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# Re-visioning *Body & Society*

LISA BLACKMAN AND MIKE FEATHERSTONE

*Body & Society* has since its inception in 1995 played a prominent role in developing the field of body-studies across the humanities and social sciences. It was edited by Mike Featherstone and Bryan Turner who carried through the innovation and creativity of its companion journal, *Theory, Culture & Society*, in establishing *Body & Society* as one of the key innovators in the field. Since that time the journal has moved beyond the 'sociology of the body' and appealed to a trans-disciplinary audience, including the disciplines of anthropology, art history, communications, cultural history, cultural studies, environmental studies, feminism, film studies, health studies, leisure studies, medical history, philosophy, psychology, religious studies, science studies, sociology and sport studies. The journal has always been characterized by its theoretical openness, reflected in the diverse and wide range of critical approaches to the body reflected in the journal. The journal has also sought to examine a wide range of issues which have arisen from the writings of theorists such as: Baudrillard, Bergson, Bourdieu, Butler, Cixous, Deleuze, Douglas, Elias, Ettinger, Foucault, Haraway, Kristeva, Latour, Mauss, Merleau-Ponty and Simondon. In recent years work on the body has exploded and studies of the body and embodiment have become increasingly central to discussions of technologies, film, media practices, communication, performance, art, regeneration, architecture, labour, dance, affect and life. These are some of the emergent objects, practices and themes that have been enriched

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by a turn to the body and embodiment, and which are reflected in the emergence of a huge and growing body-studies literature. It is at this juncture that we are pleased to announce the re-launch of the journal with a new editorial team. We are seeking to carry through the lineage and innovation of the journal from its inception, alongside a commitment to extending its scope by encouraging conceptual, empirical and methodological innovation in the field.

The new team includes those who have been central to the shaping of body-studies in the UK and beyond, and who have become key figures in the canon. These include Chris Shilling and Nick Crossley, who have both innovated some of the key concepts and explanatory structures which have shaped the sociology of the body. Their work is hugely influential and has become a taken-for-granted set of analytics for approaching bodily matters across the humanities. This can be seen in the range and number of articles submitted to *Body & Society* which draw on and extend this work. We also are pleased to have Roger Burrows on board, who contributes his vast knowledge from the fields of the sociology of health and illness and related disciplines to editorial matters. We are delighted to also welcome Patricia T. Clough to the editorial team. Patricia's expertise and seminal work in introducing the importance of affect to humanities scholars is welcome and, as you will see in this special re-launch issue, we are keen to build on this in our pioneering of body-studies. She brings a wide expertise to the journal from her own lineage in the field of ethnomethodology, working under the tutelage of Norman Denzin, through to her engagements with the philosophical work of Varela and Maturana, Deleuze and Derrida. She will be contributing the 'Afterword' to this special re-launch issue, and will be instrumental in helping to shape the field of body-studies within the academy into the future. Couze Venn will play an invaluable role on the board, sharing and translating the work of Simondon for body-studies scholars, and particularly sharing his wide knowledge of philosophy, postcolonial studies and work on embodied subjectivity in his reformulations of life (human and non-human) for approaching the body and embodiment. We are also very pleased to have Simon Dawes and Tomoko Tamari as our steadfast and trusted editorial managers, helping in the day-to-day running of the journal.

Mike Featherstone will remain as the editor-in-chief and Lisa Blackman will take up the challenge of becoming the new editor of the journal. Mike Featherstone was instrumental in the development of *Theory, Culture & Society* (editor) and *Body & Society*. His work helped to inaugurate the turn to the body across the social sciences and the humanities during the 1980s and 1990s. He has published widely and is particularly known for his pioneering work on consumer culture, the body, identity and the problematic of ageing. His relentless commit-

ment to trans-disciplinarity and providing forums for such exchange and collaboration cannot be overestimated in the growth and innovation of body-studies. Lisa Blackman has been pioneering and developing the area of body-studies at the Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK, since 1994. Her work in the area of embodiment and voice-hearing has been recognized and commended for its innovative approach to mental health research. It has been acclaimed by the Hearing Voices Network and Intervoice, and has been taken up in professional psychiatric contexts as well as making a substantive contribution to the fields of critical psychology and body-studies. Her current research in the area of subjectivity, affect and bodies has been published in *Theory, Culture & Society* as well as other esteemed journals, and will be consolidated in a book to be published by Sage/TCS, *Im/material Bodies: Affect, Relationality and the Problem of Personality*. She has published three books: *Hearing Voices: Embodiment and Experience* (Free Association Books, 2001), *Mass Hysteria: Critical Psychology and Media Studies* (co-authored with Valerie Walkerdine, Palgrave, 2001) and *The Body: The Key Concepts* (Berg, 2008). She is looking forward to helping re-launch *Body & Society*, and to maximize the journal's role in further innovating and shaping the field of body-studies.

The new cover image for the issue perhaps captures some of the commitments of the editorial team in re/visioning the journal at this particular juncture. The image is taken from the work of the Japanese artist Kenji Yoshida (1924–2009) and is titled *La Vie*. Yoshida is one of a generation of artists who faced the horrors of the Second World War and contemplated death as part of life on a grand scale, as well as contemplating the singularity of his own life in his training as a Kamikaze pilot, despite his enduring commitment to pacifism during the war. These experiences, as well as his turning to philosophical and spiritual traditions such as the Mayan traditions in Mexico and Japanese Buddhist philosophy, were central to the beguiling images that he produced collectively under the title, *La Vie*. His images, many of which are distinguishable by their use of the colour black, set amidst gold and silver leaf alongside vibrant colours such as reds, blues, and yellows, transmit a vital force of energy; what Yoshida referred to as the substance of life. Although we might associate the symbolic use of matt blocks of black with death and bereavement, Yoshida was keen to provide detours through these colours to offer a sensation of joy and vitality as part of the movement of life. The images offer an intensity of feeling that, for the artist, disclose the interdependence and interconnection of all living processes and the continuity between life and death that characterizes the living. The images have a rhythmic flow and force of intensity that remind us, perhaps, of another language of life that can't so easily be written but is conveyed with an immediacy through

what Bracha Ettinger terms 'artworking'. We are honoured to have the permission to use one of Yoshida's images as our new cover design, and hope you will join us in the celebration of the living and life, human and non-human, that Kenji Yoshida's oeuvre invites us to participate in.

### Artist's Statement

I paint to tell people the importance of Inochi To Heiwa or Life and Peace. My honorable professor, Furukido Masaru once told me: 'Yoshida, don't take up a rifle, take up painting!' During the Pacific War, Mr Furukido refused to take up arms and spent the rest of his life instructing others in the Pacifist cause. He died among the Vietnamese.

Against his will I became a soldier. I spent days in meditation on Life and Death, witnessing the death of many of my companions and civilians. After the war, I was still alive, and, when I thought about how I should live and what I should do, the lesson my professor once gave me came back to me.

What people consider most important is Life and Peace. The most horrible act that destroys them is war. War should not exist. The only way to build Peace and to give importance to Life consists in giving people mutual confidence to discuss these two values and to try to make them become real. I understood the teaching of my master: 'Yoshida don't take up a rifle, take up painting' as my own mission from the gods, given to me at the same time as life.

Every morning and every evening I express my gratitude for still being healthy today at the age of 83, and I reflect on my own insufficiencies with remorse, praying for the souls of victims that wars produce all around the world. According to my professor's words, I want to transmit my ideas though my painting, as best I can.

Life brightens the most when Peace occurs. Peace is supreme beauty.

Kenji Yoshida, 2007

Translated by Junko Abe

It thus seems timely to re-launch *Body & Society* as the key journal for publishing work related to body-matters, and also to re-position the journal as leading and shaping the trans-disciplinary field of body-studies. In our role as editors we have identified a number of emergent themes that are shaping the field, and these include a renewed interest in relation to *life* and *affect* across the social sciences and humanities. The paradigms of both life and affect break down the distinction between humans and other life forms, as we find in various forms of vitalism (Bergson, Deleuze, Massumi) and echo in debates across the biological and 'environmental' sciences (Varela, Oyama, Lewontin, Margulis, Rose). This is a new post-humanism that examines our communality with other forms of creaturely life and companion species (Haraway), and the need for a non-anthropocentric ethics (Derrida). The focus upon life recognizes the governance and regulation of bodies (biopolitics), as well as investments across diverse practices (media, consumer, biotechnological) in both the materiality and immateriality of bodies as biocapital and biomedica (code, information). The body that organizes such

diverse practices and areas of experience is a body that is open, relational, human and non-human, material, indeterminate, immaterial, multiple, sentient and processual. This suggests a shift to focus on how we can think the relational dimensions of corporeality (what bodies can do, for example), without sidelining the role of disciplining, normalizing and regulative techniques (modification). There is a need to rethink the questions we might ask about bodies, and related concepts such as subjectivity, agency, power, technology, the human, the social and matter.

We welcome suggestions for special issues and have identified areas such as movement, the senses, creaturely life, eating, medicine, biomediation, body and environment, body aesthetics, body and diasporic identity, body-in-therapy, beliefs and body, body and labour, and bio-ethics as key areas for development. We also are keen to encourage readers and authors to take empirical and methodological innovation seriously and to consider what kinds of body are being invoked and enacted, implicitly and explicitly within their own theorizing of bodily matters. We welcome papers from all disciplines and particularly encourage theoretically informed empirical and ethnographic articles, as well as articles which conceptually extend the field of body-studies in novel and innovative ways.

*Editor: Lisa Blackman (Goldsmiths, University of London)*

*Editor-in-chief: Mike Featherstone (Nottingham Trent University)*