

BODY, COMMODITY, TEXT

Studies of Objectifying Practice

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JEAN COMAROFF, AND JUDITH FARQUHAR

BEYOND THE BODY PROPER

Reading the Anthropology of Material Life

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INTRODUCTION

JUDITH FARQUHAR

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In the last decades of the twentieth century, the topic of the body became almost conventional in the human sciences. In fields ranging from anthropology to literary studies, history to political science, researchers expanded the classical social science concern with either minds or bodies, meanings or behaviors, individual bodies or the body of the social to focus on a new hybrid terrain, that of the lived body. Seen as contingent formations of space, time, and materiality, lived bodies have begun to be comprehended as assemblages of practices, discourses, images, institutional arrangements, and specific places and projects. There has been a proliferation of fascinating empirical studies multiplying the kinds of bodies that can be perceived and widening the scholarly vision of human capacities.¹

This emergence of the lived body was not entirely unprecedented. Phenomenological philosophy had long explored problems of embodiment—a term that emphasizes process and contingency—and offered a dynamic understanding of human being as inseparable from a universal human physicality existing within complex fields of influence.² The related philosophical traditions of vitalism and pragmatism also sought to understand material life beyond the dualities of mind and body, and some of the key works in these orientations are now being productively reread.³ These intellectual movements resisted modernist tendencies to excise subjectivity and experience from material bodies and worlds, idealizing them for the disciplinary attention of humanists and social scientists.

Even so, most of social science continued for a long time to treat bodies as the naturalized, essentially passive atoms or building blocks of society. The body offered to social thought by nineteenth- and twentieth-century biomedical specialties, though a complex materiality in its own right, was easily appropriated in social thought as a capsule of nature that could be inhabited, but not altered, by culture (see part I). The classic problematic of the relations between individual and society that still provides analytic tools for most of the social

sciences seems to require a “proper” body as the unit of individuality. This body proper, the unit that supports the individual from which societies are apparently assembled, has been treated as a skin-bounded, rights-bearing, communicating, experience-collecting, biomechanical entity. Our common sense has attributed basic needs to this discrete body along with fixed gender characteristics. In law it has been seen as the only possible basis for the citizen’s responsibility to act and to choose. In the humanities it was long treated as the locus of an originary consciousness that is expressed in voice, image, and action.⁴ However contradictory this complex hybrid body may seem, its naturalness and normality tend to be reinforced by the operations of common knowledge and standard operating procedure in many contemporary spheres of activity.

Recent scholarship in the human sciences, led perhaps by gender, ethnic, and rights activism in postmodern popular culture, has turned away from the commonsense body, however, learning to perceive more dynamic, intersubjective, and plural human experiences of carnality that can no longer be referenced by the singular term *the body*. It is difficult, however, to characterize one object of knowledge around which new research has been organized. What has emerged from interest in the human body, as it is lived, is a multiplicity of bodies, inviting a great many disciplinary points of view and modes of interpretation. If bodies and lives are historically contingent, deeply informed by culture, discourse, and the political, then they cannot be summed up in any one kind of narrative. There is no clear common ground, no simple foundation in physical human nature. One thing is clear, however: this is no longer the body that stands in a tidy contrastive relationship with the mind. Even if a clean distinction between body and mind was ever possible (and thoughtful rereading of the scholarly record suggests that it was not)⁵, what is meant by *the body* today is historically variable, suffused with discourses, thoroughly mindful in its practice.⁶ This is not a natural self-contained entity organized by mechanically functioning internal organs; it is not the site of will and personality; it is not the source of needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Or at least, it is not solely or completely any of these things. What the body is, however, cannot be simply stated or presumed in theory on the basis of our own historically located and spatially restricted experience. To make bodies a topic for anthropological, humanistic, sociological, and historical research is to ask how human life can be and has been constructed, imagined, subjectively known—in short, lived.

This book introduces a stellar group of writings that exemplify these changes. Ranging from classic works of social theory, history, and ethnogra-

phy to more recent explorations of historical and cultural variations in lived embodiment, forty-seven articles and book excerpts are presented here for (re)reading. Each of these works in some way challenges the taken-for-granted situations in which moderns of the Eurocentric world have lived, in certain respects unthinkingly, for a long time. Both in this introduction and in prefatory notes for each of the book’s nine parts, we draw out the potential of these humanities and social science approaches to embodiment for expanding understanding of human experience. Here the materialism of Karl Marx, with his emphasis on actual practical activity, joins with a structuralist reading of bodily symbols by Terence Turner in “The Social Skin.” Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical insights on the “lived-through” world of the body, beyond the reductive constructs of formal knowledge, inform the comparative history of the senses offered by Shigehisa Kuriyama in his article on Greek and Chinese pulse taking. The temporal bodies of Nuer pastoralists are compared with those of early modern English workers, and Chinese bodies are rendered processual through attention to breath and flavor. Bodies engaged in walking, birthing, art making, sexual foreplay, confessing fantasies, dressing, healing, reading, displaying themselves and being displayed are addressed in these readings. The articles and excerpts included here speak to each other and to the most influential trends in the human sciences in many surprising ways. Taken together, they lead us far beyond the individualist, positivist, and utilitarian presumptions that have thus far dominated our capacity to think about embodiment.

This scholarship challenges a number of classic postulates about human nature. Even putative universal needs for sex and food can be recast as contingent and unpredictable forms of desire, as Judith Farquhar’s study of bodily life in postsocialist China has shown.⁷ The traditional fixities of social science—invariant symptoms of illness,⁸ rational self-interest, the priority of the economic in the structuring of motives⁹—have returned as problems to be explained rather than starting points to be assumed. As anthropology and other human sciences have challenged sociological and biological universals, new “local” bodies have become visible, offering a diverse history and geography of human material Being. Some of these conceptions are already influential in anthropology and science studies: Donna Haraway’s widely adopted notion of the cyborg has introduced a local body that is familiar in our lives but transgressive of our linguistic distinctions between machines and humans, objects and subjects.¹⁰ A hybrid of human and machine, flesh and information, the cyborg is a desiring and displaying creature of science fiction who eventually comes to stand for the normal body in the new millennium. Margaret Lock’s notion of local biologies, moreover, an idea that demanded attention in her

study of experiences of midlife in North America and Japan, has proven productive in medical anthropology. She and other researchers have begun to investigate whole fields of material practice—eating, aging, medical procedures, daily exertions, modes of attention, forms of subjectivity—as producing contingent forms of embodiment. Cyborgs and local biologies are neither purely mental nor purely physical. Rather they are evolving and historical forms of life that are multiple and material at once, refusing all biological reductions and proposing a new politics that seeks solidarity among bodies while refusing to resort to commonsense presumptions about universal bodies or human nature.

The relatively recent field of science studies has also concerned itself with multiple embodiments, finding cultural significance in high-tech practices that are situated near the heart of social life in contemporary society. Emerging technologies ranging from assisted reproduction to organ transplantation produce bodies that are both novel and “normal.” Among the most powerful of such technologies are those of molecular genetics, a now-dominant paradigm that has deeply influenced our senses of ourselves in both biomedicine and the popular imagination.¹¹ One consequence of genetic testing and screening is that individual genomes are transformed into omens of future ill health, resulting in a new category of people, the presymptomatically ill. This is a diagnosis that may eventually include us all. The lived body is made, in effect, into a ticking time bomb. Popular appropriations of genetics thus increasingly find hope and fatality in a coded and mapped body. This is an occasion for all manner of medical and lay interpretations, as essays included in part IX of this volume attest. The body coded and decoded by genetics becomes one of many examples in this book in which embodiment must be seen as not just structural but temporal, not just an objective presence but a moment in a process that is thoroughly social and historical and hence diverse.

THE CATEGORY OF THE BODY IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY HUMAN SCIENCES

A perusal of the literature of the humanities and social sciences published before the latter part of the twentieth century reveals that discussion about the lived body was scant.¹² This was due in large part to an unquestioned acceptance of the body proper. The bounded physical body was usually bracketed and set aside because it fell “naturally” into the domain of the biological sciences. Nevertheless, as the extract by Friedrich Engels that we have selected shows, social thinkers influenced by Charles Darwin were interested

in the practical imperatives implied by the evolution of human anatomy. Nineteenth-century biology in general is a rich source of descriptions of the proper body in action. Research of the kind undertaken by Darwin on the expression of emotions and by Cesare Lombroso on criminal types, for example, reveals both the natural science interest in physical variation at the time and the universalizing and normalizing powers of an increasingly hegemonic biomedical worldview.¹³ The most extreme form of this natural science of body variations culminated in the eugenic practices of the early twentieth century;¹⁴ arguably social science has continued to collaborate with biomedicine to smuggle normative concerns with race, intelligence, and beauty into policy, clinical practice, and, of course, the desires of biomedicine’s so-called consumers.

In contrast to these nineteenth- and twentieth-century biologizing projects, the selections that appear in part I of this book under the title “An Emergent Canon,” all of which have become classics in anthropology, show how embodied individuals are thoroughly social. These works tend to draw from a Durkheimian tradition in the social sciences, in that they emphasize the irreducibility of social phenomena to the ends pursued by individuals. In this tradition the body is understood as the “first and most natural tool of man,” a carnal template that furnishes the mind with marvelous, irresistible objects and relations, a source of endless symbolic and metaphorical analogies.¹⁵ The most extended social reading of the natural body has been the widely influential work of Mary Douglas.¹⁶ She shows how bodily analogies are utilized in both secular life and sacred events to make the dominant ordering of the social world appear to be natural. The body–society analogy, drawn on in virtually every culture it would seem, provides building blocks for enforcing moral order, as the selections by Robert Hertz, Marcel Granet, and Victor Turner in part I make clear. By focusing on bodies as active, intentional, and signifying forms of cultural life, Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and their anthropological descendants opened the construct of the natural individual to sociological analysis.

Analyses of metaphoric uses of natural symbols in producing and reproducing the social order have resulted in a substantial literature on the homologous relationships commonly found among physical topography, domestic architecture, social arrangements, deportment, parts of the body, and sexual behavior. Although at first glance it appears that such cultural homologies emphasize holism, inclusion, and unity, closer scrutiny reveals that more often than not hierarchies, difference, and exclusion are commonly naturalized as part of what comes to be understood as the only just and appropriate way to

conduct daily life. The essay by Terence Turner, for example, is one of a genre that shows how social categories are literally inscribed on and into the body through precepts about the treatment of body fluids and the appropriate use of hairstyles, ornamentation, cosmetics, clothing, and so on. An oft-cited structural analysis by Pierre Bourdieu of the Kabyle (North Africa) house demonstrates the extent to which gender difference and asymmetry can penetrate every aspect of quotidian space and time. And Victor Turner's analyses of "social dramas" and their bodily correlates in healing have given anthropology some of its best examples of chronic local-level conflicts.¹⁷ However, symbolic and structuralist anthropological methods tend to see culturally specific forms of daily life as affecting rather invariant or even abstract bodies. Though mundane practices are often noted, the multiple, variable lived body does not form part of the discussion—arguments move from the material body as being good to think with, a resource for symbolic language, directly to the social and moral order. Mauss and Victor Turner are partial exceptions in that they rely on a psychologized individual as a vehicle for mediation between the body and society, thus opening a door to inner worlds of experience. Yet they too presume a somewhat ethnocentric "mind" or pattern of needs and motives inhabiting the body they describe.

In contrast to writers who follow the Durkheimian tradition and who are occupied above all with social worlds and moral order, the phenomenological movement that took root in postwar France strives to overcome mind/body and subject/object dualisms. The work of Merleau-Ponty has become emblematic in this respect. (See the excerpt from *The Phenomenology of Perception* in this volume.) Others as well have been influential in Continental philosophy, maintaining a materialist tradition somewhat distinct from twentieth-century debates among Marxists and political economists.¹⁸ In his book *Le Mystère de l'être* (1997), for example, Gabriel Marcel argues that the body, "my body," is always immediately present in experience.¹⁹ To *have* a body means inevitably that one is embodied; consciousness can exist only as mediated through experienced embodiment. The body is never, therefore, simply a physical object but rather an embodiment of consciousness and the site where intention, meaning, and all practice originate. This phenomenological approach tends to center being on a kind of presence (and temporal present) that can be made conscious but is most often taken for granted.²⁰ Embodiment therefore seems to escape, at least in part, symbolization and discourse. As a result, the lived body as understood by Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists stands in strong contrast to the approach of writers who work in the Durkheimian vein. Because its focus is on a body presumed to be universal and

individual, depicted from the point of view of the subject, embodiment in this tradition can lack both historical depth and sociological content. The invocation of phenomenology in history and ethnography is thus as often a limitation as an interpretive opportunity for the human sciences.

Bourdieu drew in part on phenomenology in the early 1970s to counter what he understood as a misplaced objectivity on the part of French structuralists, in particular Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was concerned above all with modeling the mental representations that he believed informed, cemented, and ordered social institutions.²¹ Bourdieu by contrast showed that practical activity, material objects, and daily life could not be understood simply as reflections or expressions of structures of mind. Using a renovated understanding of Mauss's concept of *habitus*, Bourdieu's approach focuses on relatively inarticulate bodily practices, but he moves away from phenomenology as he engages explicitly with everyday life as it is acted out socially. Along with Michel de Certeau and Norbert Elias, Bourdieu has had a pervasive influence on social scientists as they struggle to show the extent to which embodiment is itself social.²² His insistence on making practice—a thoroughly temporal and dynamic category—the foundation of his sociological analysis is a continuing inspiration to the anthropology of embodiment.²³ Bourdieu's turn from the body-mind divide, which kept biology and anatomy distinct from symbolism and cultural form, to empirical fields of practice has opened up a new arena for research on social life. For an anthropology of practice, the smallest gestures and the most taken-for-granted circumstances are infused with a historical and cultural significance.

Anthropology has a long tradition of drawing inspiration from neighboring fields, especially history and sociology. Contemporary social-cultural anthropology is also much indebted to recent theoretical advances in feminism as well as in literary and media studies. Perhaps most important, the anthropology of the body has taken inspiration from the work of Michel Foucault, focusing especially on his histories of madness, medicine, and imprisonment.²⁴ Foucault's accounts of the particular ways of speaking about and of disposing bodies within the institutions, built spaces, and communities of Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have provided a carnal and material dimension to the genesis of the modern individual. Foucault argues that the commonsense individual (discussed above) did not simply emerge by throwing off the shackles of a confining medieval past, learning after centuries of darkness to express its essential autonomy and originality; rather our very modern sense that the individual is a natural linkage of material body and "soul" came to be hegemonic only quite recently through the practical work

and writing of institutions of medicine and population management. Rather than reading *through* discourses to find underlying meanings, causes that can be posited, or essences that are expressed, Foucault demonstrated in his analysis of medical and welfare discourses that it is possible to learn from the explicit surfaces of the archive how social life changed its forms. His readings of often obscure historical documents show how both subjective and objective discursive practices changed in ways that are deeply consequential for the life of bodies. Foucault's method turned away from the earlier materialist histories (of, for example, the Annales school of historians) that privileged supposedly objective structures over discourse itself, and he also eschewed the idealist intellectual histories that privileged canonical theories and debates. In other words, insofar as the disciplines of the human sciences had organized their methods as either more mental or more bodily, he crafted a new, post-Cartesian historical field that no longer maintained a mind-body divide. His plane of analysis is precisely that which is now being sought out by the anthropology of the body. This is the domain of the taken for granted, the mundane records and routines that fill everyday life, the disciplinary protocols that quietly maintain the (historically contingent) normal (see especially parts II, IV, VII, and IX below). Contemporary research that goes beyond the body proper is thoroughly grounded in Foucault, and readers who do not yet know his work will do well to seek it out separately.

Cultural history has also been much influenced by Foucault, and there has been fruitful communication between cultural anthropology and cultural history. In the latter field, reflection on the methods that can open the lived past to historical analysis has led to innovative ways of reading archival materials. Many of the historical articles included in this volume sensitively explore embodied life beyond the traces found in surviving written and pictorial materials. (See Caroline Walker Bynum, Gregory Pflugfelder, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, Barbara Duden, and Shigehisa Kuriyama in this volume, for example.) This general approach became important as scholars sought to learn more about the history of difference—feminist history, history of sexualities, subaltern history—through an archive that had mostly represented the voice and the conditions of the literate and powerful. The gender historian Joan Scott has addressed the historiographic challenges posed by the new cultural history of differences in several discussions of the notion of experience.²⁵ She has shown that experience is a crucial category for researchers who go beyond normative history to document the occluded worlds of the relatively voiceless (women, workers, the colonized), yet she argues that experience has been evoked by historians in naive ways. Even many cultural historians, she sug-

gests, have treated a simple idea of experience as a foundation for empiricist histories, accumulating the evidence of the presumed experience of naturalized historical actors as additions to a growing archive of unproblematic facts. Scott counters this tendency by detailing the arguments of social and linguistic theorists that subjectivity—and thus experience and narrative accounts that claim the authority of experience—is always constructed in social practice. She shows that “experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* something that needs to be interpreted.” As she returns the category of experience from the speculations of philosophy to the work of history, Scott also reminds us of the important contributions of feminism to social theory and human sciences scholarship. It still bears pointing out that everywhere bodies are somehow gendered. Families, communities, and societies are crossed by inequalities that are often taken to be rooted in forms of embodiment; thus it was feminist scholars who perhaps most powerfully in the twentieth century forced a political anthropology of the body.²⁶

Scott's recasting of the problem of experience has important methodological implications for the human sciences. If we can find no natural invariants in bodily experience, we must continue to explore the shifting terrains presented by many modes of material life. Rather than taking (apparently) empirical bodies and (apparently) interior experience as a starting point (this is, we think, the central limitation of many phenomenological approaches), comparative scholarship in anthropology, history, and the humanities shows that the problem of the body can be read from many kinds of discourses, mundane practices, technologies, and relational networks. The bodies that come into being within these collective formations are social, political, subjective, objective, discursive, narrative, and material all at once. They are also culturally and historically specific, while at the same time mutable, offering many challenges to both scholarship and the everyday politics of a world compressed in time and space. As Haraway has persistently argued, all manner of hopeful alliances are possible once we have learned to see our worldly comrades with an expanded objectivity.²⁷

A turn toward embodied lifeworlds in some medical anthropology²⁸ as well as in feminist and political ethnography²⁹ has begun to generate important empirical research that adds to our perceptions of human possibilities. An “anthropology of the senses” has emerged to challenge a mentalist bias in symbolic anthropology, for example.³⁰ Literary attention to “the materiality of the text” and explorations of embodied practices of reading have supplemented more classically humanist forms of reading.³¹ Collections of “illness narratives” have appeared which mobilize narrative theories from philosophy

and literary criticism.³² Literary scholarship has thus made it increasingly implausible to separate the silent body from the expressive and articulate consciousness. Further, historical anthropologists have established important connections between political and bodily regimes³³ (see part V), while studies of popular culture have emphasized the extent to which bodily practices are contingent on particular gender and economic inequalities.³⁴ Perhaps most effectively of all, historians have demonstrated that the twentieth-century Euro-American body (diverse enough when many versions are attended to) is far from natural (see especially part III). The surprise or repulsion with which readers respond to descriptions of some medieval and early modern body practices and imagery makes this point clearly.³⁵ The body proper—that discrete, structured, individual myth of a European modernity—begins to disappear, to be replaced by an indeterminate site of natural-cultural processes that is full of possibilities and impossible to finally delimit. Not only is the body not singular, it is not very proper either.

A MATERIALISM OF LIVED BODIES

Perhaps what most distinguishes the anthropology of embodiment, and this collection of readings as well, from a more classic cultural anthropology is its commitment to materialist assumptions and methods in the study of cultural form. Yet we speak of materialism in a sense that is different from that of many other anthropologists. For some cultural anthropologists, *materialist* has been a negative epithet to be used against colleagues oriented to natural science methods and the positivist social sciences. Deep divides within anthropology and between its subdisciplines too often have sorted themselves out as debates between materialist and idealist habits of thought. Perhaps only Marxists have crossed this great divide with any success, but it is the rare Marxist anthropologist who departs from the economic sphere to consider other forms of materiality.

Some medical anthropologists use the term *materialism* negatively to express their discomfort with what they see as a biomedical reduction of human distress to structural-anatomic changes. They charge that medical materialism ignores the experience or even the humanity of patients, and they are often joined in this critique by health care workers. (Note especially the humanistic orientations of the “ethic of care” that has developed in nursing, itself an interesting site for locating nondualistic bodies.) But these critiques remain Cartesian in the sense that they tend to portray human ideals—mental phenomena—as violently reduced to the simplistic material level of a struc-

tural or mechanical body. By distinguishing human and subjective experiences from material and objective things, they continue to found their critique on a modernist humanism that fails to capture the life of bodies or even, we feel, the complexity of biomedical practice.

Symbolic anthropologists also remain Cartesian in relation to materialism. Their interpretations of ritual and cultural texts tend to dissolve the material world as they decode the concrete, seeking out underlying abstractions. Observable, material signifiers serve only to indicate abstract, ideal signifieds. This is another kind of ideal/material dualism, one which (as Jacques Derrida has shown) insistently privileges the ideal side of the semiotic dyad.³⁶ Though symbolic anthropological writing is replete with fascinating objects—from jaguars to wooden saints to red and white body paint—the analysis always leads us on to abstractions like social structure, cosmology, or the unconscious. These insistent efforts to stay on the culture side of the nature-culture divide, including approaches that emphasize the cultural constructedness of nature, have made it difficult to think about concrete existence and carnal life in any but reductionist terms.

The newer scholarship on the body in the human sciences, we believe, has advanced a new materialism for anthropology. With the assumptions of Cartesian common sense about bodies and minds, matter and spirit cleared away, it has been possible to approach actual forms of lived embodiment in the fields of practice in which they take form. Ethnographic and historical projects that read and delineate specific material-cultural (bodily) formations do much more than simply relativize cultures. The task only begins with a denaturalizing or “social constructionist” critique. Rather, this new empirical research opens a domain of human experience to the imagination that is at once subjective and objective, carnal and conscious, observable and legible. The problematic of perceiving bodily life in its actual empirical and material forms invites scholars to see social multiplicity more clearly and to adjust our actions more sensitively to the depths at which human Being varies. To make a topic of the body is to study cultural, natural, and historical variation in whole worlds.

Thus an anthropology and geography of space and place has combined environmental awareness with critical attention to the structured and structuring powers of built worlds over and within the bodies that live in them.³⁷ An ethnographically rich medical anthropology has had to address the messy and very concrete lives of sick people and their caretakers, critiquing the logic of both medicine and sociology with an insistence on understanding embodied practice itself.³⁸ Sociologists of bioscience and medical systems have also been very effective in showing how objects of medical concern—microbes, organs,

diseases—have their own genealogies and a linked array of powers that loop back into reality.³⁹ As we argued above, a literary criticism that attends to the materiality of texts, their circulation, and their embodied reception has embarked on exploratory and speculative technologies of reading, stepping back from the hermeneutic quest for ultimate or hidden meanings.⁴⁰ With actor-network theory in science studies, an understanding of networks made up of both human and nonhuman “actants” has emerged, presenting new questions for the human sciences about the concrete material linkages among bodies, texts, and things.⁴¹ All of these recent efforts could be said to be seeking a new style of materialism, neither reductive and economistic nor sealed off from the traditional humanistic concerns of signification, subjectivity, and ethics.

A materialist anthropology of embodiment is not really reinventing anthropology. It seeks only to indulge a widened curiosity about arenas of life that have previously been kept in the dark. It does not aim to displace either political economy or biological anthropology, nor does it seek to banish anthropologies of consciousness and meaning. The socially constructed formations and experiences it would describe are very real, and we predict that embodied readers will find much to recognize in the bodily lives of even those who are quite remote from them in time or space. However common the “bodies” of this anthropology may turn out to be, they cannot be seen as universal. By presenting them here, we hope to expand the ways we humans can imagine ourselves.

An expanded anthropology of embodiment, one with room for desires and microbes, significance and the taken-for-granted habitus, local biologies and transnational plagues, is needed and pertinent to contemporary scholarship and practical life. There is no shortage of sensitive and theoretically powerful writing that has already begun the task. A critical and ambitious rereading is now in order. Such a reading will not discard earlier concerns about bodily distinctions based on gender, ethnicity, and class, nor will it sideline the materiality of bodies; rather it can build on and further nuance the existing literature by challenging the givenness of many received categories, among which *the body* and *the mind* have too long held pride of place.

PATHS BEYOND THE BODY PROPER

The editors of this volume both came to read and write the anthropology of embodiment through their ethnographic and critical research in medical anthropology.

Judith Farquhar's first major project on the logic of practice in Chinese

medicine, based on field and library research in a “traditional” medical college in Guangzhou, China, in the 1980s, required her to acknowledge that a different body seemed to be at issue in Chinese medicine from the one presumed by modern biomedicine.⁴² In ancient and recrafted theories of traditional medicine as well as in the reported bodily experiences of patients and dinner companions discourses on embodiment proved easy to grasp and identify with—especially when speaking Chinese—yet they contained almost no reference to anatomical structures or scientifically verified substances. *Qi*, wind, and flavors were more salient to this body than muscles, intestines, and active ingredients in drugs. In later work, which moved outward from the world of medicine to that of popular culture, Farquhar continued to look for a processual body open to the constantly changing world as she explored the everyday life of urbanites in Beijing.⁴³ Even in this cosmopolitan city, where health education promotes all manner of globally recognized medical information, there are approaches to lived materiality that diverge deeply from what North Americans generally take for granted. In contemporary Chinese society the long, connected history of East Asian civilization is a constantly shifting presence, and all manner of published and broadcast materials offer resources for embodiment that challenge global common sense and cosmopolitan medical information. These resources flow through the experience of modern Beijingers in unique ways. Farquhar's current research on the way of cultivating life (*yangsheng*) in a Beijing neighborhood follows the routes of both traditional and global forms of embodiment and seeks to discover the historicity of bodies in several modes. Embodied memories of a dramatic modern history of revolution, reform, and globalization as well as practical appropriations of classical dance, martial arts, calligraphy, and medicine contribute to lives that combine many threads of history and discourse. By beginning with the everyday life of bodies, this is an anthropology that can lead anywhere except perhaps to the proper body of bourgeois common sense. Working for more than twenty years in China and reflecting for even longer on the foundations of her own experience as an American academic, Farquhar no longer believes that the body proper has ever existed anywhere.

Trained originally as a basic scientist, Margaret Lock had experiences in Japan while doing research in preparation for a Ph.D. in medical anthropology that were not dissimilar to those of Farquhar. While collecting ethnographic data in the 1970s in Kyoto clinics where East Asian medicine is practiced, she was struck by the facility with which practitioners and patients communicated in a discourse that made liberal use of such concepts as *ki* and blocked energy flows while at the same time drawing on the language of biomedicine. Many of

the practitioners in these clinics are medical doctors who, like their patients, themselves made use of biomedical services at times.⁴⁴ Without apparent conflict, practitioners and patients are able to conceptualize more than one kind of body, and pluralism in medical thought and practices was and is commonplace in Japan and, for that matter, in most parts of the world.⁴⁵ Lock's later work, a comparative project carried out in North America and Japan, focused on menopause. The differences in symptom reporting between Japanese and North American women could not be accounted for simply by resorting to an argument for historical and cultural construction. Recognition of the coproduction and interdependence of biology and culture to embodiment was key to this research, although neither biology nor culture was essentialized; both are fluid in time and through space.⁴⁶ In recent years Lock has carried out research on death, notably the condition legalized as brain death in order that organs for transplant can be procured from such living/dead entities. Once again comparative research in Japan and North America proved very useful in bringing to the fore the unexamined assumptions about these practices that are present in the dominant thinking in North America.⁴⁷ In her current research into molecular genetics and complex disease, in which Alzheimer's disease is her primary (elusive) object of study, Lock joins a rising number of social scientists who are observing the way in which genomics is steadily bringing about an end to simple deterministic arguments so often associated with biomedicine, in particular genetics, while at the same time resisting any critical decentering of the body proper. We have entered an era when we can no longer deny biological variation, as many social scientists have continued to do. Now, more than ever before, it is crucial to pay serious attention to the lived body in its infinite variety.

Together, we venture to claim another characteristic that qualifies us to critically assemble and evaluate the literature on the body: like our readers, we too are embodied. This truism highlights one of the virtues of building an emphasis on embodiment within anthropology: embodiment has the potential to unite readers and writers, anthropologists and informants, doctors and patients, teachers and students. It does not require orientalist distinctions between East and West or developmental differences between North and South. At the level of embodiment, we are all "primitives," all excellent informants for a global anthropology. The commonalities of the carnal, while they cannot be presumed, often go unacknowledged. The extent to which the embodied existence of one party is obscured can be linked to the discomfort or indignity of the other, more obviously embodied person. Doctors hide inside white coats to examine disrobed patients; writers become distant authorities

while readers question their own ability to understand the prose; anthropologists have the privilege of mobility and can remove their bodies from "underdeveloped" environments that still threaten the health and livelihood of their research subjects. Still, one cannot really gaze disembodied upon another body; when we see or read about another's pain, we are likely to experience vicarious discomforts; when we read about sex or food, we are likely to experience desire or disgust.

Thus we hope a more focused attention to an anthropology of embodiment will "cut both ways," challenging privilege and its idealization while dignifying bodily existence and chartering a new materialist anthropology. A turn to the body in anthropology has the potential to do more than simply add a topic to the study of Man or append a footnote to our accumulated knowledge about human nature. Rather, as anthropology has moved beyond the body proper it has opened up a new stratum of social existence, one that offers a broad terrain for research between the impossible poles of a Cartesian social science. This is the domain of neither a cultural mind nor a biological body, but of a lively carnality suffused with words, images, senses, desires, and powers.

NOTES

1. Some frequently cited examples are Stallybrass and White 1986; Comaroff 1985; Laqueur 1990; Bynum 1987; Martin 1987; Foucault 1977.
2. See Csordas 1994 for a discussion of the term embodiment.
3. Massumi 2002.
4. The contradictions and historical contingency of this bourgeois individual have been critiqued by Lukes 1979; Mauss in Carrithers et al., eds., 1985; MacPherson 1962; and Lowe 1982, among others.
5. This point is parallel with Bruno Latour's critique of "the modern constitution" in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993).
6. Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1987.
7. Farquhar 2002.
8. Lock 1993.
9. Stallybrass and White 1986.
10. Haraway 1985.
11. Keller 1992; Konrad 2005; Nelkin and Lindee 1995.
12. See Lock 1993 for a review article and extensive bibliography relating to the production of the social body. See also Turner 1984; Polhemus 1978; Blacking 1977.
13. Darwin 1899; Lombroso and Ferrero, 2004 (1893). See also relevant cultural history by Gould 1981; Gilman (1985, 1988); and Poovey (1995).
14. Proctor 1988.
15. Mauss 1973 (1934): 75.
16. Douglas 1966, 1970.

17. Turner 1957.
18. See, e.g., Gil 1998.
19. Marcel 1997.
20. But note Derrida's critique of the very possibility of presence (1976).
21. Lévi-Strauss 1969a, 1969b.
22. Certeau 1984; Elias 1982.
23. Comaroff 1985; Weiss 1996; B. Turner, 1984; Csordas 1994; Farquhar 2002; Wacquant 2004.
24. Foucault, 1965, 1973, 1977.
25. See, for example, Scott 1991.
26. Boston Women's Health Book Collective 1976; hooks 1981; Irigaray 1985; Kristeva 1982; Rich 1979.
27. Haraway 1991.
28. Good 1995; Csordas 1993.
29. Feldman 1991; Seremetakis 1991; Pandolfi, in this volume; Scarry 1985.
30. Classen 1993; Howes 1991; Stoller 1989.
31. Miller, in this volume; Boyarin 1993; de Man 1986; Derrida 1996.
32. Kleinman 1988; Mattingly and Garro, eds., 2000. See also Good 1994.
33. Comaroff 1985; Stoler 1995.
34. Hebdige 1979; de Lauretis 1987.
35. Bakhtin 1968; Bynum 1989; Stallybrass and White 1986.; Strathern 1992.
36. Derrida 1976.
37. Lefebvre 1991; Bachelard 1964; Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga 2003.
38. Kaufman 2005; Lock 2002;
39. Latour 1979 (1986) and in this volume; Hacking, in this volume; Mol, 2002.
40. See, for example, Liu 1995, 1999; Barker 1984.
41. Latour 1988; Callon 1986; and Law and Hassard 1999. See also C. Thompson, in this volume.
42. Farquhar 1994.
43. Farquhar 2002.
44. Lock 1980.
45. Nichter and Lock 2002; Scheid 2002.
46. Lock 1993.
47. Lock 2002.

PART I

*An Emergent Canon, or Putting Bodies
on the Scholarly Agenda*