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# Introduction

*Maaïke Bleeker*

In his classic 1947 ethnography of New Caledonia, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in a Melanesian World*, Maurice Leenhardt reports on a conversation between himself and an elderly indigenous philosopher regarding the impact of European civilization on the cosmocentric world of the Canaques. Leenhardt suggested that the Europeans had introduced the notion of 'spirit' to indigenous thought. His interlocutor did not agree and remarked that on the contrary, they have 'always acted in accord with the spirit.' What the Europeans brought to the Canaques was the notion of body (Csordas in Weiss & Haber, 1999, p. 143). Of course, the Canaques had already been bodies; they existed as bodily beings before and after their 'discovery' by Europeans. However, the character of this existence is what was altered by 'discovery', and it is that alteration that is at stake in the difference of opinion to which Leenhardt's text testifies.

When discussing Leenhardt's observations, Thomas Csordas remarks that, for Leenhardt, the Canaque philosopher's remark is a startling pronouncement. It overturns a stereotypical presumption that the body is allied with nature, and that spirit belongs to the civilized. Quoting Leenhardt, Csordas interprets the philosopher's remark as follows:

[The body] had no existence of its own, nor specific name to distinguish it. It was only support. But henceforth the circumscription of the physical being is completed, making possible its objectification. The idea of a human body becomes explicit. The discovery leads forthwith to a discrimination between body and the mythic world. (Weiss & Haber, 1999, p. 143)

The Canaques became body through European intervention. It is only with the arrival of European civilization that 'the human body becomes explicit', which involved the objectification of the body. For Csordas, this implies that the very possibility of individuation, or the creation of the individual that we understand as the core of the ideological structure of Western culture, has as its con-

dition of possibility a particular mode of inhabiting the world as a bodily being. This brings Csordas to an elaboration of a methodological distinction between the body as a biological, material entity and embodiment as an indeterminate methodological field ‘defined by perceptual experience and by mode of presence and engagement in the world’ (Csordas in Weiss & Haber, 1999, p. 145).

But isn’t this distinction precisely what is questioned by the Canaque philosopher? It presupposes that ‘bringing the body to the Canaques’ involved making them aware of something they already were but of which, prior to the arrival of European civilization, they were not aware. This seems to confirm Leenhardt’s idea that what the Europeans brought was ‘spirit’, or the spiritual capacity to conceive of themselves and the world (including their bodies) in new ways. The Canaque philosopher, however, argues that the Europeans brought ‘body’, not spirit. In equating body with matter and nature, and opposing body (defined as involving perceptual experience and engagement in the world) to embodiment, what is overlooked is the cultural character of the material and biological body; how this biological body ‘matters’ according to culturally specific parameters. And how the concept of the body as matter distinguished from spirit is an invention of European civilization, an invention they brought to the Canaques.<sup>1</sup>

In his seminal *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (1995), Jonathan Sawday argues that it is the invention of the anatomical body, understood as the material basis of our existence, that provokes, as a psychological consequence of this body, the coming into being of modern subjectivity. The anatomization of the body in early modernity was part and parcel of the development of Cartesian subjectivity as the powerful spirit or ‘ghost’ in the machine. Sawday describes how this was accompanied, in fact made possible, by the deployment of a new language with which to describe the body’s interior. Nowadays, this language is primarily associated with the post-Cartesian formulation of the body as a machine. But, Sawday observes:

[t]o the natural philosophers of the earlier seventeenth century, it was not a mechanistic structure that they first encountered as they embarked upon the project of unraveling the body’s recesses. Rather, they found themselves wandering within a geographical entity. The body was territory, an (yet) undiscovered country, a location which demanded from its explorers skills which seemed analogous to those displayed by the heroic voyagers across the terrestrial globe. (Sawday, 1995, p. 23)

During this first phase of the development of the modern understanding of the body, anatomists, like Columbian explorers, ‘dotted their names, like place names on a map, over the terrain which they encountered.’ Sawday explains:

In their voyages, they expressed the intersection of the body and the world at every point, claiming for the body an affinity with the complex design of the universe. This congruence equated scientific endeavour with the triumphant discoveries of the explorers, cartographers, navigators and early colonialists. And in the production of a new map of the body, a new figure was also to be glimpsed – the scientist as the heroic voyager and intrepid discoverer. The body was a remote and strange terrain into which the discoverer voyaged. (Sawday, 1995, pp. 23-24)

When the body was opened, it was alien territory into which the scientist journeyed. This sense of the body as alien to the sensibility that inhabited it, provided the material for the construction of the natural philosopher as the heroic explorer, the civilizing force within the boundaries of the natural body. His task was to voyage within the body to reveal its secrets. Once discovered, the body-landscape could be harnessed to the service of its owner. This process, according to Sawday, was part of a larger process of 'dominion over nature' and was truly colonial, in that it reproduced the stages of discovery and exploitation simultaneously taking place within the context of the European encounter with the New World.

Like property, the body's bounds needed to be fixed, its dimensions properly measured, its resources charted. Its 'new' owner – which would eventually become the thinking process of the Cartesian *cogito* – had to know what it was that was owned before use could be made of it. (Sawday, 1995, p. 26)

Sawday thus explains how the process of colonization within the body's interior paved the way for the Cartesian machine body. He also shows that this involved much more than discovering and giving names to what was already there. In this process of colonization, the body and the world are actually produced as the savage, and the natural other of the mind, and of civilization. They are thus what precedes and is merely discovered. This invention is further perfected in the Cartesian image of the body as a machine operating according to the laws of mechanics. As a machine, the body became objectified and fully divided from the Cartesian subject. The result is paradoxical, to say the least. The division between the 'I' that thinks and the 'it' or body in which 'we' reside, turns the relationship between them into a question.

Sawday illuminates the intimate connection between the body of anatomy, the philosophical discourse of Western modernity, and a subject which, as Francis Barker (1995) puts it, 'is skeptical of its body and guilty of its sexuality; which is committed to writing and to the domination of the object world; but

one which is forever constrained to its own self-alienation and is conscious, in the end, of so very little' (Barker, 1995, p. vi). Like Barker, Sawday locates the emergence of this constellation, this 'historical fable' (Barker), in the anatomy theatres of the early Renaissance.

In the early modern period, a 'science' of the body had not yet emerged. Instead what was to become science – a seemingly discrete way of ordering the observation of the natural world – was at this stage no more than one method amongst many by which human knowledge was organized. Dissection, Sawday argues, played a crucial role in reorganizing the cultural 'map' of knowledge, and to understand its role involves acknowledging the two-sided nature of dissection. On the one hand, dissection is 'an insistence on the partition of something (or someone) which (or who) hitherto possessed their own unique organic integrity' (Sawday, 1995, p. 3). This aspect of dissection can be seen reflected in the ways in which the 'scientific revolution' of the Renaissance encouraged seemingly endless partitioning of the world and all that it contained. The pattern of all these different forms of division was derived from the human body. Therefore, Sawday argues, the body must lie at the very centre of our inquiry into what might be called the other side of this process of partitioning, which is how the world, including the body, is constructed, or given a concrete presence through dissection (Sawday, 1995, p. 3). The divisionary procedures of dissection are the other side of the unified sense of selfhood typical of the construction of modern individuality.

The popularity of anatomy, according to Sawday, cannot be understood solely from raising the ban on the formerly forbidden practice of dissection, nor simply as a result of the superior quality of the knowledge thus produced. Rather, the anatomical body is part and parcel of the development of modern individualism, and of the modern scientific world view. Dissection turns the body into a mute corporeal object, separated from and opposed to the Cartesian disembodied I/eye as the site of subjectivity, thought and knowledge. Additionally, the 'culture of dissection' (Sawday) marks the beginnings of what Michel Foucault has analyzed as the 'surveillance' of the body within regimes of judgment and punishment, as well as an early crystallization of the modern Western sense of interiority. The public dissections in the historical anatomy theatre mark the emergence of this constellation of ideas and practices underlying what became the dominant conception of the body, including prevailing notions of how the body can be known, and what it means to know. This inaugural moment was highly theatrical in character, and occurred in a theatrical space.

During the centuries that followed, this theatrical character disappeared from view, as theatre and theory drifted apart. New developments onstage, in contemporary theory as well as in philosophy, suggest the productivity of bringing theatre and theory back into the same room in order to explore alternative

conceptions emerging at the intersection of artistic practices and philosophical, theoretical and scientific ideas. Many artists use (or have used) performance, theatricality, staging, or re-enactment as means to challenge conceptions of the body as a mere object. They argue for a new understanding of the body as an agent actively involved in world-making and in the production of thought and knowledge. Sometimes, their work presents an explicit critique of the history of the anatomical body. In other cases the implications of their work can be read as an implicit commentary on the constellation of ideas and practices concerning bodies, thought and knowledge, neatly summarized in Sawday's notion of the 'culture of dissection'. This volume contains documentation on such artistic projects by Mike Tyler, Sasha Waltz, Ivana Müller, Glen Tetley, Marijs Boulogne, Eric Joris/CREW, Emil Hrvatin, Stefan Kunzmann, Isabelle Jenniches, and Renée Copraij. These performance documentations are presented alongside a series of theoretical reflections addressing the relationships between anatomy, theatre and the culture of dissection from a theoretical point of view.

In the historical anatomy theatre, the body is not only demonstrated but also performed. Anatomy involves cutting into bodies, studying their interiors, and making visualizations of what is inside. Yes, but anatomy does more. Anatomy performs constative acts that produce knowledge by means of a public demonstration of 'how it is' with the body. This demonstration is what Mieke Bal (1996) has termed a 'gesture of exposing' that involves the authority of a person who knows (epistemic authority), who points to bodies and seemingly says 'Look, that is how it is'. These constative acts are constructed according to a logic that finds its theatrical expression in the *mise en scène* of the historical anatomy theatre, as well as in the composition of the painted anatomy lessons by Rembrandt van Rijn, among others.

Analogous to speech acts, these constative acts of producing the body 'as it is' can be analyzed in terms of three different positions, or persons, involved. The first person speaking is the anatomist, demonstrating the body to an audience. The audience takes the position of the second person, the one addressed. The body demonstrated to this audience is the third person, the one who is talked about, but not speaking him- or herself. This third person is dead, a mute object there to prove the authority of the anatomist.

As Bal points out, the success or failure of expository activity is not a measure of what one person 'wants to say' but of what a community and its subjects think, feel or experience to be the consequences of the exposition (Bal, 1996, p. 8). In order to understand the implications of the ways in which bodies matter in and through the cultural performances that produce them, it is necessary to consider how the body is discursively installed as ontological. José van Dijck ('Digital Cadavers and Virtual Dissection') demonstrates how, at this point, the explicit theatrical character of the historical anatomy theatre allows for a per-

spective on late twentieth-century visualizations of the anatomical body in the *Visible Human Project*. Van Dijck elucidates how current practices of compiling and disseminating digital body data reflect and construct persistent cultural norms involving age, gender, spectacle, identity, transparency and crime and punishment, cultural norms that can be traced back to the public dissections in the Renaissance anatomy theatres.

Ian Maxwell (“Who Were You?": The Visible and the Visceral') further elaborates one particular aspect of the relationship between the public dissections in the historical anatomy theatres and contemporary practices, namely the complex intertwining of science, education and entertainment. Following Jane Goodall (2002), he argues that the performances in the historical anatomy theatre were a forum in which scientific debates of the day were played out both in the imaginations and visceral responses of popular audiences. With respect to these historical performances, Maxwell observes a tension between ideas about visibility (through which human bodies yield knowledge in an aestheticized, putatively democratized display) and an idea about alternative, perhaps coexisting, if challenging, knowledge derived from more tangible, performative, and embodied graspings of those same bodies. This brings him to a critical evaluation of the relationship between public dissections in the historical anatomy theatre and Gunther von Hagens's present-day re-enactments of such demonstrations in his television series *Anatomy for Beginners*.

Von Hagens explicitly inscribes his project in the history of the Renaissance anatomy theatres. Not only does his performance in *Anatomy for Beginners* recall the public anatomy lessons of the Renaissance, in 2002 Von Hagens staged the first public autopsy in 170 years. The autopsy was performed in a former brewery in London, under a copy of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp*. In Von Hagens's exhibition *Body Worlds*, plastinated human bodies are staged next to enlarged images from Renaissance anatomical atlases. Several of the figures are in poses that correspond to the bodies depicted in these images. In a promotional video accompanying his exhibition, Von Hagens argues that the historical anatomists of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance knew the power of aesthetics to reach and teach their audiences. Not only did they perform their work in the often elaborately decorated setting of anatomy theatres, they also worked with artists to produce representations of their anatomy lessons as well as images and atlases in which the anatomical understanding of the human body was demonstrated. In the course of time, however, the connection between art and science got lost as representations of the human body in anatomy and medicine became more and more 'objective'. As a result, Von Hagens argues, people are no longer able to relate these images to their personal experience. With *Body Worlds*, Von Hagens promotes a return to the early stages of anatomy, and an undoing of this alienation through 'Anatomy that is Alive.'



Von Hagens certainly knows how to reach his audience. His exhibitions draw huge crowds of visitors all over the world. His work also raises many questions, for example concerning the ethical implications of using human body material. Other issues include the normative character of what his exhibition presents as ‘the human body’ and the ways in which his method of preserving and staging the body obscures differences and erases prominent features of embodied presence like fat, skin, fluids and hair. The result is a sterile athletic body of unspecified race and without traces of personal history except from injuries and medical procedures like artificial knees, moments that testify to the marvels of medical technology, capable of competition with Creation.

In the promotional video and in related texts, Von Hagens argues that he is not universalizing, but rather that his way of showing human figures makes visible the individuality of each person beneath the skin.<sup>2</sup> No body is similar. Yet, his project erases the connection with the histories that might have made (and once did make) these differences meaningful. Von Hagens’s project stages difference as variations on a universal standard, thus confirming the status of the body of anatomy as a universal and an ahistorical given. Made to look like the historical images exhibited next to them, these plastinated bodies serve as proof of the knowledge and understanding handed down to us by historical tradition, a tradition in which it is the dead body that is used to teach us about living ones. So much for anatomy that is alive.

Karen Ingham (‘The Anatomy Lesson of Professor Moxham’) also points to the ways in which the historical anatomy theatre, far from being a relic of the past, is flourishing under new surgical and digital façades. She too argues for the importance of renewed collaboration between artists and scientists. Unlike Von Hagens, however, she demonstrates how such collaboration may actually serve to revitalize the allegorical potential of what she terms *anatomo-art*. The architecture and metaphysics of the anatomy theatre influenced and continue to influence the way the *anatomo-clinical* body is located within hierarchies of power and surveillance. These hierarchies are the subject of artworks which turn the anatomy lesson into lessons that provoke, stimulate and question the very notion of what it is to be human. Such critical gestures undermine the claim to truth by the constative gesture of which the historical anatomy theatre presents a spatial metaphor, precisely by exposing the construction of this gesture.

This complicated relationship between the theatre of anatomy and the truth claim performed by it is also the subject of Gianna Bouchard’s “‘Be not faithless but believing’: Illusion and Doubt in the Anatomy Theatre.’ The corpse dissected within the theatre of anatomy, she argues, is fundamentally a pedagogical prop, utilized by medical science to educate and elucidate through elaboration and proof. In the anatomy theatre, this proof is provided by means of acts of persuasion and demonstration that are staged to deliver truth but are nev-



ertheless embedded within structures of illusion. Bouchard engages with the construction of such acts of persuasion through a reading of, on the one hand, Caravaggio's painting *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1603) and, on the other, Romeo Castellucci's version of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (2001). In both, bodies are definable as props in the sense that they may be read as theatrical objects with material presence in the moment of performance or display. In both, the body is acted upon and interrogated in a way that subverts and destabilizes the realism of anatomical science as a non-illusionary field of knowledge, instead animating more doubt.

Anja Klöck ('Of Dissection and Technologies of Culture (in Actor Training Programs – an Example from 1960s West Germany)') also engages with the relation between theatrical staging, the truth claim performed within and by this staging, and Renaissance practices of producing truthful representations of the human body. She demonstrates how residual fractures of the 'culture of dissection' have played out on the bodies of actors and actresses since then. Focusing especially on actor training programs in 1960s Germany, she shows how the actor's body becomes the site wherein the border between the externally perceivable social order and the internally concealed and possibly unordered aspects of being is explored and negotiated.

The relationship between truth, spectatorship, and the theatre is also the subject of Pannill Camp's 'Ocular Anatomy, Chiasm and Theatre Architecture as a Material Phenomenology in Early Modern Europe'. Whereas Bouchard and Klöck focus on the ways in which bodies are staged in order to deliver proof of the truth, Camp draws attention to the theatrical architecture constitutive of such proof. He observes remarkable structural similarities between the structure of modes of thought typical of Husserlian phenomenology and certain spatial attributes of theatre architecture in the Renaissance and Modern eras. He traces the relationship between this phenomenological mode of thought and a series of early modern theatre buildings that manifest clear isomorphic resonances with the human eye. Within this logic, the stage appears as a continuity that divides. This technology enables us to encounter the present, but in such a way as to separate it from ourselves.

With his analysis, Camp directs attention to the other bodies involved in the production of (anatomical) knowledge and demonstrates how the need to account for the role of these bodies in observing and recognizing phenomenological truths resulted in the incorporation of a theatrical model in which seeing is equated with knowing. My own contribution ('Martin, Massumi, and The Matrix') also engages with this relationship between the architecture of the theatre and modes of thinking, approaching this relationship from the question of movement. The theatrical architecture of Husserlian phenomenology involves a bracketing of movement, reducing transformation and change to successions

of static moments. The practice of bracketing stages a stable relationship between an objective world and a stable point of view, a position from which the world can be defined by means of pinning isolated phenomena down on the grid of culturally constructed significations. This is what Massumi terms the problem of positionality. Positionality involves a denial of movement/sensation as constitutive of the way in which the world appears to us as an object of cognitive perception. These perceptual-cognitive practices are the subject of my text, and I approach them through, on the one hand, John Martin's *Introduction to the Dance* (1939) and on the other Neo's introduction to Kung Fu in *The Matrix*, both examples read through Massumi's distinction between mirror vision and movement vision.

Susan Foster in her "Where Are You Now?": Locating the Body in Contemporary Performance' further historicizes the relationship between the static architecture of theatre and ways of knowing the world. She points out that the reorganization of the cultural map of knowledge in the early modern period not only involves profound transformations in how the world is known but also manifests itself in decisive changes in the practice of mapping. These changes coincide with a new kinaesthetic awareness of one's positionality in the world. Whereas earlier techniques had required either the reader or the map to move continually, new cartographic techniques, such as Mercator's implementation of a horizontal and a vertical grid to contain and locate the world's land masses, privileged the single and stationary subject. Foster compares the ways that bodies discerned their locatedness in the world prior to the establishment of the anatomical subject with current trends in mapping and orienting by means of the Global Positioning System and the mobile phone. She traces the implications of these developments for contemporary performance practices through a reading of Rimini Protokoll's *Call Cutta* (2004).

Sally Jane Norman ('Anatomies of Live Art') continues this exploration of the relationship between turn-of-the-century information and communication technologies, new conceptions of the body, and corresponding theatre architectures. She observes that our constant invention of machines and interactive processes to multiply and extend bodily relations to the world can be read in parallel transformations of theatre architectures that turn the theatre into a place for staging the peculiar cut-ups or splicings of space, time, persona, and more or less embodied presence afforded by networks. Technologies linking previously isolated moments and places alter our sense of presence and embodiment essential to the live art of the theatre and allow for hybrid relations between human and electromechanical and informational resources. The theatre offers ideal ground for exploring fringe zones between the natural and the artificial, between living and inanimate phenomena, and between humans and other autonomous evolving creatures.

Architectures that have marked theatre history since the Renaissance reflect the anatomy of the body politic that they convene and contain. This body politic and its ethical implications are the subject of the three remaining contributions to this volume. In 'Restaging the Monstrous', Bojana Kunst points out how the 'culture of dissection' has been instrumental in turning the monstrous – as that which does not fit within scientific, social or political categories – into a kind of quasi-object, a perversion of the natural order of things, as well as a perversion of authority. From having been an object of scientific attention, the monstrous (pretending to be something it is not and with its excessive presence disturbing the given order of things) now becomes a player on the political stage. Kunst traces the consequences of this change in the status of the monstrous, and connects those consequences to the present situation. Today, the divisions between life and death, human and non-human, are created by expelling the human out of the human body, leaving that inert life to the mercy of the contemporary flaws of political and corporative ownership. The question is how, within this situation, theatre might contribute to disclosing the generative potentiality of the monstrous while still avoiding becoming an empty spectacle.

Michal Kobiálka ('Delirium of the Flesh: "All the Dead Voices" in the Space of the Now') argues this potential of the theatre is to be found in the ways in which it can create a space (literally and metaphorically) in which categories and concepts are wrested from the use-value and invoke what Lyotard calls 'the unrepresentable in presentation itself'. Kobiálka cites how the Renaissance 'culture of dissection' divided the bodies (or their parts) into those that mattered or did not matter, turning those that did matter into complete and rational objects delimited by particular political and social coding, corporeal investigations and ideological structures. This process is taken further in the work of many theorists and philosophers, reducing the body to the ways in which it is inscribed by social meaning, and assigned psychical or indexical significance. Making bodies visible or readable is to gloss over that moment when something happens which cannot be fully folded into the known. What happens when the very materiality, the fidgety 'liveness' of the flesh, or the lack thereof, disrupts this coding? Such moments perturb the order of things in the space of the now.

Rachel Fensham, in 'Operating Theatres: Body-bits and a Post-apartheid Aesthetics', observes a close connection between the history of modern states (and their body politics) and a specular regime based on dissection. She suggests that political theatre in this globalized and postcolonial phase of modernity has to be one of body parts, not seen as intensely physical totalities, but rather as bits that provide evidence of our current non-human history. The unintelligibility of these organs without bodies (Žižek) needs a theatre that sutures the bits together again. She finds such theatre in a staging of Monteverdi's 1640 opera *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* by the Handspring Puppet Company, in associa-

tion with visual artist William Kentridge. This puppet-opera is set in a scale replica of Vesalius's anatomy theatre, complete with mortuary table and raked seating. In this theatre, Ulysses's journey is represented as a kind of postoperative delirium endured by the modern, white subject.

Organs without bodies, the delirium of the flesh perturbing the order of things in the space of the now, Ulysses returning to Vesalius's anatomy theatre, hybrid relations between human and electromechanical and informational resources, anatomo-art and new kinaesthetic awareness: do these fragments begin to conjure the outline of a new conjunction of themes and powers, a transformation of the historical fable at the foundation of our epoch, a transformation that may be ours to live?

## Notes

- 1 See for a further elaboration of this example my 'Of Passing and Other Cures: Arjan Ederveen's Born in the Wrong Body and the Cultural Construction of Essentialism'. In: Murat Aydemir (ed.), *Indiscretions: At the Intersection of Postcolonial and Queer Theory*. Amsterdam, 2008.
- 2 See for example the promotional video *Anatomy Art. Fascination Beneath the Surface. A Tour Through the Exhibition*, and Gunther von Hagens and Angelina Whalley, *Prof. Gunther von Hagens' Anatomy Art: Fascination Beneath The Surface. Catalogue on the Exhibition*. Heidelberg, 2000.

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