That's What [We] Said is an undergraduate publication from the Gender and Women's Studies Department at the University of British Columbia Okanagan.

Issue 1 (2019) Body/Politics

List of Contributors

Editors

Allison Brown

Christine Fedusiak

Claire Feasby

Kenya Gutteridge

Radia Mbengue

Stephanie Awotwi-Pratt

Tayana Simpson

Guest Submissions

Ari Sparks

Moozhan Ahmadzadegan

Faculty

Alison Conway

Lori Walter

Table of Contents

Letter from the Editor

Welcome!

I am so excited to have you join us.

That's What [We] Said was conceptualized in September 2018. After months of meeting, careful decision making, and lots of resourcing, we have finally made this journal a reality! Our title, "That's What [We] Said," plays on the phrase "That's What She Said," a common expression used to denigrate female speech. "We" is the provisional replacement of the commonly used "she" in the phrase, illustrating our desire to challenge stereotypes and assumptions that surround gender studies. Our name is an act of reclamation.

We are a collective that seeks to deconstruct stereotypes, assumptions, and boundaries about gender, women, biology, bodies, race, sexuality, geography, religion, nationality, identity, and everything in between. We acknowledge and draw attention to the unceded Syilx Okanagan territories that we write and publish from.

The mission of *That's What [We] Said* is to challenge social norms, facilitate a creative platform for an intersectional feminist discourse, and offer an approachable commentary. We believe that one of the strong suites of the Gender and Women's Studies program is that it is accessible across disciplines. We seek to amplify the voices of people from various backgrounds and to provide them with a space to be critical and creative. In so doing, we hope to deepen our connections with one another, acknowledging that community counters isolation.

This first edition is titled *Body/Politics*. Each written submission is from an editor and reflects a different commentary on the body and or/politic(s). "Body politics" refers to both the systemic regulation of bodies, the uneven decision making by those with power sustained through culture (Griffin); as well as "politic," a political collective (*OED*, "body politic").

This edition kicks off with Stephanie Awotwi-Pratt's collection of poetry, followed by our featured artists: Moozhan Ahmadzadegan and Ari Sparks. The article section starts off with a critique of dress codes by Claire Feasby. Kenya Gutteridge then undertakes a close reading of *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Alison Brown analyzes constructions of the body politic and suggests how it can be rethought. Radia Mbengue follows with an article on reproductive exploitation and the black woman's body. Wrapping up this edition is Tayana Simpson's article on the body as a site of struggle in politics.

I hope you can learn and ask questions with us. As part of an open source platform we seek accessibility and hope that our journal is applicable to daily lives and academic scholarship. We know that feminism is not limited to one realm of society but rather takes place in all areas.

This journal would not be made possible without the help and guidance from the faculty at the University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus, including Lori Walter, the Scholarly Communication Librarian at The University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus; and Alison Conway, Professor of English and Gender and Women's Studies. Acknowledgements are also due to Matthew Brown, who designed the *That's What [We] Said* Logo. Thank you. And thank you, reader, for journeying with us. I hope you enjoy the journal as much as we do.

Cheers,

Christine Fedusiak

Editorial staff

Christine is a second-year student pursuing her Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Women's Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. She previously worked as a birth and postpartum doula in Vancouver. Christine is passionate about reproductive healthcare and loves to knit.

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The Body, Inside Out
Stephanie Awotwi-Pratt

International Women's Day

Women

Woman

Woo of the Man

Woo!

Wow!

Woo!

The Woman.

Woo Who Speaks

She Who Speaks

We That Speak

The Woman

We Are The Women

Not

The Woo Of The Man.

That's What We Said: We Are

We Are
The
Ostentatious
Vivacious
Radiant and Bold
The
Courageous
Audacious
Bodacious
Strongholds.

We Are

The Doers
The Makers
The Molders
The Creators

The Animated
Spontaneous
Yet
Gracious
Salacious
Woman That We Are

Me

Who Am I?
—Who Are You?
I am a woman

—Yes! A Black Woman

I speak
I walk
I talk
I shout
I sing
I strive
I move
I do
I win
I laugh
I dance
I live
I breathe
I exist
I cry
I am

No!
I am.
Simply.

A Woman.

The Virgin Vagina

Virgin Vagina, Pristine, Clean, Unclean

Seen, Unseen

She

Is her name

The Cookie Pussy, Lucy, Goosy

Virgin.

She Is.

Oh! But a Virgin Vagina

Untouched… yet touched…

Oh! What A Perfect Vagina

To See and Be

But…

The Perfect Pussy Grabber's

Tea

The Puss

Pat The Puss That Makes Me Me

Pat The Puss That You Hold To Be Yours

Hit The Puss That You Think is Free, Free For The Taking

The Puss That Is Attached To Me

The Puss Barks In Accordance To My Cries

You Think You Have One Over My Puss

Think Again…

You See, My Puss Is Not Free For The Taking

My Puss Is Not Free

It Is For Me. And Me Alone.

But We

Laugh Dear Puss, As You Laugh At Me

Rape The Puss

As You Rape

Me.

Fight Pussy! Fight! The Goal Is Not To Flee!

Beat Him Oh Puss!

Beat Him For

Me!

Feminism

Strong

Equal

United

Are We!

Sing Free

The Liberty of We

Why Are We

We And Not

I

But Just You and Me

To Be Free

To See

That We Are

We

She Waits

She Waits

For…

No one.

No Man.

No Woman.

She Waits
Expects
Lives
Believes

Anticipates the Unexpected

Owns Her Shit!

And Lives Like A Vivacious

Bitch!

Beauty

Beauty
The Emblem Of Perfection
The Marker of Poise And Power
The Passionate and Proud Creature
Confidence Cocooned In Grace

Beauty
She Cowardices At The Word
She Knows All To Well That She Is A Façade

She
Beauty
Knows Little Untoward But Her Own Beauty
Beauty In Which She Radiates and Gravitates.

What Is Beauty But A Sponge Of Imperfectly Perfect Fragments of Duplicitous Pieces
Marked By Time and Space

Beauty
She
Is
But The Enemy,
The One We Aspire To Be
Yet Detest

Yet
She Is Only Shaped By The Eye Of The Beholder
Beauty
The
Ironic
Cowed
That She Is

Beauty
What Are You Really?

To Be Or Not To Be…

Be Ladylike

Be Nice

Be Kind

Smile

Be Pretty

Be, Be, Be

Be Clean

Be Smart… But Not Too Smart

Be Loud, But Only When Crying For Help.

Be Who Ever The Fuck You Want To

Be, Be, Be

—Be How I Want You To Be

What If I Just Want To Be Me?

Whatever The Fuck That Means?

You Don't Get To Define Me Or Who I am

You Are Not Me!

So
Don't
Define
Just Let Me
Be

Unapologetically Me!

Chrysalis

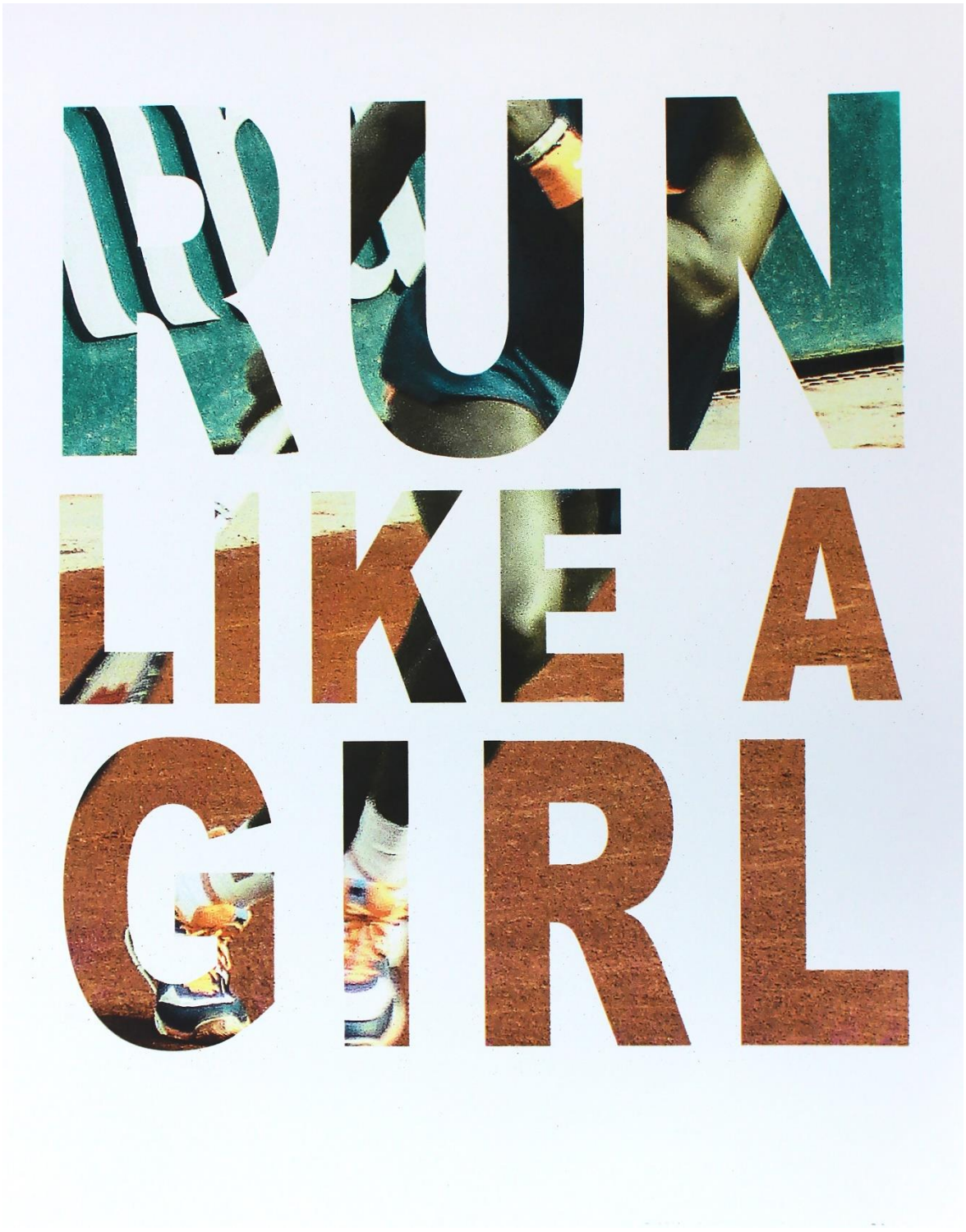
Ari Sparks

Recognize the Pattern

Moozhan Ahmadzadegan

Run Like a Girl

Moozan Ahmadzadegan



School Dress Codes: The Socialization of Gender Inequality

Claire Feasby

Introduction

The representation of the body is a visual language that is used as a means for communication. While this communication may be silent, it is one of the loudest voices an individual can possess in any society and certainly provokes societal reaction. Body representation is a reflection of diverse cultures and experiences that speaks to someone's individuality without even having to actually *say* anything. This ability to speak visually and communicate through our bodies comes from the values placed on different types of bodies and the way this visual expression is interpreted. Gender as a social construct divides bodies, simultaneously intersecting with other forms of oppression and inequality. Every person is born into a body that already has predetermined inequalities applied to it, and these are deeply rooted and perpetuated through the socialization that reinforces and reproduces these meanings. There is a complexity in the contradictions girls and women face – such as being hypersexualized yet "slut shamed" – and dress codes in schools exemplify how these contradictions complicate the relationship between identity and expression. Dress codes are constructed by fear and seek to limit discomfort by neutralizing students' identities. Rebecca Raby sees dress codes as the force that produces docile citizens, attempting to limit the motivations of students to challenge authority and pursue individuality ("Polite" 79). The human body is the most utilised tool in the expression of gender through being a site of resistance, identity, and agency, and these aspects operate

collectively to create notions of individuality. In adolescence, the ability to exercise agency when it comes to dress is powerful when shaping gender identity. We use our bodies as a canvas by choosing what to wear, which facilitates a sense of individuality, pride, and expression. The use of the body as a tool for expression of gender is problematized by dress codes in schools and the socialization of inequality.

Identity Regulation

At their core, dress codes in educational settings are aimed at regulating and surveilling students' bodies and dress choices. Typically, if a student is 'dress coded' they are given the option of changing or calling home to get different clothing; in some cases, they are suspended. Although dress codes consist of written rules, these rules are typically vague and their application is subjective, ultimately being strongly influenced by the enforcer's biases. Some common dress code regulations are: clothing is expected to fit properly; unnatural hair color and piercings are strongly discouraged or not allowed; "common sense" and "good judgement" is to prevail at all times; students must not reveal midriffs or any part of undergarments; and shorts, skirts, and dresses will need to pass the "shorts-length spot check" (Student Dress Code 325; Harbach 1039). With regulations implementing phrases such as "good judgement", "common sense", and "fit properly", the ruling of dress codes ultimately relies heavily on the school's faculty to subjectively and arbitrarily decide if their pupils are abiding by the dress code. This undoubtedly allows for biases to shape dress code regulations, thereby being strongly influenced by the genders and sexual orientations of those who make-up the school faculty. These two factors influence whether a staff member claims discomfort, attraction, or distraction based on what students wear. Moreover, requiring

girls' skirts, shorts, or dresses to be longer than their fingertips when their arms are at their sides (commonly known as 'spot checks') relies on an arbitrary marker of suitability that does not consider varying arm lengths. Cleavage is an example of the objectification of certain bodies over others – girls with larger breasts will be 'dress coded' and sexualized more than girls with smaller breasts. 'Spot checks' and stigmatized rules about cleavage illustrate how one student could get away with wearing something while meeting the dress code standards whereas a student with a different body, wearing the same article of clothing, would be 'dress coded.'

The application of dress codes has been steadily increasing, showing the impact of social fears associated with certain bodies. In 1999, 47.4% of American schools enforced a strict dress code and in 2013, 58.5% of schools enforced a strict dress code (United States. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics). The significant increase in dress codes demonstrates the determination to regulate bodies, especially those of adolescents who are hypersexualized on social media, the news, and various artistic platforms. The title of the study released by the US Department of Education: "Percentage of public schools with various safety and security measures", aligns the regulation of students' dress with locker checks, the use of metal detectors, police dog sniffs, drug testing, and security cameras. Equating dress codes with school security measures explains the rise in strict dress codes and demonstrates the hypersexualization of girls as well as fear of female agency.

The socialization of inequality is reinforced through dress codes by controlling the expression of identity, by blaming girls for distracting boys and male teachers, and by exploiting students who are particularly malleable to authoritative influence. There is an emphasis placed on adolescents to respect authority and to not question the

"rights" of authority ("Polite" 78). This exemplifies the power given to school staff through the application of dress codes, consequently socializing inequality under the aegis of the education system. Blaming girls for the distraction of boys and male teachers prioritizes the education and comfort of boys and men by exerting control over girls and women and what they do with their bodies. This reflects how school dress codes reinforce the perception that "'woman' [is] associated with the body while 'man' is linked with the mind" (Mascia-Lees 210). Girls' and women's bodies are targeted, controlled, and blamed in order to 'protect' male staff and students. Not only is this practice sexist, but it exemplifies heteronormative standards by assuming that all men and boys are attracted to and distracted by the opposite sex, therefore perpetuating inequality and the gender binary in numerous ways. Rebecca Raby notes that "dress codes participate in a broader, ongoing cultural concern with forms of female dress (and sexuality), defining what is acceptable. They consequently normalize certain forms of girlhood, problematize others, and suggest girls' responsibility for the school's moral climate" (Raby, "Girls' Engagements" 334). Raby's statement critiques the nature of dress codes for the blame and responsibility that is placed onto girls. Additionally, the association of girls' and women's natural bodies with these negative perceptions creates stigmas about certain parts of the body and attire worn. This shuns girls' and women's bodies rather than seeing sexualization as a cultural phenomenon (Harbach 1058). The ideas presented by Raby and Meredith Harbach show how these perceptions are linked to the rise in victim blaming and "slut shaming," which demonstrate the internalization of these values – such as those of dress codes – that dictate that girls and women who show more skin or wear certain clothing are sexually available, deviant, or troubled. These negative associations frame dressing in certain ways as a maladaptive

coping mechanism, further 'othering' girls and women, as well as anyone who disobeys dress codes or rejects gender norms (for example, if someone were to dress in a way that contradicts the gender they were assigned at birth - or that to which the faculty resigns them).

It is important to note that all minorities and oppressed groups are more at risk of being 'dress coded' and scrutinized based on what they wear. Additionally, the intersectionality of gender with identifiable characteristics such as race, sexuality, and body shape, greatly increases the likelihood of body regulation whether it be in schools or in the public realm. These characteristics are often discriminated against in society, 'othering' individuals based on the intersection of gender and other visual inequalities. For example, a girl who is Black is more likely to be 'dress coded' than her White female peers because she is a hypervisible figure due to the intersection that she embodies of girlhood and race (Raby, "Polite" 72). Individuals who have intersecting marginalized characteristics are subject to even more identity regulation and body politics.

Gender Roles, Binary Thinking, and Gender Bending

Body politics is the feminist anthropological concept that refers to the regulation of bodies through structural power, usually targeting minorities. The body politics surrounding dress codes disempowers minorities by not allowing the expression and experimentation with identity. Dress codes target visible bodies revealing biases based on physical appearances and social positioning. Typically, the visible body is used in contrast with the invisible body, which describes marginalized bodies as invisible and privileged bodies as visible. However, in this case, visible bodies are those who stand out as Other and who are subject to being scrutinized based on their difference(s) from a

prescribed norm. This is including, but not limited to, individuals who are women/girls, LGBTQIA+, disabled, or a racial or ethnic minority.

The dress code debate becomes paradoxical because of all the ways in which adolescent girls are hypersexualized in society, while they are simultaneously told to 'cover up' and dress and act 'decently.' Moreover, dress codes attempt to create an asexual space with an emphasis on respect, however in doing so, they have sexualized girls' bodies and disrespected identity and agency (Raby, "Polite" 79). In the Western world, girls and women are being sold a certain idealized image where clothing is "both an artifact of the sexualization of girls in our culture and also part of the larger process of identity formation over which girls exercise some control" (Harbach 1042). Through schools enforcing regulations that strengthen the gender binary, they act as one of the main sources of the socialization of gender roles, thus producing citizens who blindly manifest inequality.

Gender bending is one of the ways in which people reject these binary norms. It is the conscious act of transcending gender through things like dress, relationships, actions, and discourse. Gender bending is anything that disrupts gender roles. Historically, it has been coined as the term to describe boys or men who are transgender or noticeably effeminate however, anyone who rejects gender roles and norms – even in subtle and potentially unnoticeable ways – is actively gender bending. What an individual chooses to wear is a mindful decision that expresses identity to the people around them. Sometimes this is an effort to purposefully prompt discomfort in others. Discomfort is one of the most constructive feelings because, in the social sphere, everything is uncomfortable until it becomes normalized through widespread acceptance. This has been seen in the human rights movements, the legalization of gay

marriage, and women's liberation (although the groups involved in these movements are still largely oppressed). Challenging binaries and gender roles, and actively gender bending are some of the ways in which an individual or community can affect social change.

It is as children that we are socialized and taught gender-appropriate behavior and we internalize norms (Connell and Pearse 97). This is understood that "the socialization model pictures the learner as passive, [and] the agencies of socialization as active" (Connell and Pearse 97). That being said, Connell and Pearse note that younger children are constantly gender bending and act as agentic bodies through their socialization. It is in the teenage years, following puberty, when notions of hegemonic masculinities and femininities become adopted. These claims are shown through the different dress codes applied to elementary schools versus junior high/high schools. For example, the "Current Elementary Student Handbook Dress Code Language" states that "the goal is to maintain the best learning situation possible and the rights of the students to dress and groom themselves as they please will be recognized, as long as doing so does not interfere in maintaining such a learning situation" (Student Dress Code 325). This can be contrasted with the strict, harsh, and objectifying language of dress codes in upper year grades that aim to restrict identity expression and create an asexual environment (these have been discussed earlier in this paper). The dress codes of junior highs and high schools teach gender-appropriate behavior that molds malleable citizens. Furthermore, students can internalize values and reproduce them in ways such as victim blaming, objectification, and sexual harassment. Dress codes play a major role in the socialization and justification of such actions, behaviors, and words.

Conclusion

The body is a notebook where cultural meanings of character and value are inscribed, allowing the world to read bodies based on preconceived biases. However, individuals exercise agency through how they choose to dress within a system that attempts to neutralize expression and place bodies within a social hierarchy. Throughout history, the body has been the most utilised tool for resistance, identity, and agency. School dress codes are one of the oppressive body regulations, driven by the gender binary and sexism, that hinder the formation, experimentation, and expression of gender identity and identity as a whole. The enforcement of dress codes is a discriminatory practice because it is implemented by authority's subjective biases, becoming an issue of "frequency, inconsistency, and inequality" (Raby, "Girls' Engagement" 340). The meanings associated with dress and appearance stem from education and enculturation. To feel as though there is some control and agency in terms of expression of identity instills happiness and confidence in people, especially youth. It is an exhausting and never-ending task to protect and maintain identity while being discriminated against. By eliminating dress code policies in schools, we would be abolishing one of the most overt ways girls' bodies are policed at a young age, and adolescents would not be socialized through the education system to objectify and discriminate against girls and women based on what they wear. Certainly, a more widespread effort and engagement is needed to promote equality and freedom of expression, and abolishing dress codes would be a consequential breakthrough.

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Enabling the Present: Disability Politics, Reproductive Justice and Temporality in *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015)

Kenya Gutteridge

A war rig rolls out on the open desert, battle flags flapping in the wind behind it. The orchestral score of George Miller's 2015 film Mad Max: Fury Road *swells tragically as Imperator Furiosa (played by Charlize Theron) struggles loudly for breath in the backseat of a car, surrounded by the surviving members of her crew. When one of the Wives asks what's wrong with her, one of the Vuvalini women driving the car replies that she is pumping air into her chest cavity, collapsing her lungs. Upon hearing this, Max (played by Tom Hardy) suddenly grabs a knife, points it into her ribcage, apologizes, and plunges it in, whereupon she regains the ability to breathe. He lifts her towards him and she whispers something indistinct before collapsing again. The Vuvalini offers another diagnosis: she is exsanguinated, drained of her blood. Again, Max springs into action, recognizing the value of his universal blood type in this moment. Two of the Wives keep Furiosa awake and another holds the transfusion tube up, upon Max's requests, while he gives her a transfusion. The Vuvalini tends to Max's injection site while he injects the needle into her arm and, with her head in his hands, says: "Max." Looking up at the others, he repeats himself: "My name is Max." Then he turns back to Furiosa: "That's my name"* (Mad Max 1:47:10-1:49:27).

This, the penultimate scene of the highly successful science fiction film, marks the first time that the titular character introduces himself to any of the others in his cohort. The film centres on a motley crew revolting against the cruel capitalist regime that rules a post-apocalyptic future. Over the course of their journey together, these unlikely counterparts come to learn from and care for one another in meaningful ways that both affirm and transform their diverse capabilities—within and without their bodies—and thereby have their orientations towards one another, the Earth and time itself profoundly changed. Ultimately, they arrive at themselves through these re-orientations, affirming the notion that we are always made by our relations to others: "to be one is to become with many" (Haraway 4).

Engaged with potent concerns of the Anthropocene, *Mad Max: Fury Road* imagines a world in which fertility—in the land and in bodies—and water have become scarce. This is due at least in part to the ruling regime—"the Citadel"—secretly hoarding water and plant life, and sexually enslaving a group of still-fertile women, named "the Wives," in the service of producing more soldiers for its army, "the War Boys." The film focuses on the gender non-conforming leader of this army, Imperator Furiosa, as she tries to help the Wives escape to "the Green Place," the last remaining fertile land outside of the Citadel, her original home, and the base of "the Vuvalini," a rogue group of elderly women who guard it. She is joined on her quest by the escaped Max Rockatansky, whose universal blood type had him enslaved as a "blood bag" for the army and a defectory War Boy. The group comes to find that the Green Place has fallen prey to the same ambiguous environmental devastation that has touched the rest of the world, and they are forced to return to the Citadel, where they successfully stage a coup and release the hoarded water to the general population, "the Wretched."

The film's concern with reproductivity in all its formulations—environmental, social, sexual—anchors this paper. I argue for an alternative to normative reproductive politics "as an embodied, forward-moving, anticipatory, generative process" through a close reading of the narrative and character elements at play in this scene at the crossroads of crip theory and posthumanism, gesturing out to the wider aspects of the film (Murphy). Drawing on Alison Kafer, Brandon Fletcher and Alvin J. Primack, I first analyze the characters involved as possessing disabilities that are framed as generative conditions that affect an appreciation of difference and of interdependence. Next, I widen my lens to the film's narrative structure in order to argue that Furiosa actually reproduces these normative reproductive politics in her pursuit of the Green Place. The failure to recover this lost "Eden," which Michelle Yates deftly notes, is not only predicated on the material limits of the mortal Earth as Rebecca Sheldon claims, but also on the "straight line" that Furiosa draws from past to future, which Sara Ahmed locates at the centre of (hetero)normative reproductive politics (555). In the final paragraphs of my essay, I put these readings into conversation with one another through a post humanist perspective, drawing on Michelle Murphy to argue that the film probes the reanimation of "latent pasts" through these characters' engagements with each other's unique (dis)abilities and promotes an appreciation for "othered life." Referencing Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, I argue that the film centres our "radical immanence" in and amongst others and the Earth as critical to reproductive politics (Braidotti 34). Through its engagements with disability, *Mad Max: Fury Road* renders time as a materially manifest interdependent and adaptable structure, offering a generative alternative to the abstracted and causal time upon which normative reproductive politics are predicated.

If normative politics render reproduction as an anticipatory and individual process, the affirmation of disability as a generative condition in *Mad Max: Fury Road* is particularly meaningful given that it reframes it as an interdependent process that always finds itself in the immediacy of the present. As Alison Kafer argues, disability tends to be framed as an "unredeemable difference" that has no place in the future within American reproductive politics, even in the realm of science fiction—where we might hope for the most imaginative and revolutionary re-orientations from this understanding (74, 69). Not only are a number of characters in the film disabled in the more traditionally understood sense—Max suffers from PTSD and Furiosa bears a prosthetic arm—but, through the lens of crip theory, all the characters might effectively be viewed as "disabled" by the political forces that govern them. Crip theory, a concept coined by Robert McRuer, interrogates the ways in which various marginalized identities are "disabled" by hegemonic forces for defying a narrow definition of an "able" body and mind (Fletcher and Primack 346). All of the characters in my epigraphic scene are disabled in this sense: the Citadel uses Max for his blood, the Wives are sexually enslaved, and even the Vuvalini are disabled in their total expulsion from society and need to fend for themselves.

Yet, this scene also affirms these disablings as endowments of unique capabilities (Fletcher and Primack 347, 354). As a weathered survivalist and outcast, the Vuvalini woman is able to offer deft medical diagnoses, from which Max—a former "blood bag" used to handling injury—is able to intuit remedies, while the Wives—as caregivers and Furiosa's close kin—are able to offer much-needed support and comfort. Disability is framed as a generative condition whose diverse embodiments engender respect for difference and effect a critique of independence: each skill that these uniquely disabled

characters brings to the table is not only essential in such a moment, but also cannot stand alone—the Vuvalini's diagnoses are nothing without Max's intuitive applications, for instance (Kafer 83, Fletcher and Primack 348, 355). The film affirms its characters' unique disabilities as both valuable and necessary to one another through their engagement with social and even a (quasi-)form of biological reproduction: Max introduces himself for the very first time to the others in this moment, (re)making himself and his relation to them, while they all work cooperatively to revivify Furiosa (Haraway 25). In this sense, *Mad Max: Fury Road* affirms disability as providing a meaningful re-orientation of reproductive politics away from the individualism and self-sufficiency that subtend their normative construction and towards an interdependent understanding that is appreciative of difference.

Fletcher and Primack argue that Furiosa and the Wives' interdependent quest to find the Green Place marks a turn away from the "disabling understanding of present conditions" that the Citadel inflicts on the Wretched by hoarding natural resources and falsifying their scarcity (351).Yet these authors overlook that, in their conviction that they will find these resources beyond the Citadel walls, these characters reproduce just such a disabling. As Rebecca Sheldon argues, everything is predicated on the promise of the Green Place; without it, they are still reliant on the Citadel (111). While the Green Place is Furiosa's original home, it is for the Wives—who have lived their entire lives imprisoned indoors—an utterly abstract concept that ultimately fails to come to fruition. Thus, though I agree with Michelle Yates's assessment that the film marks the failure of Edenic recovery, and with Sheldon's assessment that this failure is founded (in part) on the material limits of the Earth, I believe they overlook a crucial reason for it: Furiosa unwittingly reproduces the same reproductive rhetoric in which the Citadel is invested.

The Citadel's power, after all, is grounded metaphorically in the idea that those who submit to its rule are "awaited in Valhalla"—another foundational space of Western myth—to which the War Boys who sacrifice themselves and the women who bear them as children against their will have no material connection. Much as their long-awaited and never-to-be-realized "return" to a place that they have never been to serves as justification for real harm to them in the present within the confines of the Citadel, the quest that Furiosa leads not only brings her close to death but also sees two of her cohorts die. "Through such investments in the promise of return, subjects reproduce the lines that they follow" (Ahmed 555). The expectation of the linear tie between past and future that Ahmed locates at the centre of (hetero)normative reproductive politics is reproduced by Furiosa: she demands the inheritance that she imagines her past to guarantee. In circumventing an examination of the "background" conditions that cause the scarcity of natural resources and keep her focused on extending this "straight line" between past and future, we might call into question whether their quest for rediscovery really marks a "turn away" from the disabling of the present that the Citadel effects (Ahmed 547).

When the characters find that the same chemical forces that decimated the rest of the natural world have reached their hoped-for refuge, they encounter what Michelle Murphy calls a "latent past"—a history not-yet-felt that erupts into the present unexpectedly. Though the "chemical infrastructures" that carry pollution across land, air, waterways and generations thwart the possibility of life "into the long future," there are some histories that, Murphy says, demand to be pulled from the sediment. We might note here a scene much earlier in the film that reifies this understanding in a poetically literal way. Erupting suddenly from beneath the sand in the wreckage of a car accident,

Max rips the IV that connects him to the War Boy he is forced to serve out of his neck, an act that is followed by the hissing sound of released air pressure (Mad Max 30:28-31:26). Though done in a stunningly subtle way, this scene pairs with the epigraphic one to make clear that Max's intuition around the need to puncture Furiosa's body from the Vuvalini's diagnosis springs directly from his experience as a "blood bag." Limited as he is in grappling with his own survival in this earlier scene, it is only in his encounter with these surprising others that this latent knowledge is reanimated as a meaningful response to another being.

This meaning-making flattens the natural cultural divide: the chemical forces that induced the environmental wreckage that surround and are latently reanimated in the Green Place are the same that have so heavily irradiated the "War Boys" that they require a constant supply of Max's blood. Though this reanimation of the chemical past in their aspirational refuge forces a "crucial gap in knowledge-making" regarding their orientation towards this hoped-for future, the re-animation of the cruel past that has Max enslaved as a blood bag—made by the same deathly cause—might also provide an invitation to "re-world" reproductive politics around "othered life" (Murphy, Haraway 24). Such a reading confirms that disability is also framed as an especially adaptable condition (Fletcher and Primack 346). In playing with the reanimation of such latent pasts, the film consolidates its critique of linear time: we cannot fully know the forces already at play in shaping our futures. Yet, in putting ourselves in the "contact zones" with others whose heritages and (dis)abilities differ sharply from our own, we might hope to pull meaningful pasts from the sediment that could re-world ourselves and the Earth, both (Haraway 4, Murphy).

It is in this sense that the film might be implicated in a posthumanist tradition: Furiosa aligns herself with the humanist espousal of transcendence of the material present through rational progress, only to be re-oriented towards the "radical immanence" upon which Rosi Braidotti insists by the force of Max's disability (34). Afflicted suddenly by a PTSD-induced flashback—a young girl from his ambiguous past desperately asking why he did not save her—it is Max who insists that they return to the Citadel upon their disappointing discovery (Fletcher and Primack 348). In this sense, it is his mental disability that re-orients Furiosa's reproduction of the Citadel's obsession with futurity back towards examining the "background" that conditions it: the many lives of the Wretched at stake in the present, urgently demanding the same resources that they hoped to put towards their own limited and figural futures (Ahmed 547). Against the "patrilineal thinking" of the Citadel, "which sees all the world as a tree of filiations ruled by genealogy and identity," my epigraphic scene marks a site of the "rhizomatic thinking" for which Haraway draws on Deleuze and Guattari: it is a site of becoming oneself through relating to others, a concrescence of beings and the heritages that make them (28, 25). Max's use as a mere resource for sustaining the "half-lives" of the War Boys, themselves disposable in the name of "Valhalla," is adapted towards sustaining the specified life of a felt and known other with whom he is in deep relation, urgently and presently (Braidotti 31).

The unique (dis)abilities that each character brings to their relations thus receive the kind of meaningful response that Haraway claims "other-worlding" demands (24). The Wives learn battle skills, Furiosa and the Vuvalini come to appreciate the need to save not just themselves but all of the Wretched, and Max—an individual rogue all his life—learns the value of interdependence. They are "becoming-with," rather than "self-

making"—investing deeply in their differences as valuable invitations to making meaning (Haraway 33). Though they are collectively oppressed by the same structure, the unique disabilities forced by their specific encounters with this regime are adapted in specific ways that transform each of them in all of their "embodiment and embeddedness" (Braidotti 32). The fact that Max does not introduce himself to the others until he has adapted his disability towards sustaining just such interdependence is testament to the non-individuated subject upon which *Mad Max* centres itself: Max, like the others, becomes who he is in the unlikely "dance of relating in their sometimes-joined, sometimes-separate heritages both before and lateral to *this* encounter" (Haraway 25). Contrary to what normative reproductive politics portend, it is not the past that informs the future, but what we do with our "radical immanence" amongst others, including Earth itself, in the critical *present* that makes all time—including our many futures and many pasts—both disparate and shared (Braidotti 34, Haraway 25).

Mad Max: Fury Road has its limits—directed and written entirely by men, it centres a mostly white and entirely light-skinned cast and subtly reproduces negative stereotypes about disability as undesirable (Yates 355, 368, Fletcher and Primack 347). Yet the fact that such potently anti-hegemonic and relational understandings of disability, reproduction and time might also be read into a popular Hollywood film is incredibly exciting. This is particularly true as the debilitating effects that factors such as ableism and climate change—among so many others—have on our abilities to create flourishing and meaningful lives continue to be left out of the limited mainstream understandings of reproductive politics, framed as they tend to be along a false binary of "pro-choice" versus "pro-life."

In their final act upon ascending the Citadel, the Wives and Furiosa release the store of water to all of the Wretched, finally manifesting the lateral form of reproduction that assures just such lives in the present, rather than an abstracted future held in perpetual trust for a privileged few. Centering a self, made by its changing and dynamic relationships, the film does not conceive that the future and past should not be factored into reproductive justice, but highlights the ways in which orientations towards these temporalities often serve to circumvent the cost of real harm in the present (Braidotti 33). As Donna Haraway puts it, "there is no teleological warrant here, no assured happy or unhappy ending, socially, ecologically or scientifically. There is only the chance for getting on together with some grace" (15). Against dominant understandings of reproduction, *Mad Max: Fury Road* frames it as an interdependent and mutable process that extends beyond the body and necessarily implicates other beings, including the Earth. As we move nearer and nearer towards the disappearance of our own green spaces, we must ask ourselves which relations we must seek to reproduce -- to ourselves, to one another, and to our own living Earth -- and which must be fossilized. There is no resting place for thinking through these questions. The time is always now.

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Revisioning the Body Politic

Allison Brown

1. Introduction

What does "the body politic" mean? Claire Rasmussen and Michael Brown use this term to draw a comparison between the human body and the polis (470). Like the body, the polity has one skin, a bounded area, in which it must operate; it relies on systems and organs, operated by individuals, to function (Rasmussen and Brown 472). Therefore, the body politic encompasses and represents the connectivity of many bodies that create *one* body of government; the faces of the polity are incorporated into this single body, identified as the "artificial man" (excluding those political communities historically fostered by marginalized groups and women) (Gatens 21). The artificial man becomes the symbolic representation of the citizens within the body politic. He is charged with protecting, defending, and representing all natural men (Gatens 22). Is the artificial man capable of incorporating the differences of all members of the polity? This essay will explore the relationship between individual bodies and the body politic, focusing on the artificial man's inability to incorporate the diversity of all members of the polity and then question how the body politic can be expanded in such a way as to include all bodies.

2. Historical Background of the Body Politic

Since the advent of modernity in the seventeenth century, the idea and use of the body politic flourished. In 1615, Antoine de Montchrétien, author of *Treatise of Political Economy*, introduced the notion of the body politics' health; the state provides nourishment to every member of its polity, but when individuals are deprived of nourishment, their spirit fades, causing the disintegration of the entire body politic (Harvey 30). In theory, the well-being of every individual body would secure the longevity and quality of the body politic. By the 1700s, communication systems allowed for legitimate social control and the subsequent popularisation of the body politic metaphor (Harvey 59). In the 1800s, Johann Kaspar Bluntschli identified the body politic as a copy of the human body (Harvey 62). Prior to Bluntschli, the body-state comparison was a mere analogy, but Bluntschli brought it to life. The body politic became an organism that was born, surviving, and mortal, just like humans. However, Herbert Spencer advocated for a simpler organism to represent the state, arguing that not every individual action impacts the body politic and some decisions are of greater value than others. Essentially, some individuals are more empowered to determine societal actions than others (Harvey 70). By the late 1800s, inherent power inequalities in the body politic were popularized and hegemonic state actors became normalized.

3. Imagined Communities and Imagined Politics

To cultivate a relationship without inequalities between the individual and the body politic, one must look to the origin of the state: the community. In Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism*, the nation is described as "an imagined political community – and

imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). For Anderson, any proclaimed community larger than one that engages in face-to-face contact is imagined, as it does not possess the same level of connectivity and kinship (Anderson 6). This community is deep, horizontal, and void of inequalities (Anderson 7). According to Anderson, the imagined community is dependent on a "neurosis" situated deep within each individual that convinces them of the capabilities of the artificial man to incorporate individual differences (5). But the imagined community and the artificial man are usually not inclusive; the real polity is diverse but is often strained, silenced, and shunned in the shell of the artificial man.

Engin F. Isin, in his article, "City.State: Critique of Scalar Thought," states that virtual ideas keep communities together (221). Communities' virtual ideas differentiate members from "outsiders", or citizens from foreigners (Isin 222). In modern politics, Isin argues, community is built on disagreement and conflicting identities that 'other' people. Creating intimate loyalties within communities requires its members to wholeheartedly believe and reproduce the imagined community. Similarly, in William T. Cavanaugh's "Disciplined Imaginations of Space and Time," he states that politics are imagined (1). Cavanaugh thinks that the theatre of politics is precisely that, a theatre, filled with actors and plots, used to fool the audience into subscribing to the politics of the current hegemonic power (1). Cavanaugh asks: "How does a provincial farm boy become persuaded that he must travel as a soldier to another part of the world and kill people he knows nothing about? He must be convinced of the reality of borders, and imagine himself deeply mystically, united to a wider national community that stops abruptly at those borders" (1). The farm boy is fooled by his imagined surroundings – his choice to fight is not his own. The agency of the farm boy is compromised by the

state's ability to invoke feelings of nationalism in the body politic. The only agent in the body politic is the artificial man, a relationship that may be considered morally illegitimate by those who are unable to be incorporated or represented by a man.

4. The Problematic Artificial Man

Imagined communities and imagined politics dictate the lives of real human bodies, represented by an artificial man. Assuming Anderson and Cavanaugh's arguments of imagination are correct, why must the artificial man be a *man*? Spencer's reasoning, borrowed from Greek philosophy, encourages the idea that only *some* bodies are capable of logic and sacrifice, making them deserving of a voice (Harvey 70). Modern political theory is still largely defined by Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who were concerned with the distinction between war and peace. They argued that war binds the body politic out of necessity, but in the process culminates civic ideals, such as a unified class (Elshtain 54). Aristotle's proposed order places individual experience within the polis to limit freedoms and resist violence (Elshtain 55). The male warrior trades violence for active political participation. While the citizen-warrior serves the polis, a man without a polis remains an uncivilized lover of war (Elshtain 55). The nature of the polis is orderly and peaceful, yet citizenship is inherently masculinized. While some bodies are deemed worthy of political participation because of their corporeality, others have been historically excluded (Gatens 23).

The artificial man trope is productive for men. In Moira Gatens' *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, and Corporeality*, she says that the human body is historically assumed to be male (23). Not recognizing women is convenient for the artificial man

because it allows him to exploit women's invisible labour and regulate and control women's bodies (Gatens 22). If the artificial man were to incorporate difference, his narcissistic image would be compromised (Gatens 27). Instead, the artificial man remains autonomous and unified as *one* body. By not being recognized in the polity, "the natural woman is left unprotected, undefended, and so is easy prey for the monstrous leviathan" (Gatens 23). Some bodies have always been excluded from the body politic because the body politic relies on the illusion of unity. The body politic fails to be inclusive of all bodies when the *one* body representing them is male or masculinized.

For the out-group, exclusion is frustrating and can spur reaction. In Juliana Spahr's "The Remedy," she describes her experience of being a pregnant woman in patriarchy (106-109). She recalls being shocked when spit on by men while breastfeeding in public, later accepting and normalizing the reaction (Spahr 106). By breastfeeding in public, Spahr was no longer a neutral citizen that the artificial man could easily incorporate -- her difference was too great, too 'other'. Realizing she no longer fit the natural order, Spahr stopped fucking her partner, the embodiment of patriarchy, knowing he could no to longer fill the hole in herself -- he was not enough anymore. Instead, Spahr rejected her neutral citizenship and used work, fucking, masturbation, and collaboration to reclaim her identity (106-109). Despite Spahr's empowering reaction to exclusion, the fact that she was spit on by members of *her own polis* is still disturbing. The real consequences of exclusion can be detrimental.

When bodies are excluded from the polis, they are vulnerable in the private and public spheres. In Judy El-Bushra and Eugenia Piza Lopez's "Gender-Related Violence: Its Scope and Relevance," they discuss the far-reaching consequences of the state's

inability to account for a plurality of bodies (1). Personal violence is reinforced by cultural constructions of gender roles and norms. For instance, in women's subordinated position, they fear provoking men and alter their behaviour to be more passive (El-Bushra and Lopez 2). In turn, women's passivity serves the artificial man, allowing women to be easily hidden behind the hegemonic white male. Public violence can be produced culturally or may result from an oppressive state. A government has the power to enact laws or policy and can play a protective role to vulnerable groups if it wants to (El-Bushra and Lopez 2). When the state is oppressive, violent regimes targeting minority groups may emerge. Gender-related violence is reproduced at both personal and state levels. For instance, rape is used in war as a method of torture, often by state militias, but is further aided by personal attitudes and beliefs (El-Bushra and Lopez 5). To ensure that no bodies are rendered vulnerable in either sphere, the body politic needs to embrace plurality.

5. The Challenge of Incorporating Difference in the Body Politic

Incorporating representations of different bodies in the body politic is challenging. In Elizabeth Grosz's article, "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason," she expands on plural representation in the body politic using "explicit sexualization of knowledges" (26). Historically, the body has been reduced to a singular masculine model, a universal masculinity of knowledges. Grosz explains that the appropriation of knowledge by the male mind left women to function as the body, reducing their desires to those of men and ignoring women's knowledge altogether (38). Subsequently, male systems of knowledge became inscribed on all bodies, securing the centrality of the phallus and male superiority in society and culture. Neutral universal

knowledges do not exist, according to Grosz, because masculine interests are inscribed in the minds of others (42). To renegotiate the maleness of the artificial man, the production of knowledge needs to be rethought and patriarchy revaluated (Grosz 44).

The artificial man will need to be revisited as globalisation challenges the permeability of borders and flows of information. Suddenly, the state's territorial boundary is facing mobile people, ideas, and information (Appadurai 161). The state's strategy of using force and violence to hold the polity together is failing in the face of globalization, states Arjun Appadurai in "Patriotism and Its Futures" (162). When violence fails or is avoided, the movement of people pushing and prodding state boundaries is barely held off by nationalism in a post-national age (Appadurai 167). However, promoting too much nationalism risks producing a reactionary by-product of othering (Appadurai 162). Appadurai says that "minorities are as often made as they are born," an appropriate statement to make in the diasporic twenty-first century (163). Appadurai discusses the genocide against the minority Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an example. Ethno-nationalist ideas in the form of Greater Serbia prompted the main perpetrators, the Serbs, to rape and kill thousands of Bosnian Muslims (Appadurai 163). In the age of globalization, nationalistic discourses are less relevant.

6. The Role of Post-Nationalism

Post-nationalism, abolishing the state in favour of large-scale political loyalties and de-territorialized states, is in conflict with the state, prompting them to react forcibly or violently to the threats of post-national Others (Appadurai 169). New social forms are needed, ones that are more fluid and less organized (Appadurai 168).

Interestingly, multicultural states have emerged that do not react violently to immigrants. Appadurai gives the example of the United States, a global superpower with permeable borders and a top destination for immigrants (169). On the surface, the U.S. is prosperous, full of opportunity, and free. Yet, the growing xenophobia in the U.S. suggests resistance to their own plurality. The inability of the state to incorporate difference may mean that it could be overcome by "an unbounded fantasy space" (Appadurai 170). If the U.S., the birthplace of 'The American Dream', is unable to be multicultural, it prompts the question: What does a tolerant, plural, borderless place look like?

Canada is often stereotyped as a successfully inclusive state, but many scholars have argued that this is a myth. In Eva Mackey's *House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada,* she disagrees with Canada's multicultural policy and ideology, saying that despite it being ingrained in Canadian identity, it does not *actually* celebrate difference (11). The notion of multiculturalism places an English-Canadian majority at the center and other cultures at the periphery (Mackey 11). The mere existence of other cultures upholds the multicultural myth of inclusivity in the Canadian national identity (Mackey 12). Canada's plural identity makes it unique from other forms of nationhood because it is constantly negotiating its identity, which Mackey identifies as constant "crisis" (18). Subsequently, Canada's lack of a homogenous identity promotes the idea of inclusivity. Instead of a "national cultural homogeneity," there is white Anglophone dominance (Mackey 18). Domination of other groups is not a new idea in Canada.

Nation-building in Canada involved uprooting Indigenous communities from their lands and confining them to reserves, enabling the settlers to transform

"wilderness" into "civilisation" (Mackey 20). Grave injustices against Indigenous peoples were viewed by the white, English settlers as progress and essential to Western nation-building: "the project specifies a (Western) *belief system* within which continuous moral and physical 'improvement' -- progress -- is seen as necessary and natural" (Mackey 21). For improvements to be made, the people needed to be "governable". Flexible and adaptable strategies were employed, allowing Canada to appear inclusive when they were actually colonizing. Mackey notes that while Canada lacks a homogenous identity, "the shared belief in progressive nation-hood based on Western principles" is strongly apparent (21). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police brought alternative forms of Western nation-building to the Indigenous peoples. Canadian Mounties have been historically viewed by Canadians as the calm, peaceful negotiators to the Indigenous peoples during settlement rather than the enforcers of oppressive, assimilation practices (Mackey 48). Compared to the U.S. and Britain, the Mounties' methods seemed fair and just, and were thus institutionalized in the Indian Act of 1876 (Mackey 49). While the Mounties, and subsequently the Canadian government, appear to be tolerant and plural, their establishment and espousal of laws and borders on Indigenous land is evidence of the opposite. Although many would claim that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a milestone on the path to reconciliation, Mackey argues that Canada remains anti-multicultural (21). Multiculturalism in Canada, viewed as a strong ideological belief, alienates groups, according to Mackey, and thus is not the site of Appadurai's "unbounded fantasy space" (170). Instead, Canada's ideological dilemma is evidence that contemporary notions of the body politic need to be re-written.

7. Conclusion

Re-writing the body politic requires creative and careful exploration of alternative representations of the polity that are capable of incorporating all standpoints. In practice, this requires an open-mind and active listening, efforts which will invite marginalized groups, typically excluded by the body politic, to share their standpoints. I have argued that individual bodies cannot be adequately represented in the body politic, offering Canada's indigenous peoples as an example, and suggest that an alternative for the body politic is needed.

What will an alternative to the traditional body politic look like? How can the body politic be re-written? In "Embodying Strangers," Sarah Ahmed rejects the idea that bodies will *ever* unify because of the way they are read; differences between bodies are not inherent, they only *seem* alternative or strange when viewed from pre-existing power hierarchies, thus preventing their unification. As space is being renegotiated to maintain and uphold power inequalities, bodies are being partially remade through interactions at the tactile level, the skin (Ahmed 42). Skin, the affective opening to other bodies, simultaneously connects and separates bodies. Ahmed says that the "body carries traces of the differences that are registered in the bodies of others," suggesting that the body is not a neutral plane, but skin is already inscribed with privilege (44). Each body is bound, contained, and bordered by skin; overcoming the binary created by skin is difficult, like crossing physical borders of imagined states and communities. Instead of differences between bodies being mapped out and marked with boundaries, Ahmed proposes looking *through* the skin to see how differences are formed *between* bodies and to understand how these differences are read in the bodies of others (44). By analyzing the lived experience of bodies inside and out, Ahmed seeks to understand how

“the very habits and gestures of marking out bodily space involve differentiating ‘others’ into familiar (assimilable, touchable) and strange (unassimilable, untouchable)” (44). The skin can be used to realize and address difference in a way that current paradigms cannot. Instead of trying to find enough space to represent all bodies in the body politic, Ahmed’s proposal of looking through the skin addresses the real issue: inclusion.

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The Black Woman's Body, Disability and Reproductive Futurism in Kindred

Radia Mbengue

Kindred, by Octavia Butler, tells the story of Dana, who travels through time, navigating systematic racism and the oppression of slavery on her journey. Through Dana's story, Butler sheds light on the oppressive bio-politics of slavery which particularly target the black woman's body and her reproductive capabilities. In this paper, I will analyze how a white racist society in *Kindred* relies on slavery to protect the future of the white child through the exploitation of black women's bodies. My analysis draws on Lee Edelman's concept of reproductive futurism which argues that participation in the different aspects of life are solely done to create a better future for the next generations and thus the white child in the novel.

Reproductive futurism is a term coined by Lee Edelman in his work *The Future is Kid Stuff*. Edelman describes futurism as the understanding that "the Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention" (3). A society's socio-political and economic features all revolve around the child and the construction of a prefecture future for the child to live in. Edelman goes further into arguing that the race of the child also matters. Indeed, in most instances, it is the future of the white child which is cherished and protected at the expense of the black child and racialized bodies living in the present. Generally, scholars agree that the relationship between race and reproduction is heavily embedded within racism dating back to colonialism. Writers like Jacqueline Jones and Angela Davis have also reflected on the political implication of the activities black women do for their slave community but also for their masters and have concluded that black women's

work and bodies are the center of the exploitative system of slavery. Drawing on *Kindred* and incorporating Alison Kafer's argument that racialized disabled bodies are queer, I will demonstrate that a body considered disabled will affect how it is treated and how its reproductive capabilities are perceived and used for the future of the white child.

My analysis of the novel *Kindred* in relation to reproductive futurism reveals that black women's bodies are deemed abled-bodied or useful when they are capable of producing more slaves to contribute to the wealth of whites. Black women's reproductive capabilities are thus important to whites because they represent a way to colonize their bodies but also control their offspring. In contrast, black bodies are deemed queer when they do not add to the wealth of the system or do not follow the norm of how black women's bodies should be exploited. Edelman's claims can furthermore be seen through the plot of *Kindred*. What is interesting about her time travel is the fact that it is triggered by a succession of events that endangers the life of Rufus, a white child she finds herself having to protect to keep the slaves of the plantation alive but also to assure her own future. At this point, protecting the child becomes a necessity, "Not only to insure the survival of one accident-prone small boy, but to insure my family's survival, my own birth" (Butler 29). Indeed, without Rufus staying alive and marrying her ancestor, she will not be born in the future.

Dana and all the slaves of the plantation find themselves having to work to protect the future of the child, Rufus. While the slaves of the plantation work to add to the wealth Rufus will inherit once his father dies, Dana realizes that her life is tightly linked to Rufus staying alive influencing the power dynamics of their relationship; "I didn't want him to get the idea that he could control it. Especially if it turned out that he

really could" (Butler 23). The slaves also represent the future wealth of the child as they are his future property. Drawing on Nira Yuval-Davis' observations in "Women and the biological reproduction of the nation," we can see how in the past, the institution of slavery has relied on the reproductive capabilities of women to acquire more wealth and build the future of generations of white children. In her paper, Yuval-Davis argues that the social position of women in intersection with their ethnicity and race "affect and can sometimes override their reproductive rights" (17). This is obvious in *Kindred*, in which black women are just seen as bodies adding labor to the plantation by producing more slaves. In this sense, black women are building a whole nation since "in addition to biological motherhood, women are producers in their own right, and reproduce the workforce through their role as carers and community activists" (Yuval-Davis 17).

Black women in particular suffer from this system because "she has to surrender her child-bearing to alien and predatory economic interests" (Davis 84). Jones similarly argues in her essay, "My Mother was Much of a Woman", that black women face a double burden "represented in extreme form the dual nature of all women's labor within a patriarchal, capitalist society: the production of goods and services and the reproduction and care of members of a future work force" (236). This is relevant and takes place in both Butler's novel, the American past and throughout history. In the novel *Kindred*, not accepting this system in which black women are supposed to prepare their children to be slaves and build the future of the white class will only result in punishment. As an example, when Dana fails to save Rufus's father from dying Rufus blames her for it "you let him die" (Butler, 209). Punishing black women for failing to contribute to the "lives" of the white class also becomes a way to control them and control their community of slaves. As Yuval-Davis argues, "the rape of the black woman

was not exclusively an attack upon her. Indirectly, its target was also the slave community as a whole" (15).

Another scholar, Jacqueline Jones, also discusses the political importance of black women nurturing under slavery. In an era in which black women's reproductive capabilities and the labor they add to the plantation were seen as one, it is important to see how the de-humanization of their bodies turned everything they do into a way to build the future of the white child. Jones argues that "[t]asks performed within the family context - childcare, cooking, and washing clothes, for example... contributed to the health and welfare of the slave population, thereby increasing the actual value of the master's property" (238). Simple activities such as getting married, bearing a child, having a family or social life all had a political implication in the American slave-holding culture before 1865.

In *Kindred*, whether Dana lives or dies depends on Rufus' survival and his father, Tom Weylin, is aware of that and reminds Dana of this complex relationship. Even if Dana does not give birth to more slaves for the plantation, her body is still being used for labor and to protect the life of the white child. When she finally kills Rufus after refusing to physically give herself to him, she loses her arm because of the act. Her body physically suffers the consequence of being queer or not fully giving herself to what Rufus represents. In the novel *Kindred*, there is less choice for the other women of the plantation as they must physically give themselves to the white class by producing more slaves but also by rape. This also affects the relationship they have with other members of their community, as Davis points out, "the black woman is related to the slaveholding class as a collaborator" (82). Those collaborators, although valued by the white class, are

heavily criticized within their communities which does not see their collaboration as an act of survival.

Understanding how controlling the reproductive capabilities of black women affects kinship is important in the context of this paper because it sheds light on how accepting the exploitation of their bodies is a way to survive but also a form of resistance. Indeed, as Davis argues, "at the same time she could realize that while her productive activity was wholly subordinated to the will of the master, it was nevertheless proof of her ability to transform things" (89). Black women were the only ones really able to transform the lives of members of their communities.

Although Dana does not produce slaves, in a way she produces willing slaves by, for example, arranging the rape of her ancestor Alice by Rufus. Dana is thus still participating in the creation of Rufus' future by providing him with a black body to abuse. However, Davis points out that the subordination of the black female body was "essential to the survival of the community. Not all people have survived enslavement; hence her survival-oriented activities were themselves a form of resistance" (89). In this instance, for the survival of her body and life, Alice must sacrifice herself by giving her body to Rufus. The importance of Alice going to Rufus herself has a greater symbolism as the slavery system does not only rely on black people giving their labor and bodies to the system, but also interiorizing the acceptance of such treatment for the future. Finally, controlling the reproductive capabilities of women by making them produce more slaves through rape was a way to control the whole community as "the master hoped that once the black man was struck by his manifest inability to rescue his women from sexual assaults of the master, he would begin to experience deep seated doubts

about his ability to resist at all" (Davis, 97). This is how the future of the nation and the future of the child is assured.

Black women's bodies and reproductive capabilities are also exploited in relation to disability. Drawing on Alison Kafer's definition of the term in her book chapter *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, a common understanding of disability conveys the idea that certain bodies are seen as not fit or unable to protect the future of the child as well as the idea that some genes as being viewed as negative while others are not.

In the context of *Kindred*, being black is seen as the negative gene that cannot be removed, no matter the relationship developed with the master. Imagining blackness as a form of political disability is important to analyze in the context of this novel because as Kafer argues, "Race and sexual orientation are often left out of disability debates, disability is being seen as more biological the political" (81). Furthermore, this will shed light on the binaries drawn on the capabilities of the body as able or disabled and how this reflects on reproductive rights.

The novel *Kindred* presents a certain understanding of how black female bodies are considered either abled bodies or disabled/queer. Being queer is thus not contributing to the dynamics of reproductive futurism. An abled body is one that can add to the value of the plantation by giving birth to more slaves. Here the understanding of disability thus relies on black women's reproductive capabilities. In contrast, a queer body is one that does not comply to these rules or does not add to the wealth of the future white child. Although Carrie is one of the only physically disabled character in the novel because she is mute, her disability is forgiven because she marries and produces more slaves for the plantation. The way queerness is understood in relation to disability is essential to comprehend in the context of this paper, because it helps understand how

the institutions of slavery are maintained by making the slaves themselves internalize what is considered queer. Carrie, the disabled character herself, is disturbed by the way Dana dresses; “She nodded, then plucked at my blouse, at my pants. She frowned at me. Was that the problem, then— hers and the Weylins” (Butler, 71). On top of that, Dana has never been pregnant which also disrupts the norms of the time she travels to, “no children by now? He frowned. You must be barren then” (Butler, 91). Dana is thus the only woman whose reproductive capabilities are not exploited for the future of the nation in Kindred and it is a problem as Edelman explains that “queerness names the side of those not ‘fighting for the children,’ the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism” (3). Being queer is thus also stepping outside of how this dynamic sets the norms of what is considered an abled body. This sheds light on the status of the black woman which Jones argues is dependent on the master; “when he needed a field hand, her status as able-bodied slave took precedence over gender consideration and she was forced to toil alongside her menfolk” (249).

In the context of the novel, an able-bodied woman is thus one who has accepted the loss of control of her body and consent to the institution of slavery in contrast to a queer one. “Not me” she said, he knows where I sleep at night” (Butler 183) says Alice once she understands how losing her reproductive rights and control over her body protects her. Remaining queer, however, leaves Dana with no choice other to kill Rufus, the child she was supposed to protect. Indeed, it is queer enough to love and hate Rufus at the same time but by not accepting being raped and losing control of her reproductive rights, she challenges the whole system of slavery and the dynamics of reproductive futurism, which I would say, cost her to lose her arm.

This paper has illustrated why it matters to control black women's bodies for economic reason but also for the sake of reproductive futurism. However, it also matters to control queer bodies because those have an influence because they threaten the norm. Indeed, in the context of the novel, one could say that Dana has influence not only on Alice's will to resist but also on Rufus' development from child to a less cruel slave-master than his father was; like when Dana says "maybe plant a few ideas in his mind that would help both me and the people who would be his slaves in the years to come" (Butler 69). Queer bodies are thus a threat to reproductive futurism. As Edelman says it so well "The sacralization of the Child thus necessitates the sacrifice of the queer" (28). While some might see black women as contributors to reproductive futurism, I believe that rape and no reproductive rights also symbolize a form of resistance through the body because by sacrificing their bodies, black women protect their slave communities. In that way, even if black women were maintaining the institutions of slavery and assuring the future of the white child, they were also protecting their communities. It was an act of survival, whether recognized or not. On that note, analyzing the various ways through which black women used queerness as an act of resistance to challenge reproductive futurism requires further analysis.

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The Political Body: An Analysis of the Body/State Relationship

Tayana Simpson

The italicized quotations throughout this essay reflect on the state/body relationship. As you read through the essay, pay attention to the way that the quotations change with the writing, and the push/pull that exists between the 'state' and the 'body.'

> *I discover that your skin can be lifted layer by layer, I pull, it lifts off, it coils above your knees, I pull starting at the labia, it slides the length of the belly, fine to extreme transparency, I pull starting at the loins, the skin uncovers, the round muscles and trapezii of the back, it peels off to the nape of the neck, I arrive under your hair, m/y fingers traverse its thickness, I touch your skull, I grasp it with all my fingers, I press it, I gather the skin over the whole of the cranial vault, I tear off the skin brutally beneath the hair, I reveal the beauty of the shining bone traversed by blood-vessels, m/y two hands crush the vault and the occiput behind, now m/y fingers bury themselves in the cerebral convolutions, the meninges are traversed by cerebrospinal fluid flowing from all quarters, m/y hands are plunged in the soft hemispheres I seek the medulla and the cerebellum tucked in somewhere underneath, now I hold all of you silent immobilized every cry blocked in your throat your*

last thoughts behind your eyes caught in m/y hands, the daylight is no purer than the depths of m/y heart m/y dearest one.

- *The Lesbian Body*, Monique Wittig 17.

Violence upon the body is enacted at multiple levels. Within the state, there are unique and drastic measures such as abortion laws, citizenship, labour, and imprisonment that are taken to ensure the continued normalization of the 'right' kind of body, and these measures inscribe violence upon the skin. Many resist the state's influence, utilizing their bodies in ways that subvert the normalized discourse of the political body; they seek to shock, to make blatant their difference, and to challenge the supposed necessity of normality. Yet despite this challenge, the body is a being in constant negotiation with its surroundings, and its permeability is inescapable; attempts at discipline and resistance exist as a tug of war between the state and the individual, who are both seeking to define themselves, and who use the actions of the other in their attempts at definition. How does the state create the political body through discourse and discipline, and how does this impact the physical body? How is the body used for resistance and rebellion? Does this resistance signify actual bodily rebellion and escape from normality, or does it simply reinforce the dominant narrative?

1. The Formation and Continuation of the Political Body

On the other side is the river / and I cannot cross it / on the other side is the sea / I cannot bridge it

- *Borderlands: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa 161.

The men of history formed the body politic, which was intended to serve as a definition of government in relation to the body: the arms, the parliament, the legs, the senate, the brain, the judiciary, the heart, the prime minister. Moira Gatens discusses the intent behind the body politic in terms of who represents, and who is represented (Gatens 21). Gaten's work serves to more narrowly define the citizen, or the political body (22). The political body, a male body, seeks to remove himself from the workings of women, to narrow his surroundings so as to exclude others. And he does exclude women, and more individuals who differ from him. By defining government based solely on male terms, the male "incorporates and so controls and regulates women's bodies in a manner which does not undermine his claim to autonomy, since her contributions are neither visible nor acknowledged" (Gatens 23). Furthermore, as long as the hegemonic male body is reproduced, others will be excluded. The polis is then represented by one body, and one voice (Gatens 23).

In its tendency towards exclusion, the body politic has clearly defined what type of body is most valuable to the state. The strong, white, heterosexual male is the body that publicly serves the state through government, the military, the workforce, and the economy (bodies of colour are frequently exploited to serve the state). This political body has served as *the* political body through the state's reinforcement using borders, citizenship, identity politics, discipline, and socio-cultural practices (not an exhaustive list). Beginning with citizenship, women, by virtue of their relegation to the private sphere, were initially excluded from citizenship rights (Walby 382, 385). Eileen Boris states that women's association with unpaid labor, as well as their historical lack of 'bodily autonomy or integrity" informs our idea of who the dominant political body is (163). This also relates to a discussion on borders, which Gloria Anzaldúa states "are set

up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge" (25). Even when individuals are able to cross borders, to merge into a society that may not be their own, they are haunted by their lack of belonging, needing to shed their 'otherness' to be accepted (Boris 164). From the beginning, the dominant, white, masculine, heterosexual body was reinforced by entry to the state, even for those who may be present within the state but were not afforded the right to exist as a citizen.

Ladelle McWhorter summarizes Michel Foucault's sense of 'discipline' as techniques utilized by the state to mould the body, identifying that techniques were utilized to 'retool' the body, turning any body into a soldier, pupil, labourer, or other role (204). Through the military and other institutions, the state exploited the body for its use, creating a model citizen that shoulders a gun, marches, defends, and more. According to Foucault, "This form of power [discipline] applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects" (781). Individual subjection is what defines who we are, yet it is heavily influenced by the state. Thus, the individual creates an identity based on an idea of a whole body, one that learns how to conform to techniques that allow it to serve the state through the military, education, and/or the workforce.

Lastly, sociocultural practices serve to further the normalization of the male political body. Susan Wendell discusses the enforcement of bodily normality in society, remarking that it is almost entirely self-governed (88). Norms such as cosmetics, shaving, hair dressing, dieting, skincare, and the like "are not forced upon women by

anyone in particular," and as a result, "they appear to be natural or voluntary while they wield tremendous power in women's lives" (87). Similar to Foucault's statement on identity, women internalize and define themselves based upon prescribed norms that reinforce their position within the private sphere, and reinforce the dominant political body as male. Theodore Schatzki and Wolfgang Natter identify that social institutions are secured through bodily activity, including consumption, desire, constitution, and so on (4-5). In a sense, sociocultural practices could be seen as a subset of Foucault's disciplinary techniques, in that women, who have been deemed to not possess the qualities necessary for the public sphere, must follow specific norms that relegate them to activities that are not as valued within society.

2. The Political Body Inscribed

The more I shrivel the more I shrink, the more you grow and develop.

- *The Lesbian Body,* Monique Wittig 162.

In remaking the body, these methods inscribe norms upon the skin. In most cases, the inscription is a violent one, wrought with power relations that serve to demonstrate the authority of normality and the subservience of the body to the state. Foucault discusses the level of power present within identity, saying, "the exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others… Power exists only when it is put into action… This also means that power is not a function of consent" (788). Rather, power exists in relation to others; for our purposes, it exists between the state and the body only when they come into relation with one another, when they attempt to utilize the other to

define themselves. Susan Wendell notes that our proximity to normality is highly present in the creation of our identity. That is, we seek to define ourselves as though we are as 'normal' as possible, using the definition of the white, masculine body (88). This comes to be in a few ways: changing our looks, changing our behaviour, or having our behaviour and choices modified for us based on our conformity or nonconformity. Regarding looks and behaviour, Kathy Peiss notes that cosmetics, although signifying a newfound independence for women, were initially created out of an anxiety about the bare faces of women (166-167). Andrea Elizabeth Shaw relates the trends in Black culture (straight hair, weaves, natural, ghetto) as attempts by black women to renegotiate their identity in a space they never seem to truly belong (22). For bodies that do not automatically fit within the white, hyper gendered body, identification can be a constant process of conforming and non-conforming, at times in a violent manner (such as black women lightening their skin).

There is also evidence of external entities forcibly conforming other bodies into hegemonic roles. Rosemary Nossif notes that the lack of autonomy surrounding women's reproductive rights stems directly from the normalized male political body, saying:

> They [reproductive laws] are… shaped by traditional attitudes about women… that they are incompetent to make decisions and are unaccountable for their actions… [and] that once a woman is pregnant, her citizenship can be abridged and her rights to privacy and equality shared with her physician, the State, and the fetus she is supporting (61).

Nossif's statement signifies the physical violence that bodies who are not included in the political body can undergo as a result of their exclusion. The state enacts reproductive

injustice, and at times physical harm, upon women who they do not see as inherently valuable to the state. Another example of violence upon bodies is the treatment of detainees in American prison, specifically those who attempt to use their bodies via hunger strikes. Reesia Orzeck notes that the state often force-feeds detainees who are hunger striking to silence them, since it disrupts the states ability to use detainees for security and political gains (32). Orzeck also is sure to note that it can be argued that force feeding was used as a form of torture, with guards:

> … restraining even those who were willing to accept enteral (tube) feeding; feeding detainees so much that they became ill; inserting the nasal tubes roughly; inserting them anew with every feeding rather than allowing the detainees to keep them in between feedings; and using the same tubes for multiple detainees (33)

This extreme violence within force-feeding exemplifies a micro example of the macro issue – the guard represents the state, who is physically forcing the citizens body to do something it may not want to do, removing the autonomy and rights from a body that dared to resist. Thus, the social practices and methods of discipline that society and the state enact to ensure normality do not stay at the level of abstract. Rather, they have specific and unique impacts on the physical body and the skin, often in an invasive and violent way

I take you by surprise, I tackle you, I take possession of you…

- *The Lesbian Body*, Monique Wittig 71.

3. **Resistance: Utilizing the Body**

> *I announce that you are here alive though cut to pieces, I search hastily for your fragments in the mud, m/y nails scrabble at the small stones and pebbles, I find your nose a part of your vulva your labia your clitoris, I find your ears one tibia then the other, I assemble you part by part, I reconstruct you, I put your eyes back in place, I appose the separated skin edge to edge, I hurriedly produce tears vaginal juice saliva in the requisite amount, I smear you with them at all your lacerations, I put m/y breath in your mouth, I warm your ears your hands your breasts, I introduce all m/y air into your lungs…*
>
> - *The Lesbian Body,* Monique Wittig 80.

Other forms of resistance exist in freak shows, music, pornography, and even simply existence as a deviant body (again, note that this is not an exhaustive list). Andrea Elizabeth Shaw, after discussing black women's identity politics, discusses how fat, Black women challenge the narrative, especially when they "harness strength from the erotic by reveling in [their] fatness and blackness all at the same time – aware of [their] sexuality and not ashamed of it" (72). Shaw calls fat black women a "repository of latent energy" through their engagement with western ideals of the body as a result of their existence (131). We can assume that any body that challenges the dominant narrative can serve the same purpose by harnessing their latent energy, and that is why the state is so fearful of difference. We can also see why unrelated activities such as freak shows, porn, and music serve as sites of resistance. Within the freak show, 'others' congregate to celebrate and utilize their otherness, critiquing hegemony (Langman 661-

662). Porn follows the same thought; for actors, it can be freeing to participate in an act you are frequently taught is inappropriate, especially if the focus is female pleasure (Langman 669). Many of these actions focus on subversion, taking a hegemonic narrative and redefining for yourself as an act of resistance.

Music follows a similar violation, specifically techno music. As Bernd Herzogenrath discusses, music can function as the unconscious of the body politic, as an experiment with new social and political realities (233). Herzogenrath delves into techno as a site of resistance, noting that "in its use of polyrhythmic beats, its use of machines, and its futuristic themes, techno seemed to directly engage with the social and political issues of twentieth century urban industrial America…" (246). Techno raves are generally held in abandoned places that once signified industry and production (critiquing capitalism) and the collective dancing serves to remove "the gaze"; the group transforms the body by celebrating together (Herzogenrath 247-248). These sites of resistance utilize the body in ways that work above the skin, yet challenge the dominant narrative and work to resist normalization. They take actions subscribed by the state and use them in ways the state may not expect nor authorize, which allows for personal meaning and reclamation of the body.

More violent methods of resistance also exist. Much in the same way that hegemonic discourse can violently imprint upon the skin with its meaning, individuals seeking to remake their identity work to change that meaning through physical inscription. As mentioned above, the state enacts violence upon the bodies of prisoners through force feeding. Orzeck identifies hunger striking as a form of political speech that exemplifies the denial of other forms of speech such as speaking in front of a court, or even being seen by the general public (42). By hunger striking, especially within a

prison, the "internal ordeal transforms the body's surface, turning it into a legible text" utilized for a purpose (42). The prisoner's body is used in a sometimes fatal way that symbolizes their efforts at resisting their dominant narrative, which is that of the state as protector while actually mistreating detainees. Body modification is also a significant portion of bodily resistance. Lauren Langman, in her discussion of the freak show, identifies body modifications as a signifier of belonging to the 'other' (664). In much the same way that normality is reproduced through identity, so is otherness. Langman states that, "many adherents of such body modification regard their embrace of the grotesque as a rejection of the alienation, sterility, emptiness and inauthenticity of modernity" (664).

Victoria Pitts defines body modification in a similar way, as a method of blatantly displaying your deviance, with the body as a project necessary to self-identity (664-665). Pitts shares the stories of a number of different individuals who participate in 'violent' reidentification; all see their modifications as affirmations of belonging to the other, a signifier of their queerness or deviance, and a rebellion against normative expectations of desire and bodily performance (446-451, 458). These modifications serve to re-signify the body as part of a community that does not prescribe to dominant narratives. They are a physical re-inscription of the skin. The body is a site rife with potentiality, and methods of resistance largely focus on reclaiming and redefining identity on personal terms, removing the states influence from your corporeality, and remaking yourself in your own terms.

the moon eclipses the sun. / la diosa lists us. / we don the feathered
mantle / and change our fate

- *Borderlands: The New Mestiza,* Glora Anzaldúa 221

4. The Meaning of Resistance

> *I question an absence so strange that it makes a hole within m/y body. Then I know in absolutely in fallible fashion that 1 am in need of you, 1 require your presence, 1 seek you, 1 implore you, 1 summon you to appear you who are featureless without hands breasts belly vulva limbs thoughts, you at the very moment when you are nothing more than a pressure an insistence within m/y body.*
>
> - *The Lesbian Body,* Monique Wittig 35-36

Can the body ever escape the state? There is evidence that even acts of resistance simply utilize state-created definitions, concepts, and ideals. Thus, resistance serves less as resistance and more as a rereading of hegemony in terms that may simply reaffirm it. Pitts states:

> The poststructuralist perspective points out that discursive moves are never wholly original and that bodies are neither naturally pristine nor blank canvases; rather, body modification proceeds within the context of forces that socially inscribe the body-subject, producing meanings that make new discursive creations possible (445).

Despite the possibility of "new discursive creations", this identifies a reality about the body that is inescapable – it is inscribed by its environment (Pitts 445). There is little we can do to ensure our body is wholly ours, wholly neutral, and void of societal influence, even if we use our bodies to create new narratives. Furthermore, the body may be read differently than we intend it to. Pitts also discusses that both cosmetic surgery and

branding have been co-opted in ways that enforce the dominant body (454). In this way, body modification may perpetuate normality and contribute to a culture where masculinity is the norm. In a sense, the body cannot be separated from the culture in which it participates.

Even existence cannot escape its connection with hegemony. Wendell, in her work on normality, states that those who are "other" serve to reinforce those who are normal. We know what normal is *not*, and we strive to ensure that we avoid that – seeing them makes it easier to understand the line of abnormality (Wendell 88). This is present in Shaw's book on fat, black women who, when owning their strength, may serve as resistance to the norm (as mentioned), but also serve as an "opposing identity anchor," affirming what a legitimate identity is (19). The woman, by virtue of her fatness and blackness, serves as the very clear antithesis to the white woman, and helps the white woman define herself (Shaw 50). Although reclaiming your body as "other" inscribes personal meaning, it can also reaffirm the dominant political body unintentionally.

What is the answer to the question of identity? To the question of body? How do we create ourselves? How do we resist hegemony? *Is my body my own?* There are few ways to answer these questions beyond continuing down the path of identity and personal corporeality. The body and the state exist as a tug of war, each one trying to gain authority and power without realizing that if one lets go, they both fall. Can there be an end? Herzogenrath defines the body as a collective, and as am environment, not an independent entity (32). Foucault theorizes that the solution is not identification, but refusal of identification:

> Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state's institutions but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state (784).

In this way, perhaps identity is not the solution, but the problem. We have seen that the state works to define the body, and the body works to define itself within the state. These actions inflict violence, both in the form of discipline and resistance. They also work in concert with one another; without the body, the state would have nothing to define itself by. Without the state, the body would have no measure of normality or abnormality, nothing to conform to or resist against. Can the state and the body ever exist without the other?

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