

Keyword Project

Mackenzie Norman

Entry 1

“The question what is a body, is the question what is it to eat: Take, eat; this is my body.”(Brown)

When I think of body in terms of colonialism I first think of the human body, and the legislation and control often exerted on bodies by colonial powers. In a literary sense, I thought of Quentin Compsons obsession with the purity of his sisters body in *The Sound and The Fury* which you can read as colonialism (is the old confederate south not a bastion of colonialism) being one of the multitude of anachronisms that tear Quentin apart. I chose body because I think it is one of the most interesting things that is legislated , etc. How can something that is only yours , only touches you, only affects you be justifiably controlled, and what “justification” have colonial powers used. On the other side of this, I am equally interested in looking at how bodies are used as tools in resistance to colonialism. The Fall illustrated this well with the use of body as a shield, and in the documentary with the women clashing with the police with their bodies uncovered.

From OED we can see it etymologically germanic, with roots most likely from the old german *botah*. Also mentioned is a connection to the latin *Corpus* especially the idea of a body as a collection i.e *corpus christi* (the collection of writing on christ)

Various Definitions from OED

- “The physical or mortal nature, state, or aspect of man. Frequently in in (the) body, out of (the) body and variants, sometimes contrasted with in spirit.”
- “The complete physical form of a person or animal; the assemblage of parts, organs, and tissues that constitutes the whole material organism.”
- “A united or organized whole; an aggregate of individuals characterized by some common attribute; a collective mass.”
- “Substance, as opposed to representation, shadow, etc.; reality.”

Looking at these definitions, all of them will be very interesting to interrogate as this term continues. Already I feel like I could look at the fall with the definition of collective mass, I am also very interested in contrasting the body with the spirit and will be looking for that in our readings.

Entry 2

“From crucifixion to eucharist; from the blood to the bloodless sacrifice; from sacrifice to feeding. The solution to the problem of war. Bread and wine, this is my body”

Natalie Diaz begins by writing “I’ve been taught bloodstones can cure a snakebite, can stop the bleeding”, immediately situating the body as nature, and creating an interesting idea that a stone of blood can stop bleeding. Through out the whole poem she situates the body as nature and vice-versa , showing that the body is of the same natural things “Your hips are quartz ... two rose-horned rams ascending a soft desert wash ”, both the internal and external of the body are natural. This poem is intensely physical, any mention of the mind is placed squarely in the memory of a physical process: “I learned *Drink* in a country of drought. ”

Continuing, she says:

“The seeds sleep like geodes beneath hot feldspar sand
until a flash flood bolts the arroyo, lifting them
in its copper current, opens them with memory—
they remember what their god whispered
into their ribs: Wake up and ache for your life. ”

The ribs are some of the most important parts of the human body, especially when you separate ‘the head from the heart’ the ribs protect all that makes a body alive – mechanically speaking. As the idea of the body being a mechanism, the usage of whispered implies breath; a whisper is on the breath - and so god breathes into their ribs – their lungs. A myth of creation in essence.

Entry 3

“The divorce between soul and body takes the life out of the body, reducing the organism to a mechanism, dead in itself but given an artificial life, an imitation of life, by will or power: sovereignty is an artificial soul, giving life and motion to the whole body. ”

For this journal entry I wanted to look at the contrast between the other women and Lucia in *Nervous Conditions*. In the story Lucia was by far the most interesting character to me. She is a foil to every other woman. To the point of nearing masculinity, but despite her masculine qualities, her body is most often described of that of a woman. *“But unlike my mother her complexion*

always had a light shining from underneath it.” I think this is what makes her a novel contradiction. She is feminine in body surely - even becoming pregnant. “Lucia had needs as all women do” However when describing her giving birth it is minimized “Lucia, who by this time had acquired the status of mother” . She encompasses mind-body dualism in an interesting way simply because her body is so divorced from her mind (and her mind is so divorced from the lived reality of patriarchy). This is fascinating because it results in her near infiltrating the staunch patriarchy of Babamakuru in a way that none of the other women in the novel can. She especially contrasts with Nyasha, who despite being better educated uses her body as a weapon, whereas I argue that Lucia, eschew the typical divide and contradiction inherent to dualism, is able to be far more successful by being whole.

Entry 4

“In deadly combat, i.e., in destructive copulation.” Locked in battle, in holy deadlock. Wedlock is the continuation of war by other means”

I found the intro to Paradise Now being interesting because the woman is dressed in very form-fitting and accentuating clothing. This immediately clashes with the guards, military, masculine clothing. Immediately - the viewer is clued into the conflict and in particular conflict that feels ‘inherent’ (at least to our gendered eyes) in some way. Continuing the body as a weapon we see the men using theirs as literal weapons.

Continuing to look at the topless women in Everything must Fall. The idea of the feminine body as a weapon is an interesting idea. Returning to the definition, we can see body as a corpse and so to bare ones body is to bare ones corpse. To view the idea of conflict being something that creates corpses then it can be inferred that to be in conflict is to create a body; thus to create a body (perhaps by going topless) is to escalate to conflict, or to make yourself a corpse. Additionally by viewing sex namely, copulation, as the creation of body then we can continue the act of going topless, (which is viewed socially as sexual) as an escalation to sex and so an escalation to the creation of a body – a corpse.

Entry 5

Going from the OED of “A united or organized whole; an aggregate of individuals characterized by some common attribute; a collective mass” I want to look at Animals People as conflict between two bodies, the Kampani and the “organized whole” of the Zafar, Farouq, and all of Animals people. We can see Farouq as “Zafar’s right hand man”. This turn of phrase usually just signifies closeness (literally being on his right , so close he is touching his hand) but as a (unfortunately, in recent political climates) fan of combat sports. I take this to mean he also acts as Zafar’s literal right hand. One of his 8 (9 if we

are talking about Lethwei¹) - weapons. Before looking more at analogy that I have perhaps already given up, Zafar is most likely the head of the aggregated individuals, but through the lens of combat, Zafar's hunger strike would run counter to that - since to lose your 'head' or consciousness is to lose the fight - near unilaterally. Thus why I brought up Lethwei, since we must jive the use of the head as the weapon, or equally likely, it is simply wrong to assume the aggregate of individuals as being "headed" especially since in not doing so this contrasts them even further from the Kampani.

Meanwhile the Kampani, the corporation responsible, is surely a body, but perhaps one more like the "Khā-in-the-Jar", which is even said here "the Chairman of the Board, alias my little two-headed friend. His advice proves that he too is a selfish cunt and that everyone in this world is out for number one. "This is good," says he, "when Elli doctress is in Amrika, it will give you a chance to get us out of here." Some days later he informs me he has told the other members of the Board, they've passed a resolution welcoming the merger between Somraj and Elli"

This creates an interesting question of not how this fight would play out. A body that is 2 heads on a foetal corpse pitted against a body with a "constant muscular tonus" and no true head.(16) When put like there is no question. The classic analogy of david vs goliath is inverted here, with the weaker 'fighter' being the Kampani while the goliath of Animals people wait. It's "they'll fight if they are forced to come to the court" so much of the book focuses on this question of will the fight happen - not what will the outcome of the fight be.

Entry 6

In reading Animals People and our class discussion about the genre of picaresque (the first time I had heard of such a thing) I was thinking about the role of body in terms of the picaresque - especially the body of the picaro. I mostly approach this from the perspective of Animal from the aforementioned animals people and Bukowski's alter-ego Henry Chianski in Factotum - or really any work by Bukowski, he quite enjoys painting himself as a picaro - mostly because both characters are fond of bragging about their impressive "Lund".

For both Chianski and Animal, their body, inspite of its unpleasant appearance represents a home of sorts. As picaros, their living situations are often non-existent or very meager, so they are forced to find comfort in their body being their only consistent 'home'. Despite this, both characters mistreat their bodies as well, Chianski with booze and Animal with reckless behaviour such as climbing a sharp mango tree. This rejection of care for their body helps endear the picaro to the reader, since so many of us have various neurosis around our body and its inevitable deterioration. So to see a character so free of this fear - in spite of the obvious damage being done is quite endearing.

Looking back to cartesian dualism, these both are interesting characters since they quite embody this (yet also do not). Both are characterized as being

¹Lethwei is a martial art that allows headbutts. <https://www.lawrentian.com/archives/1018119>

incredibly smart, yet neither can remotely control their impulses. However as with Animal on page 244, they humanize themselves by unbelievably controlling themselves, however this often at the cost of what they have led the reader to believe as being their desire. I think some would describe this as being an unreliable narrator, but I think this can in part be attributed not to dishonesty but to the picaros inability to truly introspect on their body. Just as you might not introspect on the needs of your house, they aren't lying; the mind (from where the story is narrated) and the body are simply not in sync.

Entry 7

"The woman gave me and I did eat. Eating is the form of sex. Copulation is oral copulation; when the Aranda ask each other, "Have you eaten?" they mean, "Have you had intercourse?" The schizophrenic girl refused to eat; the case of Simone Weil. Eating is the form of war. Human blood is the life and de lightful food of the warrior. Eating is the form of redemption."

I was shocked (as I think everyone was) by the sexual assault at the end of The Life and Times of Micheal K. Looking at it from a body perspective, There is a question of whether or not K ejaculates at all; "When it was over" does not imply nor reject ejaculation, viewing the people as clearly always trying to extract things from K. it seems logical to assume he did. I think K. being forced to ejaculate is important, From O. Brown "The blood or the soul is the seminal fluid. The fission, or self-alienation which produces this abstract substance, separate from the body but the life of it, is ejaculation. Ejaculation is fission" We can read his ejaculation as fission, the soul leaving the body, death even. The question this raises (returning to ejaculation) is was there a 'soul' to leave the body of K? Looking at the binary of mind and body that cartesian dualism prescribes K's ability to live off next to no food is much more inline with him being someone who is much more of mind than body, since food is often thought as just fuel for the body. However to contrast this, being imprisoned is quite distressing to K, which implies a deep connection to his body and clashes with the stoic refusal to eat.