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Master of Performance Practices Year 2

Post Body Reflections Module

Lexicon Submission

po;stb,od:y

to be read

to be listened to

to be read and listened to

to be part-ly read and part-ly listened to

This is an academic text with lexicon entries that takes the post body quite literally. In looking for ways to formulate the formless, I will examine the concepts of Donna Haraway's cyborg, Deleuze and Guattari's Body without Organs and Rosi Braidotti's Posthuman. Particularities of each will be used to approach how I am reconsidering the post body, or as I will call it, the postbody.

However: this is also a red box. Perhaps an image of a red box has just come into your mind, possibly in front of or larger than the image of an academic text with lexicon entries; if so, ignore them both for just a moment. Imagine instead a hole that extends endlessly down into the soft, dark soil of the under-ground. Now imagine a cyclone directly above it, yet upside down so that the mouth of the cyclone fits over the opening of the hole in the ground. One extends downwards and the other travels endlessly up. Now take the image of the academic text with [] again and place it inside. Take the image of the red box, however it was, and imagine it so that this up and down cyclone-hole and the academic text with [] fit within it. Possibly, the floor and lid of the red box will unstick themselves and float as separate pieces towards the infinite above and the illimitable below. The sides of the box might float to both horizons, or the entire box might stretch until all its sides are transparent, hair-thin membranes. In any case, let the sides of the cyclone and the soil around the hole soften and blur, so that what is inside begins to dissipate; let the very idea of *inside* italicize. The red no longer belongs to the box, but seeps out and around in all directions and dimensions, so that there is no red nor a box, and all *sides are non-perceivable*¹.

Within this [] with lexicon entries, I would like to expose the post body as a postbody, using fragmentation to particularize where and when natureculture enmeshment occurs. Minute alignments and adjustments, or micromovements, ensue as

¹ red box

as an imperceptible body fights against the category, the container, the genre, the gender, the medium, the structure, the system, the concept; against organization, opinion and emotion. It fights against how anatomical, psychological and physiological disciplines determine and decide, and how cultivation cunningly codifies. It fights against integrations of the body, refusing to be lured into the illusion of individuality nor enticed by the ambitiousness of multiplicity. The red box fights for the recognition and acceptance of the body as imperceptible fragments.

the consequence of fragmentation, as well as highlight how these fragments intra-relate. While liveness is im- and explicit in human and nonhuman living bodies, I will argue that it needs to be understood as body-less, and therefore im- and explicit in the po;stb,od:y. And while I participate in the paradox of using my own body, albeit my cyborg body, to work through this academic [] lexicon [] which seeks a non-body, I will admit that these experiences are fleeting at best, and that it is mostly in my imagination that the body momentarily disappears. Staying consistent with the intent to search for the non-body, this imperceptible non-red non-box exposes how micromovements occur between, around, and through the fragments within it.

Yet, even as the po;stb,od:y requires a body to work through it, so must the red box begin with the concept of a box. Inspired by Latour's black box as being an enclosure within which multiple aspects of science, technology and society merge, I look instead for a sinewy transparency of disunity in creating its red relative. Latour's black box integrates the various contents within it and, more dangerously, "...contains that which no longer needs to be reconsidered.... (its) contents have become a matter of indifference" (Callon and Latour 1981, 285). In order for the human body's short attention span to comprehend complexity, the black box simplifies by integrating differing bodies, and by doing so, makes them (in)different. In looking for the po;stb,od:y, I intend to adamantly (re)consider content in an attempt to make (in)difference irrelevant. I would argue that the unidirectional movement that occurs when content gets taken from its origin and put into the black box is another way of insuring irrelevance. The non-red-non-black-non-box both in- and outputs bodies simultaneously, while ()differently ()considering contents as non-contents, and allowing them to fragment into parts, to micromove, and to intra-relate.

Experimenting with how to approach a bodiless body, I speak only of the parts I can attest to and imagine. I need my body to write this, I need my body to be able to think about being without. I consistently perceive it as fragments; as fingers, wrists, lungs, tongue, and nerves; as ;] (- and &. I can articulate some of the innumerable parts held together by the illusion of the entity of me, but there are parts of me that remain unknowable, invisible, and imperceptible. There are fragments that I don't recognize and that are not familiar, parts which have their own agency and do not desire to become complete. I recognize in myself the desire to perceive my body as an integrated one; to move effortlessly between language, thoughts and involuntary actions; to strive for

efficiency and balance; to make sense to other bodies. I pull my parts together in order to appear whole, but my (w)holes attest to the actuality that I am parts and I am part (of). The (of) that I am part, is also parts. I am parts (of) parts intra-relating in innumerable constellations and combinations, some able to be traced back to their separate roots in biology or in society, others unfamiliar, and still others as the fragments of fragmented enmeshment.

The po;stb,od:y begins with Donna Haraway's image of the cyborg, and I gladly accept that the human body is deeply intertwined with nature and culture, a non-autonomous subject of information and infused by its autobiography. As a cyborg, I am neither wild, pristine nor untouched; neither cultivated, urban nor algorithmic, but instead an entanglement of both biology and technology, a body enmeshed with language and punctuated by time. However, being a cyborg on a quest for the non-body or, more part(icularly, the po;stb,od:y, I need to disagree with the co-evolution of nature and culture as a kind of integration, and instead re-examine specific places of biological and technological entanglement. In looking for the po;stb,od:y, I must question the assumption that co-evolution allows nature and culture to share these developments together, as a unified concept and a singular image, in order to question how fragmentation can expose other intersections that refuse this combination.

Haraway also insists that both a complete severance from our biological involuntary actions is impossible, as is ignoring our co-evolution with words, data and meaning. Even so, I would argue that human bodies cannot know or perceive every aspect of our co-evolution, nor all visible or invisible intersections of natureculture. Our enmeshment can only consist of (known) biological parts and (known) technological parts. Unaware of all of our biological functions, and unable to perceive all instances of light, the cyborg body cannot know precisely how or where enmeshment has occurred or continues to occur².

² natureculture

is a part-ly known and a part-ly unknown entanglement; its known parts co-evolve together with its unknown parts. The intersections of these part-ly known and unknown parts release co-evolution from its entanglement with only (known) bodies and (known) technologies. Natureculture must be considered as a kind of co-evolution which allows each enmeshed (un)(known) fragment to fragment further, into an ink blot neu ron ; (in)to nacu, altur

In explaining the cyborg as a metaphor for natureculture, Haraway continues, “(Cyborg imagery) means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories” (Haraway, 1991, 67), in order to connect to and communicate with all of our parts. While the po;stb,od:y celebrates parts and supports the desire of the cyborg in both building and destroying bodies and systems, it does not tear down in order to re-use or re-build with those parts. The po;stb,od:y takes the destruction, dismemberment and disintegration of bodies into its parts from the cyborg, and remains remain(s)³.

Deleuze and Guattari’s experiment with the Body without Organs (BwO) similarly look for ways to de- and non-organ-ize the human body like the po;stb,od:y, exploring what it can do when the focus is no longer on what it is. They consider the BwO not as “a finished object of metaphysics, but (as) a matter of endless becoming (through e.g. becoming-woman, becoming-child...” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, 17). They invite the body with organs, the body of notions and concepts, to consider the body without organs as a set of practices, infused by desire. Considering bodies to be the homes of dichotomies, the BwO continuously hovers in-between those dichotomies, in a state of becoming. Nonetheless, Deleuze and Guattari understand the difficulty in sustaining the experiment and this state: “[...] you can’t reach (the BwO), you are forever attaining it, it is a limit” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, 149-150).

The BwO is therefore a body that becomes and which must continuously sustain the practice of becoming in order to dis-organ-ize that body’s concept of itself, what it does and how it performs in the world. Both the BwO and the po;stb,od:y fight against systems and governances and fight for experimentations and practices as forms of movement. The

³ Fragmentation

The human body taken out of the concept of natureculture is a fragment; a tree taken out of natureculture is a fragment; the far-reaching branches, the metacarpals, the metatarsals, the veined leaf, the sugary sap, the plasma, the hemoglobin, the rings of age, the roots spreading far and wide, hair follicles, the meridians, nadis, nerves, the constant stream of thoughts and desires, carbon, the buzzing, the resonating, the beating; all are the result of fragmentation; each fragment; fragments; further.

desire of a BwO exists within states of in-between and becoming; however, both states continue to be in dialogue with the binary. If I become-woman by practicing being in-between man and woman, or nature and woman, or biology and culture, my becoming can occur only in-between those dichotomies. If I attempt multiple becomings, exist in multiple in-betweens, I still stay connected to the construct of categories; it is my becomings that multiply. I can assume that I am many things at once “and” that I can be all sides of a binary while also existing in the middle of it. However, in doing that, I fall back into the habit of wanting wholeness, of desiring to be the “and” and the “all”, and become a collector-body of multiple ways of being.

In suggesting the BwO, Deleuze and Guattari also mention that organs are “desiring-machines”. The BwO is then a body rid of such desire but is nevertheless active; it is “the body outside any determinate state, poised for any action in its repertory” (Massumi 1992, 70). That the BwO exists beyond a “determinate state” confirms both that it has existed within one and that such a state exists. The BwO is then, in actuality, confirming its own boundaries as well as the existence of other boundary-ed bodies with(in) which it exists. The idea that the BwO is a freed entity, able to move “outside” of its own limitations is a magnanimous and enticing one, yet quite ambitious. The idea of movement beyond the disorganized body comes closer to how movement relates to the po;stb,od:y; however, like itself, the movements of the po;stb,od:y are in pieces⁴⁺⁵.

How might the po;stb,od:y move beyond the state of (in)ness, beyond being a human body with its human ways of moving? I am not arguing for not-being nor for the non-human, but rather looking for ways to make being’s boundaries unfamiliar. Rosi Braidotti speaks about the necessity to defamiliarize ourselves with what we know and

⁴⁺⁵ **micromovement and intra-relationality**

happen when the po;stb,od:y continues to fragment. These pieces do not join but, as expressions and movements, flow, fluctuate, float. Without the framework of frames, the micromovement-part of the po;stb,od:y detaches itself and takes on intensity. Micromovements emerge microscopically as pieces continue to break off and disperse. The micromoving micro-fragments cause vibrations, reverberations, micro im- and explosions. They touch, envelop, collide, jostle and overlap each other, but never join. The persistent disunity allows other ways of being-with; intra-relationality as the expression of the micromovement of parts.

therefore with the human (Braidotti, 2003,13), displacing what is known about a body so that it can be perceived in other ways. She suggests that we defamiliarize ourselves with being human; that we take ourselves out of the context of what we know and perceive, in order to enter the realm of the posthuman. To defamiliarize the human requires that the blurry boundaries around the familiar need to be transgressed; in Braidotti's argument, it is the philosophical concept of humanism which requires overstepping. However, the defamiliarization with what is familiar, or the reconceptualization of the human beyond its own set of human values and its agency, are movements in one direction, from in to out, from known to unknown, from peripheral to spatial. Unidirectional, unilateral movements are not the preferred means of mobility for the po;stb,od:y, nor is having familiarity be the runway from which it takes off. Posthumanism is one way in which the human body can transgress humanism; however, it still remains tethered, by a thread, to the human. This thread extends endlessly upwards, like punctuation in the sky, attached to a red balloon. The thread keeps the red in sight. Snip the string, open the hand, and the red rhythm rhymes while disappearing into the sky. Imperceptibility happens by de-tethering the human⁶.

Rosi Braidotti, re-structures Haraway's natureculture into "the nature/culture continuum" which is central to the agenda of the posthuman and requires a "qualitative shift in our thinking about what exactly is the basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet" (Braidotti, 2013, 2). Like Haraway, Braidotti rejects the duality of nature/culture, and invites a reassessment of their entanglement and co-evolutionary interdependency. However, she takes a step further and uses posthuman theory to "contest(s) the arrogance of anthropocentrism and the 'exceptionalism' of the Human as a transcendental category" (Braidotti, 2013, 66), which is a part(icularly stark critique against Haraway's human-enmeshed cyborg. Braidotti insists that Haraway's cyborg not only stays attached to the

⁶ th.e po;stb,od:y

the de-tethered : dis-organ-ized

dis-entangled + re-enmeshed

remains of the

post human post body...

human and its “exceptionalism”, but manifests itself through the imagery of specifically white female bodies. Braidotti searches for more than specific bodies within a natureculture, human-centered enmeshment; her quest looks for the non-anthropocentric, unifying principle within it. She argues that natureculture, or the nature/culture continuum, must hold a common denominator for all living bodies, regardless of gender, color or species. She terms this unifying principle, *zoé*.

Braidotti’s *zoé* is “the vital, self-organizing and yet non-naturalistic structure of living matter itself” (Braidotti, 2013, 2). If I examine *zoé* through the po;stb,od:y, then the “non-naturalistic structure” dis-integrates into, moves beyond and is untethered to its structure as living matter. If “*zoé* (is) the dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself... the transversal force that cuts across and reconnects previously segregated species, categories and domains” (Braidotti, 2013, 60), then *zoé* needs to be taken out of the realm of noun/subject/body and into the realm of adjective and verb, expression and movement. Relieved of its “self-organizing” body, which “cuts across and reconnects,” *zoé* could move and relate in other bodiless ways. The po;stb,od:y *zoé*, then, is not a body of life, with body-based ways of being and moving, but needs to be envisioned as an intra-relational expression and a micromovement. The po;stb,od:y *zoé* as micromovements that intra-relate fragments further into⁷

This academic text with lexicon entries is neither an academic text with lexicon entries, nor red *[as.blo.od.the.un.der.side.of.t.he.skin.ex.po.sed.all.sur.fa.ce. are.as.of.the.pla.cen.ta.t.he.ulti.ma.te.in.tern.al.whi.ch.re.pels.wh.en.ex.pel.led.thi.s.re.d.is.like.th.at.wh.ich.wo.m.e.n.bl.ee.d.e.ach.mon.th.i.ron.plas.ma.ti.ss.ue.no.t.fr.om.vi.o.le.n.ce]* nor a box, yet it attempts to subvert all ideas of internal and external while simultaneously ebbing and flowing. It absorbs and vomits, consumes and expels bodies, post bodies and the po;stb,od:y. It swallows the binary, its contrary and its in-between by considering that which frames each

⁷ *liveness*

is a cyborg, near the blurry edges of the cyclone, against the horizon, observing how her body, in breaking apart, begins to be imperceptible. Her awareness separates from her senses and her thoughts from her organs. She listens as the light switches off, sees sound pulse, feels words disjoining into alpha and ink, iris-eye to iris-flower. The space in and around her is illimitable yet palpable as each fragment; travels; emanates. Liveness = the space of movement + expression.

body (and) each prefix to be imperceptible boundaries through which the ins, the exs, the posts; the nons, uns, isms, outs; the nesses and their bo:d.ies can exist fully in fragment;ed;ness; as parts which remain parts, like the debris floating in the swollen river after it has flooded the houses, factories, forests and swamps. The debris is part of the river which is part of a complex underground waterway, intra-relating with parts of springs, lakes, oceans, clouds; two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen, and many parts spinal, photosynthetic and coldblooded bodies. As a part(icular body of water, the river collects and carries, destroys and drowns, overlaps and re-organ-izes the parts of parts while itself remains parts (of) parts (Neimanis, 2017):

all these moldable, light-refracted fragments intra+relate in micro+movements with all other fragments causing a shift in perspective(the red box sustaining the cyclone-hole is itself placed within a red box containing a cyclone↔hole to under-go and over-come fragmentation.

The fragments spark as they fragment further and ignite as they meet and $\frac{\text{lap}}{\text{over}}$: the endless space sustains their micro+move+ments and pulses with intra+relation+ality - liveness of th.e po;stb,od:y do.es.n't end, because liveness \neq end, but continues as an im.per.cepti.bl.epo.tenti.al

to approach <<

among other things !

an equation :

$$\text{red box(po; stb, od: y)} \sqrt{\frac{\text{micro + move + ment + intra + relation + ality} \leftrightarrow \text{live + ness}}{\text{nacu alture}}} \quad (\text{fragmentation})^n$$

$$= \text{empathy}^8$$

⁸ empathy

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