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## NOTES AND REVIEWS

### EXTENDED BEYOND THE BODIES

*A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*. Edited by Frances E. Mascia-Lees. Blackwell Companions to Anthropology, 19. Chichester; Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. xxv+529 pages.

This wonderful companion to embodiment and body-studies covers twenty nine different aspects from our daily embodied lives. With its solid hard-cover binding and more than 500 pages of full, thick and tight text it made me a little bit frightened at the beginning – how embodied can life be, anyway? I can say it has been probably one of the broadest books I have read about bodies and embodiment for its broad variation of themes: from created embodied aesthetics to virtual created selves and everything between, themes I had not even heard about more than briefly in the news, or had not paid attention to before as an important part of surrounding embodied culture.

Some people say collections of essays cannot be read as a novel or fiction, that these are not even meant to be read so. Collections quite often are read as a Bible or ‘grasshopper-style’, starting with the chapters one likes most and then moving on as interest flows. As a linear reader I used to start from first chapter and just read myself through the text to the very last one, which is not always perhaps the easiest way. It was interesting to follow the structure of this book – how themes are linked to each other and how the placing of some chapters made full sense in context after reading neighbouring chapters. Yet when I think about the whole text I do feel I need to gather different aspects under some umbrella headings.

As a novice lecturer I could not help myself reading this book from a ‘how to make my students-to-be read this, too, and read the

whole book’ perspective. So I read with my hypothetical students of ‘cultural conceptions of the human body’ as co-readers and my laptop with search engines at hand to find out more about one or another embodied phenomena, to see it and get a better picture-based understanding instead of reading vivid descriptions. (I must say although I do understand it is uncommon and probably considered unnecessary, when we talk about bodies and embodied phenomena, one picture can say more than several paragraphs. The lack of visual material was what I missed a lot when reading, hence I had the Internet for assistance.)

The basic text and introduction to the body and embodiment for me has been Marcel Mauss’s “Techniques of the Body”. I am still surprised how enlightening, good, introductory and yet very basic a text it is. Even now, more than 75 years later and after the many phenomenological, structural and poststructural texts, its clarity is refreshing. Just like seeing for the very first time what techniques actually are and how habits are formed. Mauss has been mentioned in this collection by 2 or 3 authors, although he is not mentioned in the index; yet he and his ideas of techniques of the body and construction of habits kept haunting me when reading.

“How many bodies do we have?” is one of the first questions I have asked in my lectures or presentations. As the body always belongs somewhere, is ‘deeply sited’ in the lived world and lived experience, the number of bodies one has or is capable of operating with varies. It is related to one’s own embodied history and development of personhood.

So to lead my students to the theme and introduce them to embodiment after Mauss I would have started with the chapters titled

"Bodiliness", "Biopower", "Cultural Phenomenology", "Personhood" and "The Senses". The article "The Body Beyond the Body: Social, Material and Spiritual Dimensions of Bodiliness" by Terence Turner describes what the culturally constructed or cultural body means. The idea of "social skin" (p. 106) is something that one could keep in mind. (Elaborately decorated skin as one version of it was something I hoped to read more about. I assume Kayapo body art it is done with the juice of the jagua or jenipapo fruit (*Genipa Americana*), which is one of body-altering techniques now with an independent life in Western mass-consumption.) "Embodiment: Agency, Sexual Difference, and Illness" by Thomas J. Csordas is good basic text for a methodological overview of the authors whose ideas are most used in the anthology: Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, Foucault, Kristeva and the theoretical basis for the phenomena of pain or deep physical discomfort (phantom limb, chronic syndromes, environmental influences). "Embodiment and Personhood" by Andrew J. Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart introduces the discussion about embodiment in the bodily senses while participating in ritual processes and of the ritual efficacy of creating personhood. So I would agree "that embodiment theory is not the same as theory about the body (although it can encompass that). Embodiment is precisely about what can be in the body, or around the body, and can use the idea of the body as a locus of personhood" (p. 398). "Polysensoriality" by David Howes explains why the body cannot be taken for granted and gives an overview of the history of anthropology: what has been the role of the senses? The question asked above: "How many bodies do we have?" can be linked to the cultural idea of how many senses we have. The article titled "Biopower and Cyberpower in Online News" by Dominic Boyer shows how Foucault's biopower concept as a tool of modern governance and statecraft has become 'cyberpower' carried out by digital publicity.

The problem of racism and embodying race is something people living in a rather mono-racial society do not think about a lot, as the problem of ethnicity is more contextually relevant. So the chapters "Affect" and "Racialization" could be enlightening reading. The article "How to Do Races with Bodies" by Didier Fassin explains why associating 'body' and 'race' is not self-evident but rather bodies are racialised while race is an embodied, experienced reality. "Learning Affect/Embodying Race" by Ana Yolanda Ramos-Zayas explains evaluations of racial difference and on-going processes of "racial learning" which is understood as a behaviour-contingent aspect of social action and a phenomenological experience (p. 25).

What it means to be gendered and the whole idea of the construction of sex and gender can be read from different angles in the chapters "Autoethnography", "(Trans) Gender", "Kinship" and "Masculinities". The article "When I was a Girl (Notes on Contrivance)" by Roger N. Lancaster and with the introduction by Frances E. Mascia-Lees gives an autoethnographic and intimate insight into the embodied experience of gender, sexuality and belonging through the prism of camp. "Tomboi Embodiment" by Evelyn Blackwood makes one think about the relevancy of the "orthodoxy of bodily truth" (p. 207). "The Western idealized concept of self as an autonomous, cohesive and integrated entity that distinguishes one from all others differs from notions of personhood in Indonesia, where one is defined by one's kin ties and community of origin, as well as age, social status and rank" (p. 219). The gender defined by kin and tombois switching between different gendered roles while belonging to different kins in Indonesia is rather different from the gender that *warias* have. "Bodily Betrayal: Love and Anger in the Time of Epigenetics" by Emily Yates-Doerr shows changes in the whole phenomena of food, feeding and eating in the role of kinship, belonging and traditions in the lives of women in Guate-

mala. "The Male Reproductive Body" by Emily Wentzell and Marcia C. Inhorn analyses how sexuality and reproductivity can be important aspects in cultural mechanisms and what is considered important for creating manliness and framing stereotypes of manly behaviour in different cultures.

Questions of ethics, life and death rise painfully in the chapters "Bioethics", "Dead Bodies", "Dissection" and "Pain" but also in "Sensorial Memory" and "Tasting Food". The article "Embodied Ethics: From the Body as Specimen and Spectacle to the Body as Patient" by Nora L. Jones asks why in medicine has the body somehow becomes dehumanised and a specimen, embodying something of plain medical record? What has happened to the viewpoint that the body of marvels has become a body with errors? "Pain and Bodies" by Jean E. Jackson explains the phenomena of pain as experienced (mind), and produced through neurological structures and processes (brain). "Embodied Legacies of Genocide" by Carol A. Kidron opens the experienced horror of pain that becomes a traumatic legacy for descendants. "Tasting between the Laboratory and the Clinic" by Annemarie Mol shows how senses can be formed and how important they are in everyday life. What effort does it take to keep the senses of taste and smell active and life-supporting, what are the limits of the ability to taste and how do we tolerate loss, lack and inabilities (p. 477).

"The Deadly Display of Mexican Border Politics" by Rocío Magaña describes how "political life takes place with and through death" and what the political 'afterlife' of the body is (p. 160). From "The Body in Tatters: Dismemberment, Dissection and the Return of the Repressed" by Nancy Scheper-Hughes a question of body love rises – intact bodies, dismemberment and silent absent organs. This leads the reader to the consumption of bodies, which can be also called recycling, and the religious or political afterlife of bodies as relics or as recyclable material for organ donation.

The question of power over bodies and in a way dehumanisation arises interestingly in the chapters titled "Colonialism", "Modification", "Post-Socialism" and from a different angle in "Impairment" and "Transnationalism". "Bodies under Colonialism" by Janice Boddy analyses womanhood and control over women's bodies as illustrated by Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in the first half of the 20th century. Questions of female genital mutilation, infibulation and the Western-minded interpretation of it combined with sexual education as an expression of colonial power can be paralleled with the situation of today. If we leave aside the problem of colonial power and politics, changes in this topic are rather limited and problems remain. A rather similar question about women and their reproductivity is brought up in "Troubling the Reproduction of the Nation" by Michele Rivkin-Fish. The choice of abortion or birth as a socially forced choice is something that was faced during the Soviet period in Estonia, too. The generation of women in aged 40+ probably remembers rather well times when abortion really was among the family planning methods, although tabooed and not spoken of in public it was for decades more easily available than the pill or condoms. The chapter titled "Mediated Bodies" generally echoes the theme of reproduction control. "Fetal Bodies, Undone" by Lynn M. Morgan analyses the creation of the "public fetus" (p. 324) and how reproductive family values become part of the greenwash and, once again, biopower. How ethical can the construction of an independent living fetus be as a biopolitical metaphor and icon of fetal life when it is constructed partly by computer-animated images, by silicon models and photographs of dead fetuses? "Blurring the Divide: Human and Animal Body Modification", by Margo de Mello, analyses body modification amongst different species and makes the reader question cultural norms and the construction of personhood, the capacity to make culture

and also the construction of the other: what being treated like a human actually means when “The very act of body modification is a centrally human act. No other animal can change its body in the ways that we can, and there is no evidence to suggest that animals want to change their bodies” (p. 345). Where and how do the rights and exceptions of ‘being treated humanely’ expand and what does this mean to others? “Sporting Bodies: Sensuous, Lived and Impaired” by P. David Howe allows us to think about “who owns and creates the body” from a different angle and analyse, asking how the “material environment helps physically shape my body but the embodied actions in which I engage also transform both the physical environment and the interpretative social environment” (p. 278). “Bodies-in-Motion: Experiences of Momentum in Transnational Surgery” by Emily McDonald gives an analytical insight into the world of beauty surgery, medical tourism and ‘bodies-in-momentum’ as the process of change.

The body as a business and field of consumption is a question that arises every now and then in many texts. It can appear explicitly as a theme of corrupt organ donation in the chapter titled “Dissection”, the sporting body as a billboard in the chapter titled “Impairment”, or beauty surgery as a trend within new tourism. Consumption of self as change in a gendered role is raised in the chapter titled “Kinship”, and has become a way of living in the chapter titled “Neoliberalism”. In her article “Embodying and Affecting Neoliberalism” Carla Freeman analyses how the “individual is defined as self-propelled, autonomous economic actor ever-responsive to dynamic marketplace” (p. 356), and how this has changed and is changing the role of womanhood in Barbados.

For those who are not very aware of bio-sciences (like me) the chapters titled “Genomics” and “Haptics” can once again be a point of rethinking. “Embodying Molecular Genomics” by Margaret Lock can provoke thoughts of when and how that shift

in thinking happened, when “the location of agency and morality (shifts) away from individuals and onto genes themselves” (p. 225). “Haptic Creativity and the Mid-embodiments of Experimental Life” by Natasha Myers and Joe (Joseph) Dumit reflects the communicating of science, interpretation of data and problematic of mid-embodiment, switching between lived (active) body and the objective (passive) body.

Last but not least we can also think and rethink about the (re)creation of bodies. Chapters titled “Hybridity”, “Virtuality” and “Aesthetics” give various insights into the theme of crafting bodies. The opening article “Aesthetic Embodiment and Commodity Capitalism” by Frances E. Mascia-Lees opens a discussion on embodied aesthetics as “all aesthetic experiences are embodied, not all embodied experiences are aesthetic; thus invoking ‘embodiment’ alone does not signal the particular nature of the experience I seek to understand” (p. 7). The Arts and Crafts movement as a form of embodied aestheticised life is in focus as is consumerism of those crafted bodies and aesthetic embodiment as a matter of conscious choice. “Hybrid Bodies of the Scientific Imaginary” by Lesley Sharp opens up a problematic of hybridity and is in a way a development and extension of the problematic of organ donation and replacement that was also discussed in the chapter titled “Dissection”. The economics and body business in xenotransplantation is an important aspect, as it was with ‘recycled’ human bodies – there is strong price and demand pressure. Organs and tissue from pigs as cheaper and more easily produced material than primate material for xenotransplantation raises questions not only about bioethics but also the morality of biocapital and may be problem with religious aspects. The very last article of the book “Placing the Virtual Body: Avatar, Chora, Cypherg” by Tom Boellstorff leads embodiment into the virtual world and thus to creating pluralisation of place body and embodiment locate.

Avatars or virtually created creatures can be seen as a new embodiment but also as extensions of the self and self-crafting. So creating avatar as an act of creation can be compared with human crafts and skill in general. And then we are in a way back in the beginning of a book – creative people embodying their aesthetic values. Choosing, crafting, consuming. (In this moment I really enjoyed my linear-way of reading, it felt like finishing a nice well crafted chain, well linked together and complete.)

I realised after reading this book that I took these texts as wonderful material for education. They provide a good structure or backbone for a whole seminar yet must be accompanied by rich visual material and video clips. This would extend the embodied knowledge of my hypothetical students-to-be and lead them beyond the body to

extended and personally undiscovered bodies. For my hypothetical students' sake, and because I love books, books in use, I sincerely hope this book will also have a soft-cover copy, a cheaper version in paperback that would be a valuable companion on the study table of every student interested in bodies and embodiment. So I was happily surprised to find out that some of my students had already discovered these texts, in a file format available on the web, and already use this knowledge for their research work. Embodied knowledge, active, in use.

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