; one more and I'll vomit. He washed his hands and face and left.
>
> MORA 2007: 117

Previšić contextualises this sequence of Abel Nema's multilingualism with the polyphonic aspect of the novel in general. The first distanced and neutral description results in the "I" raising its voice (Previšić 2010: 6); in this moment his "multilingualism breaks through his emotional barriers" (Previšić 2010: 7). This passage also conflicts with Abel's attributive voicelessness and his performative naming, Abel Nema (Previšić 2010: 7). Abel himself sets off this process (Albrecht 2010: 269); he is very much aware of what he is doing to his body (Previšić 2010: 7) as the above-cited quote shows.

Abel reaches a state of mental independence from the commitments of the socio-cultural space, but not a physical one until the end. Abel is in a state of "deterritorialization" (Biendarra 2011: 54); he exists as an outsider in a society in which, for him, places do not perform the function of social spaces of action anymore. He has to experience that in a physical way. Consequently, Abel Nema's *Sprachreise*, his language journey, ends not only in amnesia but also in aphasia, a loss of speech (Albrecht 2010: 268). Beaten up and tortured by a group of young gypsies, he ends up almost crucified, hanging by his feet (Albrecht 2010: 265):

> On an early autumn Saturday morning in a neglected playground not far from the railway station three women found the translator Abel Nema dangling from a jungle gym: feet wound round with silver tape, a long, black trench coat covering the head, swinging slightly in the morning breeze.
>
> MORA 2007: 6

Later, Abel lies in the hospital in a fugue state:

> The room is full: doctors and at least ten speech therapists, one for each language. […] To make a long story short: he's lost his languages. You've got a bright little boy there.
>
> MORA 2007: 415F.

He has become a linguistic phenomenon, a subject of research; as the doctor states: "It's one of the most interesting neurolinguistic cases ever" (Mora 2007: 416). Embodying the symbolism of his name, he does not remember anything or anybody. "All functions of language that create and secure identity have faded" (Czeglédy 2010: 322). Unable to perform the given and demanded social norms and to negotiate the power and dependency issues that come with relationships, he remains a weak body within his surrounding society, an embodiment of an "anti-hero" (Kegelmann 2011: 424), as can be seen when he, at the end of the novel, "interrupts repeatedly: 'That's good!'" (Mora 2007: 416f.) He is left with a wounded, penetrated body:

> When people tell him what they know about him—his name is Abel Nema, he comes from such and such a country, and once spoke, translated, and interpreted ten or twelve languages—he shakes his head with a polite-apologetic-incredulous smile. [...] Contrary to expectations, he has recovered but one language, the local language, though in that language he can generate only simple sentences. [...] What he most likes to say is still: That's good. The relief, no, the joy he derives from being able to say it is so palpable that his loved ones give him every opportunity to do so.
>
> MORA 2007: 418

By contrast, the "dystopian ending" (Biendarra 2011: 57), Abel's aphasic state, "establishes order" (Previšić 2010: 9f.). Abel Nema becomes "located in one language," a localisation that becomes "detached from national boundaries of the country of origin" and previous cultural processes (Previšić 2010: 9f.). Abel, because of the aphasia, goes through the process of child language acquisition without a static attachment to his birth place. Previšić points out that the novel, with this ending, negates the established performative polyphony (Previšić 2010: 12). We agree with Previšić and therefore suggest reading the novel's ending not as a finite one but rather as a turn to a new, certainly bitter and severe, path in his language biography. Abel does not need to "label" what he perceives as reality anymore nor does he have to isolate himself by being different (Previšić 2010: 13). Following Previšić's reading of speech performativity, one could take the reading so far as to state that, not until Abel, bound again to a speech normative perspective, knows the *simplicity* of just having to express himself in one language does he experience relief at the end of the novel when he says "That's good." (Mora 2007: 418)

5 Angels Speaking in Tongues Lost in Translation

In both novels, Dimitré Dinev's *Engelszungen* and Terézia Mora's *Alle Tage*, the authors enact literary language biographies in which the protagonists need to find new ways to express themselves. The novels narrate the story of "language and identity loss," but also of "salvation" (Hielscher 2006: 201), through transgression. The novels, although they have quite different endings, establish comparable motifs, such as the plurality of identity plots, the orality of the narrative tradition, and the protagonists' voicelessness as a reaction to and also a product of social and cultural norms. The protagonists' flawed and ambiguous bodies show, as outlined here, the marks of *Sprachfremde*, their foreignness *in* language but also the language of the foreign that acts upon them.

In *Engelszungen*, according to Hipfl, the motif of the tongue serves as a metaphor not only for an instrument of language production, but also for Svetljo's psychological rejection of a political language that speaks with twisted tongues. Svetljo's tongue is frozen into silence and only melts when he encounters the "language of love" (Hipfl 2008: 101). In *Alle Tage*, Abel Nema's language ability results in the "trauma" (Biendarra 2011: 46) of being "a human being, without humanity," as Abel is described by his roommate Konstantin (Mora 2007: 117). His seemingly new openness in his interactions with his fellow human is a result of his aphasia. Bound to one language, he becomes bound to humanity, in a tragic way.

Dinev and Mora enact protagonists that struggle with and face up to the obstacles caused by being exposed to language diversity—each of them in a different and specific manner. Svetljo and Abel challenge discursive constructions of the positive aspects of being a transnational citizen and of multilinguality. The protagonists are not at all smooth characters but rather inconsistent and contradictory ones. Being exposed to multilingualism and varieties of speech carries a great potential to create identity but can also result in social exclusion and marginalisation. In these novels, silence and multilinguality stand for "social disengagement" and "de-subjectification" (Czeglédy 2010: 322). However, these processes lay the groundwork for the constant testing and stretching of language boundaries.

In both novels, the protagonists feel betrayed by their fathers, both political and human because these authority figures have contributed to their loss of community. Poor decisions by political leaders have forced them into exile. Their fathers have proven unable to help them in their transition into a new world—one because of his involvement with the failed government and his negative relationship with his son and the other because of his desertion of

his family (Müller-Funk 2009: 407; Biendarra 2011: 40). The exile faced by these young men is more than simple topographical isolation; it is also the lack of a sense of "belonging" to a community and a culture (Biendarra 2011: 57). Their state of permanent marginalisation underlines the fact that there is no home to return to. Svetljo's and Abel's trouble with language, their *Sprachfremde*, is symbolic of this sense of otherness that they fear will be permanent. The resolution of their crises logically comes through redefining *home*. Tragically, *home* was never really defined in the first place. For Svetljo, *home* is the community he creates with his lover Nathalie; *home* becomes the immediate family, wherever it is located (Müller-Funk 2009: 413). For Abel, the attempt to try to gain access to the world community—or as many parts of it as possible—fails, and feelings of *home* can never be established. He is forced to have just one language. Although acquiring all the different languages does not bring salvation in order to achieve a sense of community, when being bound to and located in just one language, things do not come full circle either, as the novel begins with "Let us call the time *now*; let us call the place *here*" (Mora 2007: 5). To take up the image of the knotted tongue in the context of *home*; the authors enact protagonists that have to re-identify themselves before they can speak and connect. *Home*, it now becomes obvious, might be, throughout the narrative in both novels, the imagined future place of the present voicelessness and silence. While Svetljo finds his voice in expressing his love for Nathalie, for Abel it is yet to come.

How do bodies become inscribed by language and at the same time have the power to inscribe both the body and language of others? This is the question we raised at the beginning of this article. In various ways, the injured bodies in the novels result in speechlessness and voicelessness as a reflection of the experience of foreignness. The rejection of language and communication signifies a loss of identity, both "inner and outer" (Schweiger 2004). The novels create unique language biographies that represent moments of transcultural confrontation as well as a challenge to the idea of the native tongue as the embodied norm. This article attempted to explore how literature ruptures, transforms and transgresses common perceptions of identity performance, and to examine the function and power of speech by looking at the vulnerability of the language body as represented by *voicelessness* for Svetljo in *Engelszungen* and Abel's *language recovery* in *Alle Tage*. The novels can serve as examples of literature, or maybe, as Marven states, of "postidentity literature" (Marven 2011: 7) that links cultural productions to larger issues, such as the painful materiality of language as it is threaded through the (language) biography. The protagonists analysed in both novels have significant speech-performative aspects tied into their *personae*, a fact that makes their isolation from society obvious, sometimes in a very excessive and painful way.

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CHAPTER 8

Putting Hell on Paper: Chronic Pain Patients and the Challenge of Illness Narratives

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Abstract

Within the growing field of illness narratives, autobiographical accounts of patients who live with chronic pain form a comparatively rare subgenre. These narratives face manifold difficulties in conveying of what it means to live with nearly constant, life-crippling pain, struggling against the reader's urge to turn away from the monotonous torture, and also against the invisibility of pain, which causes the marginalisation of sufferers with chronic pain disease in society. Intrinsically bound up with this marginalisation is the issue of available language that allows a sufferer to verbalise her pain. Through exemplary readings of two contemporary illness narratives of chronic pain patients (Lous Heshusius, Lynne Greenberg) and one of the late 19th century (Alphonse Daudet), this essay questions the supposedly self-evident, exceptional status which has been attributed to physical pain by most phenomenological thinkers: a feeling that is utterly isolating, inexpressible and simply resistant to translation. Instead, this essay argues, illness narratives inscribe individual experience into a larger community, which is constantly transformed by testimonies. This circular structure of "narrative ethics" (A. Frank) thus challenges the tenet of pain's inexpressibility.

1 A Budding Genre of Survivor Literature

Within the growing field of illness narratives and survivor literature, autobiographical accounts of patients who are living with chronic pain form a comparatively rare and young subgenre. An obvious explanation lies in the fact that chronic pain has been classified as an illness only recently (Melzack and Wall 1994, Merskey and Bogduk 1994). Until the late 1970s, pain was considered not a suitable target for research. In medical terms deemed of no interest, physical pain was presumed to be a negligible symptom and mere personal experience that could not be studied quantitatively. Patients whose pain neither reacted to medication nor could be explained by an organic lesion or dysfunction were often relegated to psychiatrists or treated as malingerers (Soyka

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2001: 81). This situation has fundamentally changed even if affected patients still face a shortage of adequate medical resources (Zimmermann 1988: 57). In 1974, John Bonica, anaesthesiologist and author of the standard work *The Management of Pain* (1953), founded the *International Association for the Study of Pain*, which laid the groundwork for the institutionalised study of pain, the foundation of specialised pain treatment centres, and the development of a university curriculum for students of medicine. The last three decades have seen an explosion of research on the physiology of pain, collective pain beliefs and pain chronification patterns (Meldrum 2003). Simultaneously, medical practitioners and researchers began to revalue physical pain as intrinsically detrimental to health. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, pain is a subject that receives great attention, not only from sufferers and their attending doctors, but also from scholars in the humanities,[1] and increasingly from national politics. The final report of the *European Pain Proposal* (2010) states that every fifth European suffers from unspecified chronic head and back pain or chronic pain caused by cancer, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, neuralgia, multiple sclerosis etc. (The minimal definition of chronic pain is endured suffering on more than three days of the week for more than three hours a day.) Epidemiological data for the US are comparable (*The Painful Truth Report*). Chronic pain disease as a "silent epidemic" has come into the public's focus. It is no longer regarded as an insignificant symptom of diseases, but as a central public-health issue that causes damages to national economies worth billions. General interest in chronic pain disease and in patients' memoirs possibly has increased not least of all for these economic reasons.

Nevertheless, these illness narratives face a threefold difficulty in their endeavour to create awareness of what it means to live with nearly constant, life-crippling pain. On a mere practical level, narratives of chronic pain patients generally do not follow a "restitution plot" (Frank 1995: 77): it lies in the nature of chronic pain disease which is resilient to treatment that authors do not write after the cure has made them whole and healthy again, but rather protocol the changes brought to their lives while still being pain patients. They face the possibility of living with intermittent pain until the end of their days. Reading their accounts, one often wonders how they could gather the strength to write through the pain. Secondly, narratives of patients with chronic pain not only struggle against the reader's urge to turn away from the monotonous torture but also struggle against the invisibility of pain in the individual causing the marginalisation of sufferers of chronic pain in society. "For who wants to know what constant pain is like?" asks Lous Heshusius (2009: xxiii) in her

1 See e.g. Morris (1991), Christians (1999), Meyer and Hermann (2006).

pain memoir *Inside Chronic Pain*. Thirdly, and intrinsically bound up with the second difficulty is the question of available language that allows a sufferer to verbalise her pain.

2 The Exceptional Status of Pain as an Isolating Emotion

"How do you put hell on paper? Love would be easier. Or joy, or pleasure." (Heshusius 2009: xxiii) Heshusius's puzzled observation at the outset of her memoir implies an important assumption with regard to the difficulty of expressing feelings of physical pain. This difficulty has been stressed so insistently that it has become something of a philosophical commonplace to pronounce the adequate expression of pain as an insurmountable or even ontological impossibility. Since, at the latest, Wittgenstein, theoreticians of pain from the realms of philosophy and literature have agreed on the epistemologically and socially isolated and isolating status of physical pain. Since we are unable to feel another's pain, we remain in doubt about the truthfulness of his or her feelings and reports of pain. Moreover, both a recollection of our own feelings of pain, and thus also a belated analysis of this sensation, are also impossible, since pain in its intensity is only palpable to the sufferer in its here and now. Pain is something that we know all too well, but cannot recognise. Philosophically, physical pain is what is quintessentially beyond recognition (Sofsky 1996; List 1996).

Physical pain is no sign for something else. It does not mean anything and does not refer to anything else. Elaine Scarry has given the most influential version of this reading of physical pain with her now classic study *The Body in Pain* (1985). Physical pain in its relentless presence floods the sufferer and lets her fall silent. A linguistic state of emergency follows. Scarry speaks of an "unshareability" of physical pain, of pain's essential rigidity which resists language and of a general "inexpressibility" of pain (Scarry 1985: 3f.). The widely quoted passage from Scarry's introduction states that pain in contrast to all other feelings (such as love, hate, fear or hunger) has no referential content: "It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language." (Scarry 1985: 5) This impossibility (or tremendous difficulty—Scarry does not commit herself to either term) of putting pain into words is responsible for pain's invisibility, which facilitates its instrumentalisation for different ideologies.

In his work *Over de Pijn* (*On Pain*) [1943], the Dutch anthropologist Frederic Buytendijk defined differences between psychological pain and acute pain as well as sustained physical pain with regard to how they affect the questioning attitude of the sufferer. Pain, as an interruption of the smooth flow of

consciousness, stimulates metaphysical inquiry. Whereas pleasure and happiness are experienced in an unproblematic manner, putting us in a state of harmonious, trouble-free unity, suffering puts an end to any "metaphysical insouciance" (Buytendijk 1948: 21). Psychological pain such as an endured injustice is indissolubly linked to mental questioning, comparing, distancing, and appraisal processes which alleviate or intensify the suffering. In phenomenological terms, physical pain, however, constitutes a fissure in the transparency of the Body-Subject that is the unquestioned, normal and pain-free state of the Self. The French surgeon, René Leriche aptly describes this experience by defining health as living within the "silence of the organs" (Leriche 1937: 27). Physical pain, on the contrary, is experienced as property of a body that has suddenly become a stranger (Buytendijk 1948: 134). Buytendijk differentiates between the sudden, acute pain that is quick over and forgotten ("Getroffen-Werden") and prolonged pain ("Getroffen-Sein"). Only in the case of sustained pain does the sufferer experience pain as an isolating and torturing presence without a frame and perspective. Similarly, Emanuel Levinas cites inescapability and lack of perspective in order to mark the crucial distinction between physical and psychological pain. Whereas in moral pain the sufferer stays in possession of her cognitive and linguistic capacities, thus preserving a distancing and liberating attitude of dignity, the utter subjection to physical pain makes it impossible to detach oneself from existence. Levinas's ontological philosophy understands physical suffering as an encounter with the existential solitude and the presence of being which cannot be outrun:

> In the ordeal, in suffering, in physical pain, we find the definitive in its purest form, which constitutes the tragedy of solitude [...] physical suffering in all its degrees is an impossibility to detach oneself from the instance of existence. It is the very irremissibility of Being.[2]
>
> LEVINAS 1983: 55

The philosophies of pain proposed by Buytendijk and Levinas describe physical pain as an opaque status, as an existential throwback onto oneself, and as a crippling presence without an exit. However, Levinas's and Buytendijk's existentialist-phenomenological positions which pivot on the isolating status of the experience of pain are historically situated readings of pain. They emerge

2 English translation is mine. The original reads: "Dans la peine, dans la douleur, dans la souffrance, nous retrouvons, à l'état de pureté, le définitif, qui constitue la tragédie de la solitude [...] la souffrance physique, à tous ses degrés, est une impossibilité de se détacher de l'instant de l'existence. Elle est l'irrémissibilité même de l'être."

in times, when religious interpretations that had helped sufferers to alleviate their suffering are increasingly losing their effect. Traditionally, as a rupture between subject and body, the experience of pain marked the collapse of conventional meaning and opened up a passageway to spiritualisation (Scheler 1963: 37). This obvious link between the collapse of meaning in pain and the experience of pain as an opening for spiritual interpretations dissolves with the emerging medical understanding of the pain mechanism and the attendant secularised interpretations of pain (Primavera-Lévy 2012: 30–46). The vision of a spiritual surplus value gained through the experience of pain has lost much of its persuasiveness.[3] For Buytendijk, who is aware that his diagnosis bears a historical dimension, modern man who is oblivious to the human condition, no longer reflects on a deeper meaning of pain, regarding it only as troublesome nuisance or temporary inconvenience that can be managed with suitable medication. Blaming progress in the treatment of pain, Buytendijk (1948: 165ff.) sees the modern experience of pain as an increasingly isolated one that has lost its once natural pathos of a universally shared condition.

3 Sensible Feelings or Questioning the Exceptional Status of Physical Pain

The exceptional position that much of contemporary theory attributes to physical pain should be questioned. Through readings of three illness narratives of patients with chronic pain we shall see how the work of literature counteracts the concept of pain's "unshareability" and contributes to making imaginable a life with recurrent pain. These are the aforementioned memoir by Lous Heshusius *Inside Chronic Pain* (2009), Lynne Greenberg's *The Body Broken* (2009), and the French writer Alphonse Daudet's notebooks *La Doulou* (*La Douleur*) [1887–1895], which were only published in 1930. The supposedly existential truth of pain's isolating properties and its "inexpressibility" is far from being self-evident. In fact, with the recent apparition of this genre of illness narratives we might be witnessing a reversal of common assumptions about the isolating nature of pain.

Before turning to the texts, it is necessary to clarify the question of whether the phenomenological structure of physical pain fundamentally differs from other feelings. It is crucial to state that physical pain is not the only feeling that is experienced as an un-intentional feeling that is not tied to an action and essentially regarded as a condition. In fact, this classification applies to all

3 This view is also held in Illich (1976), Frankl (1950), and Buddensieg (1956).

feelings of sensation, accordingly also to the sensation of pleasure occasioned by touching, eating or drinking. Thus physical pleasure also carries the signs of existential solitude and conditional presence, which Levinas phenomenologically engages with physical pain. In his theory of the "stratification of the emotional life," German phenomenologist Max Scheler differentiates between four levels of feelings.

> These are (1) *sensible feelings*, or "feelings of sensation" (Carl Stumpf), (2) *feelings of the lived body* (as states) and *feelings of life* (as functions), (3) *pure psychic feelings* (pure feelings of the ego), and (4) *spiritual feelings* (feelings of the personality).
>
> SCHELER 1973: 332

Scheler defines the sensible feeling as "by its nature exclusively an actual fact" (Scheler 1973: 334). It is localised and extended. Indeed, sensible feelings exist exclusively as distinct moments in the body; they are defined and limited with regard to body-time and body-space. A natural linkage from sensible feelings into an emotive recollection or an expectation thereof is impossible. There is "*no 'refeeling'* ['Wiederfühlen'], *no 'postfeeling'* ['Nachfühlen'], *no 'prefeeling'* ['Vorfühlen'], and *no fellow feeling* ['Mitfühlen']" (Scheler 1973: 334). Consequently, pleasure too would be affected by the fundamental "inexpressibility." Language, as Scarry postulates for the case of physical pain, would be destroyed by pleasure and only be reconstituted with great difficulty. Obviously, the silence and invisibility of pleasure is not treated as an urgent philosophical problem as is the silence of pain. Should this point us to the conclusion that despite the fact that both pain and pleasure are sensible feelings, humans hold richer cultural and verbal strategies to communicate physical pleasure? Or is it rather not so that asking for the complete expression of the sensible feeling obliterates a more fundamental concern?

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein inquires into the possibilities of *knowing* the pain of the other. Behind this line of inquiry is the endeavour to understand socially governed language-games and the "grammar" of pain. Can we know that we mean the same phenomenon when using the phrase "I am in pain"? By giving the example of a box in everyone's possession with a "beetle" inside and their proprietors claiming that they only know what a beetle is by looking at *their* beetle, Wittgenstein concludes: "If we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and name' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant" (Wittgenstein 1953: 101, No. 293). Despite his concession that it is impossible to gain ultimate certainty about the pain of another person, Wittgenstein proposes a short

experiment to doubt the pain of another "in a real situation." In his dialogical deliberation, he writes:

> 'I can only *believe* that someone else is in pain, but I *know* it if I am'. Yes: one can make the decision to say 'I believe he is in pain' instead of 'He is in pain'. But that is all.—What looks like an explanation here, or like a statement about a mental process, is in truth an exchange of one expression for another which, while we are doing philosophy, seems the more appropriate one. Just try—in a real case—to doubt someone else's fear or pain.
>
> WITTGENSTEIN 1953: 102, No. 303

At this juncture, it seems to me that Wittgenstein swerves from his exclusively cognitive line of inquiry, pointing to a more important ethical dimension. His invitation to doubt the other's fear and pain in an actual case unveils the absurdity and human inadequacy to encounter a suffering person with assumptions about the verifiability of her feelings. If one takes the ethical line, the question of giving expression to sensible feelings of physical pain is not of prime importance. This importance is certainly given for the special case of clinical diagnostics (e.g. the detailed *McGill-questionnaire*) or for the professional author who made it her profession to find words for every imaginable state. Yet even as accomplished an author as the French Alphonse Daudet renounces this ambition when confronted with this task. In his in 1930 posthumously published collection of notes on the subject of his neurological pain *La Doulou* (*La Douleur*) [1887–1895] Daudet writes:

> Torture … no words to express. What use are words anyway? Words for everything that is felt in pain (as well as in passion)? They come when everything is over, appeased. They speak of recollection, impotent or lying.[4]
>
> DAUDET 2002: 16F.

Daudet's phrase combines Scheler's insights with Wittgenstein's claim that the verbal expression of pain replaces the cry but does not describe it (Wittgenstein 1953: 83, No. 244).

4 All translations of Daudet are my own. The original French reads: "La torture … pas de mots pour rendre ça, il faut des cris. D'abord, à quoi ça sert, les mots, pour tout ce qu'il y a de vraiment senti en douleur (comme en passion)? Ils arrivent quand c'est fini, apaisé. Ils parlent de souvenir, impuissant ou menteurs."

4 Putting Pain on Paper: Stages in the Memoirs of Chronic Pain Sufferers

If we are to accept Max Scheler's analysis, neither a cognitive nor an emotive path leads to a sensible feeling, which is always given as a present condition, exclusively tied to a specific time and a specific place in an individual body. However, descriptions of the effects of the sensible feelings of physical pain on the other levels of the emotional life are very well communicable. The pain memoirs by Greenberg, Heshusius and Daudet deliver cogent depictions of how prolonged physical pain affects thought processes as well as the living environment of chronic pain sufferers, and therefore make it possible for the reader to emphatically receive their testimonies.

Despite the differences between the three texts, two to three typical stages can be discerned in their descriptions of a life with pain, each with characteristic metaphors and themes. The first stage is characterised as a time where the pain is experienced as overpowering intrusion. It is a passage of passivity and increasing depletion of the sufferer. Pain is archetypally described as an almighty satanic agent, against which the sufferer remains powerless. Heshusius, who has been suffering from intermittent head- and neck pain since a near-fatal car accident in 1996, describes the sheer terror of the all-too-familiar visitor pain. One has certainty that he will show up, but cannot know when. She pictures the feeling of the endured exposure as follows: "When the pain stays mercifully away, I feel as if an abusive husband has left. As if a war has ended. As if a hurricane has finally passed." (Heshusius 2009: 25) Daudet speaks of the insidious invasion of pain that bit by bit infiltrates his entire thinking and feeling. Pain glides into his vision, his sensations, and judgments. A beautiful landscape no longer elicits feelings of beauty or harmony, but only escapist phantasies (Daudet 2002: 23; 40). Daudet precedes his records with the epitaph *Dictante Dolore*, taking dictation from pain. For an accomplished writer, this epitaph is an incapacitating concession. The sovereign author-subject Daudet is demoted to a medium of the powerful voice of pain. Pain does not add anything, but rather successively depletes the subject, remaining the sole discernible feature, a state, for which Daudet has coined striking spatial metaphors: "In my poor, holed carcass, worn by anomia, the pain echoes like a voice in an abode with neither furniture nor wall hangings. Days, long days where there is nothing alive within me except suffering."[5] The figure of the

5 "Dans ma pauvre carcasse creusée, vidée par l'anémie, la douleur retentit comme la voix dans un logis sans meubles ni tentures. Des jours, de longs jours où il n'y a plus rien de vivant en moi que le souffrir." (Daudet 2002: 28).

suffering patient as an empty receptacle, in which solely pain as living voice makes an appearance, recurs in Daudet's analogy between the concert hall and the incomparableness of individual suffering: "No general idea about pain. Every patient finds his own and the evil varies with the acoustics of the recital hall."[6]

A constitutive feature of the first stage of pain memoirs is the conceptual separation of *before/after*. Before the pain came into a well-ordered life, before pain changed everything; after the loss of professions, hobbies, friends, routines, daily tasks and joys that defined the sufferer's identity. "You have lost a life" is the comment of one of the more sympathetic caregivers of Heshusius, who strives to help her understand her anger and desperation (Heshusius 2009: 61; 113). In *The Body Broken*, Lynne Greenberg, a scholar of English literature, captures the *before/after* with recurrent references to Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a sudden fall from grace, in which she had been living: as professor of literature at the New Yorker Hunter College, as fulfilled, happily married mother of two wonderful children with their own Brooklyn home: "We were living in the prime of our lives in our own little Eden. I was the luckiest girl in the world." (Greenberg 2009: 14) The catastrophe of the invasion of pain into her life is palpable for the empathic reader through the narrative of the loss of her former life. Physical and psychological weakness put her beyond the gates of this private paradise. Incapacitated in her thought by the strong pain, she is obliged to resign her teaching obligations and to give up her research. Lethargic and dolorous, increasingly tied to her bedroom, she witnesses how the relationship to her children slips from her hands. The relationship with the antagonist pain becomes the most important bond of her life.

While the first stage of a life with debilitating pain is typically determined by a medical narrative, that is, by the medical language of physicians, specialists, and by the frantic and mostly hopeful search for an adequate cure to reconstitute the normal state of health, the second stage is characterised by the slow abandonment of the "restitution narrative" and the taking over of a "chaos narrative" (Frank 1995: 75; 97). During this second phase, expressions of mourning for the lost life, desperation about the suffered injustice, and suicidal deliberations dominate the narration. Alienation from the world of the healthy takes centre stage. The fact that the members of the sufferer's family (if existent) return to their normal routines after a certain time of adjustment may be registered with reassurance. More frequently, however, it forms

6 "Pas d'idée générale sur la douleur. Chaque patient fait la sienne, et le mal varie, comme la voix du chanteur, selon l'accoustique de la salle." (Daudet 2002: 17).

a further factor of isolation. Daudet acridly notes that this regained routine after the subsided state of emergency naturally implies a certain obtuseness to the condition of the person in pain: "Pain is always new to the one who has to endure it, but banalises itself for the entourage. Everyone gets used to it, except myself."[7] It is difficult to communicate the empty, though brimming life with the "devil" pain, as Heshusius puts it. All three authors transcribe a nearly identical dialogue with friends: "What are you doing right now?—I'm suffering."[8] Heshusius with a former colleague at the phone: "'What do you do all day? […] I have pain. I manage pain. I see doctors'. 'Oh', she said. And after a brief pause she said 'But what do you do all day long?'" (Heshusius 2009: 47) And Greenberg, also on the phone: "What are you doing today? How was I to answer this question? *I'm doing pain right now?*" (Greenberg 2009: 36)

Resignation and the forced cohabitation with the foe pain are linked to experiments with numerous medications and drugs, which regularly further alienation between the self, environment and others. Heshusius, Daudet and Greenberg eventually learn to loathe the benumbed state since it takes away the already minimised remainder of conscious life left by pain. Daudet speaks of chloral's "cosmetics," Greenberg and Heshusius describe how they are seized by drug-induced aphasia. Greenberg, who additionally struggled with a methadone addiction during the first years of chronic pain, draws on the myth of Persephone's recurrent descent in the netherworld in order to describe the relationship to her youngest daughter.

Between the first two and the third, the last stage in narratives of chronic pain is the discovery of co-sufferers, of the *Doppelgänger* in pain (Daudet 2002: 50). Daudet, who documented his annual stays at the sanatorium Lamalou, as well as Greenberg and Heshusius, all stress the decisive factor of encountering fellow patients for regaining community and the rediscovery of their inner strength. With this third stage, their illness narratives touch on the genre of spiritual autobiographies, even without a conversion to God. During this last stage, their pain memoirs converge with self-help books by presenting valid strategies and techniques of integrating pain into life. Daudet and Greenberg emphasise the beneficial effects of a behavioural therapeutic approach, acting healthy as if they were pain-free. The main idea is to break free from the narcissism caused by pain in order to spare family and friends: "Pride in not imposing on others my bad temper and the dark injustices of my

7 "Douleur toujours nouvelle pour celui qui souffre et qui se banalise pour l'entourage. Tous s'y habitueront, excepté moi." (Daudet 2002: 20).

8 "Qu'est-ce que vous faites, en ce moment?—Je souffre." (Daudet 2002: 7).

suffering."[9] Heshusius explains the power of meditation as conscious attention to the present moment, which works as a paradoxical antidote to the presence of physical pain: If she ponders her past or future, her life is indeed ruined. The present moment, in which she even catches glimpses of beauty by intentional mindfulness, is the only place where she can be (Heshusius 2009: 93f.). Writing about her life with pain as an on-going battle and balancing-act between medical and psychological strategies, Greenberg finds the evocative metaphor of a garish circus with an "underbelly of violence" which "threatens to topple the tent at any time" (Greenberg 2009: 198):

> I play the role of a magician, with sleights of hand and tricks up my sleeve, or a juggler, struggling to keep several options afloat, or a tightrope walker, balancing precariously and hoping that I don't fall again. Sometimes, I'm simply a clown, foolish in my efforts; other times, I'm a lion tamer, wielding a whip, trying to wrestle pain into control before it whips me.
>
> GREENBERG 2009: 198

Another important strategy, maybe even the silver bullet, which is the *raison d'être* of all three investigated texts, is the act of writing and record taking. Writing in order to straighten the chaos brought by pain, writing as lived creativity that detracts from pain, and (here, Daudet is the exception) writing as mediation of one's own story in order to affect the lives of others. Heshusius, prior to her accident a professor of education at York University (Canada), considers her both intimate and scientific-critical discussion about the world of chronic pain to be a political endeavour, comparable to lobbying work. For her, it is imperative to tell about pain, in order to lessen its invisibility and to mobilise political and financial resources to better help patients with chronic pain. Greenberg notes in her epilogue that the vision of helping others with similar experiences through her storytelling had a more palliative effect than anything else. Their initially meaningless and empty tales of woe would be retrospectively justified as a testimony with an important effect on the lives of affected others. In his study *The Wounded Storyteller*, Arthur Frank has labelled this form of autobiographic telling as *Narrative Ethics*. A narrative ethics is defined as an attempt to guide others in their self-formation by the act of giving testimony, while one's own life changes by affecting the lives of others. The circular structure of a narrative ethics partakes into a universal responsibility by

9 "Fiérté de ne pas imposer aux autres la mauvaise humeur et les injustices sombres de ma souffrance." (Daudet 2002: 42).

inscribing individual experience into a larger community, which is influenced by these individual testimonies (Frank 1995: 154–63). Narrative ethics thus forms a practical counterpart to the debate about pain's inexpressibility, which we have discussed previously.

Having made our way through Heshusius, Greenberg, and Daudet, what could be the reasons that have led to such a philosophically unequivocal diagnosis as Scarry's claim about the resistance of pain toward language? It seems to me that it is not mainly the nature of the sensible feeling that inhibits communication and lets language run dry, but rather the failure of the non-suffering environment to adequately react or to listen to the sufferer. In Virginia Woolf's essay, *On Being Ill*, which Scarry cites as one of her key witnesses for her thesis of pain's inexpressibility, Woolf, by no means, states that pain cannot find adequate expression. She does however say that it needs the courage of a lion tamer to look these things square into the face. And she introduces (albeit in a not altogether serious, but rather mocking tone) an anthropological-social dimension. Humans cannot afford too much sympathy for the suffering of others; otherwise all activity would come to standstill:

> But sympathy we cannot have. Wisest Fate says no. If her children, weighted as they already are with sorrow, were to take on them that burden too, adding in imagination other pains to their own, buildings would cease to rise; roads would peter out into grassy tracks; there would be an end of music and of painting [...].
>
> WOOLF 2002: 9

Yet the notion that the human needs to look away to guarantee the progress of civilisation is no unshakeable anthropological feature, as could be demonstrated by numerous cases, in which repeated references to suffering and grievances brought about sympathy and change. Daudet, who suffered from the long-term consequences of shameful syphilis, the *maladie honteuse*, was justified to feel isolated in his pain, the cause of which he could not even divulge. The isolation, as is evident from his journals, was alleviated when meeting fellow sufferers. It is not only living with pain that makes life hellish, but the state of being in pain among healthy people who are oblivious to the other's burden (Cassell 1994: 246f.). Daudet's notes functioned as a safe space where he expressed what others (except his ataxic friends) would not hear or which decorum and pride would prevent him from sharing. This is reflected by the fact that he never thought of publishing his notes as part of his work. The budding genre of pain memoirs, on the contrary, is indicative of a change in public sensibilities, which makes it increasingly acceptable to integrate and communicate disgraceful states of physical and mental weakness.

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CHAPTER 9

Neuroethical Reflections on Body and Awareness in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday*

Sara Strauß

Abstract

After a brief introduction to the philosophical discourse on the interrelation between body and awareness this article exemplifies in how far twenty-first century English fiction raises public awareness for the so-called mind-body-problem and related ethical concerns. By means of analyses of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) this article examines literary reflections on the interrelation between body and awareness and neuroethical questions. In their fictional works both authors engage with insights from biomedical research, neuroscience and the philosophy of mind. Whereas Ishiguro employs elements of dystopian fiction in order to create a possible world shaped by biomedical advancement, McEwan's stream-of-consciousness novel juxtaposes the deterministic worldview of a neurosurgeon with the view of a person affected by a mental disorder. The article conveys how the use of narrative techniques enables Ishiguro and McEwan to reflect critically on current discourses about biological determinism versus the idea of a free will, and how the authors thereby succeed in engaging the reader in ethical reflections.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century an age-old concern re-emerges to increasing public attention: the interrelation of human body and awareness. In addition to a general academic interest in the issue, writers of literary works raise public awareness for the so-called mind-body-problem and related ethical concerns. After a brief introduction to the philosophical and scientific discourse on the topic, this article exemplifies two different literary strategies to engage with questions of body and awareness in twenty-first century English fiction.

The recurrent discourse on the mind-body-problem addresses the issue whether there is a characteristic of the human mind that makes it possible to distinguish mental processes from physical characteristics of the brain. This principal question of the philosophy of mind has preoccupied philosophers and scholars from various disciplines, such as biology, psychology,

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anthropology etc., alike—not only since René Descartes, in the seventeenth century, posited "cogito ergo sum" (Descartes s.d.: 19). In the wake of Descartes's ruminations, the approach of Cartesian dualism has prevailed over centuries. It distinguishes the immaterial mind from the physical body and considers them to be separate yet interacting substances. At the end of the nineteenth century, in efforts to overcome dualism, William James gave emphasis to the strong interaction between body and mind:

> Mental phenomena are not only conditioned *a parte ante* by bodily processes; but they lead to them *a parte post*. […] [I]t will be safe to lay down the general law that *no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change*.
>
> JAMES 1981: 18; italics are James's

In contrast to dualist conceptions, James concluded: "Mind and world in short have been evolved together, and in consequence are something of a mutual fit." (James 1981: 11)

From the latter decades of the twentieth century onwards a re-emergence of interest in the mind-body-problem is evident. Thomas Metzinger draws attention to the current high relevance of the topic:

> Today, the problem of consciousness—perhaps together with the question of the origin of the universe—marks the very limit of human striving for understanding. It appears to many to be the last great puzzle and the greatest theoretical challenge of our time. A solution of this puzzle through empirical research would bring about a scientific revolution of the first order.
>
> METZINGER 1995: 3

Contrary to the former dualist paradigm, current approaches in the philosophy of mind and in cognitive science are based on materialist convictions, i.e. the position that everything is determined by the physics of the brain. Patricia Smith Churchland explains:

> Available evidence indicates that the brain is the thing that thinks, feels, chooses, remembers, and plans. That is, at this stage of science, it is exceedingly improbable that there exists a non-physical soul or mind that does the thinking, feeling, and perceiving, and that in some utterly occult manner connects with the physical brain. Broadly speaking, the evidence from evolutionary biology, molecular biology, physics, chemistry, and the various neurosciences strongly implies

> that there is *only* the physical brain and its body; there is no non-physical soul [...].
>
> SMITH CHURCHLAND 2006: 5

In the context of this materialist stance in cognitive science, bioethical considerations evolve. The recently emerging subdiscipline neuroethics addresses moral issues arising from ongoing research on the human brain and its implications for our conception of man, human life and society. Thus neuroethics examines the conflicting priorities of moral values and advances brought about by neurobiological insights. William Safire, when coining the term *neuroethics* in 2002, drew attention to the possibilities and dangers resulting from neuroscience. He defined *neuroethics* as

> the examination of what is right and wrong and good and bad about the treatment of, perfection of, or unwelcome invasion of and worrisome manipulation of the human brain.... It deals with our consciousness—our sense of self—and as such is central to our being.
>
> SAFIRE 2002; cited in Illes 2006: IX

This points to a vast number of new issues that complicate the debate in the field of body and awareness in the twenty-first century.

It is a particular characteristic of bioethics, and thereby of neuroethics as its subdiscipline, that the discussion of ethical problems evolving with biomedical advances is not limited to an academic or philosophical discourse but also involves wide public attention. Discussions in society and the media often focus on a practical, ethical, social, political or legal relevance of the topic. Against the background of this academic as well as public discourse, literary fiction has also persistently concentrated on the issue of body and awareness. Writers' focus on the human consciousness reached its heyday during the first decades of the twentieth century. The modernist period was marked by a high degree of experimentation with the possibilities to represent human consciousness in narrative fiction. At the beginning of the twenty-first century authors again direct their attention to the subject matter of body and awareness. Today, while contemplating the issue in their narratives, writers more and more draw attention to related bioethical questions.

In order to give an overview on different ways of addressing the topic of body and awareness in contemporary narratives, this article examines two examples of early twenty-first century English fiction. By means of analyses of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) the article exemplifies two strategies of literary reflection on the interrelation between body and awareness and related neuroethical questions.

1 Neuroethical Reflections in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* unfolds against the background of the debate on genetic engineering and cloning. The first-person narrator Kathy H. gives a nostalgic, retrospective account of her life from early childhood in a boarding school to her contemporary situation at the age of thirty-one shortly before she donates several of her organs. Kathy recollects her and her friends' childhood experiences in the boarding-school-like institution Hailsham, a world of its own with limited contact to the outside where the children grow up under the tuition and guidance of guardians. Kazuo Ishiguro here conveys idyllic images of childhood and adolescence at boarding school: images of friendship and first love, the feelings connected with group identity, and the children's and adolescents' curiosity for life and the secrets it holds for them.

During their time at Hailsham the protagonists come to a growing awareness that they differ from other people. This dissimilarity is constantly alluded to and later overtly expressed by the protagonists and their guardians. Conversely, the high degree of familiarity conveyed by the first-person narrative situation refutes any suggestion of otherness. The first-person narrator's depiction of her and her friends' activities and the insight into the narrator's feelings and lines of thoughts characterise the protagonists to behave in the same way as any other child and adolescent would do. Although there is, hence, no noticeable anomaly in the students' behaviour, outward appearance and mental activity, the guardians constantly remind them of the fact that they are "special" and have to take painstaking care of their physical health:

> You've been told about it. You're students. You're … *special*. So keeping yourselves well, keeping yourselves very healthy inside, that's much more important for each of you than it is for me [the guardian Miss Lucy].
>
> ISHIGURO 2010: 68; italics are Ishiguro's

In comparison with the bodies of the guardians and of other people outside of Hailsham, the students' bodies are considered precious. In contrast to the high regard for their physical well-being, less attention is directed towards the children's minds and their emotional welfare. This discrepancy in attention hints at an overvaluation of the children's body over their mind.

Analogously with the narrator's gradual revelation of her and her fellow students' growing understanding in how far they are different from other people, the reader finally understands that the protagonists differ in the way they were

brought into the world and by the fact that their lives are determined by a purpose which will result in their premature death. The guardian Miss Lucy brings these facts home to the adolescents in harsh detail:

> The problem, as I [Miss Lucy] see it, is that you've been told and not told. You've been told, but none of you really understand, and I dare say, some people are quite happy to leave it that way. [...] Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do. You're not like the actors you watch on your videos, you're not even like me. You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided.
>
> ISHIGURO 2010: 79F

The reader understands that the protagonists have been created artificially and gradually realises that they are clones who were modelled after other persons unknown to them. Life at the boarding school is therefore geared towards the purpose of preparing the students for being, first, a carer of organ donors and, ultimately, becoming an organ donor themselves. In order to ensure their physical well-being and to prevent the students from asking questions and developing an interest in the outside world, life in Hailsham is governed by strict rules and routines as well as innumerable taboos. Hailsham exemplifies one institution within a rigid system which is directed towards only one means: the exploitation of the bodies of the clones. In the process the students are deprived of any human rights, not only the right to life, liberty and security of person but moreover the freedom of thought, the freedom of opinion and expression, etc. Thus, in their rare contact to the outside world the protagonists have to "find out that society rejects them and that people do not consider them equal human beings but are in fact scared of them" (Mildorf 2008: 278). Some of the guardians, who, compared to the protagonists themselves, have superior knowledge about the clones' inferior status in society, feel compassion for them. Miss Lucy, for example, quits her job as a guardian since she can no longer cope with the ruthless treatment of the children in her charge and the whole system depriving them of the human rights of self-determination and freedom.

From the guardians' behaviour towards the children it becomes obvious that in the usual cases the system does not expect the clones to show strong emotional feelings and further human character traits which would reveal that they, like any other human being, have a subjective consciousness. In

Hailsham, however, the headmistress Miss Emily and another mysterious woman of eminence called Madame concentrate the students' education on the appreciation of art and foster their creativity. Thus, Madame regularly selects the four or five best creative works of a year for what she calls "the Gallery" (see Ishiguro 2010: 32). Creativity, hence, receives a very high value in Hailsham: "A lot of the time, how you were regarded at Hailsham, how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at 'creating'" (Ishiguro 2010: 16). In the strongly regulated and reclusive system of the boarding school their creativity enables the students to satisfy their need for individual expression. It is only in the design and exchange of their creative products that the students are able to acquire any personal belongings that distinguish them from their fellow students. Thereby their creativity is the only possible means for shaping an individual identity.

However, the system denies the clones any individuality[1] and completely focuses on the benefit expected from their bodies; as adults Kathy H. and her friends Ruth and Tommy understand that by means of assessing their creativity Madame tried to detect whether the clones have an awareness similar to 'normal' human beings. When, years after having left Hailsham, they find out about Madame's whereabouts and confront her with their hypothesis, Madame admits: "We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all*." (Ishiguro 2010: 255; italics are Ishiguro's)

In *Never Let Me Go* Kazuo Ishiguro thus expounds the problems of dualist conceptions of man, which consider body and soul as separate substances, but he moreover adverts to the problems of materialism which reduces human beings to their bodies. It is by means of the narrative perspective, which gives the reader insights into the first-person narrator's consciousness, that Ishiguro prompts the reader to reflect on these assumptions. As a result of getting to know Kathy H.'s consciousness from within, the reader realises that her thoughts and feelings do not differ from the mental processes and emotions of 'normal' human beings. In consequence of her nostalgic report, the reader is able to identify with the protagonist. This is further enhanced by the narrator's every now and again addressing a narratee with the pronoun *you* and assuming that the addressee had similar experiences as she had: "I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham […]"; "I'm sure somewhere in your

1 The clones are not even granted full names to distinguish them from others with the same first name. Instead, as in the case of the narrator Kathy H., they are differentiated from each other only by letters of the alphabet as a substitute of a complete surname, which usually relates people to their ancestors and thereby to their origins and the history of their families.

childhood, you too had an experience like ours that day" (Ishiguro 2010: 13; 36). Kathy H. addresses the narratee as another clone who was brought up in a likewise institutionalised surrounding. At first sight, apart from the secrets around the children's genetic origin and the prospect of their future, Kathy's nostalgic memories of Hailsham recall life at an ordinary, although very reclusive, elitist boarding school. As a result of the reader's identification and empathy with the protagonists, the reader rejects the outsiders' assumption that the protagonists could *not* have a soul and considers it an absurd hypothesis. Instead, by means of internal focalisation through the first-person narrator the reader sees 'what it is like to be a clone', that is to say, as regards the mental and emotional experience it is the same as being a normal human being.

Ishiguro's novel can be put into relation with a debate in the philosophy of mind epitomised in Thomas Nagel's essay 'What is It Like to Be a Bat' (1974). In his article Nagel criticises reductionist, materialist approaches towards the mind-body-problem. He emphasises the first-person ontology of consciousness, i.e. the fact that you cannot imagine what the consciousness of a creature is like without being that creature itself. As Nagel reasons:

> Conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon. […] No doubt it occurs in countless forms totally unimaginable to us, on other planets in other solar systems throughout the universe. But no matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experience *at all* means, basically, that there is something it is like to *be* that organism. […] We may call this the subjective character of experience. It is not captured by any of the familiar, recently devised reductive analyses of the mental, for all of them are logically compatible with its absence.
>
> NAGEL 1974: 435; italics are Nagel's

Nagel adverts to the impossibility of entirely sharing the experience of another organism since "every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view" (Nagel 1974: 436). "At present we are completely unequipped to think about the subjective character of experience without relying on the imagination—without taking up the point of view of the experiential subject." (Nagel 1974: 441) Kazuo Ishiguro thus reverts to an artist's means to deal with this problem: he uses his imagination and gives a fictional account of what it would be like to be a clone.[2]

2 Since, on the one hand, Ishiguro's novel deals with clones of humans and, on the other hand, we are "restricted to the resources of [our] own mind" (Nagel 1974: 437), the experience of the clones in *Never Let Me Go* must show the same phenomena as the experience of any other

Beyond imaginatively engaging with the theoretical discourse on consciousness, Ishiguro fundamentally raises ethical considerations when depicting a system which values one life higher than another. The world he creates in *Never Let Me Go* is characterised by a wide degree of elitism and hierarchies. Whereas the guardians at Hailsham attribute higher value to the clones' physical health than to their own bodies, after leaving Hailsham the protagonists learn that in comparison to clones from other institutions Hailsham students are considered to form an elite. Among the clones there are rumours that these students can be granted a deferral of their donations and thereby a longer life than others:

> What they were saying was that some Hailsham students in the past, in special circumstances, had managed to get a deferral. That this was something you could do if you were a Hailsham student. You could ask for your donations to be put back by three, even four years. It wasn't easy, but just sometimes they'd let you do it. So long as you could convince them. So long as you *qualified*.
>
> ISHIGURO 2010: 150; italics are Ishiguro's

The way in which students are said to qualify for a deferral is to prove that they are "really, properly in love" with another person (Ishiguro 2010: 151). Thus, in order to be granted some rights of self-determination, the clones have to reveal that they have a soul and consequently deserve an (although only slightly) more humane treatment.[3] Here Ishiguro portrays a hierarchical system in which the life of one person is valued higher than the worth of another person. On the one hand, the physical bodies of the clones are highly valued for the reason that they will later benefit other 'normal' persons. Their bodies are therefore means to an end. As a result, the clones' physical health is more valuable than the health of the guardians, for example. On the other hand, the clones' mental and emotional awareness does not receive any attention at all. The clones are denied any human rights and obtain a severely inferior social status. Thus, the protagonists have to come to terms with the fact

> that there are people out there, like Madame, who don't hate [them] or wish [them] any harm, but who nevertheless shudder at the very thought

human being because they are humans and because we cannot realistically assume the point of view of another creature.

3 In the final part of the novel this hope for a better treatment of some of the clones is, however, contested when Madame explains that the system does not acknowledge her proofs of the clones' souls.

> of them [...] and who dread the idea of [the clones'] hand brushing against theirs.
>
> ISHIGURO 2010: 36

The clones are even granted less knowledge about their own life, their origin and their future than other people, such as the guardians. Ultimately, the status of 'normal' people in this society remains vague: On the one hand, they will definitely benefit from the clones' organ transplantations. On the other hand, the novel does not reveal who these persons are and leaves it uncertain whether all people in the fictional world know about the existence of the clones. Ishiguro, thus, depicts a rigid social system of inconsiderate hierarchies. The many mysteries, contradictions and ambiguities disclose that the system is ill-conceived and the society is not prepared to meet the challenge of the many benefits and risks of technological advancement in biomedicine.

It is as a result of the literary strategies involved with the first-person narrative situation and the genre of dystopian fiction that Kazuo Ishiguro achieves to inspire reflections on the discourse of body and awareness. Within the framework of dystopian fiction *Never Let Me Go* presents the debate on cloning, bodily enhancement and neuroethics from a possible-worlds point of view.

> *Never Let Me Go*, however, steps out of history, planting itself in a kind of alternative England in the 1990s. [...] It imagines a world in which genetic cloning—not nuclear technology—turns out to be the defining science of the twentieth century. [...] While the story has futuristic qualities, *Never Let Me Go* is free of the gadgetry and technology salient in most science fiction. The novel exists in a world whose contours we must infer, rather than witness, which gives it an ominous cast.
>
> FREEMAN 2008: 196

With its characteristics of dystopian fiction *Never Let Me Go* places itself in the tradition of a genre which has always dealt with questions of technological advancement and bioethics. By situating the action not in a futuristic but rather in a possible world with realistic traits, Ishiguro is able to illustrate abstract philosophical and neuroethical controversies. With the help of the first-person narrative situation the author succeeds in bringing this discourse down on a personal scale:

> By giving a personal account of someone who suffers from the rigidity of the system and who faces a cruel death, the novel inevitably guides the reader's perception and evaluation of events. And yet, the novel also

> remains teasingly ambiguous as it does not openly pass judgement and instead leaves Kathy as well as the reader in a state of sad resignation.
>
> MILDORF 2008: 289

2 Neuroethical Reflections in Ian McEwan's *Saturday*

Another way in which twenty-first century English fiction engages with the mind-body-problem can be exemplified by an analysis of Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday*—a novel which, in the tradition of the genre of stream-of-consciousness fiction, "is fundamentally and principally about consciousness" (Childs 2006: 150). McEwan's novel deals with one day in the life of the London citizen Henry Perowne. While the protagonist pursues his typical Saturday activities throughout the day, his experiences and thoughts are presented by various narrative modes of introspection, such as stream of consciousness and free direct style.[4] Thereby the reader gets immediate access to the protagonist's mind. The importance twenty-first century society attributes to the cognitive is embodied in the main character himself. As a neurosurgeon by profession, who in his daily work life operates on human brains, Henry Perowne's interests centre on the workings of the mind. During the day presented in the novel, he constantly reflects on the interrelation between bodily and mental phenomena. For example, he continuously ponders the anatomy of the brain and the processes of cognition. Apart from some detailed recollections of different cases of brain surgery (see McEwan 2006: 7–11; 44; 248–56), it is particularly interesting how Henry Perowne applies this medical knowledge to everyday life. For example, upon waking up in a state of elation in the middle of the night, Perowne tries to explain his condition to himself with the help of his medical knowledge:

> Perhaps down at the molecular level there's been a chemical accident while he slept—something like a spilled tray of drinks, prompting dopamine-like receptors to initiate a kindly cascade of intracellular events; or it's the prospect of a Saturday, or the paradoxical consequence of extreme tiredness.
>
> MCEWAN 2006: 5

4 *Free direct style* (also *free direct discourse* or *free direct thought*) is a method of "representation of thought as well as speech" similar to the way a character would utter them. In free direct thought "the apparently verbalized thoughts of characters are reported directly (e.g. with first person pronoun, present tense, etc.), but without the reporting clause" (Wales 1989: s.v. 'Free direct thought').

Here, free direct style shows how Perowne analyses every mood, thought or behaviour from the viewpoint of his profession as a neurosurgeon.

It is not only the consciousness of the main character which is in the focus of the entire novel but also his attempts to get access to other people's awareness. Although he is aware of the fundamental secrecy of the human mind, he tries to read other people's thoughts. For example, Perowne speculates about the worries of his adult daughter Daisy when she returns home after an absence of six months. His speculations are presented by an insight into his thoughts in free direct style:

> Something else is different. She's no longer merely pretty, she's beautiful, and perhaps also, so her eyes tell him, a little preoccupied. She's in love and can't bear to be parted. [...] Whatever it is, she's likely to tell Rosalind [her mother] first.
>
> MCEWAN 2006: 183F

Perowne observes an alteration in his daughter's appearance, facial expression and later in her behaviour. Thereupon he conjectures that she must be "unhappy in love" (McEwan 2006: 204). The fact that these are only Perowne's subjective thoughts is evident since he absolutely misinterprets his daughter's condition: she later turns out to be pregnant.

What is exceptional about Ian McEwan's narrative style in this novel is the use of the present tense as the principal tense of narrative. This creates an impression of immediacy whereby the reader has the feeling to perceive the action in the same instant as the character-focaliser Henry Perowne. At the same time, the present tense corresponds to the spontaneity of human thoughts and the minimal lag of time between perceptions and their manifestation in the mind. As Head states, "stylistically [...] the novel makes a bold attempt to engage with the immediacy of human consciousness" (Head 2007: 192).

When Henry Perowne tries to read his daughter's mind, he becomes aware that, although he routinely operates on the human body, specifically the brain, the awareness of the individual person remains a secret. He realises that one cannot read other people's minds but can only speculate:

> It's likely her [= Daisy's] mind is turning fast, faster than his can, perhaps around a broken mosaic of recent events—raised voices in rooms, flashes of Parisian streets, an open suitcase on an unmade bed, whatever is distressing her. You stare at a head, a lushness of hair, and can only guess.
>
> MCEWAN 2006: 205

Despite his efforts Perowne cannot make out the reasons for Daisy's concerns until he becomes aware of her pregnancy. He, thus, remains an outsider to her inner life irrespective of his efforts to enter her consciousness.

By contrast to his exclusion from other people's subjective inner life, Perowne's profession as a doctor makes him an expert on the physical preconditions of awareness. His professional knowledge is constantly reflected in Perowne's thoughts when he considers the interrelation between bodily conditions and mental phenomena. By habit he diagnoses every condition of the people surrounding him. An example is Perowne's behaviour towards a man he is confronted with by sheer coincidence. When he is involved in a minor car accident, Perowne is threatened by the other driver, Baxter. When Baxter bullies Perowne in the streets, the doctor automatically concludes from his opponent's behaviour that the man suffers from a mental disease. He diagnoses "poor self-control, emotional lability, explosive temper, suggestive of reduced levels of GABA [i.e. neurotransmitters]" (McEwan 2006: 137). As a result, Perowne concludes that Baxter suffers from Huntington's Disease, a neurodegenerative disorder which affects the patient's whole existence and will ultimately lead to his early death. Thereby McEwan opposes the sane and extremely rational Perowne to Baxter whose emotional and mental faculties are affected by a genetic disorder. Through Perowne's diagnosis of the genetic predisposition of Huntington's disease, Ian McEwan emphasises the interrelation between body and awareness:

> If a parent has it, you have a fifty-fifty chance of going down too. Chromosome four. The misfortune lies within a single gene, in an excessive repeat of a single sequence—CAG. Here's biological determinism in its purest form. [...] Your future is fixed and easily foretold. [...] [F]rom the first small alterations of character, tremors in the hands and face, emotional disturbance, including—most notably—sudden, uncontrollable alterations of mood, to the helpless jerky dance-like movements, intellectual dilapidation, memory failure, agnosia, apraxia, dementia, total loss of muscular control, rigidity sometimes, nightmarish hallucinations and a meaningless end.
>
> MCEWAN 2006: 93F

As a matter of fact, Perowne's thoughts about the causes and symptoms of Huntington's disease describe his own worst fears. For the rational Perowne the most frightening threat to life is a loss of control by mental disorder. When unemotionally ascribing the causes of it to biological determinism, he is far from any ethical reconsideration. His attitude towards mental diseases

demonstrates his one-sided, scientifically oriented way of thinking and his appreciation of logical reasoning.

By the opposition of the novel's main characters Henry Perowne and Baxter, Ian McEwan hints at a missing neuroethical consideration when reducing the mind-body-problem to biological determinism, i.e. materialism. Thus, *Saturday* addresses ethical issues by emphasising Perowne's passivity. Among others this passivity is exemplified by Perowne's indecision to assume responsibility for the people surrounding him, like Baxter. Stylistically, this criticism comes to the fore when McEwan employs irony to ridicule Perowne's feeling of superiority and his one-dimensional view on mental processes. Currie sums up that "*Saturday* pitches a neurosurgeon's notion of interiority against the novelist's" (Currie 2007: 127):

> [O]n one hand, there is a notion of the mind as pure matter [...] [i.e. Perowne's scientific notion]. On the other hand the mind which thinks this, and everything else that it thinks on a single day, Saturday, 15 February 2003, is the subject of McEwan's novel, so that the conception of the mind as matter is also the matter of the novel's exploration of interiority. Perowne is both a subject and an object of knowledge, but of course he doesn't know it. He is the object of knowledge because an omniscient narrator is allowing us access to his head, and this access therefore provides an ironic contrast with the kind of access to heads which is the stuff of neurosurgery.
>
> CURRIE 2007: 127

This ironic duality also finds a parallel in the narrative mode of the novel. Stylistically, Perowne's considerations about human thought processes are expressed in long passages of stream of consciousness while, at the same time, dealing with questions of the human mind in the protagonist's metacognitive thoughts. Therefore, McEwan's engagement with human consciousness becomes evident on different levels of the novel. The author addresses the interrelation between body and awareness on the level of the plot, stylistically in the narrative mode of stream of consciousness, and on a metafictional level by intertextual relations to evolutionary biology and the philosophy of mind. As one intertext, *Saturday*, for example, alludes to the work of the philosopher and psychologist William James. This intertext works as a counterbalance to Perowne's belief in biological determinism since William James was a strict opponent of the idea of determinism and advocated free will when he pronounced: "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will" (James 1926: 147). *Saturday*, then, addresses the current neuroethical controversy if

human beings are determined by their neurobiological bases or by free will. By pointing to this controversy and by emphasising Perowne's rational attitude towards "biological determinism" (McEwan 2006: 93), McEwan's stream-of-consciousness fiction challenges the reader to question the protagonist's one-dimensional point of view and engage in neuroethical reflection.

3 Conclusion

The analyses of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday* exemplify different strategies to address the topic of body and awareness in contemporary narrative fiction. In their fictional works both authors engage with insights from biomedical research, neuroscience, the philosophy of mind and other disciplines. In this context, the writers draw attention to neuroethical implications related to the mind-body-problem. Kazuo Ishiguro employs elements of dystopian fiction in order to create a possible world in which human beings benefit from biomedical advancement but which moreover results in an inconsiderate society overvaluing one human life over the other. In his stream-of-consciousness novel Ian McEwan juxtaposes the deterministic worldview of a neurosurgeon to the life of a person affected by a mental disorder. With the help of their fiction Ishiguro and McEwan challenge the reader to critically reflect on the current discourse of body and awareness and related neuroethical issues.

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CHAPTER 10

Self, Interrupted: Body, Awareness, and Continuity in Oliver Sacks's *A Leg to Stand On*

Tanja Reiffenrath

> First I was limb-less, unable to command; then I was willed, or commanded, like a puppet; and now, finally, I could take over the reigns of command, and say 'I will'.
>
> OLIVER SACKS, A Leg to Stand On 97

Abstract

In a time that neuroscientists celebrate as the age in which the human brain will be deciphered and the mysteries of consciousness will be revealed, concepts of 'mind' and 'body' are highly contested. Yet artists and writers likewise engage in dualist and materialist discourses of philosophy of mind and, what is more, offer insights into the lived experience of disrupted minds and bodies. In this light, this essay revisits Oliver Sacks's 1984 autobiographical work *A Leg to Stand On*. In Sacks's text it becomes obvious that the alienation from parts of the self is a problem of visual perception, 'body-image' (i.e. how one perceives one's body), and neuronal awareness that can be, and in the course of the narrative in fact is, explained in medical terms. In this vein, Sacks's work points to the dichotomy between first and third person points of view. In the narration of his illness experience, Sacks frequently reinforces a dualist stance and only when mind and body are reconciled in spontaneous and unconscious action, recovery sets in, triggered by music. Moreover, this sense of 'wholeness' finally merges Sacks's perspective of the recovering patient with that of the medical professional.

In 2013, the New York Live Arts inaugural festival *Live Ideas* pays homage to the oeuvre of the neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks. Posters announcing the first festival of arts and ideas feature Cardon Webb's design for the Vintage Book editions of Sacks's acclaimed titles *Migraine*, *Awakenings*, *The Island of the Colorblind*, *Uncle Tungsten*, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, and *Seeing Voices*: The contours of a human head, the skull opened in a cross-section to expose the brain, the carefully sketched lines around the ear and across the face that suggest muscle strands and the more distinctly drawn nerve cords to the eye, the nose and the mouth. It is not the purely neurological side of Sacks's

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writing, though, not the lump of grey matter or the medical cross-section perspective that the festival is devoted to. Choreographer Bill T. Jones, the Executive Artistic Director of New York Live Arts, explains, "[p]erhaps more than anyone in recent history, Dr. Sacks has contributed to our growing understanding of the role of creative expression within the mind-body connection" (quoted in Lee 2013).

In a time that is already being celebrated as the age in which the human brain will be deciphered and the mysteries of consciousness will be revealed, concepts of 'mind' and 'body' are highly contested. Yet their conceptualisation and relationship is not only documented and challenged by neuroscientists and philosophers of mind. Artists and writers likewise engage in dualist and materialist discourses and, what is more, offer insights into the lived experience of disrupted minds and bodies. In this light, this essay revisits Oliver Sacks's 1984 autobiographical work *A Leg to Stand On.* In the story that challenges the classical autobiography by covering only a brief, albeit intense period of time in 1974, Sacks narrates his experience, from a hiking accident in the mountains, during which his leg is severely injured and in need of surgery, to his speedy recovery. At first, recovery appears inconceivable: Although experts manage to restore continuity in his nerves, thus restoring the 'object body', with its nerves and muscles, Sacks's sense of self is perceived as utterly disrupted. *A Leg to Stand On* hence succeeds in locating neurological research and clinical terminology in the context of philosophy, art, and literature, but also moves beyond the clinical realm to study the ontological notions of the self.

Although philosophers of mind, anthropologists and neuropsychologists have long abandoned the dualist stance on the mind-body problem, we do retain the folk notion that we are inside our bodies and, in philosopher Daniel Dennett's words, take on the role of the "pilot of the ship" (Dennett 1996: 77). Particularly in times of illness, this becomes a pressing issue as the body ceases to provide an intact "home" for the self and a strong sense of alienation and discontinuity disrupts the notion of embodiment. In *A Leg to Stand On*, it becomes obvious that the alienation from parts of the self is a problem of visual perception, 'body-image' (i.e. how one perceives one's body), and neuronal awareness that can be, and in the course of the narrative in fact is, explained in medical terms. In this vein, Sacks's work thus points to the dichotomy between first and third person points of view. At the same time Sacks's story also elucidates that there is a second and much more significant level to the discontinued notion of embodiment, constituted by the dichotomy of thinking and doing: bodily movements are opposed to memories of them and to mental capacities in general.

1 Engaging Anthropology and Literary Studies

In his introduction to the volume *Embodiment and Experience*, anthropologist Thomas Csordas notes that the body has figured as a prominent theme in anthropological writings since the 1970s and 1980s (Csordas 2003: 1). However, as Emily Martin highlights in her keynote address to the American Ethnological Association, scholars are currently witnessing a paradigm shift in the ways in which our bodies are organised and experienced: "the end of one kind of body and the beginning of another kind of body" (Martin 1992: 121). No longer a "brute fact of nature," the body ceases to be imagined as a stable and material object that adheres solely to the rules of biology (Csordas 2003: 1). Instead, the body becomes an agent in experience. As a consequence, processes of cognition and perception, as well as the ways in which individuals are engaged with the world have moved to the foreground of anthropological investigations of the body. Flawed communication or the partial understanding of a situation—"the consequences of relatedness"—are indicative of what Csordas refers to as an "embodied standpoint" (Csordas 2003: 2; 12).

In a similar vein, literary scholars have increasingly treaded across the boundaries of their discipline. Exploring notions of 'mind', 'cognition', and 'consciousness', they are not only responding to the current trend in literature[1] to experiment with the depiction of (mentally) ill characters, cognitive scientists and neuro-scientific jargon, as well as techniques of fragmented narration, but are also transforming the parameters of literary analysis. In his essay collection *Consciousness and the Novel*, David Lodge (2002: x) notes that literary theory radically moves away from a formal analysis of literary texts, and instead uses them as a starting point for philosophical speculations.

In this context, narratives focusing on the experience of illness are particularly interesting. Illness can push language to its limits (cf. McEntyre 2006: 244), but, more than that, shift the representational boundaries of experience as such. Constituting a deep personal crisis, illness disrupts the protagonist's or narrator's frame of reference and has a crucial effect on their perception of their environment and especially their selves. Critics such as Marilyn Chandler therefore regard so-called 'pathographies' as a means of reevaluation (cf. Chandler 1990: 5). This does not only hold true for the fact that pathographies enable their protagonists and narrators to establish causal connections and thus endow their illness experience with meaning. In addition, Chandler's

1 For an introductory overview, please see Stedman (2008); Fludernik (2010); Herman (2003); Hogan (2003).

observation points to the potential of these texts to reconstruct and redefine self and identity.

With regard to this, the notions of 'body' and 'mind' are of outmost significance, as is the lived experience of illness in these narratives. Despite the fact that the injured body and its deteriorated physical state are often foregrounded, the body is no longer conceived as the mere object onto which meaning is inscribed. Borrowing from feminist theory, Franziska Gygax outlines the divide between the material and the semiotic, asserting that the body is "neither purely material, nor exclusively constructed in the discourse" (Gygax 2007: 194). Into this theoretical in-between space, Einat Avrahami aptly weaves the notion of subjectivity, a concept that especially in the case of illness narratives complicates the relationship between qualitative experience and representation (cf. Avrahami 2007: 2). Alluding to Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies*, Avrahami contends that the body needs to be acknowledged as "the very 'stuff' of subjectivity" (cf. Avrahami 2007: 2).

Rather than constituting the mere topic of the story, Arthur Frank argues that illness becomes a distinctive characteristic of the storyteller, one that emerges from the wounded body. He asserts that the body thus becomes at once topic, instrument, and cause of storytelling (Frank 1995: 1f.). Storytelling is hence an embodied practice, yet one that extends beyond the obvious sense of the physical nature of writing: the body as the entity that tells the story is prominent in the language, style and rhetoric of the narrative. Frank adds that it should be self-evident that the teller's body shapes his/her story of illness, asserting that "[o]nly a caricature Cartesian would imagine a head, compartmentalized away from the disease, talking about the sick body beneath it" (Frank 1995: 2).

2 The "Who" in the Case Study

Oliver Sacks's *A Leg to Stand On* is representative of the already large, but continuously growing body of fictional and nonfictional accounts of illness and lends itself particularly well to an interdisciplinary engagement with discourses of mind, body, and self. Despite his career as a neurologist, Sacks is best known for his popular scientific writing on the treatment of neurological disorders, in which he introduces a concept akin to R.A. Luria's 'romantic science'.[2] Like the Russian neuropsychologist Luria before him, Sacks claims

2 In his foreword to Luria's seminal study *The Man with a Shattered World*, Sacks characterises Luria's approach to the brain as fundamentally different from classical neurology and

to recognise the possibilities of romantic science when analytic science and the patient's biography are read side by side. *A Leg to Stand On* is particularly relevant in this context, as it reflects Sacks's enthusiastic view of this kind of medical encounter that he describes as the "dream of a novelist and a scientist combined" (Sacks 1987: xii). In the past, it was well acknowledged that the symptoms accompanying neurological dysfunctions are unpredictable, individual, and frequently quite "curious," so that diagnoses often required careful attention to the patients' stories and their symptoms. Howarth (1990: 105) argues that with the rise of computer-operated CAT-scanners, though, diagnosis has experienced a radical shift towards a statistical and technical study that ultimately turns neurologists away from the earlier, more holistic view of the patient. It is the turn back to his holistic view that Sacks has coined "neurology of identity." He employs this term in an attempt to transcend the biomedical approach to illness.

What is more, this kind of story-telling needs to be seen in opposition to traditional medical discourses since the central focus here is not on the disease but on the patient (cf. Garro and Mattingly 2000: 8f.). While Sacks's earlier works focus on the case histories of his patients, Sacks himself is the patient in his narrative, an issue that naturally adds to the attempt to "restore the human subject at the center";—in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Sacks calls for the extension of the case history to a narrative that will depict the "who" and the "what," in other words, a patient in relation to his/her disease, "in relation to the physical" (Sacks 2011: ixf.).

It is striking that in the preface to his story, Sacks himself refers to the unfolding events not as an autobiography but as a 'neurography', explicitly pointing to Luria. As a consequence, the objectively, materially and medically conceived body arguably moves into the background to give way to subjective, qualitative, and concrete experiences of illness. The retrospect perspective on illness not only enables Sacks to intertwine these experiences with his knowledge of clinical terminology and comments on the state of neurological research and the clinical encounter, but also allows him to make connections to philosophy and art, thereby constructing his illness not only as a subjective

"potentially therapeutic," as it promised new ways of studying and comprehending neurological phenomena (Sacks 1987: ix). Classical neurology was understood to formulate abstract and general rules about neurological functioning and isolating individual parts and events from the whole, thereby reducing the rich quality of life to an abstract schema. Romantic science, in contrast, seeks to "preserve the wealth of living reality" and maintain the richness of experience (Luria quoted in Sacks 1987: ixf.). The result is a 'biographical' study, such as Luria's *Mnemonist*, in which the patient as a whole is described (Sacks 1987: xif.).

but also as an aestheticised experience. Nevertheless, aesthetics are not an end in itself in Sacks's work, but rather a means to achieve recovery and healing, an approach that will be outlined in the following.

3 The Discontinued Self

Although the narrating 'I' establishes a coherent account of illness and recovery, a close reading of Sacks's story reveals that the narrator himself is not a coherent and unified persona. This is not only a problem owing to Sacks's unique position as both doctor and patient, but an issue that highlights his problematic understanding of his injured self. Strikingly, the accident leads to an immediate and utter detachment:

> My first thought was this: that there had been an accident, and that *someone I knew* had been seriously injured. Later, it dawned on me that the victim was myself; but with this came the feeling that it was not really serious.
>
> *LEG*[3] 6; italics in original

While his self-perception is of course severely distorted here and his sense of body ownership is lost, this fulfills a crucial strategy, namely to keep the self in safety, unified and untouched by serious illness. This attitude of detachment does not collapse even when Sacks begins to examine his injured leg: "Very professionally, and impersonally, and not at all tenderly," he treats his leg, looking at it "as if [he] were a surgeon examining 'a case'" (*Leg* 6). Sacks remains devoid of any feeling and self-reference when he takes on the professional role of the physician. In this particular situation, Couser argues, medical jargon may in fact express the experience of illness accurately and subjectively and figure as the way in which bodily experience is normally constructed. It is hence by means of the professional perspective that Sacks moves from the vulnerable patient to the status of the privileged physician (cf. Couser 1997: 27). Nevertheless, this approach needs to be extended to not only illustrate the expression of bodily experience but also the awareness of the body prior to its expression. It should be noted that it is by means of proprioception, or in Sacks's words "the eyes of the body, the way the body sees itself" (*Man* 46), that awareness of the body figures. Proprioception here clearly dominates over visual perception, as

3 The abbreviation "*Leg*" used in the following refers to Sacks's *A Leg to Stand On* (1984); "*Man*" refers to *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (2011).

even Sacks's professional objective examination of his leg features attributes of proprioception, such as "toneless" and "flimsy" (*Leg* 6). Eventually, proprioception naturally undermines the professional outside perspective when his examination moves cause Sacks to scream in pain (*Leg* 7).

Yet the dichotomy between first and third person perspective does not only emerge in Sacks's own account of his illness. The subsequent chapter of his book titled 'Becoming a Patient' begins with a quotation by John Donne: "I cannot rise out of my bed till the physician enable me, nay I cannot tell that I am able to rise till he tell me so. I do nothing, I know nothing, of myself" (*Leg* 21). The patient is conceptualised here as passive and powerless, incapable of acting and knowing, and fully relying on the power and knowledge of the physician. This quote sets the tone for the following accounts, as Sacks is subjected to the control of various nurses and doctors and brought into the London hospital that he compares to the Tower of London and its "notorious torture chamber" (*Leg* 28). When the surgeon prepares Sacks for the upcoming operation, he does not grant him a spinal anesthesia:

> For then I could see what was happening. They said, no, general anesthesia was the rule in such cases, and besides (they smiled) the surgeons wouldn't want me talking or asking questions all through the operation!
>
> I wanted to pursue the point, but there was something in their tone and manner that made me desist. I felt curiously helpless, as with Nurse Solveig in Odda, and I thought: 'Is this what "being a patient" means? Well, I have been a doctor for fifteen years. Now I will see what it means to be a patient'.
>
> *LEG* 29

The surgeons humorously, yet paternalistically allude to Sacks's own medical professionalism that may interfere with their authority. Here, Sacks experiences what it is like to be a patient, in the sense that Donne's quote has foreshadowed. Through the general anesthesia Sacks does indeed "see what it means to be a patient," i.e. he cannot "see" what happens to his leg during the operation. It is clear here that Sacks's perspective shifts in this scene from that of a medical professional who recommends anesthesia options, to the patient, who wishes to object, but feels too helpless and is therefore forced to give up both control and consciousness during the operation. This scene is crucial for the unfolding events since it is at this point that the subjective and objective perspectives are ruptured. While Sacks does of course continue to speculate on the nature of his injury from the perspective of a medical professional, he

repeatedly turns to comparisons with patients that he has encountered before, and, most importantly, to his own view of his injury. The objective view on his illness, however, is now located in the domain and authority of other doctors, who repeatedly tell him that, "surgically speaking," there is nothing wrong with him (*Leg* 72). In her article 'Tenacious Assumptions in Western Medicine', sociologist Deborah Gordon illustrates that subjectivity is generally considered to exist "in there," while objectivity is "'given', 'out there'" and distinct from its observer (cf. Gordon 1988: 25f.). As a result, the patient's subjective perspective is often seen as idiosyncratic. She argues that health and illness are not defined by the patient's experience, but rather through the objective data that an examination of the body reveals (Gordon 1988: 25f.). Ultimately, Sacks's doctors regard the publicly observable third person stance as the only way of expressing the nature of his injury accurately.

The development of Sacks's phenomenal experiences points to the fact that qualitative experiences are peculiar to the person experiencing them. According to the philosopher Thomas Nagel, they are "so peculiar that some may be inclined to doubt their reality, or the significance of claims about them" (Nagel 1974: 437). In this fashion, it becomes obvious that the objective explanations given by his doctors can neither account for Sacks's personal illness experience, nor can they reassure him that his recovery is proceeding.

Over the course of the story, Sacks constructs a vivid representation of his distorted body image and lost sense of body ownership. Because the leg does not function properly, it is erased from Sacks's "inner image" of himself (cf. *Leg* 55). On the verbal level, this disconnection is illustrated by an absolute negation of the injured leg as part of his body, when Sacks describes it as the "non-leg" (*Leg* 64) or at best a "life-less replica" attached to his body (*Leg* 80). His "non-recognition" then leads to the conclusion that the injured leg is "not-me" and impossibly "continuous with [him]" (*Leg* 47f.).

Although Sacks is deeply troubled by the uncanny lack of feeling for his leg, he is capable of observing his disrupted sense of proprioception:

> One has oneself, one *is* oneself, because the body knows itself, confirms itself, at all times, by this sixth sense. I wondered how much the absurd dualism of philosophy since Descartes might have been avoided by a proper understanding of 'proprioception'.
>
> *LEG* 47; italics in original

Proprioception, in the literal sense the perception of "one's own," refers to the ability to perceive the relative position of, for instance, one's limbs. Sacks's observation elucidates that, as a consequence, one understands oneself as a

material, corporeal object, instead of merely an immaterial, thinking being. Arthur Kleinman aptly defines what he terms the "divided nature of the human condition in the West": persons affected by illness realise that they *are* their bodies. But at the same time they also *have* (i.e. experience) their bodies, with the latter meaning that they perceive that they have a sick or injured body that is distinct from their selves and that may be observed objectively, as if they were someone else (Kleinman 1988: 26). Ultimately, the relationship between the patient's mind and body is ruptured and the self is conceptualised as the Cartesian thinking mind that may observe the injured or sick body, to an extent that it may even be completely alienated from it.

It should be noted that Sacks's observation of proprioception strongly contrasts to his earlier view of himself. Right after the operation Sacks feels, to his own surprise, reinvigorated and ready for a quick recovery, since he believes in his "good body, its strength, its resilience, its will to recovery" (*Leg* 37). Although Sacks does not treat his body with the same striking lack of self-reference as his injured leg, the qualities that he considers necessary for a speedy recovery are solely attributed to his body, despite the fact that they would generally be applied to both, body and mind. This evokes the impression that at this point in the narrative, Sacks views his body as the sole agent in his recovery process.

This impression is underlined by a statement that follows his expression of confidence. Preparing himself for the first visit of his physiotherapist, Sacks concludes that she will help him get the leg "ship-shape" again, pondering on the implications of this proverbial phrase:

> I somehow *felt* like a ship when I said 'ship-shape' to myself, a living ship, a ship of life. I felt my body was the ship in which I travelled through life, all parts of it—strong timbers, alert sailors working harmoniously together, under the direction and co-ordination of the captain, myself.
>
> *LEG* 38; italics in original

It is in brief scenes, such as this one, that Sacks slips into a dualist stance. He distinguishes between his body, the material home of his self, and his mind, to which he attributes the power to direct and co-ordinate the workings of the body. In her essay on 'Mind and Body as Metaphors', Laurence Kirmayer (1988) describes mind and body as two contrasting poles in the human experience since they symbolise the voluntary and intentional as opposed to the involuntary and accidental. She argues that it is precisely this opposition that assumes a central role in forming both a private sense of self and a public concept of the person and is thus responsible of the powerful persistence of the mind-body

dualism in the Western conceptualisation of illness (cf. Kirmayer 1988: 57). In his study *Nervous Acts*, George Rousseau points out that especially the alleged separation of body and mind is a crucial issue in the representation of illness. He argues that in everyday conceptualisations of the self, the separation of mind and body facilitates life. This is not only true in times of health, when each part has its functions, but even more so in times of illness: Rousseau asserts that "when things go wrong, you fix the part rather than the whole" (Rousseau 2004: 341). According to him, we like to forget that any illness of the body is likewise an illness of mind and hence of the entire self (cf. Rousseau 2004: 341). Ultimately, his approach stresses the unity and inseparability of mind and body in the self. However, when Sacks considers himself the "captain," he eventually connects the capacity to think and control the body to his self. According to philosopher Daniel Dennett, who uses the same metaphor to refer to the relationship between self, body, and mind, this exposes the persistent dualist view that one is not one's body, but the body's owner (Dennett 1996: 77).

Nevertheless, Sacks's optimistic vision of the ship-shape body is soon ruptured when he is not able to move the leg in physiotherapy:

> The image of myself as a living ship—the stout timbers, the good sailors, the directing captain, myself—which had come so vividly to my mind in the morning, now re-presented itself in the lineaments of horror. It was not just that some of the stout timbers were rotten and infirm, and that the good sailors were deaf, disobedient or missing, but that I, the captain, was no longer captain. I, the captain, was apparently brain-damaged [...].
>
> *LEG* 44

This fearful recognition illustrates that Sacks first of all realises that he is no longer fully in control over his body. Yet at precisely this point, the dualist notion is transcended, as Sacks realises that it is not only his body that is affected, but also his mind. Up until then, he had assumed that his injury in no way affected his "essential being" (*Leg* 44), yet now he comes to the conclusion that his inability to move the leg is "*not just a lesion in my muscle, but a lesion in me*" (*Leg* 44; italics in original).

As his ability to move the leg does not return, Sacks's emotional situation turns dramatic: He is repeatedly haunted by nightmares, in which he dreams that the cast, in which the leg is protected, is in fact either completely solid or empty. He imagines his leg to be made of "chalk or plaster or marble" or of something entirely inorganic (*Leg* 64). Finally, Sacks is even convinced that he has lost his leg and that recovery is inconceivable:

> The leg had vanished, taking its 'past' away with it! I could no longer remember having a leg. I could no longer remember how I had ever walked and climbed. I felt conceivably cut off from the person who had walked and run, and climbed just five days before. There was only a 'formal' continuity between us. There was a gap—an absolute gap—between then and now; and in that gap, into the void, the former 'I' had vanished—the 'I' who could thoughtlessly stand, run and walk, who was totally thoughtlessly sure of his body [...].
>
> *LEG* 58

Interestingly, Sacks begins to connect the loss of the feeling for his leg also with a loss that affects his entire self. Enumerating verbs of movement, such as *walk*, *run*, and *climb*, he stresses the self's capacity for movement and action. All of these verbs illustrate that it is of course also a self that is standing in an upright position, not a patient whose "head lies as low as the foot" (Donne quoted in *Leg* 21). However, in his current situation, he can no longer establish a connection to the self that was capable of performing all these actions, claiming that the continuity between him and this past self is merely "formal"—much in the same sense as the nerves and tissues that were surgically reconnected. Moreover, this perceived lack of connection stands as a synecdoche for the disruptive nature of illness that illustrates Sacks's transition from being healthy to becoming a patient that he has previously considered to constitute "two separate stories" (*Leg* 23). Consequently, the embodied practice of memory, too, is of crucial significance in Sacks's conceptualisation of his self. His condition thus constitutes the opposite of the phantom limb condition: in the latter, the limb is missing, yet memory persists that the limb is a functioning part of the body, while in Sacks's case the leg has been erased from memory although it is still part of this body.

4 "Muscle Music"

Sacks's recovery eventually sets in when Sacks experiences the first instances in which his nerves are reinvigorated, moments that he describes as an "electrical storm" (*Leg* 86). Though overwhelming and powerful, these "lightning flashes" also set the scene for a Gothic spectacle: "I could not help being reminded of Frankenstein's monster, connected up to a lightning rod, and crackling to life with the flashes" (*Leg* 86). After this first comparison that serves to elucidate the uncanny feeling of the nervous system reverting to motion, Sacks quickly corrects himself, stating it is not him but his nervous system that is "electrified into

life" (*Leg* 86).—He, however, "played no part in these local, involuntary flashes and spasms," which he describes as lacking any personal quality, intention, or volition (*Leg* 86). On numerous occasions, Sacks then compares himself to a puppet, illustrating his passivity and inability to control his leg that is instead moved by his nerves only. These comparisons, too, point out that he perceives his willing mind to be cut off from his wounded body.

Though often relapsing into such a Cartesian dualist stance, Sacks gradually develops an alternative strategy, for instance when he awakes feeling what he terms "an odd impulse" to flex his left leg, and is—immediately and for the first time since his accident—able to do so (*Leg* 94). "The idea, the impulse, the action, were all one," Sacks recounts (*Leg* 94), attributing his active contraction of the muscle to his ability to remember how to *move* the leg. Movement is crucial to Sacks here as it finally not only involves his body but also his mind. It is striking that only at this point, Sacks considers his self to be involved in the bodily movements, hence tying the concept of his self tightly to movement. He celebrates the muscular sparks as uniting his mind and body, "the unity which had been lost since [his] disconnecting injury" (*Leg* 95) and a unity that we attribute to movement and, as will illustrated, to music.

When listening to Mendelssohn's lively and lighthearted music, Sacks recounts that he feels more hopeful "that life would return to [his] leg—that *it* would be stirred, and stir, with original movement, and recollect or recreate its forgotten motor melody" (*Leg* 87; italics in original). The developments that Sacks envisions here correspond to the muscular sparks that first move passive nerves and then finally also involve his own movement, a movement that Sacks terms "original" and that we read as "natural" and originating from him. This passage therefore allows for direct parallels between his reinvigorated nerves and music. Music is crucial here as it is presented as the means by which Sacks is able to not only "recollect"—remember—movement, but also recreate it, and hence constitutes a powerful metaphor for the unity of thought and action, mind and body. In the same passage, Sacks celebrates his immersion in the music as the moment in which

> the animating and creative principle of the whole world was revealed, that life itself was music, or consubstantial with music; that our living moving flesh, itself, was 'solid' music—music made fleshy, substantial, corporeal.
>
> *LEG* 87

For Sacks, a unity of mind and body is not only expressed metaphorically through music, but is by analogy also inherent in "life itself"; it is a unity that

becomes embodied. Looking back at his injury, Sacks then explains that not only nerves and muscles were disconnected through his injury but at the same time also the unity of body and mind: "The 'will' was unstrung, precisely as the nerve-muscle. The spirit was ruptured, precisely as the body." (*Leg* 96) Here, too, Sacks describes his mind and body borrowing from musical terminology.

Sacks's recovery accelerates when he practices walking with his therapist and suddenly hears again what he terms his "own personal melody" (*Leg* 109), the music of Mendelssohn:

> I found myself walking, easily, *with* the music. […] [I]n this self-same moment *the leg came back*. Suddenly, with no warning, no transition whatever, the leg felt alive, and real, and mine, its moment of actualization precisely consonant with the spontaneous quickening, walking and music. […] I was absolutely certain—I *believed* in my leg, I *knew* how to walk…
>
> *LEG* 108; italics in original

In her essay 'The Soul of Oliver Sacks', Ella Kusnetz harshly criticises this climactic moment of recovery, accusing Sacks of inauthenticity, if not copyright infringement,[4] yet neglecting the function of this scene (cf. Kusnetz 1992: 193). This moment of revelation can be aligned with Sacks's effort to descent the Scandinavian mountain after his accident with his injured leg where Sacks suddenly hears music and finds himself not being "muscled along" anymore, but rather "musicked along" (*Leg* 13). Not only does his story come full circle at the point of his recovery, but it also stresses the role of music as a spontaneous and transcendental power that brings body and mind in tune by merging the cognitive, the sensual, and the physical. In *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, Sacks invokes a passage from Nietzsche—"We listen to music with our muscles"—to illustrate that music does not only have an auditory and emotional effect on the listener but also a motoric effect (Sacks 2008: xii). In this respect, he sees music, too, as embodied (Sacks 2008: xii). Alice Budge in 'The Doctor as Patient' stresses that although Sacks does receive the appropriate

4 Kusnetz accuses *A Leg to Stand On* of being "a false book" (Kusnetz 1992: 191) and contends that the use of music as a spontaneous principle of organization may possibly not be Sacks's original idea. Pointing out that the 1983 version of *Awakenings*, a book originally published in 1973, features the story of a former musician suffering from Parkinson's disease, who states that he is "unmusicked [and] must be remusicked" (294f.), and that *A Leg to Stand On* was not published until 1984 although Sacks claims to have written it in the 1970s, she admits that through "the complicated process of projection and expropriation in Sacks—as well as the elaborate fictionalizing, fantasizing, and metaphysicalizing—that in all the books it is virtually impossible to discern whose material is whose" (Kusnetz 1992: 192f.).

physical care, he attributes his recovery rather to the recovery and healing of his soul, "a rehabilitation of the self through music" (Budge 1988: 135).

Fittingly, the title of this chapter in *A Leg to Stand On* is 'Solvitur Ambulando'—'it is solved by walking'. When Sacks before tried to move his leg that appeared so strange, so lost and so clumsy, he wondered: "Will I be forced, from now on, to think out each move? Must everything be so complex?" (*Leg* 108) When mental capacity was at first idealised as the controlling force, it now appears as impeding as it turns the automatic process of walking into an activity in which cognitive processes are foregrounded, thereby complicating it to the extreme and unmanageable. The music which Sacks perceives, however, serves as "'motor' music," a "kinetic melody" that simulates the "natural, unconscious rhythm" of walking (*Leg* 108f.). Moreover, music provides him with the ability to organise and coordinate movement in sequences (cf. Sacks 2008: 257). Sacks depicts this moment as an "abrupt and absolute leap" (*Leg* 109). It is then through the power of this inner rhythm that Sacks is able to—quite literally—overstep the gap in his self-conception that we have mentioned before. We thus fully agree with Frank (1995), who asserts that music allows for a direct connection to the body that language cannot provide. It is only later, in the process of writing, that the narrating 'I' can transform this overwhelming feeling into language (Frank 1995: 107).

5 Sacks's Neurology of Identity

It is finally through the distance and Sacks's epistolary exchange with R.A. Luria that the overwhelming feeling of his distorted body image is not only transformed into language, but is also located in the context of neurological research and medical tradition. The afterword to *A Leg to Stand On* closes with an annotated bibliography and Sacks's critique of classical neurology. Sacks argues that the existing terms of classical neurology are inadequate to describe his loss of body image (*Leg* 161). This conclusion triggers his effort to establish what he terms *neurology of identity*, a new form of medical understanding that will help to "escape from the rigid dualism of body/mind" (*Leg* 178). Generally, Kleinman credits Freud with including the interpretation of the patients' biographies and their personal experiences of illness in medical treatment, asserting that this practice has influenced a number of medical professionals—amongst them Sacks—and helped to form new ways of speaking about health and illness that incorporate the "deeply private significance of illness" (Kleinman 1988: 42f.). Kleinman's notion of the "deeply private" also highlights that the *neurology of identity* eventually aims at reconciling the dichotomy between

objective classical neurology and individual subjective experiences, between the abstract and the concrete.

Murdo McRae contends that the strong appeal of Sacks's neurology of identity certainly rests in the fact that human identity is marked by individuality and uniqueness and stresses the irreplicable. Nevertheless, his article voices profound criticism when he reminds that "Sacks's repudiation of abstract and impersonal thinking should not blind us to the equally abstract and impersonal character of his own thinking" (McRae 1993: 97f.). In this vein, he accuses Sacks of viewing not only his own patients but also himself when he is a patient, in ways that reproduce "the conceptual, even ethical, fault in traditional neurology," namely treating individual patients as replicates of other patients (McRae 1993: 97f.). A possible explanation that McRae offers is based on the assumption that Sacks was influenced by thinkers such as Leibniz and Pythagoras, who generally favor the abstract over the concrete, turning the individual empirical instance into a synecdoche for other instances and their general form (cf. McRae 1993: 97f.). These points of criticism are problematic and we assert that several of the text passages that McRae cites to support his argument are in fact open to a contrasting interpretation, such as the one in which Sacks slowly tries to descend the mountain with his injured leg while he is reminded of a childhood experience and recounts:

> For it was then, in the summer of 1938, that I discovered that the whorled florets were multiples of prime numbers, and I had such a vision of the order and beauty of the world as was to be a prototype of every scientific wonder and joy I was later to experience.
>
> *LEG* 16

While McRae (1993: 100) interprets this passage as an instance in which individual parts disappear into the whole, we contend that this passage is significant as it intertwines the vivid and detailed experience of the flower garden with sober mathematical abstraction. In this passage, the principle of the golden ratio, the key to aesthetics, is uncovered by merging both formulaic abstraction and the concrete experience of nature.

Furthermore, McRae repeatedly criticises Sacks for intertwining his own experiences with the case histories of other patients, arguing that "his fellow patients' identities resided not in their uniqueness but in the way each served as a synecdoche for an abstract form: the alienated, the excommunicated, cast-out patient" (McRae 1993: 107). McRae thus reads Sacks's use of other patients' neurological problems as a means to underline his own alienated status, accounting for their immediate function in these case histories. Since the

attending physicians have continuously stressed the uniqueness of Sacks's situation, they have ultimately alienated him from the community of patients and knowledgeable doctors and hence complicated any form of communication between medical professionals and the patient. Through experiences similar to his own, Sacks emerges as a member of their community, a community in which he is capable of sharing and making sense of his experiences, as well as giving voice to his own moral fallacy. He thus proudly declares: "I was no longer alone, but one of many, a ward, a community, of patients. I was no longer the only one in the world, as perhaps every patient thinks in the ultimate solitude of sickness" (*Leg* 124). In the context of subjective experiences and objective observations, however, Sacks's strategy loses some of its critical connotations. At first sight, Sacks's representation of other patients does correspond to the classical case history, as the scene describing a young male patient that Sacks encountered as a medical student on the ward elucidates. Sacks describes his encounter with the patient at length, beginning with a brief report on his admission and a thorough observation of the patient, who refuses to go back into his bed since "someone's leg" is in there (*Leg* 50). However, once the patient offers Sacks an explanation for his strange behavior, objective professionalism becomes intertwined with empathy:

> He [patient] felt the leg gingerly. It seemed perfectly formed, but 'peculiar' and cold. At this point he had a brainwave. He now 'realised' what had happened: *it was all a joke*! [...] but feeling that a joke was a joke, and that this one was a bit much, he threw the damn thing out of the bed. But—and at this point his conversational manner deserted him, and he suddenly trembled and became ashen-pale—*when he threw it* [the strange leg] *out of bed, he somehow came after it—and now it was attached to him.*
>
> *LEG* 51; italics in original

The mode of representation is striking in this scene. In free indirect discourse, Sacks's narrating voice mixes with the patient's voice and view of the situation, adapting not only his diction when speaking about the "damn thing," but also tracing the patient's train of thoughts when he comes to the crucial realisation that the entire situation can only be the result of a cruel joke played on him by the hospital staff.

On the one hand, stories of encounters between him and patients in earlier contexts allow Sacks to maintain his status as expert and medical professional: on the surface, they enable him to assume the voice of a medical authority at a time when he is severely injured and not granted an objective voice in

front of his attending physicians. On the other hand, the modes of representation in these accounts show that in these case histories, Sacks merges the objective and subjective perspective, for instance by paying close attention to the patient's qualitative experiences of his leg. What leads to insight in this situation is not a mere comparison with the patient's diagnosis, but with him as an individual, when Sacks states that

> although I called myself a neurologist I had totally forgotten him, thrust him out of my consciousness until—until I found myself, apparently, in his position, experiencing [...] what *he* had experienced, and, like him, scared and confounded to the roots of my being.
>
> *LEG* 53; italics in original

It becomes clear here that Sacks finds fault with his practice of neurology for having forgotten this patient's peculiar story and in fact credits his own disturbing experiences as a patient for returning these memories and, most importantly, for great insight and an understanding of his own condition. Stories such as this one hence foreshadow Sacks's call for the 'neurology of identity'.

Oliver Sacks's article on 'Neurology and the Soul' addresses what he conceives as the "split between science and life, between the apparent poverty of scientific formulation and the manifest richness of phenomenal experience" (Sacks 1990). He characterises this split as a vast discrepancy which is caused by our "desire to see ourselves as something above nature, above the body," a desire which spurs dualist conceptions of the self (Sacks 1990). So while his recognition of proprioception may then be seen as a theoretical, scientific strategy to transcend this dualist notion, music certainly serves as a practical and subjective strategy to reconstruct and feel the unity of his mind and body. Once the Cartesian view of the self is suspended, the scientific study of the body as a mechanical entity loses its legitimacy (cf. Eisenberg 1977: 10).

6 Conclusion

Our analysis has revealed that Sacks's conception of himself as a patient rarely transcends the dualist stance, more often reinforces it. His distorted body image does not allow him to imagine a connection between the injured leg and the self and his loss of memory of the leg prohibits him from using it. Only when mind and body are reconciled in spontaneous and unconscious action, recovery sets in, triggered by music. Moreover, finally this sense of 'wholeness'

powerfully merges Sacks's perspective as the recovering patient with that of the medical professional.

In spite of his illness experience, which has caused deep trouble in Sacks, the closing of the story turns him into the "autonomous individual," whose life is celebrated in the classical autobiography (cf. Smith and Watson 2005: 3). This is, most importantly, a self that emerges from the illness experience as a more insightful and knowledgeable physician whose view of illness is arguably altered and who has succeeded in transforming illness into meaning. This meaning is not merely a personal and subjective one, but one that receives social relevance as it helps to establish a new medical discipline. The ending of the story thus reestablishes Sacks as the professional that his audience is already familiar with. This is only possible because the experience of illness eventually receives almost positive—enlightening—connotations and serves as the basis for the 'quest' plot that Sacks's story, like numerous contemporary American pathographies, follows. Yet Sacks's narrative also highlights that knowledge is not merely inscribed onto the sick body after the experience has passed, but that the body itself figures as an agent in the perception of the illness experience.

Nevertheless, we would like to emphasise that the temporality of illness and Sacks's eventual recovery are crucial in this story. Although illness is foregrounded, it ultimately remains a disruption of a life that is "interrupted in the music of being" (cf. Kaysen 2009: 167).

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CHAPTER 11

Performances in the Anthropocene: Embodiment and Environment(s) in Ilija Trojanow's Climate Change Novel[1]

Sabine Wilke

Abstract

In this essay on the relationship between bodies and their environments in the Anthropocene two literary accounts of embodied relationships between humans and their environment will be analysed. They both present models of intricate interconnectedness of human bodies and their non-human environments, but they differ in emphasis and orientation. One is a self-conscious landscape performance art event and the other highlights the affective co-constitution of earth and humans. The two projects presented in Ilija Trojanow's novel *EisTau* represent two radically different ways of narrating and artistically configuring interconnectedness of bodies and environment. The performance event seeks to highlight the role of the human as driver for creative solutions in a global age. The scientist who suffers from sadness and melancholy, on the other hand, reacts by channelling his affective disorder into destructive—and, in the end, self-destructive—actions. By presenting both sides, Trojanow offers the reader a chance to negotiate the tension between a focus on the critique of dominant narratives and the dire need for people to be involved in helping shape better futures in new and creative ways.

The concept of the Anthropocene, i.e. a new geological era in which the human influence on the earth's atmosphere has significantly increased in shape and complexity, forces us to rethink the realm of anthropocentric reasoning. Pronounced by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer within the context of the community of climate-change scientists in an article in 2000, the idea of the Anthropocene is quickly catching on within art circles and debates in the humanities. While the concept itself is quite controversial and by no means accepted in the scientific community (see, for example, Ruddiman 2003: 261ff.),

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it has definitely interesting ramifications if applied to culture and society and it has the potential to incite fruitful, revisionist, and critical readings of the tradition. This is the project of a new metaphysical movement called object-oriented ontology where objects are said to exist independently of human perception and on equal footing with one another. With a philosophical foundation in the writings of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, object-oriented ontology rejects the idea that objects can be exhausted by their relations with humans or other objects (see Harmann 2002: 16ff.). In the Anthropocene where the interconnectivity of every part with everything else is an important feature of all world relations, where the world of the human and the non-human is profoundly intertwined, a perspective that emphasises relationality is helpful to understand and conceptualise the relationship between humans and their environment.

Our interest is to reflect more deeply and more concretely on the meaning of different configurations of embodiment in Ilija Trojanow's climate change novel *EisTau* [Ice Melt]. The novel features a performance artist and his project of staging a human chain of bodies thereby visually configuring the letters SOS in the Antarctic environment and a glaciologist whose object of study—an Alpine glacier—has melted away and who is now overcome with feelings of melancholy, which turn him into an eco-warrior who ends up kidnapping the cruise ship on which he serves as the lead lecturer and tour guide, leaving the human SOS chain to its own devices in the remote polar environment and turning a piece of performance art into the real thing—the emergency signal—by enacting a performance himself—the kidnapping of the ship. What does it mean to be embodied? How are bodies troped with respect to their environment(s)? And what is the relationship between humans and their non-human environment? To address these and other questions, it is important that we understand the relationship between bodies and place, or bodies and landscape, or, what Maurice Merleau-Ponty has called "environmental embodiment" (see Merleau-Ponty 1964: 3ff.). Merleau-Ponty has explored various ways in which the human body lives in the world in terms of perception and movement. In its pre-reflective state, the perceptual body engages with the world thanks to a certain corporal awareness and through that awareness also transforms this environment (see Seamon 2013: 1ff.). The body as condition of experience is what Merleau-Ponty calls "corporeity," a condition that establishes the primacy of perception (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 3ff.). If we extend that property to non-human bodies we are able to perceive of wordly engagements in environmental or ecological terms as Brown and Toadvine have proposed in their introduction to *Eco-Phenomenology* (see Brown and Toadvine 2003: 12ff.). This eco-phenomenological engagement is situated in a space that is neither purely objective, because it is reciprocally constituted by a diversity of lived

experiences motivating the movements of countless organisms, nor purely subjective, because it is nonetheless a field of material relationships between bodies, in other words a radically inter-subjective space. Trojanow's literary treatment of these two artistic practices of configuring the body in an environment that emphasises the relational dimension of worldly engagements can serve as the staging ground for thinking through the parameters that regulate the concept of environmental embodiment in the Anthropocene.

One important aspect of thinking about body and space relations in the Anthropocene has to do with the fact that we need to engage critically with the predominant mode of relating to the environment in Western culture, i.e. the culture of looking. Are there alternative ways of constructing bodies and environments that are not based on the (Romantic) visual gaze that Caspar David Friedrich's canonical figure of the European male subject gazing into the landscape from an elevated position high above the clouds (in his painting *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* from 1818) enacts so prominently and passionately? Can we imagine a human response to landscape that is not framed through the visual paradigm? Or, phrased differently, can we imagine and realise a multisensory dimensional response to landscape that is not automatically folded into the paradigm of subjectivity or what Foucault called "the spatial turn" in the humanities and cultural studies? To conceive of landscape through the visual gaze constitutes a form of alienation where landscape is shaped according to the parameters of the human gaze. Without denying the social and cultural construction of environments, we can nevertheless decode its historical structures, take account of the spaces within it as well as account for the anthropological roots of landscape if we bring other concepts to bear on our analysis. Landscape is inhabited space before it is visual space. Even if the visual appropriation becomes dominant in the Western tradition, the initial physical and material appropriation is still there. Edward S. Casey even argues that

> [r]ather than being one definite sort of thing—for example, physical, spiritual, cultural, social—a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: places not only *are*, they *happen*.
>
> CASEY 1996: 26F

Bodies and landscapes collude in the idea of "placescapes," "especially those that human beings experience whenever they venture out beyond the narrow confines of their familiar domiciles and neighbourhoods" (Casey 1993: 25). Such a physical experience of landscape has the ability to undercut the visual paradigm.

Georg Simmel has proposed the idea of a "Stimmungslandschaft" ('landscape of attunement') in order to conceptually explore the fact that human beings are shapers of the land as well as shaped by the land (see Simmel 2007: 21f.). In his reflection on landscape, Simmel seeks philosophical expression for the idea of the essential oneness of human beings with their environment in the practices and performances of every-day life. A "Stimmungslandschaft" can be understood as a poetic practice that does not function via the dominant visual paradigm but instead emphasises an ethical and physical-material core in the experience itself. Attunement reminds us of our connectedness to the land; it encourages us to let live, to preserve, to respect, and to be in awe. Goethe's contemporary Carl Gustav Carus may very well have been the first to articulate such a non-visual appropriation of landscape in his concept of "Erdlebenbildkunst" ('earthlife art') that promotes a way of landscape painting that not only relies on scientifically accurate observations but also demonstrates knowledge of the historicity of each object and each object's interrelatedness with its surrounding environment (see Borsó 1999: 16). Landscape art or land art in general is an excellent example for thinking about the relationship between bodies and their environments in the Anthropocene as it engages the dimension of space and the environmental location of art with the values of sustainability and an ethics of care and respect toward nature. On the land art movement of the American West, Thompson writes that its

> relationship to the green movement is complicated, highlighting the interaction between people and nature but, at the same time, shaping nature and questioning the image of the lost paradise garden that informs many approaches to conservation.
>
> THOMPSON 2012: 16

Land art can draw us toward nature but it can also highlight the artist as shaper of the land thus emphasising the potential geo-engineering qualities of humans in the Anthropocene (see Crist; Palmer). Indeed, this complicated relationship between humans and the non-human world becomes particularly problematic when the land art in question works with landscapes of environmental degradation such as strip mines or waste dumps. Some critics argue that "turning strip mines and waste dumps into art [...] monumentalizes, perhaps even consecrates, the harm they inflict upon nature" (Thompson 2012: 19). Land art is a process-driven art form that foregrounds the physical aspect of the material it works with; it engages a three-dimensional space; it locates its objects in the local environment, and it explores the boundaries of artistic perspective (see Lailach 2007: 10ff.). In its ecological variant—as made apparent in the 1969 New York exhibition titled "Ecological Art"—it wrestles

with a definition of place and it rests on the notion of the materiality of all bodies (see Lailach 2007: 19ff.).

In this essay on the relationship between bodies and their environments in the Anthropocene, we analyze two literary accounts of embodied relationships between humans and their environment. They both configure models of intricate interconnectedness of human bodies and their non-human environments but they differ in emphasis and orientation. One is a self-conscious landscape performance art event and the other highlights the affective co-constitution of earth and humans. If it is indeed true that in the Anthropocene there is no outside position to withdraw to (no outside of nature-culture, no outside of textuality), art has the ability to explore the conceptual spaces of the Anthropocene with a variety of artistic practices and narratives. The two projects presented in Ilija Trojanow's novel *EisTau* (2011) represent two radically different ways of narrating and artistically configuring the property of interconnectedness in an age where the human being has become the determining factor in influencing our geological age (see Leinfelder et al.). In the Age of the Human, as Christian Schwägerl has called our age, the human being has to radically take charge of transforming our behaviors guided by the principle of responsibility in order to shape a sustainable future for our global earth (Schwägerl 2013: 30ff.). The SOS performance in Trojanow seeks to find an artistic configuration for the role of the human as driver for creative solutions for a global consciousness in a global age. The scientist who suffers from sadness and melancholy, however, is no longer able to deal with the complexities and the challenges of this new age and reacts by channelling his affective disorder into destructive—and, in the end, self-destructive—actions. By presenting both sides and by asking his reader to take both configurations seriously, Trojanow offers the reader the chance to address the important tension between a focus on critique and unsettling of dominant narratives and "the dire need for all peoples to be constructively involved in helping to shape better possibilities in these dark times" and re-imagine new approaches to new challenges in creative ways (Rose et al. 2012: 3).

Trojanow's novel *EisTau* from 2011 begins with a quote from Beckett: "at each slow ebb hope slowly dawns that it is dying." Without context, "it" presumably refers to "hope" thus putting an interesting spin on Kafka's famous saying that "there is endless hope, just not for us" (quoted in Homann; trans. S.W.). The Beckett quote is taken from the novella *Company* and attributed to a nameless speaker who expresses his hope for redemption in the following passage:

> It [the voice] slowly ebbs till almost out of hearing. Then slowly back to faint full. At each slow ebb hope slowly dawns that it is dying. He must

> know that it will flow again. And yet at each slow ebb hope slowly dawns that it is dying.
>
> BECKETT 1980: 11

With this text from 1979, Beckett begins a series of so-called "closed space stories" in which he explores the relationship between memory and the self, in particular the self under observation and confined in a closed space as well as the relationship between bodies and space, especially confined spaces (see Krämer 2004: 86). *EisTau* stages such scenes of slow ebb where hope slowly dawns that it is dying. Each chapter constitutes a station in the itinerary of a cruise ship en route through Antarctica—indicated by the exact geographic coordinates for each location in terms of degrees, minutes, and seconds of longitude and latitude as chapter titles—and each station representing an even further step in the growing alienation of the main character, Zeno Hintermaier, from our Western way of life, i.e. our excessive habits of consumption and our unsustainable way of life that leads to the destruction of the environment. The voyage begins in Ushuaia, Argentina, where the ship is readied for departure and where the crew meets again for yet another season of cruising in Antarctica. It is Zeno's fourth season as tour guide and lecturer. This season, he is in charge of the entire interpretive staff and entertains and educates the passengers with his lectures about the properties of the ice and the fragile polar environment.

We know from the very beginning of the novel that something extraordinary is about to happen as the novel is written from Zeno's point of view (with the exception of the short intertexts between chapters that present a collage of other voices and views). Zeno decides to keep a journal and talks to the other crewmembers about a decision that he made, that something needs to happen and that it is about time that it happened (see Trojanow 2011c: 18).[2] Chapter 3 features excerpts from his first lecture on the history and significance of Antarctica, deriving the meaning of the term historically from classical sources and framing it in terms of an archive for the history of mankind, thus validating Paul Crutzen's idea of establishing a connection between the layers within the polar ice shield and the history of mankind (see T 33ff.). Chapter 4, which takes place in the Falklands, focuses on Zeno's growing alienation from the other crew members and passengers by addressing the topic of animal rights and species loss. In a conversation with some of the other crewmembers, Zeno comments that the crisis in the Falkland Islands between Argentina and the UK that unfolded in 1982 was the first war in which more animals died than

2 In the following the abbreviation T is used to refer to Trojanow (2011c).

people (see T 47). At the same time, we hear Zeno talk about his work as a glaciologist, an activity that he characterises as a mixture of passionate observation and precise measurement (T 50). This idea of passionate observation ("leidenschaftliche Beobachtung") plays an important role in Zeno's relationship with the object of his studies, the melting Alpine glacier—maybe not unlike J. M Coetzee's strategy of "sympathetic imagination" of the emotions of animals in his novel *Elizabeth Costello*. It is the convention of the literary discourse of love that Trojanow employs in these passages in which Zeno's relationship with "his" glacier is featured and, consequently, the discourse of (human) sickness and death that he employs in those passages in which we learn about the glacier's slow dying, that give poetic configuration to Beckett's image of the dawning death of hope.

Zeno's glacier dies in Chapter 5 of the novel leading to a radicalisation and growing sense of anger in him about the rate and magnitude of environmental destruction in Antarctica, specifically the colonial mind frame with which the nouveau riches ("Parvenüs," T 67) take possession of the fragile polar environment as if they had the right to the first night and every other night after that. In Chapter 6 the cruise boat passengers visit an abandoned church and whaling station in Grytviken, South Georgia, which has been declared an Area of Special Tourist Interest. They learn about the operation of the former whaling station and how the whalers used every single part of the animal, either to extract the oil or to produce fertiliser and fodder (see T 83). They also visit Sir Ernest Shackleton's grave. In face of the purpose-driven efficiency that the operation on this former whaling station represents, Zeno reflects back on his dying glacier and the destructive impact humans have on the environment, a process he now calls "mass extermination" ("Massenvernichtung," T 87)—a loaded term in German since it is commonly used for the systematic extermination of the Jews (and other Nazi victims) in the Holocaust. With this idea of "mass extermination" Zeno captures the obsession of most people in our culture and society to keep going until everything has been destroyed: "Sie pfeifen sich nichts, wie die meisten von uns, bis sie alles verbraucht verdreckt verschwendet vernichtet haben" (T 88). At the same time, Zeno is unable to articulate a consistent framework of critique for the attitudes towards nature that he observes on the specific case of his dying glacier. Instead of a systematic reflection about the philosophical and cultural roots of environmental destruction, his anger keeps growing, his melancholy turns into rage, and his marriage falls apart (Chapter 7).

In Chapter 8 he becomes physical for the first time, punching the artist Dan Quentin in the face as he is announcing his SOS performance to the passengers. At this point, Zeno leaves the parameters of science (passionate

observation, exact measurements, modelling scenarios, and articulating warnings) and his new job as lecturer on a cruise ship (interpreting polar environments), and turns to more radical models of delivery for his next warning (see T 127). On Deception Island (Chapter 9) the ship anchors in the middle of a caldera so that the passengers can enjoy a brief dip in the ice-cold sulfur-rich seawater (see T 131). On Half Moon Island (Chapter 10) Zeno fails to rescue and treat the courageous Ms. Morgenthau, who gets bitten by a breeding penguin when retrieving the stolen egg from another bird and offering it to the rightful mother in her open hand, and on their last stop while the crew and passengers are busy embodying SOS in the polar environment (Chapter 12), Zeno kidnaps the ship with only Ms. Morgenthau on board, who is in the infirmary recovering from her injury, leaving the crew and passengers of the cruise ship to their own devices in the vast context of the remote polar environment and turning an event that was meant as an art performance calling attention to the plight of the Antarctic into a human emergency as they now have to signal SOS with their bodies and seek to be rescued not just for show but for real.

Fusing an age-old image in literature (the ship) with Beckett's idea about narrating bodies in closed spaces, Trojanow's cruise boat becomes the location for the encounter of different models of configuring the relationship between bodies and environment and giving it a decidedly environmental spin. Antarctica becomes the last wilderness. Trojanow does not simply write a story about a melting glacier, icebergs in Antarctica, and the modern cruise ship industry, he takes the polar environment in which his scientist and the crew and passengers on the cruise ship find themselves seriously and allows the environment to shape his poetic practice. *EisTau* functions like an iceberg in poetic terms with its small surface structure above sea level and a significant deep structure that lies beneath the surface that needs to be uncovered in reading and interpretation (see Hamdorf 2011). The collage of intertexts between chapters offers a very small sample of voices that relate differently to the experiences described in the main text. Thanks to the Internet, there is also a wealth of additional material available about this literary text, its author, and the topic of climate change ranging from the reviews in the most central daily newspapers (summarised in *Perlentaucher*) to interviews with Trojanow, staged readings of the text, excerpts from the audio version (see Osterwold 2011) and many other engagements with this literary text. In the remainder of this essay, we focus on an analysis of the two different models of configuring bodies in their environments that are presented in the text which to us represent opposite modes of relating to the extraordinary nature of Antarctica in the face of its imminent destruction.

For Trojanow, both modes of environmental embodiment constitute symbolic forms of action that are destructive in and of themselves, that have no significant consequences in the real world, and that will not change our relationship to nature and the environment (see Casimir 2011). Sigrid Löffler (2011) characterises the art performance of the human SOS chain a cheap event and pseudo protest. Dietmar Jacobsen (2011) calls it a sign without any effect and a superficial media art project. All these critics read the event through Zeno's eyes, not as a mode of configuring that uses human bodies to stage the internationally recognised morse code distress signal which was in effect from 1908 until 1999. In 1999, this signal was replaced by the Global Maritime Distress Safety System and from then on it became illegal for a ship to use the old signal.[3] In fact, Wikipedia tells us that the morse code distress signal is not really a sign at all but a procedural sign since it consists in a continuous sequence of dits and dashs, that in popular usage SOS has been associated with phrases such as "save our ship," "save our souls," or "send out succor" but that these are simply mnemonic devices and that SOS is not really an acronym for anything. If a chain of human bodies forms the letter transcription of an outdated procedural sign that is commonly associated with a cry for help as part of an art performance, this human chain then becomes part of a mnemonic mode in which bodies relate to their environment in a very physical sense. Human bodies become part of a communal effort to remember and store information more easily, a very physical way of relating to each other and to the environment. This may look like a cheap art event to Zeno who is not participating in the performance, but it may have a very different meaning to the participants who activate bodily memory and a different form of attunement, even if that may not have been the effect intended by the artist.

The preparation for this art event is described in Chapter 8 of *EisTau*. Zeno recalls conversations he has had with his father, specifically about his inability to articulate his unease with the idea of visiting Antarctica on a cruise ship and realising the political significance of all these scientific stations in which nations position themselves *vis à vis* future possibilities to exploit the polar environment once the Antarctic Treaty from 1959 expires or is renegotiated. Trojanow talks at length about the political significance of Antarctica in the various interviews he has given about this topic (see e.g. Trojanow 2011a). An enraged Zeno confronts a Chilean soldier who jumps on land, lights a cigarette and then walks right through a penguin colony not paying any attention to the proper distance we are supposed to keep from wildlife. He first asks him what

3 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SOS (consulted 15.01.2013).

he is doing, then points to his cigarette, and eventually runs toward the soldier and grasps his arm in an effort to make him stop his disrespectful behavior (see T 114). The soldier points his gun at Zeno and, thanks to the intervention of two friends, Zeno gets off the hook and is able to return safely to his ship. Back on the boat, his fellow crewmembers look at him with great concern and the captain gives him a lecture. This is the context in which the performance artist Dan Quentin enters the scene. We look at him through Zeno's eyes as someone who never moves without an entourage, someone who needs an audience and who is used to being worshipped (see T 123). Ironically, it is Zeno's job to let the passengers know that they will have the historical chance to become an active part in an artwork and to go over the security procedures with them. "Art needs you," he tells them and sure enough the passengers get all excited about the project and the opportunity to get involved and do something for the environment (see T 123). A CEO from St. Louis welcomes the imaginative nature of the event; an older woman supports the constructive character of the protest; and a retired teacher from Paderborn is looking forward to sending a photo of himself participating in the event to his friends and family (see T 123f.). Everyone signs on except for the Polish machinist who came on board with Dan Quentin and who is heading home as a hitch hiker after working two months on King George Island. The art event is off to a successful start including the many opportunities planned for marketing the event afterward.

In Chapter 9 Zeno learns more about his role in organising the art event from the captain, who just gave him a lecture about his behavior in the scene with the Chilean soldier. In this conversation, Zeno insists on his reading of the art performance event as a joke ("Klamauk"; T 134); he maintains that an SOS without a concrete reason for sending the signal is perfectly ridiculous and, in his reasoning with the captain, Zeno is developing the kernel idea for his later symbolic act of kidnapping the ship: what if the art work became real and if the SOS embodied by the passengers in the art performance were to become authentic in the face of a human crisis? Wouldn't that raise the market value of the photos exponentially (see T 134f.)? A real emergency ("Havarie"; T 138) would make the whole thing believable in retrospect and, in a conversation with a fellow crewmember on board, the pianist jokingly suggests to Zeno that high jacking the ship would do the trick: a "ship cruise" would become a "Ship Crusoe" (T 138). The semiotic space opened up by such a semantic shift becomes the location for Zeno's performative intervention in the environmental crisis facing the polar environment. The moment at which the artistic embodiment of an outdated procedural sign of distress articulated in the context of an art performance turns into an authentic distress signal for a human emergency highlights the clash of two very different semiotic principles. In the art event,

human bodies form a chain on the ice intending to call attention to the endangerment of the polar environment through widespread media coverage of the event. In the 'authentic' signal, people call attention to their own distress in the face of their abandonment in the Antarctic. The first mode presents the possibility of playfully experiencing a physical form of embodiment by engaging with other people on the polar environment and coming together around an environmental topic, advocating for an environmental cause, and protesting against environmental destruction. The other mode becomes a survival strategy, calling attention to the emergency situation in which the passengers find themselves.

The event itself takes place in Chapter 11. Dan Quentin is standing on a knoll with a megaphone directing his three hundred extras that are all dressed in red into formation. He is asking the passengers to visualise the letters SOS with the O in the middle as the symbol for the undestructable, the core of life, and with the snakes on both sides symbolising the condition of pollution on the one hand and the condition of healing on the other (see T 163). Once in formation and prepped about visualising the principles of this event, the performance itself consists of vitalising the individual letters by raising the arms one at a time and then all together at the end. Zeno calls this a scene from a fun park ("Kirmes"; T 163) and an Oktoberfest in the deep South. When the crew (consisting mainly of Filipinos) arrives at the scene in order to participate as well, Quentin first tries to send them back as he is quite annoyed at them and does not really need or want them as part of the performance, but in the end adds them to one of the snakes as an unwanted addendum, an infected appendicitis perhaps. He then hurries over to the helicopter in order to lift up and take pictures of the performance from above (see T 164f.). This is the moment at which Zeno returns to the boat, asks everyone including the captain to leave the boat (with the exception of Ms. Morgenthau, who is recovering in the infirmary), and takes off into the open sea. The participants in the art performance are staging a signal of distress, not realising that they are now signalling for their own survival. Zeno, on the other hand, is enacting a real kidnapping, not realising that his action is a performance as well that will be perceived as such in the media and by the other passengers. Acts of destruction and self-destruction are frequently staged events that want to be noticed by an audience, even if only in retrospect as in this case.

Within the novel, Zeno embodies a different relation between the human body and its natural environment, one that is captured by Trojanow in poetic terms by applying the discourse of love to Zeno's relationship with the Tyrolean glacier that he studies as scientist. After spending twenty years measuring "his" glacier and producing scientific data that suggest its slow but sure

death, data that have made no difference whatsoever in the larger picture of a society that continues its destructive habits of consumption, a society that has embraced what Trojanow has called the "take-make-waste" economy (Trojanow 2011b: 16), Zeno asks himself what the point about science is if the events are worse than the prognoses. He becomes critical of a science that is merely descriptive but not transformative. Trojanow has articulated a similar position in his interviews and proposed that we develop a new spirituality of nature, one that does not colonise and appropriate nature (see Trojanow 2011b: 16). Trojanow demands a new attitude toward nature and advocates for a radical break with two thousand years of anthropocentric self-aggrandisement (Trojanow 2011b: 16). In his interview in the "Kulturjournal" he takes his diagnosis of the ills of the age of humankind even further by suggesting that enlightenment is now reduced to the process of analysis: we collect data, we interpret these data more or less rationally, but we do not act on the consequences that these data suggest; he calls our society and our economy entirely irrational in the age of ecological destruction (see Trojanow 2011d), even though one could question how a set of data that continues to objectify nature can serve as the foundation for such a transformation which may be the ultimate reason for the failure of Zeno's project. When Trojanow comes to readings and interviews, he frequently embodies Zeno himself, introducing himself as Zeno Hintermaier to the audience, reading from his novel embodying Zeno's voice (see Casimir 2011)—a similar configuration as in Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello*. What Trojanow demonstrates on the example of his main character in *EisTau* despite of the failure of his staged protest, however, is that it is possible to have empathy for nature.

Trojanow narrates this emphatic relationship between Zeno and his glacier in terms of a love story, engaging with the conventions of the genre and applying them to the non-human world. For Zeno, the melting of his glacier is not a rational event that he can explain with the tools of his science. He is rather traumatised by his glacier's death. We are now able to understand what he means by passionate description when we look at Zeno's daily routine during field research: how he gets up early in the morning, walks around his glacier, how he touches it and then touches his face, how he feels its breath, listens to its voice, and how he suffers when the glacier falls ill and he has to grow into the role of the doctor. When the glacier does die, he is devastated and driven into the spiral of destructive behaviors that eventually leads to the kidnapping of the ship and leaving the passengers involved in the art event stranded.

This condition is best understood as a poetic configuration of a state of the mind that Laurel Peacock has described as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). In the particular case of her research on contemporary American poetry,

Peacock is theorising the poetic dimension of the physical harm being done to the body by toxins and the psychological state of sadness that affects a person who suffers from this condition. The acronym SAD is used by Peacock as a way to conceptualise the interrelatedness of the physical and the psychological in poetic terms. In fact, SAD suggests that humans and the environment are both disordered (see Peacock 2012: 85) and that affect plays a crucial role in understanding human emotions with regard to climate change. Peacock shows how the California poet Brenda Hillman "creates a poetics of environment that demonstrates an openness to being affected by (often depressed by) the environment, rather than deploying its elements in the service of a transcendent meaning" (Peacock 2012: 88), thus providing models of thought for apprehending the ways in which we are affected by our environment (see Peacock 2012: 101). Trojanow presents a narrative model for such an eco-poetics of affect by letting us follow the story of his novel *EisTau* through Zeno Hintermaier's mind and by poetically configuring his involvement with his glacier in the form of a love story. We follow Zeno's reasoning even though he is not perfect, seldom correct in the assessment of other people's motivations, and, in the end, resorts to violence himself. In his interviews, Trojanow has articulated two important critical insights into his character: Zeno does not get involved with social justice issues and he is unable to engage his new sexual partner, the Filipino crewmember Paulina, seriously and on equal terms (see Gmünder 2011). Zeno's real love is the melting glacier and its malady and eventual death is what radicalises him into being the self-destructive eco-terrorist that he eventually becomes. Zeno is articulating a critical position about the destructive nature of our social and economic system and our unquestioned belief in the doctrine of neoliberalism. Trojanow, however, does not share Zeno's shortcomings and may or may not share Zeno's affective involvement.

Dan Quentin's art event and Zeno's kidnapping of the cruise ship remain symbolic actions in the context of a world in which the interrelatedness of all humans with the non-human environment presents new challenges about configuring this new world artistically and in literary form. The art event is a performance that explores a mode of relating to the environment that uses a chain of human bodies to inscribe a signal of distress. Zeno's kidnapping is a result of his affective disorder. Both models address the question of what it means as humans to inhabit this earth in the new age of the Anthropocene. Dan Quentin's art event in Antarctica and Zeno's kidnapping of the cruise ship in the end are therapeutic events. The interconnectivity between humans and nature in the Anthropocene requires us to think differently about human psychology. In the condition of interwovenness of human and natural history and

facing extreme environmental degradation, the approach of eco-psychology can perhaps reestablish a prior existing primordial bond between humans and their environments, a bond that is experienced in the art performance and in the eco-poetic configuration of Zeno's affect where bodies react to their environments in physical as well as psychological ways. If the affective connection between humans and the Earth and humans and other beings is to be restored, Zeno's melancholia needs to be taken seriously despite of the fact that, as a member of the cruise ship industry, he continues to contribute to environmental destruction. Trojanow's model of narrating Zeno's relation to his glacier lays the groundwork for appreciating the role that fiction can play in foregrounding models of embodiment in the Anthropocene.

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CHAPTER 12

Disintegrating Identities: Bodily Presence in Contemporary Writing

Gert Hofmann

Abstract

Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the transcendental subject, Roland Barthes' views about the death of the author and the theme of the end of Literature represent a break-up of new approaches to literary theory in the second half of the 20th century. This literary and theoretical 'complex'—in both senses of the word, as structural complication and as obstruction to critical reflection—reflected on the experience of historical traumatisation and the subsequent radical contestation of traditions of authoritative thought and autonomous aesthetics.

The "Poetics of the Body," as suggested here, is an approach to describe and analyse contemporary ways which resist the paralysing effects of this global complex in literary criticism and cultural theory. The crucial question is here: "What configuration of human subjectivity is yet possible in the space between historical annihilation and literary self-assertion?" Taking J.M. Coetzee's *Elisabeth Costello* fictions as an example, we search for figures of the corporeal feeding into an on-going stream of "subjectivity" which does not depend on conceptual identity pools but rather expands into an ever growing human experience of *exposedness* to something *outside* the sphere of cognitive identification.

Identity is the result of an act of identification: a cognitive process applying a conceptual proposition (a theory) on experiential things as *objects*.

The human subject, or *Self*, however, does not emerge in its concrete manifestation from such a cognitive process (as a process of identification qua objectification) but rather develops as an ongoing *narrative* of self-acknowledgement and self-articulation whose identity is always doubtful.

Literature and literary theory in the age of deconstruction have proven the fragility of the human subject, and analysed the intellectual, political and socio-cultural conditions of its contestation and traumatisation in the twentieth century.

The essay opens a debate about new delimitations of the human subject and its potential for forms of awareness beyond the ideology of identity. The boundaries of the subject are to be redrawn; fundamental aspects of its *conditio*

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humana explored, and a new sensory apparatus developed in order to create a discourse involving its bio-somatic dimensions, its creaturely qualities and its corporeal creativity.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, a range of new approaches to literary theory developed, intimating the ultimate loss of unity and discrediting traditional views of identity qua autonomy in literary agency. One can, for example, refer to Jacques Derrida's idea of the death of the subject, Roland Barthes' "death of the author" and the theme of the end of Literature (cf. Oort 2009). This "complex"—in both senses of the word, as a structural complication and as an obstruction to critical reflection—originated in the literary debate on the experience of historical traumatisation and the subsequent disintegration of all traditions of authoritative thought. In the diverse fields of critical theory, philosophy and discourse analysis, psychoanalysis and semiology, and particularly in the discourse of Holocaust representations in the aftermath of Adorno's radical comments on the coldness and indifference of bourgeois consciousness (cf. Hofmann et al. 2011: 1–15), parallel discussions have been under way, in an attempt to clarify the status of the human subject as a literary agent beyond constructions of identity. This debate has not so much expanded the traditional notion of the subject, as adopted the discourse of its disintegration. As a result, the boundaries of the person and its subject-position in cultural practice and theory have been redrawn while fundamental aspects of its *conditio humana* needed to be explored, aspects which had hitherto been concealed beneath the cognitive quest of conceptual reflection.

Perhaps a new type of sensory apprehension must be developed in order for the bio-somatic dimensions of the person, its creaturely qualities and its creativity, to find a discourse. The subject was not dead, had never died, had in fact never fallen silent; following an impulse running counter to history, the contested, paralysed and muted subject has manifested itself in an intermittent discourse—both theoretical and literary—of the non-cognizable and non-identifiable (the unsayable) which defies the assault of cognitive appropriation, exploring instead the aesthetics of the human condition in figures of disempowerment and traumatisation—thus regenerating a sense of subjectivity and human survival (cf. Hofmann 2003).

The central question is: What configuration of human subjectivity is still possible outside of identity-based discriminations between autonomy (subject) and commodity (object), in the space between annihilation and self-assertion?[1]

1 Cf. Stanley Corngold, *The Fate of the Self. German Writers and French Theory*, Durham and London: Duke University Press 1994; Corngold suggests: "If writing against the privilege of literary consciousness becomes more and more the expression of literary consciousness, would

In a move to initiate a "poetics of the body," this question is being addressed by elaborating upon both literary and theoretical discourses that seem to be intrinsically associated with the phenomenon of corporeality, defining it as a *recessive* kind of subjectivity—that is, one that despite its being generally contested and discredited, is regained in the act of writing.

We find here a form of subjectivity that paradoxically subverts the power of its own annihilation and that critiques, relativises and supplements claims to the disappearance of 'the subject'. Giorgio Agamben (*Homo Sacer,*[2] *L'immanenza assoluta*[3]), Jean Luc Nancy (*Corpus*[4]), Paul Virilio (*Esthétique de la disparition*[5]), and Emmanuel Levinas (*Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*[6]) are some of the protagonists in this interplay of discourses.[7] They deal with the subject (of cognitive agency; that is, of conscious mind, knowledge, memory, writing, etc.) chiefly in the processes of its dissolution, but also implicitly reinforce figures of the corporeal that counteract these very processes and feed into an ongoing stream of "subjectivity" that does not contract into identity-pools but rather uncontainably expands into an ever growing human experience of *exposedness* to something *outside* the sphere of cognitive identification. Such figures can no longer be articulated and "thematized" in intelligible terms of "being" (Levinas 1992: 55f.), but they can be *suggested* in poetic structures of *becoming*, as in the metamorphic dynamic of writing.

Based on these reflections we shall examine the structural dynamic of such corporeal poetics and, taking J.M. Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello fiction and his associated poetics of "sympathetic imagination" as an example, measure its current literary validity (Coetzee 2004: 80).

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not so sustained an attack on the self actually bring about its disappearance? [...] literature opens a way into our being. The entire jagged arc of poetic activity from writer to reader—to which, I will add, the subjectivity of the poetic intention necessarily belongs—is privileged evidence of the self." (2–3) While we agree with Corngold's views about the perseverance of the subject of literary agency, we also explore expressions of poetic subjectivity beyond the conditions of autonomous self-consciousness.

2 English translation: Agamben (1998b).

3 German translation: Agamben (1998a).

4 German translation: Nancy (2007); French with English translation: Nancy (2008). Cf. also Nancy (1993a).

5 German translation: Virilio (1986).

6 German translation: Lévinas (1992).

7 Precursors in the field of body phenomenology are Henri Bergson (1896) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945).

1 Adorno and the Consequences for Critical Theory

Adorno, in his *Negative Dialectics*, was the one of the first to discredit the authoritative reliability of our intellectual tradition. In his view, the horror of Auschwitz and the "crisis of meaning" it instigated, highlight the urgency of a post-enlightened (also post-Marxist) and ethically sensitised art of the *human condition.* In contrast to the bourgeois intellectual tradition, this art consciously subjects itself to the bodily affections of its corporeal immersion in bare life, confronting the materiality of life's fragility. Borne by such affections, art advocates a new categorical imperative which can depend on a sense of corporeality only, "because it is the abhorrence, become practical, of the unbearable physical pain inflicted on individuals, even after individuality, as an intellectual form of reflection, is on the point of disappearing" (Adorno 2001: 167):[8]

> In the camps death has a novel horror; since Auschwitz, fearing death means fearing worse than death. What death does to the socially condemned can be anticipated biologically on old people we love; not only their bodies but their egos, all the things that justified their definition as human, crumble without illness, without violence from outside. The remnant of confidence in their transcendent duration vanishes during their life on earth, so to speak: what should be the part of them that is not dying? The comfort of faith—that even in such disintegration, or in madness, the core of men continues to exist—sounds foolish and cynical in its indifference to such experiences.
>
> ADORNO 1990: 371

According to Adorno, "faith" in the cognitive intelligibility—or identifiability—of lived experience forms the unifying core of the bourgeois subject. He unmasks it, however, as the mere ideological armour of the antagonistic indifference and cold conscience of those who claim the autonomous right of establishing their existence in an exclusive act of being "in-and-for-themselves"[9] (i.e. the bourgeois), in contrast to those who are confined to live their lives as being there *for others* or for something else (i.e. the labourer). While providing subsistence and consumption for everybody, the labourer is forced to surrender himself to an all-encroaching industrial and societal machinery of alienated

8 Cf. Adorno (1970: 358f.).

9 "An und für sich Sein," which is Hegel's formula for the self-realising act of the human spirit in history.

work.[10] In Adorno's neo-marxist historical perspective, bourgeois ideology peaks with Hegel's philosophy of mind. For Hegel, unity as driven by an autonomous intellect, is solicited as the trans-historical identity of subjective and objective reality in a human state of "absolute" self-awareness. "Absoluter Geist" and "absolutes Wissen" bring about the *telos* of history as the ultimate synthesis of "intelligence" and "reality" in the intellectual realms of art, religion, and philosophy, where ultimately "the in-itself free intelligence" obtains intelligible form, becoming manifest in its reality. (Hegel 1975: 440; trans. G.H.)

There is no 'dying' in Hegel's synthetic intellect because death itself, i.e. the end of history, is the insignia of the synthetic intellect's majesty. The lived body of historical experience has become nothing but a dis-embodied, self-reflective act of "remembrance, and the Calvary of the absolute spirit, reality, truth and assurance of his throne"—this is the concluding notion of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*. Hegel's dialectic constructs a metaphysical state of identity, as the ultimate act of speculative self-realisation, at the expense of physical life experience. In Hegel's philosophy, the *corpse* of a completed history appears as the actual object and monument, the signet on the truth of the human spirit's metaphysical sovereignty. Adorno criticises this sovereignty for its being "indifferent," "antagonistic" and "uncompromising" towards the metamorphic formations of life's body, whose unity is neither absolute nor synthetic, but organic and decomposable, exposed to the formlessness of its own unintelligible reality, but also susceptible and exploitable for the *jouissance* of the synthetic games of cold abstraction that are the product of the bourgeois mind. It was these ethical pitfalls of Hegel's speculative dialectics of history that prompted Adorno's philosophical outrage and motivated the writing of his *magnum opus* "Negative Dialectics."

Flowing through the veins of Adorno's argument, the following question begs examination: if purely intellectual claims regarding 'consciousness' ("absoluter Geist," "absolutes Wissen") as the genuine status of subject identity have been discredited, exposed in their 'coldness' and deadliness, what could be the role of *Leib* and *Leiblichkeit*[11] in the discourse on this matter? According to Adorno, the affectivity of the human body, which resonates with physical suffering as the most basic condition of life, is a non-synthesisable supplement

10 "Der moderne Begriff der reinen, autonomen Kultur bezeugt den ins Unversöhnliche angewachsenen Antagonismus durch Kompromißlosigkeit gegenüber den für anderes Seienden sowohl wie durch die Hybris der Ideologie, die sich als an sich Seiendes inthronisiert." (Adorno 1977: 21) On Adorno's cultural criticism see Hofmann et al. (2011: 1–15).

11 Possible translations are 'lived body' or 'corpus' and 'body-awareness' or 'corporeality'—in opposition to 'consciousness'.

or "addendum" to the intellectual subject and its imperative of identity qua autonomy; it can never be absorbed in the synthetic process of intellectual self-realisation, but it offers a playground for radically avant-gardist acts of "unconscious" writing in which "the absolute horror still quakes" (Adorno 1995: 50; trans. G.H.).

In a tribute to Adorno's fundamental critique of identity-based traditions of theoretical thought, which sets the tone for the entire discourse of "critical theory" in the second half of the 20th century, we want to move the discourse on 'corporeality' towards a new critical reflection on subjectivity without identity.

2 Programme of Modernity? Nancy and Derrida

After Adorno had set the terms for the discourse on the materialistic and somatic conditions of awareness in critical theory, Jean-Luc Nancy, in the most uncompromising manner, has shifted the focus of ontological thought from the *synthetic* subject of intelligence to a rather *ecstatic* subject-ground of body awareness. His "ontology of the body" pre-empts any intelligible act of signification and inscription into the body and articulates itself in a process of relief from all transcendent authorities of meaning. "[*Ex*-]scribing the body" (instead of inscribing it with abstract meanings) attempts to undercut the ideologies of identity and their powers of imposing conceptual knowledge on corporeal experience by focusing on forms of a genuine body-thought-and-writing (Nancy 2008: 45). A joy of "ipseity" is generated only in self-exposing gestures of a bodily subject "making place for sense" (Nancy 1993a: 204) in acts of *touch*—the most basic form of corporeal communication—and thus enabling an awareness which is "*touching* upon *sense*" (Nancy 2008: 17)[12] without ever compromising itself by submitting to the cognitive grasp of the *other* body as an object:

> This is how the body rejoices in itself: it enjoys an 'ipseity' that consists in not possessing the Self of subjectivity, and in not being the sign of its own sense, *ipseity* itself, this body itself, this very body, in its very self enjoys, but this enjoying or this joy takes place as the very ex-position of this body. This joy is birth, is coming into presence, outside of sense, in the place of sense, taking the place of sense, and making a place for sense.
>
> NANCY 1993A: 203F

12 We have to see "writing, reading" as "something that is not deciphering: touching, rather, and being touched, involved with the body's masses." (Nancy 2008: 87)

"Ipseity" is a constant presence which is immanent to bare life; it resists and escapes the synthetic construction and possessiveness of the transcendental intellect and informs writing as a somatic *actus purus* which does not depend on superseding forces of cognitive identification and signification.[13] "What in a writing, and properly so, is not to be read—that's what a body is." (Nancy 2008: 87)

For Jean-Luc Nancy "writing [...] the body" points at the primary initiative of a "program of modernity":

> Let there be writing, not *about* the body, but the body itself. Not bodihood (corporeité), but the actual body. Not signs, images, or ciphers of the body, but still the body. This was once a program of modernity, no doubt already it no longer is.
>
> NANCY 2008: 9

Nancy points at modern literary projects, beginning at the turn of the nineteenth century,[14] which constituted a fundamental critique of all classicist and idealist definitions of artistic and philosophical value. "Writing the body" as a modern initiative, here, means reinforcing the physical conditions of life: not subjecting the body to metaphysical principles of transcendental categorisation but, instead, adhering to the multiple immanent and transformative impulses of its own exposure to the lived world.

Also Derrida, in his book *about* Nancy,[15] discusses the project of modernism; but the way in which he does this is different: whereas Nancy considered the immanent writing of the body as a crucial impulse to the modern project of literary subjectivity, Derrida refers to the identity of the transcendental subject of intelligible truth as "this concept of the modern tradition," which has informed the (non-analytical) discourse of philosophy since Descartes. Derrida points out that, in spite of this inconsistency, Nancy, claiming for the body the agency of a writing subject, remains loyal to Cartesian philosophy, and that his loyalty could only be explained "by needs of a strategy, with reference to [...]

13 Interesting is the question if such a sedimental ground of "ipseity" necessarily informs the very act of deconstruction and the dynamic of Derrida's thought of *differance*. Cf. Roland Theuas S. Pada (2007).

14 We could refer paradigmatically in German literature to Hölderlin and Kleist; cf. Nancy's 'Hyperion's Joy' (1993b); Hölderlin's thought of "the One" is a "conflagration" of Kant's thought of the "sublime" qua "finitude": "Man is the catastrophe of the One, the One is being mortally torn apart and his life lived on." (Nancy 1993b: 68f.)

15 Cf. Derrida (2000).

the *truth of this subject*" (Derrida 2000: 37), which of course requires a sense of unity. In Nancy's reading, however, the truth of the Cartesian subject consists in "the non-extension of the mind," as opposed to the extendedness of the body. Truth is "what the union [of the cognitive/intelligible act and the body] demands as much as what the distinction [between subject and object, mind and body] guarantees." (Nancy 1979: 145) 'Modern' in Cartesian terms is thus "the unity of the subject as its truth" (Nancy 1979: 145), based on its non-extension, as opposed to the extendedness and therefore multitude of the body's presence in the physico-empirical world.

When Nancy consequently sets out to write the "ontology of the body" in opposition to Cartesian transcendental modernism, he searches for a subject that *maintains the unity of truth*, but also traces the extendedness of the body. Tracing the body here refers to the *act of writing* as a modus of *touching on* the things of the world's extended body, but not of appropriating conceptual knowledge of them as objects in the modus of analytical thought and cognitive science. Touching (as opposed to grasping/grabbing) is for Nancy the most seminal modality of ontological thought:

> Perhaps we shouldn't think the 'ontological body' except where thinking *touches* on the hard strangeness of this *body*, on its un-thinking, unthinkable, exteriority. But such touching, or such a touch, is the sole condition for true thought.
>
> NANCY 2008: 17

"Touching" inaugurates an *exterior* or peripheral sense of unity which is decisively non-discursive and not guaranteed by an interior or en-centric principle of intelligible unity—or identity—which *imposes* its sense on the senseless corpus of the world.[16] Instead, touch, as a gesture of tenderness, always *exposes* itself, in perpetuated acts of writing, to an exterior reality that cannot be intellectually controlled. Truth manifests itself only as the presence of the *other subject*, not as the objectified realisation of a universal truth-concept. It is constituted only as the singular occurrence of a configuration prompted barely by *touch* which bears the urge for further literary expression. The point of touch creates unity in the sense of a vague indifference between our *own* and an

16 The aesthetics of the eighteenth century assumed a platonic hierarchy of senses, with the visual sense as the superior, because distant, reflective and abstractive sense that appeals primarily to the intellectual capacities of human awareness, i.e. the perception of ideas as pure forms. The lowest sense would be touching, as the closest, as the least abstractive but most affective sense, appealing to our perception of only purely material qualities.

other's body, between interior and exterior sensation, the proper and the alien subject, but it does not identify self and other in a synthetic super-formation. It rather confirms their apartness as a liminal case of contiguity.

> Ontology, then, is affirmed as writing. 'Writing' means: not the monstration, the demonstration, of a signification but a gesture toward *touching* upon *sense*. A touching, a tact, like an address: a writer doesn't touch by grasping, by taking in hand [...] but touches by way of addressing himself, sending himself *to* the touch of something outside, hidden, displaced, spaced.
>
> NANCY 2008: 17

In contrast to the post-modern discourse in critical theory that undermines the modern Cartesian faith in the intellectual subject as unifying authority, Nancy's philosophy of the body raises the question of an alternatively *sustained* subjectivity that in the modus of writing qua *touching upon sense* expands *beyond* the breakdown of the intellectual subject as an untouchable force of signification which always remains identical to itself.

Derrida's own discourse on the "subject," on the other hand, touches on the possibility of a modus of writing "without subject" (Derrida 1998: 303), understood as the actual modality of writing poetry, which is based on "signature" rather than *subject*. "Signature," in Derrida's interpretation, underwrites the immanence of the written text, and thus denounces the Cartesian authority of the subject-centred logos. Through its ever-advancing processuality, writing iterates infinitely the subject's "own dispersion" into a sphere of experience "beyond logos" and therefore beyond identification.[17] The act of *signing* then authenticates a text without subscribing to the *signifying* authority of an identified subject; the signature itself performs an act of writing which absorbs the immanent vitality of the textual body without subjecting it to the inscriptive forces of a transcendent and ultimately irrevocable semantic of the mind.

In this notion of the signature as an ever-advancing and never ultimately signifying act of writing, Derrida's "without-subject" touches on Nancy's corporeal subject and its ex-scriptive force of "writing the body" without falling into the cognitive trap of identifying the other as an object. Nancy's writing "corpus" may thus provide a recessive subject-ground for the literary "without-subject"

17 It principally fails to be reintegrated into "the order of the subject." Derrida has elaborated on his thought of "signature" mainly in 'Signature Event Context' (1982: 307). See also Derrida's case study of Genet's autobiographical writings in *Glas* (1990); cf. Jane Marie Todd (2004: 67).

of Derrida. Nancy's programme of writing the 'ontological body' aims at 'exscribing' it by suspending all cultural significations imposed on it, while Derrida's "without-subject" yields meaning, but only in a supplementary fashion and in excess of all cognitive identity constructions based on presumably irreducible concepts. Both delete the inscriptions of the logos into the living and writing body and both disperse all its transcendentally or historically enforced significations.[18] Performing the process of its own exscription, Nancy's body "*makes room* for existence" instead of re-enacting or revising the transcendental systematic of categorical meaning that Derrida's without-subject deconstructed: "no 'a priori forms of intuition' here; no 'table of categories', the transcendental resides in an indefinite modification and spacious modulation of the skin." (Nancy 2008: 15)

There are avant-gardist precursors, such as, among others, Hölderlin, Nietzsche and Artaud, who represent an alternative literary and philosophical tradition of modernism that claims, in opposition to the traditions of progressive thought (transcendental idealism, historical materialism, empirical and logical positivism), the ultimate sovereignty of the sensitive body over the cognitive mind. This is most strikingly but not exclusively evident e.g. in Hölderlin's late poetics of *tenderness*, in Nietzsche's *hybridisation* of physiology and metaphysics in theatrical philosophy,[19] and in Artaud's project of a "pure theatre" based on the "physicality of the absolute gesture."[20] In the contemporary literary scene, J.M. Coetzee performs a parallel move towards establishing a literary subjectivity rooted in non-conceptual body awareness, one that inaugurates a poetics of *touch* in a basic sense of living instinct and that potentially unites all living creatures in a motion of "sympathetic imagination" (Coetzee 2004: 80).[21] Before elaborating on Coetzee, however, some further elaboration is required on the idea of 'touching' (contiguity) as a dynamic form of *in-between* or threshold subjectivity without identity.

18 "We have to begin [...] by means of the *exscription* of our body: its being inscribed-outside, its being placed outside the text as the most proper movement of its text; the text itself being abandoned, left at its limit." (Nancy 2008: 11).

19 Cf. Gert Hofmann's 'Theaterphilosophie: Nietzsches Ästhetik der Transfiguration' (Hofmann 2003: 195–223).

20 "I maintain that this physical language, aimed at the senses and independent of speech, must first satisfy the senses. There must be poetry for the senses just as there is for speech, but this physical, tangible language [...] is really only theatrical as far as the thoughts it expresses escape spoken, articulated language." (Artaud 1974: 25).

21 E.g. in his novel *Elisabeth Costello*: as derivate and critique of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's neo-romantic poetology of a trans-linguistic *unio mystica* in the Lord Chandos letter. See below.

3 Between Bodies: Touching as Extra-conceptual, Artistic Form of Awareness

Nancy's ideas on writing the *corpus* resonate with Gilles Deleuze's[22] and Giorgio Agamben's[23] reflections on the "absolute immanence" in both the act of writing and living. "Absolute immanence" procures an endless potentiality for life, which manifests itself precisely when life touches at its limits, "struggling with death" (Agamben 1998a: 100, 104; trans. G.H.). Only then, as the almost muted and utterly non-intelligible "potency of Not" (Agamben 1998a: 13, 23; trans. G.H.), i.e. as the categorical denial of all identical and referential meaning,[24] it discourages, according to Agamben, the possessive power of the cognitive act and engenders instead an immanent process of re-writing and writing forth (i.e. of literature) that can never be contained or terminated by conceptual means. The "immanence" of life, as Deleuze has shown it, dissipates the transcendental components of the integrated subject while committing them to an open process of writing which generates only accidental and volatile elements of loosely composed unities. The literary text appears like a mere textured sediment of this process, or like a non-reticulate patchwork of contingent, "touching" connections, but without coherence: like "a wall of loose, uncemented stones, where every element has a value in itself but also [independently; GH] in relation to others: isolated and floating relations, islands and straits, moving spots and sinuous lines" (Deleuze 1997: 86). This special kind of unity (of truth) without identity presents itself in the ragged costume of the harlequin, in his confusing disguise, which is bitter-serene and always credible, but never coherently interpretable.

Who wears this costume?

The subject of the harlequin's masked presence and imaginary truth is the guise itself, the *trope* of an irrevocable permeation of being and image, essentially un-essential. It can be captured only as an articulated and articulating *gap* or *tear* in the texture of the performance, as a moment of conscious unconsciousness, as it were, in the stream of awareness that constitutes the

22 Cf. English translation Deleuze (2001) and German translation Deleuze (1996).

23 Giorgio Agamben points out how the instance of immanence/immanent causation conjures up a "semantic constellation" that opens up a "zone of absolute indefiniteness" of all grammatical categories; cf. Agamben (1998a: 116f.; trans. G.H.).

24 Agamben's and Deleuze's prime witness for the swindling potentials of life's immanence is Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" whose standard formula "I would prefer not to […]" perverts the linguistic logic of reference into the anti-logic of (negative) preference. See Agamben (1998a) and Deleuze (1997).

world as the habitat of the living. But—and this constitutes a difference with the disembodied accounts of postmodernism or deconstruction—these gaps and rents in a faltering conscious mind are undercut by the living body in its physical extendedness and sensual exposedness, and particularly in its metamorphic potentiality,[25] bearing an indefinite number of identities, voices and faces, human and non-human, always singular and contiguous in their mutual relationship, without ever being prone to completion in a conceptually unifying sense.

Unity as based on corporeality can still be thought along the lines of Nancy's conception of *touching*. While we have previously suggested that the point of touch constitutes unity only qua contiguity, without enforcing identity, Nancy highlights that precisely there, at the point of being *in-between*, the bodies emerge as "*naked image*[*s*]," i.e. as masks and guises and "ciphers," which are categorically "foreign to [...] any deciphering": "There is nothing to decipher in a body—except for the fact that the body's cipher is the body itself, not ciphered, just extended." (Nancy 2008: 47) The bodies' *Self* is therefore nothing but this exposure to one-another, this extended contiguity through the point of touch, "through and through in the coming, in the coming-and-going into the world." (Nancy 2008: 111)

This also means that the point of touch, while spawning imagination, is void of essential definitions, defies claims of authenticity and, as a consequence, fulfils the ultimate condition for the presence of the Other in the One, and the exposedness of the One to the Other. Hence "touching" constitutes an exceptional state of de-centred, intermittent threshold awareness, blurred between absence and presence. "Touching" awareness corrupts the order of conscious orientation, and renounces the possessiveness of the intelligible mind that forces the multitude of beings into the identity of its predicament. It resonates, however, with a recessive body awareness that is nonetheless able to reflect on its own fragility and exposedness.

It may be the true privilege of art to avail of these unique potentials of the body, and to renounce and subvert the power of knowledge, to refrain from the raids of objectifying intelligence on the realm of the *other subject*, while inverting the logic of reference into the anti-logic of preference and sympathy for what remains unintelligible. What is at stake here is not autonomy, but the *sovereignty* of art, its true intellectual lawlessness, its potency to compose the splintered, abject and singular relics of our disintegrating mind to erratic configurations of a bodily grounded awareness (cf. Dischner and Hofmann 2007).

25 Metamorphosis as a *corpus*-borne alternative concept of unity can already be traced in Friedrich Nietzsche's performance-based philosophy (cf. Hofmann 1993: 195–224).

4 Unity of Touch: Corporeality as Subject Ground in J.M. Coetzee's Writing

On the current scene of world literature, the shift from the intellect-focused subject of identity criticism to the body focused subject of a conceptually deviant "writing"-process has become an overall dominating impulse. J.M. Coetzee is one of the protagonists of this poetological shift. Mainly in the series of his Costello-fictions,[26] Coetzee has developed his theory of literature-based "sympathetic imagination" in opposition to the conceptual restrictions of the analytical discourse of Anglo-American philosophy and its logical realism.[27]

In his novel *Elizabeth Costello* "sympathetic imagination" emerges as a form of trans-conceptual awareness with "no bounds" "that allows us to share at times the *being* of another" (Coetzee 2004: 79f.) and that reaches beyond the polar distinction between subject and object, i.e. between analytical mind and synthetic reality. The novel explores the practical possibilities of such "sympathetic imagination" as a kind of *sym-embodiment* which allows us to "feel" our way "towards a different kind of being-in the world" (Coetzee 2004: 80, 95).[28]

> The body is as the body moves, or as the currents of life move within it. The poems ask us to imagine our way into that way of moving, to inhabit that body.
>
> COETZEE 2004: 96

Bodily movements and inward motions provide the signature for that configured openness or, with Nancy, for the *extendedness* of space which provides the world as habitat for a living experience. Taking Howard Hughes "Jaguar"-poem as an example, Costello emphasises that writing is *not* a matter "of inhabiting

26 We refer mainly to his two most recent novels *Elisabeth Costello*, which is based on a series of earlier lectures delivered by Coetzee in the narrative disguise of the fictional author Elisabeth Costello on philosophical and literary questions of the relation between human and animal life, and *Slow Man*, where Elisabeth Costello again, quasi as the fictional alter ego of Coetzee and as the fictional author of the narrative, appears within the frame of her narration as a character whom we encounter only from the focal point of the novel's protagonist, "slow man" Paul Rayment.

27 On Coetzee's criticism of analytical philosophy's approach to the problem of consciousness-reality relations and its ethical implications with regards to animal life see Mulhall (2009).

28 Coetzee alludes here to Martin Heidegger's existential hermeneutics, which in the first section of his *magnum opus* "Sein und Zeit" refers to human existence as an individually articulated form of "being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-sein*); cf. Heidegger (1979).

another mind but of inhabiting another body" (Coetzee 2004: 96), even that of an animal:[29]

> Writers teach us more than they are aware of. By bodying forth the jaguar, Hughes shows us that we too can embody animals—by the process called poetic invention that mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and no one ever will. He shows us how to bring the living body into being within ourselves.
>
> COETZEE 2004: 97F

Slow Man then explores the extreme possibilities of such "embodied" imagination in the most uncompromising manner of *writing forth* the borderline awareness of the human experience in a limbo state between life and death, which proves radically reduced to the sheer receptiveness and passiveness of physical presence, "stretched out" and exposed to an elementary "touch" of the world "that no one has explained and no one ever will," be it "sharp" and "painful" or tender and kind:

> The blow catches him from the right, sharp and surprising and painful, like a bolt of electricity, lifting him up off the bicycle. *Relax!* He tells himself as he flies through the air [...].
>
> He lies stretched out, at peace. It is a glorious morning. The sun's touch is kind. There are worse things than letting oneself go slack [...]. He closes his eyes; the world tilts beneath him, rotates; he goes absent.
>
> COETZEE 2006: 1

Letting his *mind* go absent, and losing conscious control over his living interactions with the "world," the narrator allows the traditional, ontologically premised unity of intelligent subject and intelligible world to disintegrate. However, this disintegration still appears undercut by the survival of a more obliquely than distinctly pervasive body presence that is no longer subject to the distinctive *grasp* of knowledge but to the *touch* of a strangely synesthetic[30]

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29 Giorgio Agamben has analysed this emerging openness of the human life world as a "hiatus" of self-reflection that occurs between animal and human awareness only *within* the horizon of human consciousness as such: Agamben (2003); Italian original: Agamben (2002). Coetzee's poetic of "sympathetic" or "embodied" imagination follows a similar dynamic of emerging reflection based on elementary body awareness; the process and rhythm of writing in *Slow Man* follows precisely this dynamic of emergence.

30 "[H]e hears rather than feels the impact of his skull on the bitumen [...]." (Coetzee 2006: 1).

and purely corporeal awareness. Paul Rayment, the focal narrator of the story, who, as a cyclist, suffered severe injuries in a traffic accident and, as a consequence, had one leg amputated, faces the problem of being unable to recalibrate his post-traumatic life as an amputee against his pre-accident personality as a vital and physically active sixty-year-old man. His bodily impairment, the mutilation and the persistent state of physical violation result in a loss of personal identity, which cannot be reversed. The insistent presence of the *wound* tears apart the texture of his biographical self in a way that cannot be mended and overwritten with alternative meaning. However, what is present in the ineffable presence of the wound is, in Nancy's terms, the "impenetrability" of the body, its unitary character, its uncompromising interiority and simultaneously unprotected exposedness; minds can merge, bodies cannot—the violent logic of the crash: "Two bodies cannot occupy the same space simultaneously." (Nancy 1993a: 189) Thus the unity of corporeal presence does not underlie the subject-object synthesis of the self-conscious mind, but underlies the *jouissance* of the tender *touch* between two bodily exteriors, or the pains of violent penetration and mutilation, both breathless moments of existential de-signification. Nancy writes:

> Bodies are impenetrable: only their impenetrability is penetrable. Words brought back to the mouth, or to the ink and the page: there is nothing to discourse about, nothing to communicate. A community of bodies.
>
> [...]
>
> How does one touch? An entire rhetoric resides in this question. But what would happen if we understood the question non-metaphorically? *Comment toucher?* [...] What does a word touch, if not a body? But there you have it: How can one get hold of the body? I am already speechless.
>
> NANCY 1993A: 190

Touch creates unity as the sympathetic *emergence* of multiple *personae*, not as the synthesis of intelligible identical objects. In *Slow Man*, Paul Rayment is compelled to get in touch with the "crippled self" of his "truncated" body by learning to acknowledge the sustained *painfulness* of his irreversible trauma, which obliterates all the meaning and structure of his previous life and catapults him into an unexpectedly altered existence (Coetzee 2006: 17). The multiple and sophisticated sensations of "sympathetic imagination" are reduced here to the raw feeling of *pain* as proprioception. Pain has been perceived as the *arkhé* of all senses, as "the *general condition of being alive*, a state of sensation, a sensual monitoring of the body, a care or awareness of its health and its

status": "the body's internal sense of itself" (Elkins 1999: 23).[31] Paul Rayment's traumatic experience, which defines the narratological focus of the novel, is in line with this perception:

> *Pain is nothing*, he tells himself, *just a warning signal from the body to the brain* [...] but of course he is wrong. Pain is the real thing [...].
>
> COETZEE 2006: 12

Only pain is the *real thing*. Pain, the ineffable presence of the wound, is the presence of sheer bodiliness and bare life, prior to sensible significations and inscriptions; and only pain survives all incurred obliterations of lived meaning and personal identity. The 'bodying' of pain and touch creates unity of a unique kind: "writing the body" does not result in a text, signifying and conceptually framed as identifiable entity, but in a *texture* of indefinite semantic bearing, and in the soft agency of a subject that gives in only to body-immanent impulses of bare life, of (not) wishing rather than willing:

> 'There is no need', he begins again, 'for us to adhere to any script. No need to do anything we do not wish. We are free agents'.
>
> COETZEE 2006: 105

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31 See also Jean Starobinski (1989).

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PART 3

Experience of Self-Transcendence

CHAPTER 13

Awe and Humility in the Face of Things: Somatic Practice in East-Asian Philosophies[1]

Graham Parkes

Abstract

Whereas Western philosophy, beginning with the ancient Greeks, tends to focus on the question 'What is the truth?' and employ abstract reasoning to answer it, classical Chinese philosophy prefers to ask, 'What is the way?' meaning 'How are we to live?' and to engage in somatic practice in response.

In the philosophies of Confucius and Zhuangzi in China, and Kūkai and Dōgen in Japan, we can distinguish two forms of somatic practice: developing physical skills, and what one might call 'realising relationships'. For all their differences, one thing these four thinkers share in common is a sense that our relations to others are exacerbated by egocentrism and made harmonious by humility—whether in the face of the ancestors or our contemporaries, the things around us or the phenomena of nature—and that appropriate somatic practice increases humility while reducing egocentrism.

Because such practices aim to transform the practitioner's experience, philosophies grounded in them help to close the gap between beliefs and behaviour, and between ideas and action. In this way they avoid the drawbacks of purely theoretical philosophies, which can produce any number of good intentions in the philosopher, or follower, that often don't get put into practice.

Whereas the Platonic-Christian philosophical tradition in the West favours an 'ascent to theory' and abstract reasoning, East-Asian philosophies tend to be rooted in somatic, or bodily, *practice*. In the philosophies of Confucius and Zhuangzi in China, and Kūkai and Dōgen in Japan, we can distinguish two different forms of somatic practice: developing physical skills, and what one might call "realising relationships." These practices improve our relations with others—whether the ancestors or our contemporaries, the things with which we surround ourselves, or the phenomena of nature—by reducing egocentrism and increasing humility. Because they transform the practitioner's

■ To maintain sequence order footnotes are renumbered

1 An earlier version of this essay was published in *The European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4(3) (2012). We are most grateful for permission to reprint it here.

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experience, the major benefit of philosophies grounded in somatic practice is that they help close the gap between beliefs and behaviour, and between ideas and action.

The background to what follows is the global environmental crisis we are currently facing, and especially the prospect, if the developed nations insist on continuing with 'business as usual', of reaching by way of several synchronous positive feedback loops—such as reduction of the ice-albedo, methane release, and water vapour feedbacks—a tipping point that will usher in what climate scientists call "runaway global warming".[2] This kind of syndrome was apparently a major factor in the "Mother of All Extinctions" at the end of the Permian Period some 250 million years ago, and something similar appears to have caused the oceans on Venus to evaporate and the carbon dioxide levels in its atmosphere to rise to over 96 per cent. If we manage to reach that tipping point, it will be the end of civilisation as we know it, and all questions in philosophy and religion—perhaps even all questions *simpliciter*—will be nugatory.[3]

Among the numerous factors driving this current insanity is a lack of awe and humility in the face of the wonders of the world—other people, natural phenomena, and the things we make use of in living our lives. This essay considers the role of somatic practices in cultivating such humility in the context of some East-Asian philosophical and religious traditions. By somatic practice I mean disciplined and repetitive activities of the body that have a cumulative effect on its physiology and transform its experiencing. After considering somatic practices in some representative Chinese and Japanese philosophies, we conclude with a brief remark about the benefit of such practices.[4]

It has often been remarked that a major difference between the Western and East-Asian philosophical traditions is exemplified in the contrast between their primary guiding questions: For Western thought, beginning with the ancient Greeks, the question is usually "What is the truth?" whereas for classical Chinese philosophy it is more likely to be "What is the way?"—meaning 'How are we to live?' It is less often remarked that this difference derives in large part

2 I am grateful to Gereon Kopf for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

3 See Hansen (2009), Chap. 10, 'The Venus Syndrome'. The subtitle may strike the reader as unfortunately alarmist—but only until after he or she has read and digested the contents of the book.

4 Right on the deadline for submitting this typescript, my colleague John Maraldo mentioned an essay of his, of which I had been regrettably unaware, that turns out to deal with my topic here: 'An Alternative Notion of Practice in the Promise of Japanese Philosophy' (2009). There is time only to cite his definition of practice, which is perfectly consonant with my own usage: "action done over and over again, performed for its own sake but with a learning curve toward improvement, with the whole person, 'body and soul', engaged; that is, with attentive seeing or know-how built into the action" (Maraldo 2009: 19).

from a difference in methods: Whereas the Platonic-Christian tradition favours an 'ascent to theory' and abstract reasoning, East-Asian philosophy tends to be rooted in somatic practice. Another, related difference between the two sets of traditions is that the Western tendency to distinguish between philosophy and religion, secular and sacred, theory and practice, is foreign to East-Asian thought. For example, in the Chinese tradition 'knowing' is as much a practical as a theoretical matter, and Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism are religions as well as philosophies.

Broadly speaking, one can distinguish between two forms of practice in these traditions: developing physical skills, and what one might call "realising relationships"—"realising" in the dual sense of becoming aware of our relations with others, and also making those relationships real, or actual. This requires imagination, but it is also very much a somatic process. For all their differences, one thing shared in common by the four East-Asian thinkers to be discussed in what follows is a sense that our relations to others tend to be exacerbated by egocentrism and made harmonious by humility—whether in the face of the ancestors or our contemporaries, the things with which we surround ourselves, or the phenomena of nature.

1 Confucius: Developing Skills and Realising Relations

The prerequisite in ancient China for becoming a philosopher—or a scholar-official, or even just a gentleman—was self-cultivation through the Six Arts: ritual ceremony, the playing of music, calligraphy, mathematics, archery, and charioteering. If we can assume that training in mathematics involved the use of some kind of abacus, than all six arts would require considerable physical skill, to develop which requires practice.

The most important arts for Confucius (551–479 BCE) are the first two, the practice of *lǐ*, or 'ritual propriety', and of music. These complement one another in that playing (and listening to) music molds the moods and emotions from within, while the mastery of ritual ceremony shapes the energies of the body from the outside. There are obvious parallels between the role of practice in each, but the focus here will be on ritual propriety, since its role in realising relationships and enhancing humility is more extensive. Roger Ames has pointed out that the association of ritual propriety with the body (*tǐ*—a cognate of *lǐ*) is established by a passage from the *Book of Rites*:

> Now the great corpus (*tǐ*) of ritual proprieties (*lǐ*) is embodied (*tǐ*) in the heavens and the earth, emulates the four seasons, takes *yin* and *yang* as its standard, and comports with human feeling [...].

BOOK OF RITES, cited in AMES 2010: 109

This body of cultural practices gets its life, then, from being performed by succeeding generations of practitioners, and its sustenance by incorporating the energies of the natural world.

As Herbert Fingarette showed quite some time ago in his *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, the first great philosopher in the classical Chinese tradition dissolved the distinction between religious rituals and secular activities by advocating the application of the skills necessary for the former to *all* social interaction. There are three distinctive features to the forms of ancient sacrifice on which Confucius appears to have modeled his understanding of ritual propriety: one sacrifices something of *value* in acknowledgment of the higher powers with whom one is establishing or cultivating a relationship—whether these are the heavens, the spirits, or the ancestors; one has to practise the ritual with *precision*: the rite must be performed right, if it is going to work; and one's *heart* has to be in it: simply going through the motions is not sufficient.

To give something up in order to enhance a relationship focuses one's attention on the Other in a way that reduces egocentrism. Confucius's insistence that the ritual be performed properly, in the traditional way rather than simply as one likes it, evinces and encourages humility in the face of the wisdom of the ancestors. He does, however, acknowledge that changing circumstances may necessitate changes in procedure: he is prepared to go along with the practice of substituting a simpler cap of silk for an elaborate linen cap in order to spare expense; but he objects to a newfangled switch in the order of doing prostrations and ascending steps, since this change is arbitrary.[5] Those men of old knew what they were doing when they elaborated the ritual in these particular ways, and it would be presumptuous of us upstart latecomers to presume that we know better. It is this kind of submission that is meant by the Confucian expression *kè jǐ*, 'self-discipline' or 'self-restraint'—whose literal meaning is 'conquering' or 'overcoming the self', with connotations in this context of 'overcoming selfishness' or 'egocentricity' (12.1). If for example you announce on your first visit to the martial arts dojo that you intend to do the form (*kata* in Japanese) 'your way', that visit is likely be your last. The whole point is to do it their way, until through prolonged practice you have made the form your own. That is why in Japan such arts, whether martial or fine, are practised as a 'way' of life (the way of archery, the way of tea, the way of calligraphy, and so forth).

5 Confucius, *Analects*, 9.3. Subsequent references in the body of the text simply by the numbers of chapter and verse. I use the translations by Ames and Rosemont (1998) and by Lau (1979) with occasional slight modifications.

The work of culture requires a constant cultivation of the movements and attitudes of the human body mindful of its environment. In Confucian ritual the appropriate garments, for example, are prescribed in advance; but how one wears them (the precise angle of the hat, the arc of the sweep of the sleeve) requires careful attention to particular detail. Whether in the presence of the many or the few, the great or the small, "the gentleman does not dare to neglect anyone [...] wears his robe and cap correctly, and is polite in his gaze" (20.4). Ritual propriety demands acute awareness of the position and posture of the body in motion: it simply will not do to be stumbling as one ascends the steps, knocking over the flowers on the altar, or dropping the ritual implements on the floor. Through honing the body's movements in relation to other people and things, one becomes more open and responsive to the world and enhances social harmony through one's skillful interactions (1.12).

The infusion of heart or soul into one's activity depends on a prior mastery of the physical practice, and here the parallels with music are instructive. I may bring to the musical performance an overflowing soul and a heart brimming with good feeling, but if I cannot play the instrument, the results will be embarrassing at any level beyond the teenagers' garage band or the friends' alcohol-fueled jam session. But while mastery of technique is indispensable, it is not sufficient. Witness the flood of teenage violin and piano virtuosos from China these days who command flawless technique and attain almost supernatural speed on the most demanding works in the western classical repertoire—but tend to lack the requisite depth of feeling. Confucius advocates, in the practice of ritual propriety, a balance between "native substance" and "acquired refinement": too much "nature" and you get boorishness, while over-cultivation results in mere punctiliousness (6.18).

An important consequence for Confucius of the assidious practice of self-cultivation on the part of the gentleman, or consummate human being, is that the power (*dé*) thereby accumulated has an almost magical effect on the people around him: "The power of the gentleman is the wind, while that of the petty person is the grass. When the wind blows, the grass is sure to bend" (12.19). The resulting charisma of the exemplar naturally encourages emulation on the part of others: all the ruler has to do—but he has to be seen to be doing this—is to take up his position facing south, and the empire will spontaneously order itself (15.5; 2.1). The consummate practice of Confucian ritual propriety can thus be awe-inspiring in the way it exerts a mysterious and quasi magical effect on others through some kind of "sympathetic resonance".

The central Confucian concern with family reverence (*xiào*, traditionally translated as "filial piety") is a special case of the Master's conception of human existence as being radically *relational*. His characterisation of the way

to become fully human and humane (*rén*)—by "loving one's fellow human beings" (12.22)—involves extending the love one naturally feels for the closest kin to one's more distant relatives, and from there, in a gradated way, to the rest of society (see Ames 2011: Chap. IV). This ability does not come naturally but requires practice, practice in the cultivating of reciprocity (*shù*). Confucius's claim that one of the most difficult things in life is to fully own up to one's shortcomings and take oneself to task for them is surely on the mark (5.27): as another Good Book points out, it is so much easier to see the tiny splinter in the other person's eye than the huge log that is lodged in one's own (Matthew 7:3–5; Luke 6:41–42). It's clear from many passages in the *Analects* that Confucius is well aware of the close connection between the human tendency toward selfishness and the prevalance of what modern psychology calls *projection*—as evidenced in his 'negative' formulation of the Golden Rule. When asked whether there is "one expression that can be acted upon until the end of one's days," Confucius replies: "There is reciprocity: Do not impose on others what you yourself do not want" (15.24; also 12.2).[6]

The task of realising relationships—in the sense of ensuring that we are relating to the reality of the people we deal with rather than our fantasy projection of how we would like them to be or think they ought to be—requires that one learn to see through (and so check or restrain) one's projections by acknowledging one's own faults. One of the most precious gems of moral-psychological insight to be found (twice) in the *Analects* is this: "When walking in the company of two others, I am bound to be able to learn from both. The good points of the one I emulate; the failings of the other I correct—in myself" (7.22; 4.17). How much easier it is to correct the failings of the other person instead—and how elegantly that rhetorical retroflexion at the end softens the hardness of the task of working oneself into shape. To be able to put oneself properly in the other person's shoes, and see the situation from his or her point of view, requires a depth of empathy that can only be achieved through assiduous practice in imagining.

But this project also involves a kind of somatic practice in the form of honing one's perceptions and sharpening one's attention, so that one really hears what the other person is saying by being sensitive to all the overtones and undertones of the voice, reads his or her body language carefully, and sees clearly the subtleties of facial expression that may reveal what is felt but is not being said. It is a matter not just of letting those "mirror neurons" get crackling, but also of a sympathetic feeling of patterns of tension and relaxation in the musculature. The task is to open oneself to an intuitive attunement with the

6 See the discussion of *shù* in Ames (2011: 194–200).

other person's life, so that one can practise genuine benevolence rather than merely helping the other become more like oneself.

Admirable though the Confucian project is, the Daoists (a century or two after Confucius) regard it as too narrowly confined to the realm of social relations, and advocate an expansion of concern to the natural environment within which any human society must operate. The relationships to be realised in that broader context will be correspondingly more extensive.

2 Zhuangzi: Entertaining Perspectives and Attuning the Body

Along with the legendary Laozi, to whom the *Daodejing* is ascribed, Zhuangzi (369–286 BCE) is the second great thinker in classical Daoism. His main way of realising relationships is through what one might call perspectival practice, exercising body and mind toward greater flexibility by way of "free and easy wandering" through a diversity of perspectives (Zhuangzi 2009: 7f.). He acknowledges the occasional necessity of the perspective of utility (through which we see what things we can use and how) for coping with practical matters, but is also concerned to demonstrate its limitations. For one thing, we tend to get stuck in certain modes of this perspective, as a story in the *Zhuangzi*'s first chapter astutely shows.

Zhuangzi's friend Huizi (a real person and also, tellingly, a logician) has been given some seed that grows into an enormous gourd weighing over a hundred pounds. He tries to use it in the customary way, as a water container—but it is too big to lift; then, split in half, as a ladle—but it is still too unwieldy; so he ends up smashing it to pieces in frustration. Zhuangzi asks why he did not think to use it intact, as a different type of vessel in which he could have gone "floating through the lakes and rivers." Huizi was stuck in a particular perspective of utility, fixated on the gourds as something to put water in, and so overlooked the possibility of putting himself in the water and using the gourd to keep on top of it.[7] Even in this imaginative shift the body plays a part, insofar as Huizi failed to feel that he could physically fit himself inside the gourd.

As long as we stay fixated in the perspective of utility, we shut down the prospect of feeling either awe or humility in the face of things. One way that Zhuangzi shifts us out of this perspective is by pointing out, in a number of passages, what he calls "the usefulness of being useless"—which, given the arrogant rapaciousness of humans, is a valuable asset for other beings. In one

7 Zhuangzi (2009: 7f.). 'Free and easy wandering' is the title of this first chapter, which Ziporyn translates "Wandering far and unfettered."

story a certain Carpenter Stone comes across a famous tree at a shrine, which is "so large that thousands of oxen could shade themselves under it." He walks past it without a second look, dismissing it as "worthless timber" and "useless." The tree later appears to him in a dream and instructs him on the usefulness of being useless, which is what allowed it to "live out its natural life span." The tree's parting remarks are especially telling:

> Moreover, you and I are both beings—is either of us in a position to classify and evaluate the other? How could a worthless man with one foot in the grave know what is or isn't a worthless tree?
>
> ZHUANGZI 2009: Chap. 4, p. 30

The tree shakes the carpenter out of his anthropocentrism by remarking that a reciprocity of perspectives, which highlights their both being finite and impermanent beings subject to death, grants them a salutary ontological parity. Since the tree was good for nothing, the local religion—one of the few forces capable of subverting the human drive to use things up—granted it special protection, which is what allowed it to grow to such awe-inspiring proportions.[8]

In keeping with the general Daoist move away from anthropocentrism, Zhuangzi invites the reader to entertain (literally, "hold oneself among") the perspectives of many other species and kinds of beings: more often of insects, reptiles, birds or fish than of mammals—perhaps because these last are easier to empathise with. In the course of a philosophical dispute beginning from the question, "Do you know what all things agree in considering right?" one of the interlocutors puts the anthropocentric perspective in perspective in a way that is unmatched in the history of world philosophy. After asking which beings among a variety of animals (including the human) know the best places to sleep in, or the best things to eat, he says:

> Monkeys take she-monkeys for mates, bucks mount does, male fish frolic with female fish, while humans regard Mao Qiang and Lady Li as great beauties. But when fish see these legendary beauties they dart into the depths, when birds see them they soar into the skies, when deer see them they bolt away without looking back. Which of these four 'knows' what is rightly alluring?
>
> ZHUANGZI 2009: Chap. 2, p. 17f.

8 See the discussion of this story in James W. Heisig (2003: 40ff.).

We humans like to think that of course we know what is what in the world, but this last question shows us just how silly that presumption is. Only when we learn to check the drive to regard the world from the standpoint of what is in it for us, and so slip out of the anthropocentric perspective, can we become open to the mystery of things.

To achieve such an openness one needs to empty the heart-mind (the Chinese *xīn* covers the sense of both terms) of all the conceptual clutter that has been accumulating since one was socialised into a language. According to Zhuangzi, "[t]he genuine human beings of old breathed from their heels, while the mass of men breathe from their throats." This seems to refer to meditative practice that "balances the *qì* energies" that compose the body, and which is also associated with "fasting the heart-mind" (Zhuangzi 2009: Chap. 6, p. 40; Chap. 7, p. 52f.; Chap. 4, p. 26f.). Such fasting dissolves sedimented judgments and prejudices in the mind, and loosens habitual reactions in the body, so that the *qì* energies of heaven and earth (*tiān*, or *tiāndì*) can flow through unimpeded and keep one on course.[9] For all the flexible interchanging of perspectives between human and other beings that Zhuangzi recommends, it is not a matter of abandoning the human perspective altogether, but rather of keeping it in dynamic interplay with the perspectives of natural phenomena. The genuine human being is one for whom "neither the Heavenly [the natural] nor the human wins out over the other" (Zhuangzi 2009: Chap. 6, p. 42.).

Another way of attaining such a condition is through prolonged somatic practice that attunes the entire musculature to the dynamics of natural energies. One of the best known passages in the *Zhuangzi* concerns King Hui's cook, whose skill with the cleaver is such that, after cutting up "thousands of oxen" over a period of nineteen years, his blade is "still as sharp as the day it came off the whetstone." After three years of practice he is able to stop "scrutinizing the ox with his eyes" and deactivate his ordinary way of understanding, so as to let the subtle energies that constitute his own body resonate with the energies that compose the carcass and thereby guide his blade into the interstices in just the right way (Zhuangzi 2009: Chap. 3, p. 22).[10] As is often

9 "The Course" is Ziporyn's translation of *dào*, 'the Way', in the *Zhuangzi*.

10 The term used here is *shén* ('spirit') rather than *qì* ('energies'), but it is clearly a matter of *qì* in this case. In ancient Chinese cosmology, *qì* undercuts the distinction between animate and inanimate, and so an ox carcass is as much a configuration of *qì* as an ox, just a less vital configuration. For more details, see the section 'Cosmologies of *Qi*' in my essay "Winds, Waters, and Earth-Energies" (Parkes 2003).

the case with such adept practitioners, the performance is aesthetically as well as practically impressive, a captivating dance rather than a humdrum procedure:

> Wherever his hand smacked the ox, wherever his shoulder leaned into it, wherever his foot braced it, wherever his knee pressed it, the thwacking tones of flesh falling from bone would echo, the knife would whiz through with its resonant thwing, each stroke ringing out the perfect note, attuned to the 'Dance of the Mulberry Grove' or the 'Jingshou Chorus' of the ancient sage-kings.

The cook's explanation of his ability is simple: "I love the Course (*dào*), something that advances beyond mere skill." This echoes Confucius's saying that whatever powers he possesses come from "heaven" (7.23), and exemplifies Daoist humility in the face of the powers of heaven and earth. The cook's love of *dào* is shared by several other characters in the *Zhuangzi* whose practice has allowed them to develop almost supernatural physical skills, but just one more example will suffice.

Qing the Woodworker was carving a bell stand that was so awe-inspiring that those around him "were astonished, as if they had seen the doings of a ghost or spirit." When asked about his technique, he explains that he takes care not to "deplete his vital energy (*qì*)" and also "fasts to quiet his mind," so that after three days he has given up any concern for "praise or reward, rank or salary." Only after a week of letting go all conventional valuations does he feel ready to search for the proper materials.

> I enter into the mountain forests, viewing the inborn Heavenly nature of the trees. My body arrives at a certain spot, and already I see the completed bell stand there; only then do I apply my hand to it. Otherwise I leave the tree alone. So I am just matching the Heavenly to the Heavenly. This may be the reason the result suggests the work of spirits!
>
> ZHUANGZI 2009: Chap. 19, p. 81f.

As in the case of King Hui's cook, it is a matter of practice that empties the heart-mind of all preconceptions and finds the right material by letting the human body's energies resonate with the energies of the natural body. We can surely assume that this kind of responsiveness continues from the tree-finding into the wood-carving phase.

3 Kūkai: Learning to Listen and Reading the Signs

Kūkai (774–835) was Japan's first great thinker and is one of the world's profoundest and most comprehensive philosophers. As the founder of the Shingon School of Esoteric Buddhism, he was a master of theoretical speculation, whose thinking was always grounded in somatic practice. His best known idea is probably *sokushin jōbutsu*, the idea that it is possible to attain enlightenment in this present body—by contrast with earlier Buddhist views that enlightenment could be achieved only after many lifetimes. What one realises through the somatic practices that Kūkai recommends in this endeavour has to do with a larger body belonging to Dainichi Nyorai (Mahavairocana in Sanskrit), the Dharmakaya or cosmic embodiment of the Buddha. Kūkai's second great idea, *hosshin seppō,* means that Dainichi as the Dharmakaya is constantly engaged in expounding the Buddhist teachings, or Dharma. This contrasts with the traditional understanding of the cosmic embodiment of the Buddha as "formless and imageless, and totally beyond verbalization and conceptualization."[11] It also exemplifies one of Kūkai's major innovations in the development of Buddhist doctrine, which was to bring the idea of the Dharmakaya "down to earth" by identifying what was customarily regarded as the Absolute, formless and imageless, with the totality of the actual world we presently inhabit.

This world, for Kūkai, is constantly creating itself through the Five Great Processes (*godai*) of earth, water, fire, wind, and space interacting with each other and with a sixth process, awareness—so that he also speaks of the Six Great Processes constituting the world (Hakeda 1972: 228f.).[12] At the deepest level these interactions are sound-energies that take the form of signs, just as Dainichi's expounding of the Dharma happens as both spoken sermon and written scripture.[13]

Taking the elucidation of the teachings through sound first: this means, on the one hand, sounds we can ordinarily hear, such as the wind blowing through the grass, the crashing of waves on the shore, the roaring of a forest fire, the song of birds and the cries of mammals. Even for the uninitiated

11 Kūkai, 'The Difference between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism' (*Benkenmitsu nikyō ron*) in Hakeda (1972: 154).

12 Kūkai, 'Attaining Enlightenment in This Very Body'.

13 For Kūkai reality consists of nothing but sounds and signs, as he explains in his treatise 'The Meaning of Sound, Sign, Reality' (*Shōji jissō gi*, KMW 234–45) where he recounts a process whereby sounds become signs and signs become things.

among us, such sounds can seem, if we attend to them with an open mind, in some way meaningful (though we may have no idea what they mean). On the other hand, Kūkai is talking about sounds that are ordinarily inaudible: vibrations emanating from the sun, the resonances of clouds, and the voices of rocks. The key to understanding this enigmatic idea is his notion of *sanmitsu*, the "Three Mysteries," or "Three Intimacies" (see Kasulis 1995).[14] This triad is based on the traditional Buddhist conception of the individual as consisting of "body, speech, and mind," and working karmically as "acting, speaking, and thinking." Corresponding to these three aspects of the individual are three aspects of Dainichi as the cosmic Buddha: the sounds of the world as his speech, the signs of the world as images of his thought, and the things of the world as his body.

Although Kūkai emphasises that Dainichi's elucidation of the Buddhist teachings is "for his own enjoyment" and a communication "between the Buddha and the Buddha," it is also true that "he deigns to let it be known to us"—at least to those of us who undertake appropriate practice (Hakeda 1972: 152).[15] Insofar as Dainichi preaches the Buddha-Dharma through the sounds of the cosmos, the Shingon practitioner will be able, by chanting mantras, to attune his or her hearing to the cosmic resonances and thereby understand the sermon.

Just as every phenomenon creates a sound that we can learn to hear "with the third ear," as it were, so everything is also a sign inscribed in the great scripture that is the world. As Kūkai writes in one of his longer poems:

> Being painted by brushes of mountains, by ink of oceans,
> Heaven and earth are the bindings of a sutra revealing the Truth.
> Reflected in a dot are all things in the universe;
> Contained in the data of senses and mind is the sacred book.
> It is open or closed depending on how we look at it;
> Both [Dainichi's] silence and his eloquence make incisive tongues numb.
>
> HAKEDA 1972: 91

As for the Dharmakaya's elucidation of the teachings as a sutra, it will not be readable by the uninitiated—even though striations on rocks or patterns in water or vegetation may appear to an open mind to mean something. Full

14 Kasulis's translation by "intimacies" is more illuminating philosophically than "mysteries," and his essay is an exceptionally lucid exposition of these two key texts of Kūkai's.

15 Kūkai, 'Exoteric and Esoteric'; 'Introduction to All the Sūtras', translated by Kasulis (1995: 174).

comprehension of the world's signs will require the Shingon practices of visualising mandalas and settling the mind in meditation (*samadhi*)—an opening of the third eye, as it were.

Finally, to be able to feel and experience all things as constituting Dainichi's body, the somatic practice of mudras (symbolic hand gestures) is necessary. As Kūkai puts it, in "Attaining Enlightenment in this Present Body":

> If there is a Shingon student who reflects well upon the meaning of the Three Mysteries, makes mudras, recites mantras, and allows his mind to abide in the state of samadhi, then, through grace, his three mysteries will be united with the Three Mysteries [of the Dharmakaya Buddha]; in this way the great perfection of his religious discipline will be realised.
>
> HAKEDA 1972: 230f.

Through these three kinds of practice one is able to realise one's participation as body, speech and mind in the body, speech and mind of the cosmos—thereby achieving intimacy with the world's many mysteries.

If we ask, in the case of natural phenomena, what is to be learned from them, which aspects of the Buddha-Dharma they teach, we find no explicit answer in Kūkai's writings. But presumably they would include: the impermanence of all things, the interdependence of their arising and perishing, the necessity for limits, the infinity of perspectives in the world, and the beauty of natural and spontaneous unfolding. Insofar as the world is what Kūkai calls the "wondrous" and "fulfilled" body of the cosmic Buddha, it is worthy of our awe and respect (cited in Kasulis 1995: 174).[16] And insofar as natural phenomena are delivering sermons and scriptures in the primordial natural language, a certain humility in the face of such valuable sources of understanding is called for.

The esoteric practices of Shingon Buddhism are many and various, and often extremely complex, but a few general features deserve mention.[17] In many rituals the practitioner sits in front of a painted or sculpted image of a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva, as if before a mirror, and visualises the interaction between the two parties as culminating in an identification or union. The context, derived from ancient Indian etiquette, is that the practitioner offers hospitality to the deity, preparing his body and clothing, as well as the ritual implements and reception place, as if he were a host "receiving an honored guest." The square altar platform that is at the centre of Shingon ritual is regarded as a mandala that derives from the place where Shakyamuni attained

16 Kūkai, 'Introduction to All the Sūtras'.

17 See, for example, the descriptions in Yamasaki (1988).

enlightenment. The primary ritual implement is the *vajra* (single-, three- or five-pronged), which symbolises "the diamond-like wisdom that destroys all delusion" and is thus associated with many buddhas and deities in the pantheon. The vajra bells, ritual trays, metal chimes, candle stands, flower vases, model pagodas, incense burners, and other implements have multiple symbolic meanings relating not only to Buddhist philosophy and soteriology but also to the natural world, so that the practitioner's handling of them serves to integrate his activities into the rhythms and resonances of the whole cosmos (Yamasaki 1988: 162; 124; 163–67).

4 Dōgen: Preparing Food and Sailing Boats

The practices we find in the Zen Buddhism of Dōgen (1200–53) are in general less elaborate than those of Shingon, even though in both cases the practitioner's body becomes integrated with the body of the world. For Dōgen "the true human body" is "the entire world of the ten directions" (Dōgen 2010: 1:426).[18] He frequently warns that any intention "to become a buddha," any striving for enlightenment, strengthens the ego rather than reduces selfishness, and he insists instead on the "oneness of practice and realization." Dōgen might, like Zhuangzi, acknowledge the validity of the means-end schema in certain contexts of practical life, but he would point out that this way of construing experience unhelpfully divides our lives into the worthwhile ends at which we aim and the often burdensome chores we have to perform in order to achieve them. Without this dualism everything one does becomes an opportunity for realisation.

Adopting such a nondualistic attitude would help to counteract a major contributor to the current environmental crisis, which is our poor relationship with *things*, insofar as rampant consumerism encourages using things up—thereby promoting a certain disregard for them. Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* ('Treasury of the True Dharma Eye') is unique among the masterpieces of world philosophy in devoting chapters to the preparing and eating of food, as well as to the making, washing and wearing of clothes, the proper care of eating bowls (which he calls "the body and mind of buddha ancestors"), going to the toilet and performing ablutions, and to "washing the face and cleaning the teeth" (Dōgen 2010: 2:720).[19] Careful attention to the things we handle to help us take care of the basics leads to care for the wider environment in which we live.

18 Dōgen, 'Body-Mind Study of the Way'.

19 Dōgen, 'Eating Bowls' (*Hou*); see the section 'Care for the Body' in my essay (Parkes 2010).

Dōgen advises monks who work in temple kitchens to use the polite forms of language when referring to meals and their ingredients: "Use honorific forms of verbs for describing how to handle rice, vegetables, salt, and soy sauce; do not use plain language for this." (Dōgen 2010: 2:764.)[20] He also stresses the importance of treating the kitchen utensils as well with the utmost care and respect.

> Put what is suited to a high place in a high place, and what belongs in a low place in a low place. Those things that are in a high place will be settled there; those that are suited to be in a low place will be settled there. Select chopsticks, spoons, and other utensils with equal care, examine them with sincerity, and handle them skillfully.[21]
>
> DŌGEN (1985: 55)

Gratitude and reverence for what is given us to eat, and for what we use to prepare and ingest our food, dictate that we take care to keep the kitchen clean and well ordered. But the order does not derive from an idea in the head of the cook, but rather from careful attention to suitabilities suggested by the things themselves. This lets us situate the utensils so they may be "settled"—and thus less likely to fall down or get damaged.[22] And once we get down to cooking, we find that the creative interplay between activity, utensils and ingredients is a paradigm case of what Dōgen calls "turning things while being turned by things" (Dōgen 1985: 56). For his ideal of fully engaged activity, or total dynamic functioning (*zenki*), full attention is crucial—for a sense of both how things are turning so that we can align ourselves aright, and how our turning them is in turn affecting what is going on (Dōgen 2010: 1:450–52).[23]

When it comes to eating, the activity that sustains all human life, practice becomes all the more important. Dōgen begins an exposition of regulations for the serving and eating of meals in monasteries by citing a line from the *Vimalakirti Sutra*: "When we are one with the food we eat, we are one with the whole universe."[24] From this it follows, Dōgen says, that food is also the Dharma and the Buddha. After a thousand or so words on how monks are to enter the Hall, where the various monastery officials are to sit, and on how and where the

20 Dōgen, 'Instructions on Kitchen Work' (*Ji kuin mon*).

21 Dōgen 'Instructions for the Tenzo' (*Tenzo kyōkun*).

22 Nishitani draws attention to the 'settling' connotations of the term *samadhi* in the context of a discussion of "attuning ourselves to the selfness of [for example] the pine tree or the selfness of the bamboo" (Nishitani 1982: 128).

23 See 'Undivided Activity' (*Zenki*).

24 Dōgen 'Regulations for Eating Meals' (*Fushuku hampō*); in Kennett (1976: 97).

monks are to sit down and arrange their robes, he finally gets to the regulations concerning the bowls and utensils.

> In order to set out the bowls one must first make *gasshō*, untie the knot on the bowl cover and fold the dishcloth to an unobtrusive size, twice crosswise and thrice lengthwise, placing it, together with the chopstick bag, just in front of the knees. Spread the pure napkin over the knees and put the dishcloth, with the chopstick bag on top of it, under the napkin. The cover is then unfolded and the farther end is allowed to fall over the edge of the tan, the other three corners being turned under to make a pad for the bowls to be placed upon. The lacquered-paper table-top is taken in both hands, the under-fold being held in the right hand and the top one in the left, and is unfolded as if to cover the bowls. While holding it in the right hand, take the bowls with the left and place them in the centre of the left end of this table-top, thereafter taking them out from the large one separately, in order, beginning with the smallest. Only the ball of the thumb of each hand is used for removing them so as to prevent any clattering.[25]

The practice of this ritual at every mealtime inculcates care and reverence for the things that accompany the central necessity of human existence. While we are learning, it obliges us to become acutely aware of how we are handling these things, and of the joy, when the food is served, of harmonious interaction with others. Once the ritual has been incorporated and made "second nature", the actions flow spontaneously—so that it is not that a subject of consciousness uses the body to unfold the lacquered paper, but rather that my hands guide the paper's unfolding and help it on its way to where it needs to be.

Another discussion of the use of artefacts, in the chapter on 'Total Functioning', broadens the context of our activity to cosmic dimensions. Dōgen invokes as his prime example a product of basic technology:

> Life is just like sailing in a boat. You raise the sails and you steer. Although you manoeuvre the sail and the pole, the boat carries you, and without the boat you couldn't sail. But you sail the boat, and your sailing makes the boat what it is. Investigate a moment such as this. At just such a moment, there is nothing but the world of the boat.[26]
>
> DŌGEN 2010: 1:451; trans. modified

25 Dōgen 'Regulations for Eating Meals' (*Fushuku hampō*); in Kennett (1976: 100f.).

26 Dōgen 'Undivided Activity'.

The sailboat is the consummate nature-friendly product of technology, one that—by inserting a human artefact (in the form of sails) into the interplay of the powers of heaven and earth—makes use of natural forces without abusing them or using them up. Since winds are by nature variable, a sailboat functions properly only if it can also be propelled by human action mediated through a pole or oars. And yet these implements only work in conjunction with a boat. The activity of sailing is thus a prime example of "turning things while being turned by things" (Dōgen 1985: 56).

> When you sail in a boat, your body, mind, and environs together are the dynamic functioning of the boat. The entire earth and the entire sky are both the dynamic functioning of the boat. Thus, life is nothing but you; you are nothing but life.

Regarded from our customary anthropocentric perspective, a boat, as something made by human beings, is *in* our world, in *my* world, but lacks a world of its own; whereas for Dōgen the context of total functioning allows the world to be construed by any particular focus of energy, or pivot of force, or dynamic function, within it.[27] As in the case of Daoism, this move away from anthropocentrism is accompanied by an increase in humility.

Dōgen has much more to say on the topic of "realising relationships," where his approach is strikingly similar to the 'creative perspectivism' of Zhuangzi, but there is no space to discuss it here[28]—nor for a discussion of the role of language in Dōgen's thinking, since the focus of this essay has been on the non-linguistic aspects of somatic practice—though a few brief remarks are in order.

Dōgen's writings are unparalleled in their philosophical and poetical style, and he is thus the complete antithesis to the stereotypical Zen master who rejects language altogether. It is true that the practices discussed above tend to dispense with certain kinds or uses of language: while it may be helpful in the learning stage, language plays no role once the practice has been mastered. If, in performing a fiendishly difficult piece, a concert pianist thinks "I mustn't forget to flatten that F natural in bar 76," she is sure to fluff it: instead she lets the music flow, without mental commentary, through her fingers and onto the keyboard. The Daoist emptying of the heart-mind is a dropping of all the conceptual clutter and calculative thinking that hamper spontaneous activity. In Buddhist meditation practices, the waves that agitate the sea of the

27 On the centrality of practice as activity (*gyōji*) to Dōgen's thinking, see Kim (2004: Chap. 3, esp. 67–76).

28 See the section 'Water and Waters' in Parkes (2010).

turbulent mind are fanned by the chatter of the internal dialogue: when the waves subside the ensuing glassy calm allows undistorted reflection of what is actually going on.

By contrast, mantras are central to those practices advocated by Kūkai that help us listen to and understand the sounds of the cosmos—but mantras are not chatter, and the language in which the Dharmakaya expounds the Dharma is no ordinary, or even human, language. For Dōgen a new and different kind of language begins to emerge from the silence underlying the babble of egocentric consciousness as realisation unfolds, so that there is an inextricable linguistic component to this style of Zen awakening.[29]

On another level the point of practice for Dōgen is actually very simple: to enable the confrontation with, and embrace of, impermanence—the world's impermanence, but more immediately our own. All arising and perishing, as he says, at every moment. In talking to the "Students of the Way" in his monastery, he says:

> When you truly see impermanence, egocentric mind does not arise, neither does desire for fame and profit. Out of fear that the days and nights are passing quickly, practice the Way as if you were trying to extinguish a fire enveloping your head. [...]
>
> It goes without saying that you must consider the inevitability of death. [...] You should be resolved not to waste time and refrain from doing meaningless things. You should spend your time carrying out what is worth doing. Among the things you should do, what is the most important?[30]

If we allow the embrace of impermanence, it lets us distinguish the meaningless things we do from the meaningful, insofar as Dōgen's "should" is no universally applicable ethical imperative but rather an existential exhortation for each individual to discover what is worthwhile, what really matters in life.

The benefit, it seems, of philosophies that are grounded in somatic practice is that they help close the gap between beliefs and behaviour, between ideas and action, by transforming the practitioner's experience. When philosophy is pursued on the level of abstract theory, as it so often is in the western

29 It would be interesting to explore the consonance here with such thinkers as Nietzsche and Heidegger, who similarly dismiss ordinary language in favour of a quite different poetical and philosophical way of letting language speak.

30 Dōgen 'Points to Watch in Practicing the Way' (*Gakudō-yojinshū*) in Dōgen (1988: 1); Dōgen (1987: 2–17, p. 97).

traditions, it can generate and disseminate an abundance of wonderful ideas—so many of which never get put into practice. But when the philosophy is embodied from the start, and the practices aim at reducing selfishness and mitigating the desire for profit and fame, the actions that flow from them are likely to enhance natural phenomena rather than harm them, insofar as they conduce to awe and humility in the face of things both natural and human-made.

The mystery of things is amplified by an awareness of their radical impermanence: awe-inspiring how they come and go, and work and play, all together. And amazing that we, too, appear to be coming and going with them, here in this very moment—and the next moment, and the next. So far, at least, but not of course for too long.

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CHAPTER 14

The Silent Performance of Mindfulness: Aware Corporeality / Corporeal Awareness of No-Self

Snježana Zorić

Without Mindfulness, the Eyes Do Not See, the Ears Do Not Hear …

Abstract

This essay thematises body, mind, consciousness and awareness trying to relate them within the context of Buddhist teaching (*dharma*) and anthropological theory and methodology. Taking the text of *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* as a point of departure, the meaning of contemplating body and mind as being developed within the text is to be investigated, while the possibility of such research manifests itself as being problematic because of its essential unobservability. The processual internalisation of the text-prescriptions within both body and mind of the practitioner in the silent performance of meditation is tempting us to face the ongoing practice in its performative actualisation as an experience of *presence*.

1 Theories and Methodologies

In this article we address the theoretical and methodological dilemma of the (non-) duality of body and mind, exploring their existential manifestations in the form of embodiment, consciousness and awareness and relating them to the Buddhist teaching, *dhamma*. Taking the text of *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta* (Dīghanikāya 22) as a point of departure, we will investigate the meaning of contemplation upon body and mind as it evolves within the text. We reflect on possible contributions of such practice in terms of its methodological value for the understanding of own and other experience within current anthropological paradigms. An immediate problem arises because of the unobservable nature of contemplation *in praxi* and because of its epistemic evaluations. *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta* (*Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*) belongs to the Long discourses of Buddhist *Tipiṭaka*, namely *Dīghanikāya*. It appears a second time in the collection of medium-length discourses, *Majjhima Nikāya*, under the name of *Satipaṭṭhāna*; both *suttas* differ only slightly from each other, in some details considering the Four Noble Truths and concentration on mind-objects, *dhamma*. In this article, we analyse the longer version,

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taking into consideration the Pāli original[1] and Nyanaponika Thera's translation (1962).[2] *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna sutta* presents *sati* or mindfulness as a main pillar for the right way of thinking and consequently for the right way of all of the proceedings that shape one's own life in order to liberate mind from three poisons which in Buddhist teaching are described as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). "Mindfulness" as a translation for the Pāli term *sati* was introduced by Rhys Davids. It emphasises the moment of presence in the contemplating mind rather than the moment of remembrance and recollection implicit in the etymology of the original verb. The presence implies consciousness about the nature of the basic phenomena of human existence such as suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*) and selflessness (*anatta*). These three characterise the mental, sensual and volitional factors of human personality, which relate to the aforementioned basic phenomena of greed, hatred and delusion. The practice of mindfulness in its processual performativity discloses the dependent origination of things (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the nature of sensations and feelings as well as ways of keeping apart from them—and it shows the nature of body and mind deconstructing them radically up to the insight into their emptiness.

In the first section, the text introduces objects of mindfulness as the starting point of meditation—the body (*kāya*) alluding to its postures, its clear understanding, impurities and elements, concluding with a description of the nine stages of decomposition of the physical corpse. It follows an examination of sensations and feelings, (*vedanā*), mind (*citta*), and givens or mind-objects (*dhamma*). *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* in its prescriptive and performative dimension aims not just to explain the insights of Buddha's enlightenment and show how to follow his teaching at a cognitive level, it also clearly presents techniques for the practice of metamorphosis of mind. The practice consists of an initial discursive approach, proceeding through the ritualised performance of prescribed rules for controlling body and sensation/feelings. It ends in a synoptic awareness of both of them as being distinct yet also necessarily relating to and conditioning each other in the processes of mutual cultivation and final transcendence. The absence of ego/subject/I[3] in Buddhist epistemology forces

1 See http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/d22-Mahasatipatthana-S-tltr-piya_111203.pdf. ■ To maintain sequence order footnotes are renumbered.

2 There are many newer translations of the text. Since they are essentially based on Nyanaponika Thera's, I follow this classical version.

3 Ego/subject/I are absent in the ontological sense, but are a three-dimensional manifestation of the delusiveness of personal identity appearing as ego on the level of the identity of particular existence, as subject in the epistemological sense, and as I in terms of individuality.

us to ask how a practice without self, which unifies all these dimensions, can be cultivated, can be theorised, and for whom? My initial idea, that of theorising mindfulness (*sati*) while practicing it, opens up the further question whether it is possible to apply mindfulness as a methodological tool without determining the one (who is) mindful, and the question, in terms of the discipline, of how subjective experience could have any relevance for the outcome of interpretation? This is also a question of how performance practice can be transformed into mindful experience, and how consciousness of presence can be translated into a sequence of words—a question which irritated my mind because of all the indeterminacies and resistances it implied. The process of gradual internalisation of the text-prescriptions within the body and mind of practitioner in a silent performance of meditation confronts us with an unobservable phenomenon. If we adopt the position of remaining "outside," it will remain an unsurmountable obstacle. On the other hand, the practice is necessary in order to realise corporeally what *sati* is. Only the ongoing experience in its practical actualisation could be the "own experience," conceptualised after being experienced "from within," i.e. from the body and mind alike. This begs the question whether the researcher, caught in this methodical trap, should cross the boundaries of objectivity and science and enter the realm of Buddhist practice as an experience of the 'other' to be researched through the lens of experience from within. Wallace was engaged in both the practice and the description of such an endeavor to reach a balance between theory and practice. He writes about the importance of allowing practice and theory to permeate each other:

> I have attempted to find a middle way between the rich theoretical framework of scholarly analysis that illuminates the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness and actual engagement in meditative practice.
>
> WALLACE 2011: 2

For him, empirical investigations of this method are very important, because the theory should be tested on the basis of its contributions to the pragmatics of living.

> Theoretical analysis has many merits, but there is no benefit unless the theory is put into practice. On the other hand, the practice of mindfulness is impoverished without being rooted in the vast, fertile field of contemplative wisdom that has developed and perfected these techniques.
>
> WALLACE 2011: 2

And besides, "theoretical analysis provides the context necessary for understanding one's own unique experiences." (Wallace 2011: 2)

Engaged in similar reflections, Bruner and Turner (1986) proposed a new paradigm called anthropology of experience, shaped according to Dilthey's hermeneutics which argue that "reality only exists for us in the facts of consciousness given by inner experience" (Bruner and Turner 1986: 4). But the authors immediately distance themselves from Dilthey's thesis and emphasise that they approach the topic of experience indirectly through the vehicle of its expressions. Although they leave behind their idea before exploring its potential, they do remain aware of the inner dimension of the whole experiencing process which relates not only to how individuals experience expressions of their culture but also to the way in which events affect their individual consciousness. Practicing and reflecting *sati*, one will see that even though in creating experience consciousness is affected by events, at a deeper level experience shows itself as a flow of mindfulness—of its metamorphosis between being form-free/empty and embracing a new form. Further on in the discussion, the authors detach themselves from common characterisations of experience in terms of rationality, language and verbalisations, and introduce feelings, expectations and images related to it as an essential part of their reflections. Experience is thus not understood as an abstract analytical or objective concept of interpretation, but as a personal living reality which consists not of re-actions but of actions, enactions, engagements in the world, and of the various ways of living within it.

Meditative experience is a kind of inner experience characterised by conscious efforts of interacting with the inner and outer world. In this context I understand consciousness as intentional in its noetic-noematic relationality.[4] Meditative techniques proceed first through a stage of mindfully observing the objects of consciousness in order to progress subsequently through their phenomenological reduction. However, such definition does not solve the problem of the methodological limits of one's own conscious experience. Apart from intentionality taken as a phenomenological descriptive device, consciousness could be characterised as existential commitment to the world applying various strategies of liberating oneself from suffering in the form of friendship (*metta*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). Without the right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) and the right way of living together based on meditative and cognitive practices,[5] this embodiment in its experiential dimension (as we perceive ourselves),

4 Relation between subject (*arammanika*) and object (*arammana*) (Govinda 1969: 79).

5 The Noble Eightfold Path, *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* consists of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā sankappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*),

which according to Buddha's teaching is a kind of disease, cannot be cured. There is no reason to enter the path of liberation if one does not see that suffering (*dukkha*) could be overcome with happiness (*sukkha*). In his research on Buddhism and psychoanalysis, Rubin accentuates pragmatic and therapeutic aspects of Buddha's teaching: "[…] his primary focus was psychological and ethical. He was more interested in alleviating human suffering than in satisfying human curiosity about the origin of the universe […]" (Rubin 1996: 16). Desolate conditions in the world and 'selves-at-risk', social disintegration and ontological homelessness paired with psychological dislocation, according to Rubin, open up the space for a Buddhist analysis of human nature, which may also be applied in psychoanalytic practice (Rubin 1996: 1).

Bruner and Turner are not interested in the problem of experiencing one's own suffering epistemologically and therefore they look for solutions in the realm of expressions which they understand as "encapsulations of the experience of others" (Bruner and Turner 1986: 5). However,

> the relationship between experience and its expressions is always problematic […]. The relationship is clearly dialogic and dialectical, for experience structures expressions, in that we understand other people and their expressions on the basis of our own experience and self-understanding. But expressions also structure experience, in that dominant narratives of a historical era, important rituals and festivals, and classic works of art define and illuminate inner experience.[6]
>
> BRUNER AND TURNER 1986: 6

Even if we tried to make the concept of expression fruitful for researching *sati*-experience and the body-mind relation, it still remains vague and obscure what expressions of meditative experience are. The tripartite distinction between life as lived (reality), life as experienced (experience), and life as told (expression) proposed by Bruner and Turner, does not suffice for our purpose, due to its strong hermeneutical dimension and orientation toward meaning and less toward practicing corporeality. The methodological option would be either to stick to body-mind dualism as a heuristic device and argue that

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right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

6 It is clear that we are here entering the hermeneutic circle: "Our knowledge of what is given in experience is extended through the interpretation of the objectifications of life and their interpretation, in turn, is only made possible by plumbing the depths of subjective experience" (Bruner and Turner 1986: 6).

meditative experience is observable on the level of corporeality of the other only, or on the other hand to contend the ambiguity and inner paradoxality of the body-mind complex, affirming their unity and duality in the form of *qualia* and emphasising their resistance to any form of intersubjective stipulation.

Also, neuroscience and cognitive science started a dialogue with Buddhism decades ago, considering on the one hand its potential in curing various mental diseases, and on the other hand deepening the understanding of the mind and its ways of operating within the world. They do not emphasise expressions from the third-person perspective of cognitive science, but reintroduce introspection, an approach which had been marginalised for a long time as an illegitimate scientific methodological tool. A first-person cognitive science started to implement direct approaches in researching brain, behavior, mental phenomena and mind through subjective/individual experiences. Furthermore, in dialogue with Buddhism cognitive scientists refined their own discourse on various metacognitive levels thematising mindfulness and the origins and nature of mental suffering and happiness correlated with consciousness.[7]

In the late 1980s, neuroscientist Francisco Varela started a dialogue with Buddhism and its main representative, His Holiness Dalai Lama and founded the "Mind and Life Institute" for this purpose, together with some of his colleagues. They pursued embodied philosophy and introduced the "neurophenomenological" paradigm into neuroscience. In their now classic work, *The Embodied Mind*, Varela, Thompson and Rosch further develop the phenomenological insights of Merleau-Ponty and define embodiment as having a "double sense: it encompasses both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms" (Varela et al. 1991: XVI). In their work on dialogue between science, experience, Buddhism and comparative thought (Varela et al. 1991: XVIII), they developed a new approach in cognitive science which they describe as "enactive" process, implying that cognition is always embodied action. That opened up the possibility to criticise any foundationalism and objectivism of cognizing actions, supporting their argument with the Buddhist teaching of the Madhyamaka school that cognition "has no ultimate foundation or ground beyond its history of embodiment" (Varela et al. 1991: XX).

Consequently, in order to practice *sati* and experience its benefits, one is primarily supposed to be embodied. The minimal definition of embodiment in the context of my research characterises it as a time span between birth and death. However, consideration of human embodiment in the Buddhist

7 For more detailed information see http://www.mindandlife.org/.

life-world demands a larger perspective. Embodiment, which is from the very beginning a process of becoming and evanescence which will never be completed but suspended by death, is deeply connected with realms before the beginning of life (birth) and beyond the end of human existence (death). That means that the body is not just a physicality, but awakens upon mind, in a fashion similar to what Colombetti states about the deep continuity between mind and life in her enactivist approach to the feeling body: "Life is always 'minded' or 'mindful', and the richer a living form, the richer its mind." (Colombetti 2014: xvi) Thus, as the enactive approach to mind is not ignoring the lived experience, the approach to embodiment we propose cannot ignore the acting out, inter-acting, and en-acting of mind.

Such claims can only partially "be elaborated for the study of culture and the self" as proposed by Csordas (1990: 5). The methodological shift proposed here will indicate the insufficiency of the fact that "self [is] culturally constituted" (Csordas 1990: 5), because in Buddhism this category is absent—there is no subject, no self and no I. We do not consider truth as a scientific construct either (Csordas 1990: 5), we would rather argue, following the inner logic of the Buddhist discourse, that what we call truth is awareness as awakening and therefore ultimate experience leading to a transformation of embodiment. On the level of everyday consciousness, truth is just the name for an unknown experience. And the body as seen by Buddhists is a process of consciously taking shape; in fact each moment new embodiment takes place according to karmic conditions. It is always "under construction," restructuring name and form (*nāma*-rūpa), of the five aggregates of clinging (*kkhandhas*), which constitute our apparitional "I" and create the delusion about its ontological status. Therefore the body is not only a biological given. We are not just thrown into the world, on the contrary, desire/thirst (*taṇhā*) to becoming (*upādānakkhandha*) is the cause of embodiment.[8] In the aggregates of existence, which shape one's personality (*kkhandhas*), there is no separation of mind and body. *Rūpa* is referring to corporeality, *vedanās* are sensations/feelings originating from the touching (*phassa*) of corporeal and spiritual organs with the outer world (eye with forms, ear with tones, nose with smell, tongue with taste and body with its touched organs), and finally of the mind with its objects in the form of thoughts and imagination. Cognition is clearly corporeal, because the mind is just a sixth sense. *Saññā* refers to perception accompanied with processes of identifying the relation between the sensual perceiving organ and its belonging object as a form of becoming conscious and capable of handling

8 "Khandha Sutta: Aggregates" (SN 22.48) (tr. from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu). http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.048.than.html.

this relation. *Saṅkhāras* are spiritual formations connected with the volitional aspect of human being entering into acting mode after becoming conscious of *vedanā* and *saññа* and interpreting them. *Viññāṇa* is consciousness about *saṅkhāras* and encompasses all four prior *kkhandhas*.

To get closer to the idea how body is embodied, we will briefly describe the inter-dependent co-arising of various factors addressed in *Mahānidāna sutta*[9] which shows connectivities of actual embodiment with pre-embodied and post-embodied conditions (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Birth (*jāti*) of the body comes from becoming (*bhava*) and becoming comes from clinging (*upadāna*),[10] clinging comes from thirst, desire (*taṇhā*),[11] desire from feeling (*vedanā*),[12] feeling comes from touching (*phassa*),[13] and touching from name and form (*nāma-rūpa*).[14] Further on, name and form come from consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and consciousness comes from them. There are six elementary forms of consciousness relating to the above mentioned organs but according to *Abhidhamma* this simple insight should be elaborated in more detail, therefore the text analyzes 121 classes of consciousness. Distinctive classifying comprises fundamental principles of consciousness which are objects (relation between subject and object, objects and realm of consciousness, the realm of pure form, and the realm of non-form). The structure of consciousness is observed and described under its peripheral, subperipheral and subliminal aspects. Further on, *Abhidhamma* differentiates forms of consciousness according to the principles of direction, form, precondition, potential value, feeling, knowledge and volition. Then it analyzes factors of consciousness together with functions of consciousness and the process of perception,[15] concluding that "such is the origination of this entire mass of stress."[16] Using a highly differentiated taxonomy, *Abhidhamma* eventually identifies four types of 'higher man' who is free from suffering.

As is obvious from the text, each embodiment is considered as an opportunity for reaching the higher levels of consciousness up to final enlightenment (*bodhi*). As pure *awareness* of the whole cycle of dependent origination, *bodhi* which is no longer caught in the net of dualities and successive becoming,

9 See www.buddhasutra.com/files/Buddhist_Sutra_M2.pdf.

10 Clinging to sensuality, precept and practices, views and various doctrines of self.

11 Craving for sensuality, becoming and no-becoming.

12 Feeling is originating in the contact of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and intellect.

13 Touching refers to mutual permeation of sense organ with object of its sensuality.

14 Name and form resulted from touching; contact of sensual organs and their respective objects consists of mental activities in relation to physical properties.

15 For more see Govinda 1969.

16 http://www.buddhasutra.com

moment-to-moment consciousness awakens in the wholeness which is equivalent to the annihilation of each form of consciousness and subsequently of each future embodiment. In distinction to the phenomenon of consciousness which is at least *a posteriori* able to reflect on itself, one is not aware of awareness in the moment of its presence, awareness enters the realm of consciousness when it is already past but it makes possible all our experiences in the form of perceptions, thoughts and memories. In being aware, one *is* what one is aware of (or one is no more); therefore it is epistemologically useless to equate the idioms *I am aware*, *I see*, *I feel*, *I will* with one another. The distance between subject and object associated with intentionality of the noetic ego-pole and the noematic object-pole is abolished. The subject of this insight which is experienced as bound with corporeality is not present in awareness. Awareness is not self-consciousness but detached from all relationality, empty.

Four Noble Truths, explained in the second part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, disclose the basic experience of suffering in the embodied life of human beings.[17] Here our attention is required to distinguish between suffering and pain. The former refers to the mental states of consciousness, the latter to the physical body, yet in the *sutta* we will intuit their mutual interrelatedness due to mindful conscious apperceptions which are causing both kinds of experience. Experiences of physical pain and mental suffering are raised through the interaction of sensations/feelings (*vedanā*), conscious mind (*citta*), and physical basis (*dhamma*), which are at the same time needed for interaction to take place at all. While we cannot prevent pain appearing on the level of corporeality, mental suffering can be transformed into something-not-yet-to-be. This is possible because the idea of self is deconstructed:

> 'I am' is a vain thought; 'I am not' is a vain thought; 'I shall be' is a vain thought; 'I shall not be' is a vain thought. Vain thoughts are a sickness, an ulcer, a thorn. But after overcoming all vain thoughts one is called a silent thinker. And the thinker, the Silent One, does no more arise, no more pass away, no more tremble, no more desire.
>
> *MAJJHIMA-NIKĀYA* 140

The silent thinker is one who realises not only the impermanent and insubstantial nature of experiential reality but sees the unstable nature of words and concepts, as they are changing through time and with them those who are using them. To state that things just "are" or "are not" is too simple and implies overlooking the processual nature of embodied reality. Therefore it appears

17 They became soon universalised and transcultural.

necessary to cultivate mindfulness, attentiveness (*sati*) because it only manifests itself in the act of cultivating it.

Insofar as the practice of internalising the *satipaṭṭhāna* could be seen as a kind of subversion of social and cultural body and mind boundaries imposed by the culturally determined life-world, it is only possible to become liberated by refuting social norms and activities through life as monk, or in a state of renunciation. The program of the "Mind and Life Institute" enlarges the scope of possibilities, universalising the teaching and applying it in a medical context, especially observing the appropriateness of mindfulness in the treatment of chronic medical disease. In this context, one of the co-founders of the Institute, Jon Kabat-Zinn developed a clinical Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction method for the healing of the human mind (MBSR). Objectives of his endeavors were to explore in collaboration with researchers from the areas of medicine, psychology and neuroscience together with H.H. Dalai Lama, the healing potentials and clinical applications of meditation which he supposed could refine itself through systematic and continuous cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*). Furthermore he would argue, together with Richard Davidson, that the transformation within the human mind might cure the body, and that the mind itself could change (Kabat-Zinn, Davidson and Houshmand 2011: 24). Later on, in analogy to Buddhist insights into the impermanent nature of the human body, mind and the world around, Davidson emphasises the importance of the concept of neuroplasticity.

> We are not indelibly fixed in our current state, but rather these are characteristics that can be transformed. There is a very precious and important convergence of that idea with the modern concept of neuroplasticity—the notion that the brain can change in response to experience and training.
>
> KABAT-ZINN, DAVIDSON and HOUSHMAND 2011: 23f.

Turning back to our methodological dilemma, if we imagine a monk or lay person sitting cross-legged, immersed in meditation, facing the wall, eyes closed, body motionless, with only the sign of the gong to indicate the beginning and the end of the practice, as a researcher we have two options: we can observe his *sitting* (or *the sitting* of participants), or we can take part in meditation. Both options, to observe and to participate in the form mentioned above, seem to contradict the well-established methodological canon of the anthropologist, even though at first sight the researcher would be doing exactly what the method of the discipline demands. He observes and participates. Even though it is felt by many to be disputable in its oxymoronic

nature and inner ambiguities,[18] this participant observation is still considered an objective and empirical methodological approach within anthropological scholarly orthodoxy; and is waiting for further deconstruction. From a classical disciplinary perspective, the unobservability of inner experiences will exclude the method proposed here, and moreover this method would also be graded as a naïvely heretic attempt by the researcher-practitioner to treat his own inner experience as a methodologically objective tool. Even though this point is not new, we still cannot be satisfied with answers that have so far been given about how to overcome the reductive nature of anthropology as an empirical science. What is usually missing in anthropology is exactly what neuroscientists have already included in their methodological program (if Buddhism is concerned), i.e. their living practice as monks (Wallace, Rubin) or their yearlong study with known Buddhist teachers, such as H.H. Dalai Lama in the case of Varela or Thích Nhất Hạnh in the case of Kabat-Zinn, to mention just two of the best-known names. It means also that participation in the meditating process requires textual knowledge which is often missing in anthropological research; or it demands direct transmission from teacher to student and sharing the life together. Thus another point needs to be taken into consideration, about the interrelatedness of text and life, life and performance, observing other and observing self, questioning the nature of the meaning of being empirical and experiential within anthropology, and creating a space within which such a method should define or redefine itself or be rethought and practiced completely anew.

The strategy of acquiring knowledge of meditation as a practitioner or participating researcher, i.e. entering the process of meditation presupposes, in the context of my investigation, a knowledge of its procedures as unveiled in the text of *Satipaṭṭhāna*. An alternative way would be to have this procedural knowledge ritually transmitted from teacher to practitioner, integrated into field-research, as in many cases of *Vipassanā* teaching in Myanmar or various techniques within Tibetan Buddhism. The preparation for such research requires a long period of study and practice, engaging both body and mind in various acts of experiencing and acquiring knowledge of textual prescriptions of these meditative acts intended to enlighten and to liberate, instead of producing scientific writing or offering a bit of experience for the sake of science. It puts researchers in the awkward position of allowing themself be urged to reconsider their previous knowledge of theory and method as well as their strategies of writing. But more importantly, it raises the ethical question of

18 Clifford and Marcus 1986, Reed-Danahay 1997, Sparkes 2000, Ellis 2004, Humphreys 2005, Chang 2008.

misusing the transmission of Buddha's teaching for a purpose outside of its genuine scope, if there is no transformational intention behind practicing it. In such a constellation we find ourselves not only in the usual moral dilemma of anthropological fieldwork but in the middle of the controversy between the semiotic and phenomenological approach as addressed by Csordas regarding the problem of the dichotomised nature of body and mind and the possible dissolution of their conceptual duality. There is also the hermeneutic dilemma between the universalising understanding of everlasting religious truths which might be transferrable around the world in the ontologised form without the necessity of a mutual history of reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and the possibility of rewriting them both. In the case of reflecting/practicing the Buddhist meditation and incorporating the text describing it, one is positioned mentally in the alien text and bodily (usually) in one's own world, attempting to reconcile the representation of the content transmitted through the text from a distant past, with the fact of being-in-the-meditating-world as observer and observed, here and now.

A recent approach, which uses emotions as a methodical tool and pleads for the emotional commitment of the researcher to the process he is involved in, has pursued similar objectives while entering a dialogue with radical empiricism. Davies (following Jackson) argues that "one can use both psychology and local epistemologies to unravel field experience" (Davies 2010: 15), and emphasises "non-cognitive modes of learning" as used by Luhrmann (Davies 2010: 20) showing how other cultural ideas changed researchers' lives. This paradigm is related to the pragmatism of William James, and his *Essays on Radical Empiricism* published in 1912, but has overlooked some of the philosophical questions raised by James, such as whether consciousness exists at all, and about pure experience which is nothing other than radical empiricism itself. In fact his paradigm was developed in two articles dedicated to this topic and published in 1904, *Does Consciousness Exist* and *A World of Pure Experienc*e. They were inspired by Buddhist teaching:

> The founding father of American psychology, James (1890), was one of the first who recognized that the Dharma inheres in a psychology and who agreed on the notion of Karma as the interplay of cognitive-affective intentions and manifest behavioural (inter)action. He broke new ground for psychology by inviting Dharmapala, a later Bhikkhu from Sri Lanka, to a guest lecture in 1903 at Harvard and by declaring that that lecture on the Skandha (psychological modalities) would be the psychology everybody would be studying 25 years hence.
>
> KWEE 2010: 32F.

James evolved his speculations against the dualism of body and mind inspired by Dharmapala's lecture, referring to the dualism of subject and object, or consciousness and its content, alternatively. His argument denies reification of consciousness and, as he wrote, "for seven or eight years past I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience" (James 1912a: 2). Interestingly, James himself declares openly that his previous notions should be discarded. His revised view of consciousness denies its entity-character but insists that it stands for a function in pure experience which according to Kwee would be equivalent to the notion of "nondual in Dharma" (James 1912a: 33). For James, pure experience is exclusive reality:

> My thesis is that if we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff 'pure experience', then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter. The relation itself is a part of pure experience; one of its 'terms' becomes the subject or bearer of the knowledge, the knower, the other becomes the object known.
>
> JAMES 1912a: 2

Thus James wanted to avoid the associational nature of knower and known and tried to reformulate them within the stream of consciousness and continuity/flow of pure experience.

Accordingly, 'anthropological' radical empiricism "is best conceptualized as a methodological position concerned with the spaces between—between things in relationship, on the one hand, and between each separate use of self-contained method, on the other" (Davies 2010: 23). Hence radical empiricists proclaim a necessity of fusion between subject and object, their position endowing "transitive and intransitive experiences with equal status," and they start to ascribe methodological relevance to "phenomena which the inductive methods of traditional empiricism were never designed to treat" (Davies 2010: 3).

The plea of Davies, Spencer and other radical empiricists was that we can no longer take mind as superior to feelings and that the subjective dimension of field research and participant observation does have a scientific value. Thus they distance themselves from the idea of James, translating it into the bare subjectivity of emotions, refusing the mind as a valuable instance of cognition. In doing so, they remain in the area of relationality which is the necessary outcome of observations on the emotions of the researcher and their

articulation in words and concepts. It seems that neither James nor radical empiricists could show the inner belongings of body and mind and instead simply showed other possibilities of conceptualising and experiencing their mutual influence. While including the practice of mindfulness in the researching process, I would like to consider whether it is possible to write from within the experience of transgression. Additionally, I recognised the difficulties of intercultural encounters appearing together with *sati*-practice, and I want to take into account the necessity of reflecting the nature of intercultural experience, its meaning and practicability especially within the strongly self-oriented individual and cultural context of the West. As previously mentioned, the Mind and Life dialogue started in 1987. Therefore the focus of their intellectual and practical exchanges with H.H. Dalai Lama lies on in-depth, cross-cultural dialogue. They also maintain that "the methods and goals of scientific and contemplative inquiry are profoundly complementary, with each of them having enormous potential for enriching the other."[19] According to Rubin, "the nascent dialogue between the Buddhist meditative and Western psychoanalytic traditions has been perhaps the most illuminating aspect of this historic encounter." (Rubin 1996: 3). Engaged in dialogic conversation, both sides do not strive for some dialectical *Aufhebung* but for the creation of various fruitful new approaches. For Varela his goal was the "creation of a contemplative, compassionate, and rigorous experimental and experiential science of the mind which could guide and inform medicine, neuroscience, psychology, education and human development."[20]

Regarding the radical empiricism of an anthropology of emotions, another insightful example of personal experience applied as a methodological tool has been offered by Joanna Cook, where she describes her life as a Buddhist nun.

> In my research I try to convey how becoming a monastic changes one's relationship with mental, physical, and emotional processes as well as the way in which one interprets subjective experience. […] Experiential knowledge of meditation was of paramount importance if I was to have any understanding of how meditation becomes meaningful and why people commit themselves to what is often a gruelling practice.
>
> COOK 2010: 240F.

Similarly, Tanja Luhrmann is perveptively critical of Csordas's theory of "embodiment" as remaining caught in the distinction between cultural and experiential:

19 http://www.mindandlife.org

20 http://www.mindandlife.org

> Knowing the limits of the distinction between cultural categories and bodily experience, I want, for the purpose of analysis, to use the distinction to force us to pay attention to our own experience as ethnographers. When we treat our raw moments as data, they demand that we take seriously the limitations of a category-centric approach. They force us to take seriously the different ways in which we pay attention to cultural categories. And that, in turn, can teach us something about the process through which embodiment takes place.
>
> LUHRMANN 2010: 213F.

Also other representatives of radical empiricism (Crapanzano 2010, Hage 2010, Hastrup 2010 et al.) experiment and suggest various attempts to deal with methodological ambiguities regarding the understanding of embodiment and the transgression of these ambiguities' limitations.

One earlier radical approach that expresses doubts about the common anthropo-methodological canon is contained in the fabulous work of Anthony Cohen on self-consciousness calling into question "the methodological pretensions of modern anthropology" (Cohen 1994: 3). His main objective was to deconstruct misunderstandings and therefore misrepresentations of the Other, disabling "the axiomatic difference between the anthropological self and the anthropological other" (Cohen 1994: 4). Marking self-consciousness as the point of departure in his research, and positioning it within the discourse of alternative anthropology, Cohen refuses the main assumption of modern anthropology which "was built on the putative culture distance between anthropology and anthropologised, on the largely unexamined assumption of the difference between the self (observer) and the other (observed)" (Cohen 1994: 5).

Cohen's discourse on self-consciousness is valuable for the research on meditating practice in the context of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, insofar as it offers some insights into the nature of something he calls "self" which could, however, be compared with the idea of the Buddhist nature of no-self and might mutually illuminate similar phenomena with different names. Researching how the *Satipaṭṭhāna* prescribes the meditative contemplation of body and sensation/feelings, applied on the researcher as researcher, and on him as practitioner being observed by himself, we are practising what Cohen calls "to do fieldwork on ourselves" (Cohen 1994: 8); and he sees this self as so complex, differentiated and changing that each situation determines it in a different way. Insofar, self never remains the same as itself, i.e. in "being itself" self is of necessity simultaneously the other.

From the point of view of Buddhist exegesis itself, as contained in the *Abhidhamma* which emphasises the importance of experience as final proof of

realisation of Buddha's teaching (*dhamma*), empiricism would be just another word for cognition of the instability of self which is incessant self-othering. As metaphysics is an "entirely relative concept, whose boundaries depend upon the respective plane of experience, upon the respective form and extent of consciousness" (Govinda 1969: 39), negation of metaphysical thoughts in Buddha's discourses could be modified and seen as transformation of metaphysics into empiricism based on the reconceptualisation of methodology:

> He [Buddha] did not attain this insight through philosophical speculations and discussions or by mere reasoning and reflection, but by the transformation of consciousness in meditation, and therefore he knew that his experience could not be expressed, imparted by words, or arrived at by logical conclusions, but only by showing the way, how to attain, how to develop and cultivate this higher type of consciousness.
>
> GOVINDA 1969: 41

2 Sati

Sati or mindfulness is the initial and first step in dealing with one's own mind (*citta*),[21] which is the foundation of human embodied life. Mind (*citta*) is the source of elementary experience of suffering and joy within embodiment; it is the cause of its highest pleasures as well as deepest misfortune. Mind is that which one is, and as it is forever changing, like "ten thousand apes," we cannot identify an unchangeable self as 'myself' within embodiment. Mind is never mere intellectuality, it is always associated with emotions, and Trungpa defines it as

> that which possesses discriminating awareness, that which possesses a sense of duality—which grasps or rejects something external—that is mind. Fundamentally, it is that which can associate with an 'other'—with any 'something' that is perceived as different from the perceiver.[22]

21 In *Satipaṭṭhāna*, that what refers to mind is called *citta*. Nevertheless, the Buddhist *dhamma* teaches various kinds of mind such as *manas*, the logical and more conceptual mind, or the Buddha nature as non-conceptual mind, but *citta* is heart-mind of which is dependent the whole state of embodiment.

22 http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1813

Mind is a non-physical phenomenon and clearly distinguished from the body but also inevitably connected with it, it means they are not same, not different, but belong together. Kelsang Gyatso, in describing the mind, is using a metaphor common in Buddhist scriptures, in which the body is the dwelling place and the mind its dwelling guest for a short time because after death it will proceed to the next life leaving behind the body to natural decomposition, only to be united again in the next embodiment.[23] Thus, there is no duality of body and mind in embodiment, but before and after embodiment, there is a mind preparing the form of the body.

The Buddhist meditation as it is exposed in *Satipaṭṭhāna* offers just one example how to approach the problem of body and mind, (no-)self and embodiment. Its practice aims at the purification of mind, insight into impermanence of all mind-objects and final liberation of ignorance. Sayādaw U Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa recommends translating *satipaṭṭhāna* as "observing power" which, besides mindfulness, I would consider as a most appropriate paraphrase, especially when it comes to the conceptual differentiation between mindfulness, consciousness and awareness.[24] Since consciousness and mindfulness are relational terms, *sati* being the higher development of consciousness because one while conscious might not be necessary mindful, and awareness is empty of both.

A brief description of the first part of the *sutta* will be given considering body, sensation/feelings, mind and mind-objects or givens. The second part of the text with its more doctrinal character will serve as emic layer for shaping one possible interpretive frame. As already mentioned before, body and mind are clearly distinguished in the text but not set apart, the prescriptions for their contemplation are not only a descriptive supplement of reality but aim at the transformation of both of them through free action while being-in-the-world, which is possible only in a mindful embodiment. Even though the Buddhist discourse considers embodiment without self and contends the impossibility of its reduction to an randomly appearing biological/physical entity, this embodiment underlies biological and physical rules and laws and, in accordance with its ever accompanying conscious processes, refigures and restructures itself within the inner space of the five *kkhandhas* as constitutive elements of what one is experiencing as personality. Embodiment is just a name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) for corporeal appearance between birth and death, but is delusively experienced as 'my embodiment', which is passing through various bodily stages known as young age, old age, sickness, and death

23 http://kadampa.org/reference/what-is-the-mind/

24 http://www.holybooks.com/meaning-satipatthana-sayadaw-panditabhivamsa/

in a sense of one individualised existence. Embodiment is a conscious process of raising awareness of this transitoriness of being, in which the delusive/apparitional self is always changing. Mindfulness or *sati* is the seventh part of the Noble Eightfold Path, and consists of conscious observing of the living and dead body (*kāyānupassanā*) followed by contemplating the sensations/feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), observing mind (*cittānupassanā*) and phenomena constituting the multifariousness of the world (*dhammānupassanā*).

Body (*kāya*) is physical body[25] but to become conscious of it, to experience it must include the observing of bodily sensations (*vedanā*), which anticipates the interrelatedness between the first and second *satipaṭṭhāna*. In a similar way there is a connection between the third and fourth, namely between mind (*citta*) and mind objects (*dhamma*) as without them the mind would be empty. The experience of them as separate entities is not possible, therefore contemplation, be it upon body or mind or mind objects, always passes through the instance of sensations (*vedanā*).[26]

> This is the sole way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destroying of pain and grief, for reaching the right path, for the realization of Nibbāna, namely the four Foundations of Mindfulness.
>
> What are the four? Herein (in this teaching) a monk dwells practicing body-contemplation on the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world; he dwells practicing feeling-contemplation on feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world; he dwells practicing mind-contemplation on the mind, ardent [...;] he dwells practicing mind-object-contemplation on mind-objects, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 117

The contemplation of the body starts with breathing as the phenomenon crucial to life as such. Except in *Satipaṭṭhāna* we can also find elaboration of breath in *Ānāpānasati sutta* (Majjhima Nikāya),[27] where mindful breathing is observed in relation to the impact of movements of breathing on the

25 In *Satipaṭṭhāna,* the doctrine of three or more bodies (*trikāya*) is not developed yet.

26 See http://www2.dhamma.org/en/vri.htm; http://store.pariyatti.org/Vipassana-Research-Institute_c_273.html

27 See http://www.palikanon.com/majjhima/m118n.htm

body. Breathing is the first and last sign of the living being, with it begins and ends each embodiment. Breathing engenders a possible relationship with the world and the interaction with it, which is shaped through feelings, thoughts and will.[28] Body without breath is dead body, corpse. Through controlled breathing[29] embodiment can raise to the level of consciousness, can be spiritualised and enlightened. This process is only possible in the case of a human embodiment if it is accompanied by consciousness and awareness. This means that according to Buddha's teaching animals or other beings, such as gods and spirits cannot be enlightened and need to be reborn first as humans.

> Breathing in a long breath, he knows, 'I breathe in a long breath'; breathing out a long breath, he knows, 'I breathe out a long breath'; breathing in a short breath, he knows, 'I breathe in a short breath'; breathing out a short breath, he knows, 'I breathe out a short breath', 'Aware of the whole breath body, I shall breath in', thus he trains himself. 'Conscious of the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe in', thus he trains himself. 'Conscious of the whole (breath-) body, I shall breathe out', thus he trains himself. 'Calming the bodily function (of breathing), I shall breath in', thus he trains himself; 'Calming the bodily function (of breathing), I shall breathe out', thus he trains himself.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 118

For Nyanaponika Thera the process of breathing is a proof for the accuracy of the chain of conditioned/dependent origination, *paṭiccasamuppāda*,[30]

> [...] in heavy, short or strained breath, or in the ailments of the respiratory organs, we become aware of the *suffering* associated with the body [...] the dependence of breath on the efficient functioning of certain organs, and, on the other hand, the dependence of the living body on breathing, show the *conditioned* nature of the body.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 63

28 In awakened consciousness the mind is projecting its sensuous and volitional contents upon the world of material objects and establishes a threshold between subjective and objective experience.

29 Rhythmic breathing is not only connecting embodiment with the world but also brings it into homologising with the whole universe.

30 Throughout the text I am using Pāli terms and international transliteration but if an author is using Sanskrit equivalents or words without diacritical signs I am leaving them according to their original form, as in this case of Nyanaponika Thera's *pratītyasamutpāda* vs. *paṭiccasamuppāda* etc.

Even though the breathing body could lead a life of its own, as is usually the case, because the breathing is a non-conscious process, it could also be influenced through mindful contemplation which is able to change this instance of embodiment through "tranquillization and deepening of the entire life-rhythm" (Nyanaponika Thera 1962: 61), transfiguring it into a body permeated with consciousness. On the other side, not in its transformative potential but in its evanescence, being mindful of the body might include contemplating its repulsive parts:

> And again, monks, a monk reflects upon this very body, from the soles of his feet up and from the crown of his head down, enclosed by the skin and full of impurities, thinking thus: 'There are in this body: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, gorge, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, solid fat, tears, liquid fat, saliva, mucus, synovic fluid, urine'.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 119

In *Nine Cemetery Contemplations* each possibility to be identified with body and self within it is removed in order to annihilate any concept of substantiality in embodiment:

(1) And again, monks, as if a monk sees a body one day dead, or two days dead, or three days dead, swollen, blue, and festering, discarded in the charnel-ground, he then applies (this perception) to his own body thus: 'Truly, this body of mine too is of the same nature, it will become like that and will not escape from it'.

Thus he dwells practicing body-contemplation on the body internally […]

(2) And again, monks, as if a monk sees a body discarded in the charnel-ground being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, herons, dogs, leopards, tigers, jackals or by various kinds of worms, he then applies (this perception) to his own body: 'Truly, this body of mine too is of the same nature, it will become like that and will not escape from it' […]

(3) And again, monks, as if a monk sees a body discarded in the charnel-ground: Reduced to a skeleton held together by the tendons, with some flesh and blood adhering to it […]

(4) Reduced to a skeleton held together by the tendons, blood-besmeared, fleshless […]

(5) […] without flesh and blood […]

(6) […] reduced to loose bone scattered in all direction—here bones of the hand, there bones of the foot, shin bones, thigh bones, pelvis, spine and skull […]
(7) […] reduced to bleached bones of shell-like colour […]
(8) Reduced to bones more than a year old, lying in a heap […]
(9) Reduced to rotted bones, crumbling to dust, he then applies (this perception) to his own body thus: 'Truly, this body of mine too is of same nature, it will become like that and will not escape from it'.

Thus he dwells practicing body-contemplation on the body internally, or externally, or both internally and externally. He dwells contemplating originating-factors in the body, or he dwells contemplating dissolution-factors of the body, or he dwells contemplating both origination- and dissolution-factors in the body. Or his mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for knowledge and mindfulness. Independent he dwells, clinging to nothing in the world.

Thus indeed, monks, a monk dwells practicing body-contemplation on the body. (Nyanaponika Thera 1962: 120f.)

Wherever the body resides (and the same holds for mind as well), either on the threshold between its voluntary and involuntary practice or in-between conscious and unconscious mental, emotional and volitional states, and however we observe it, whether having a life of its own or being on the threshold, it is a vehicle *for* (object) and *of* (subject) breathing, *for* and *of* sensations/feelings and a vehicle *for* (object) and *of* (subject) volition, being also a physical entity composed of elements but also disappearing and decomposing once dead. After calming the process of breathing, the practitioner is dwelling in the perception of the body as simply body in itself and as other, and infers that both—self and the other are not belonging to themselves, are not their own.

The text proceeds with a description of the perception of actual appearing and dissolving of the body, regarding their causes together with ways of detachment of any clinging to the things in the world while walking, standing, sitting or lying down. The practitioner is meant to be conscious of doing just that. Performing this,

> a monk, in going forward and in going back, applies clear comprehension; while looking straight ahead or while looking elsewhere he does so with clear understanding; in looking straight on and in looking elsewhere, he applies clear comprehension; […] in wearing the robes and carrying

> the almsbowl [...] in waking, speaking and being silent, he applies clear comprehension.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 119

The meditation further evolves contemplating the impurities.

The aim of this practice is to be conscious of each corporeal part and its behavior. For Nyanaponika Thera this should redirect thoughts preoccupied with the *aim* of going to the *act* of going itself (Nyanaponika Thera 1962: 63).

"Mental dissection" or the mindful visualising of the invisible bodily parts in *Nine Cemetery Contemplation* reveals the importance of a disgusted perception of corporeal unity. The reason for such contemplation is that the body for a deluded mind is just a place for various realisations of pleasure, joy and all kind of attachments through touching, causing sensations/feelings which can not only obstruct progress on the way towards enlightenment but deepen the states of suffering. Thus, one of the reasons for shaving a monk's head is to avoid vanity which could arise from the consciousness about the beauty of the body and taking pleasure in it. From clinging/attaching (*upadāna*) originates body consciousness (*kāyaviññāṇa*) and from body consciousness contact and touching (*phassa*). Nevertheless, "physical attractiveness [is] a blessing so long as it does not arouse vanity."[31]

Bernhard Waldenfels in *Das leibliche Selbst* emphasises the body not only as the basic phenomenon of our life-world but the paradox of its self-referentiality as well, because "to talk about body, means in a certain way to speak corporeally"[32] (Waldenfels 2000: 9). That means that our discourse on the body depends strongly on the body's spatial position in each act of reflecting, contemplating or meditating, and its interacting with other phenomena proceeds with reference to the world, to the self and to the other[33] (Waldenfels 2000: 11). Similar to *Satipaṭṭhāna*, he is also considering sensations and volition as a crucial part of body reflections and

> to speak about sensations means not only to speak about myself [but] at the same time about the world and about the others. [...] Sensation is a complex event and it concerns the world, nature and social world.[34]

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31 http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php?title=Body&oldid=146424

32 "[D]enn *über den Leib* sprechen heisst in gewisser Weise, *leiblich* sprechen."

33 Weltbezug, Selbstbezug, Fremdbezug.

34 "[Ü]ber Empfindung sprechen nicht bloß heisst, dass ich über mich spreche," but "gleichzeitig über die Welt und über die Anderen [...]. Das Empfinden ist ein komplexes Geschehen, das die Welt, die Natur und die soziale Welt mit betrifft."

WALDENFELS 2000: 76

Satipaṭṭhāna contemplation on sensations/feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) describes arising experiences as pleasant, painful and neutral; they can be both worldly and unworldly. Contemplation is practiced internally, externally and both internally and externally and creates the mindfulness which is able to discern origination-factors in feeling, dissolution-factors and both origination- and dissolution-factors in feeling. Sensation/feelings in Buddhist psychology imply less than emotions (Nyanaponika Thera 1962, Govinda 1969) as they are induced by sensual impressions and generate craving/thirst bound into the chain of causation. The importance of cultivating *sati* or mindfulness would be to break the chain. *Vedanās* appear when six sense organs touch the sense objects and induce the consciousness belonging to them (*saḷāyatana*). Besides five common sense organs, such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, in Buddhist epistemology mind represents the sixth sense.[35] In such a way mind is constituent part of sensations and sensations in their more conscious form as feelings are a constitutive part of mind. With the six senses Buddhism relativises the dualistic setting of body as physical and mind as its non-physical "dwelling guest." Within the dependent-origination chain of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, sensations are induced by touching (*phassa*) and generate further craving, thirst (*taṇhā*). As Piya Tan in his *Study of the 2nd Aggregate, Vedanā* (*Feeling*) (2005) emphasises, *vedanā* is different from emotions:

> In early Buddhist psychology, feeling refers to the affective (or hedonic) tone that arises in connection with sense-perception, that is, pleasant feelings (*sukhā vedanā*), painful feeling (*dukkhā vedanā*) and neutral feeling (*adukkham-asukhā vedanā*) [...].[36]

I suggest the rendering of *vedanā* with the double term *sensation/feeling*, as according to my understanding of the Buddhist tradition, *vedanā* implies the meaning of both of them due to the relationality of the consciousness generating process. Sense organs perceive sense-objects, but first through the touching of consciousness feeling appears in its nature of thirst and craving. Sue Hamilton (1996) proposes less differentiation between them because she wants to emphasise the cognitive moments:

35 See more in *Vimuttimagga*.

36 http://dharmafarer.org

> [...] it could be argued that 'sensation' is a word which is more readily associated with neutrality than is 'feeling', which is more associated in our minds with pleasure or pain. [...] But 'feeling' *can* be used neutrally: it is not uncommon to say 'I feel indifferent about that'. [...] I suggest that *vedanā* has a cognitive dimension which is conveyed by the word 'feeling' but not by 'sensation'.
>
> HAMILTON 1996: 145

This preference is not rigorously maintained, as Hamilton declares that *vedanā* is "affective rather than intellectual cognition" (Hamilton 1996: 46). However, *vedanā* implies both, sensing the objects of the outer world and becoming conscious of it in terms of pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent feelings.

The contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*) is described as knowing/cognising/being conscious of mind with lust, without lust, with and without hate, with and without delusion, such as the shrunken state of mind, distracted state of mind, developed and undeveloped state of mind, the focused and unfocused mind, freed and not freed mind. The known gifts of delusion (*moha*), greed (*lobha*), and hatred (*dosa*) are here represented as unwholesome factors of states of mind, which are conditioned by the absence of proper judgment and view, while hatred generates further unwholesome states connected with an apparitional ego/subject or I. All four pillars of mindfulness are analyzed according to their harmful or not harmful consequences. The benefits of such observation in bare attention lie

> in its being an effective way of self-examination leading to an increasing measure of self-knowledge. Here again there is a bare registering of the state of mind, either in retrospection or whenever possible and desirable by the immediate confrontation with one's present mood or state of mind.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 71

How can we understand mindfulness of *citta*, what means being mindful of mind? Mind[37] is not only permeated with sensation/feelings, mind is heart,

> the centre & focus of man's emotional nature as well as that intellectual element which inheres in & accompanies its manifestations: i.e. thought.

37 *Citta* is that kind of mind which is experiencing apparitional subjectivity (my embodiment), mind as *manas* is epistemological instance of logical cognizing processes, and mind as *viññāṇa* is sensory consciousness.

> In this wise *citta* denotes both the agent & that which is enacted [...]. For in Indian Psychology *citta* is the seat & organ of thought.[38]

Mind is defined as "non-physical phenomenon which perceives, thinks, recognizes, experiences and reacts to the environment."[39] Such clear definition of mind contradicts my endeavor to emphasise ambivalences in the body-mind dichotomy and their inseparableness. Therefore the inquiry about the mind-objects as a crucial part of mind's activities shows that one aspect of mind is the process of knowing which is conscious and engaged with objects. Its other dimension is emptiness, formlessness in which the objects' prime can arise and take form (*rūpa*). On the matrix of relation between mind and mind-objects we can observe dissolution of subject and object, subject being understood as just momentary appearance of a certain structure of the five aggregates of clinging/attaching (*upādānakkhandha*). Because they are without self, they might be considered as mind and body together, consisting of material form, body (*rūpa*), sensation/feeling which are here more connected with being conscious of its pleasant, unpleasant and neutral nature (*vedan*ā), and perception (*saññ*a). *Saññ*a perceives signs and features of objects and keeps this experience in memory to be able to recollect it in the future. As with consciousness, perception is sixfold, consisting of five sense objects and of mental objects of mind.[40] *Saññ*a can identify objects of experience and has the ability to name or conceptualise them. Further constituents are mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) as volitional agents together with consciousness (*viññāṇa*).[41] This is the bundle of the delusively appearing individuality, caused by an unmindful intercourse with the surrounding environment creating objects as seemingly belonging to it.

Being mindful of mind, contemplating *citta* implies observance of its discontinuous nature, from one moment to the other being happy, unhappy, loving and hating, joyful and angry, in one word, *citta* comprises all inner experiences, and as such has not yet been understood in terms of *bodhicitta*,

38 http://obo.genaud.net/backmatter/glossology/glossologytoc.htm

39 http://viewonbuddhism.org/mind.html

40 http://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/sanna/index.html

41 Various authors translate and interpret these terms slightly differently. See http://obo.genaud.net/backmatter/glossology/glossology/panc_upadana_kkhandha.htm

It is important to be conscious that all *kkhandas* are impermanent and appear and disappear within short periods of time. In spite of that we experience them as real, as we are immediately conscious of them when they appear as well as when they disappear. Only *nibbāna* is characterised through the absence of *kkhandha*, meaning liberation from their delusional influence on the cultivation of the path towards enlightenment.

the mind who is, in Mahayana Buddhism, directed towards enlightenment. Mind is the most basic and simultaneously the most unfree constituent of embodiment being connected with three gifts and their unwholesome effects, especially those connected with a lack of transparency in cognition.

Knowledge in Buddhism could be divided into opinion (*diṭṭhi*) induced by senses, judgment (*pamana*, *anumāna*), which is construed dialectically, and illumination (*paññā*) mediated through intuition. The cultivation of mindfulness has an impact on all of these three kinds of knowledge. Opinions are guided by reason and therefore might be erroneous and erratic. *Sati* could correct them. Judgments are shaped through logical inference (*vitakkavicāra*) and in difference to opinions which are subjective, they are objective rational knowledge of the perceived objects within the phenomenal world. *Sati* could sharpen them. Finally, intuitive knowledge (*paññā*) is experienced as awareness which makes all conscious perceptions and their conceptualisations possible, it precedes them as a primal state of each embodiment or, when embodied, as a consequence of the meditative effort to transcend the differences between me and the world in *samādhi*, realised through the reductive processes of *jhāna* meditation,[42] which leads to the unity of knowing mind and known mind-object and of their emptiness respectively. *Sati* is the *conditio sine qua non* of all of these realisations.

The objectivity of the *vitakkavicāra* aspect of knowledge is described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* through the contemplation of mind-objects. In his translation of text and further analysis Nyanaponika Thera uses interchangeably the terms "mind-objects" and "mental contents" for the Pāli term *dhamma*. I prefer "mind-objects," as mental content could exist also without objects. In *vitakkavicāra* a kind of synoptic consciousness about the phenomenal world around us is created, which is experienced by means of the former three pillars of mindfulness. *Dhamma* theory in Buddhism is very complicated and

42 *Samādhi* is practice of focusing the mind on one point, and *Samādhi sūtra* defines the practitioner as "one who knows as it really is the arising of the body and passing away thereof; the same with feeling, perception, activities and consciousness." See http://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/sanna/index.html.

Gunaratna explains *jhānas* as follows: "By fixing his mind on the object the meditator reduces and eliminates the lower mental qualities such as the five hindrances and promotes the growth of the higher qualities such as the *jhāna* factors, which lead the mind to complete absorption in the object. Then by contemplating the characteristics of phenomena with insight, the meditator eventually reaches the supramundane *jhāna* of the four paths, and with this *jhāna* he burns up the defilements and attains the liberating experience of the fruits."

See http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/gunaratana/wheel351.html.

controversial, especially if considering the ontological status of *dhammas* themselves, which are described as being existent in the past, present and future. Controversy arises with the question of how their permanency within an impermanent world is possible, i.e. can they "like the law of physics, [...] describe how things behave, and [...] tell us that the world tends to work in a predictable manner?"[43] Indecisiveness considering the meaning and understanding of the term has been elaborated upon at length by Gethin, who summarised some of the possible readings of *dhamma* as "particular nature or quality possessed by something," or as "mental or physical state, thing, or quality"; but this too has been criticised as not accurate.[44]

A monk is practicing *dhammānupassanā* when he contemplates mind-objects which are in the text represented through the five hindrances (*pañcanīvaraṇāni*), the five aggregates of clinging (*upādānakkhandha*), the six internal and six external sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), the seven factors of enlightenment (*sattasambojjhaṅgā*), and the four noble truths (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*).

The five hindrances are sense-desire, anger, sloth and torpor, agitation and worry, and doubt; the practitioner is conscious of their presence, absence or both.[45] They prevent the mind from enlarging of insights and mislead it on its path to awakening/enlightenment. Each hindrance is well defined according to related traditions (Theravāda or Mahāyāna) and sense desire, e.g. is longing "for happiness through the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and physical feeling," anger is connected with a will for rejection, resentment and hostility, sloth and torpor are "heaviness of body and dullness of mind which drag one down into disabling inertia and thick depression, agitation and worry is the inability to calm the mind and doubt is lack of conviction and trust" (Fronsdal 2001: 44-65). Any interference with the contemplating process is ascribed to these hindrances; the disability to overcome one's ignorance is caused by them. Therefore, practicing mindfulness on hindrances leads to full awareness of the instantaneous nature of them and shows the necessity to not even let them arise at first. An interesting remark about these hindrances is given by Brahmavamso[46] and Gethin arguing that they can be contemplated only when they have already passed away, "after one has abandoned them" (Brahmavam-

43 http://dhammaweb.net/dhammabook/view.php?id=97

44 See http://dhammaweb.net/dhammabook/view.php?id=97

45 The Five hindrances (*pañcanīvaraṇāni*) are of mental origin and Pāli texts in general mention as such, sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), anger (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), agitation and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*).

46 Brahmavamso also elaborates each *nīvaraṇa* in its impact on the process of meditation. See Brahmavamso (1999); http://www.budsas.org/ebud/ebmed051.htm.

so 2002: 35-38; Gethin 2001: 36-44),[47] which means that they are present in our consciousness only when the practitioner entered the *jhāna* meditation leaving *sati* behind. In such a context, *sati* would mean memory and recollection more than mindfulness of immediate presence.

Further on, the monk is practicing contemplation on the mind-objects of the six internal and six external sense-bases.[48] These are eye, visible forms and the eye-consciousness, ear and sound, audible objects, and ear-consciousness, nose and smells and olfactory consciousness, tongue and flavours and gustatory consciousness, body and touching objects with tactual consciousness, and finally the mind and mind-objects together with mental consciousness. That alone makes already eighteen forms of consciousness; the monk

> knows how the arising of the non-arisen fetter comes to be; he knows how the rejection of the arisen fetter comes to be; and he knows how the non-arising in the future of the rejected fetter comes to be.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 125

Before elaborating Four Noble Truths, the text describes seven factors of enlightenment (*sattasambojjhaṅgā*), which are mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of reality (*dhammavicaya*), energy (*viriya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*),[49] as remedies against five hindrances. A monk knows:

> The enlightenment-factor of mindfulness is in me; or when the enlightenment-factor of mindfulness is absent, he knows, 'The enlightenment-factor of mindfulness is not in me'. And he knows how the arising of the non-arisen enlightenment-factor of mindfulness comes to be; and how perfection in the development of the arisen enlightenment-factor of mindfulness comes to be.
>
> NYANAPONIKA THERA 1962: 126

Here we can see that *sati* appears not as an independent phenomenon, as in *Satipaṭṭhāna* itself, but for the second time is integrated in a group of various factors influencing the way toward overcoming suffering, the first one being the seventh element of the Eightfold Path. As one of the *sattasambojjhaṅgā*, *sati* is the most influential in self-mastery. To reach final liberation from ignorance

47 More in www://dharmafarer.org.

48 The aggregates of clinging which are coming between them have been described earlier.

49 They are described in *Bhikkhusutta* (Samyutta Nikāya 46.5).

the second factor of enlightenment is of main importance, analytical knowledge of the phenomena of embodiment and its contacts with the outer world, intending to see things as they "really are" (*yathābhūtam*), and they "are really" as they appear. Appearing and disappearing is the nature of the world, there is nothing substantial or of long duration in it. This *bojjhaṅgā* is guided by reason and not by sensations, it discriminates and investigates and asserts the causality between the appearance and disappearance of phenomena. On energy (*viriya*), Piyadassi Thera (2008) emphasises:

> Thus the path of purification is impossible for an indolent person. The aspirant for enlightenment (Bodhi) should possess unflinching energy coupled with fixed determination. Enlightenment and deliverance lies absolutely in his own hands.
>
> PIYADASSI THERA 2008: 8

He goes on to describe how the lack of happiness or rapture (*pīti*) as a mental property obstructs the advance towards enlightenment (Piyadassi Thera 2008: 9). It is influential on body and mind and results in contentment. Like energy, tranquility (*passaddhi*) is also present in body and mind (*kāyapassaddhi* and *cittapassadhi*), calming both of them. *Samādhi* strives towards

> intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to an unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place. It is concentration that fixes the mind aright and causes it to be unmoved and undisturbed. [...] Right concentration dispels passions that disturb the mind, and brings purity and placidity of mind.
>
> PIYADASSI THERA 2008: 11

These efforts result in the seventh factor of enlightenment, in *upekkhā* which means not bare indifference but not being upset when touched by the vicissitudes of life (Piyadassi Thera 2008: 13).

In the same vein as practicing *sati* follows mindful relating to the above described *sattasambojjhaṅgā*. They also could be present and absent in consciousness, and the monk is supposed to know about their arising and non-arising, eventually becoming mindful that he has established within him factors of enlightenment necessary for further proceeding on the way. Piyadassi Thera in his analysis of seven factors of enlightenment emphasises that

> man's mind tremendously and profoundly influences and affects the body. If allowed to function viciously and entertain unwholesome and

> harmful thoughts, mind can cause disaster, even kill a being; but mind also can cure a sick body. When concentrated on right thoughts with right understanding, the effects mind can produce are immense.
>
> PIYADASSI THERA 2008: 3

3 Conclusion

In this essay my aim was to show how one religious text could be brought into practice within an alien cultural context through an intercultural encounter and how this practice could possibly be used as methodological tool in anthropological inquiries. Hence, another question was thematised: how the performance of this practice which is not observable but is dependent on third-person reports or on first-person experience, shapes our interpretive work on the one hand, and leads to new forms of understanding and new ways of perceiving the world on the other hand. The proposed frame of inquiry operated on the analytical background of several phenomena, i.e. body/embodiment, mindfulness, consciousness and awareness. Finally, of equal importance was the practice of textualising the implemented methodology as a follow-up of research which is not self-evident but identifies a strong need for more precise conceptualisations. I refrained from quoting from third-person comments upon practice because they all still have difficulty in articulating and describing experiences beyond the level of the stereotypical or trivial. Each practitioner has brought into the practice some preconception of what body, mind, consciousness or awareness might mean, how they could be experienced, and with what results. Confrontation with textual tradition within the larger context of Buddhist exegesis, which would enable the creation of a new intercultural experience, is missing as practitioners are mostly caught in the "web" of intentions to be healed from suffering. A more strict methodology of observing and practising is required where the practices and phenomena to be considered are unknown in one's own culture, scientific field, and personality. More importantly still, it is necessary to evolve a new terminology and vocabulary about new phenomena connected with insights into consciousness and awareness from the Buddhist perspectives and how to textualise them. It is not at all the same thing if we talk about "consciousness" in general or about 121 different kinds of consciousness, as mentioned in the Buddhist texts. The metamorphosis of the wording processes is extremely important if the experiences of these practices are to become a source of information for those non-practitioners interested in the Other; but also for practitioners who genuinely intend some transformation and not just a cultural experience. Writing cannot

be reduced to describing, and understanding cannot remain inside the frame of its own understanding and its communicative intentionality. Thus, the anthropological discourse itself seems to be decentered through such concreative theoretical orthopraxis and requires a broadening of its empirical horizon.

The fact of embodiment and its nature characterised through the Four Noble Truths (suffering, its origin, the possibility of its cessation and the way of transcending it) justifies the practice and its application as an existential methodological tool with therapeutic value. Kabat-Zinn used perceptive analogies to link the four truths with medical procedure, pointing out how the first truth corresponds with the nature of symptom which is suffering; the cause of suffering is contained in greed, hatred and delusion (second truth); prognosis of healing process due to the fact that the disease is curable (third truth); and methodology of treatment which is the Eightfold Path (fourth truth) (Kabat-Zinn 2011: 27).

While a primarily anthropological research and writing practice may not have explicitly therapeutic aims, the contribution of research on *Satipaṭṭhāna* lies in its raising of awareness of own aporetic position in the world through the practice of "four pillars of mindfulness," methodically being "in" and "out" at the same time; and, more pointedly, in the process of attached/detached differentiation of characteristics of discursive phenomena being researched through first-person versus third-person cognizing and experiencing (experience in the sense of 'Erlebnis'), and finally in the idea of anthropological writing as a way of articulating them both. If the "being in" is applied as research methodology while practicing *sati*, it is not the same activity as that of the "usual" meditative practitioner, who is "just" practising for the sake of his own inner growth. The researcher has to observe the ways of his own mind and feelings, reflecting on the body and the phenomena of the world, as prescribed in the text, but also to shape a new scientific text. These practical and reflective processes show that the nature of the mind lies not only in mind itself but in its personal perceptions, social constructions and intercultural representations and recreations as variously applied already in neuroscience, cognitive science and medical therapies such as the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) method or the Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).

Through the practice of mindfulness we do not come to know what *sati* is, but it makes the experience of its consequences as results of the practice itself possible, as well as intersubjective and intrasocietal moments of experiencing the (intercultural) "touching." Thus anthropological writing could transmit the existentiality of cognitions which are pragmatically decisive during the meditative practice, even though this experiential dimension is disputable in terms of empirical methodology. The paradox runs deeper, as the claim

of methodology 'to be empirical' cannot be fulfilled if empirical methods do not give access to the phenomenon. The aporia of "being in" and "being out" remains unsolved and the researcher *cum* practitioner does not intend to transcend them and to reconcile them in some harmonious Third. There is no Third, it is only emptiness, experienced in the ultimate *bodhi*, enlightenment, illumination, or phenomenon of which in fact we do not know what it is. Anthropologists write about enlightenment/awakening/awareness from an unenlightened mind and therefore with a limited horizon. Understanding cannot go beyond understanding itself. In this sense, to be a *Grenzgänger* is not enough for a new methodology of inquiring into unknown phenomena (that is, without the intention to reduce them to our given knowledge and established conceptual and experiential understandings); one must instead become a trans-border commuter (*Transgänger*), the one who arrives at the voidness of pure experience, which is just a word for the annihilation and suspension of each experience and all the ways of its unenlightened-minded naming. Awareness has no horizon.

The practice of mindfulness (*sati*) is a way of approaching the threshold, the *limen* from which the first decision could be made to enter the Eightfold Path at all. Each transition, if it happens within one embodiment is a decentering experience in the sense that everything becomes center—*centrum ubique circumferentia nusquam*. This experience is pure presence, *nunc stans*, simultaneity of all that was, is and will be, it means the "now" of reality, which when transferred into language becomes an a posteriori succession of moments manifested in reality. What is experienced as reality cannot be replaced through existing thoughts and words due to which our cognitions have only provisional character, and show their impermanent nature. Lama Zopa Rinpoche's characterisation of mind as "phenomenon that is not body, not substantial, has no form, no shape, no color, but, like a mirror, can clearly reflect objects,"[50] leaves us with impression of duality of body and mind in Buddhism. Even though the mirror-metaphor is common in Buddhist descriptions of mind, it takes hold only when the embodied mind is meant. Reflections are relational and always past-oriented. They reflect what is not any more in this impermanent life-world. Reflections are always aporetic, unique indeed but deficient. Thus, I would rather suggest that the image of mirroring is applicable in a sense of understanding the mind and its mind-objects. Only before their mutual encounter might the mind be "without dust," i.e. empty, as suggested by another Buddhist metaphor. Buddhist texts remain ambivalent in their way of considering unity and differentiation between the mind and body.

50 http://viewonbuddhism.org/mind.html

Aporetics appear also on the social level of analysis. While it is not the issue of my inquiry here, this is a very important part of various ethnographies, as evidenced by experience e.g. by Cook in a Buddhist monastery:

> during fieldwork and analysis a paradox became apparent between internal processes of renunciation for individual monks and *mae chee* and the importance of public demonstrations of 'no-self'. Multiple displays of sensory and physical control become a central focus in renunciates' lives, but this necessarily creates a dynamic paradox between understanding of self and the moral context of public action.[51]
>
> COOK 2010: 252

In elaborating a new methodological attempt of inquiry I will plead for philosophical ethnography which is more focused on self as *othering*, and writing as *thirding* in a complex process of practical, i.e. cognizing and wording pragmatics of emptiness (*suññatā*). As we came to know from the *sutta*, mindful encounter with body within the meditating performance, sees the body as a vehicle and obstacle. The body has its limits but may transgress boundaries. It inheres the whole cosmos, has beginning and end with all the impermanences in between. However the mind, too, is non-substantial, the duality between body and mind being the consequence of a delusive identification of the mind with ego/subject/I. Proclaiming it as simply delusive does not give enough interpretive space to understand and explain the apparitional I which in fact is not. Body and mind are neither two, nor one, but are encompassed by awareness (*bodhi*), enlightenment, experience of light through which all acts and enactments of forming and deforming can appear. Awareness is empty, thus making transgression from one experience into another possible. Without this empty and formless awareness (*suññatā*) no mind, no sensations and no mind-objects would be possible.

The art of body and mind's metamorphoses proposed by *Satipaṭṭhāna*, even though historically determined by the place and time of Buddha's teaching, seem to have significant potential for trans-temporal and trans-spatial living. Space is opened up for new ways of self-transformation and self-healing in the context of intercultural transference. To what extent the experiential forms and shapes will be changed in this translational process remains to be

51 Is no-self contradicting sociality, and does being involved in meditating action mean to be a-social or antisocial? Is retreat of a meditating monk from the world of social bonds a subversive or affirmative social act?

investigated in each culture individually. Certainly it can create an awareness that ego/subject/I could be transformed just because there is no self, but an assemblage of momentarily structured aggregates of multifarious forms with various names, such as ego/subject or I. Mindfulness embodied through silent performance gradually progresses into awareness which is without referent, i.e. empty. The issue of whether this emptiness generates the same experience interculturally cannot be understood just from the assertion of its trans-temporal character as higher reality.

Performative methodology combined with a scientific approach to modern Buddhism, as proposed here, inspires us to more strict conceptual analysis of body and mind, and makes us conscious of phenomena of body and mind which are otherwise "just happening" and "passing by" in the unmindful everyday life. Even though it might enlarge the cognizing and perceiving horizon of body and mind, and establish the foundation for other forms of consciousness, the performative methodology cast in the form of discourse could eventually lead to the creation of a philosophical in-depth ethnography. But it would not lead to an illuminated awareness of emptiness, where there is no body, no mind, no commitment of consciousness to the word, no knower and thing known, no difference between beingness and beinglessness. *Sati* as a methodological tool might be a skillful means (*upāya*) for the conscious cognition of (no-)self and world, and it might anticipate a new anthropological paradigm transferring emphasis from meaning to empiricity, but it cannot avoid the methodological trap one remains caught in. Embodiment is an utterly aporetic state of body and mind circling around enactings of the experience of meaning (*Sinnerfahrung*). When performing mindfulness, as shown in *Satipaṭṭhāna*, the practitioner becomes conscious that "every performance is a betrayal of every text—but only because every text is already a betrayal of the primary experience of reality" (source unknown). Conscious realities continue to be multifarious, minded and corporeal, experiences continue to be non-coherent, and their permeations are flowing further among fluid things. The practice of mindfulness is unobservable silent performance from within, and static when observed from without. The body and mind here are not separate realities; on the contrary they are necessarily and inwardly connected. Their whole dynamics take place as ardous efforts in proceeding along the path that transforms mind and body alike. Awareness conditions both of them but itself remains unconditioned. If it is ever experienced, awareness is a momentary peak of embodied practice metamorphosed into pure presence, no-self, which each time, if ever, is reached anew. Enlightenment as pure light in the state of awakening is nothing other than extinction (*nibbāna*). There is no differentiation. To translate it into concepts and words would mean to hold

the process in one understanding and to halt the dynamic process of mindful progress. *Sati* is conceivable only partially as it is a thinking tool to generate non-thinking. If Kuhn is right about the discontinuous development of science based on revolutionary cracks, looking back on already reached paradigmatic metamorphosis, some examples of which have been set out in the text, we can anticipate further changes in conceptualising science and in our ways of dealing with its methodologies.

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