

Archaeology of the Body

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Abstract

Under the influence of phenomenological approaches, a semiotic perspective on the body is being replaced in archaeology by analysis of the production and experience of lived bodies in the past through the juxtaposition of traces of body practices, idealized representations, and evidence of the effects of habitual gestures, postures, and consumption practices on the corporal body. On the basis of a shared assumption that social understandings of the body were created and reproduced through associations with material culture, archaeology of the body has proceeded from two theoretical positions: the body as the scene of display and the body as artifact. Today, the body as a site of lived experience, a social body, and site of embodied agency, is replacing prior static conceptions of an archaeology of the body as a public, legible surface.

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CONTENTS

The body—as metaphor for society, as instrument of lived experience, and as surface of inscription—has come to occupy a central place in contemporary social theory. Archaeology, although coming late to this topic, has begun to make critical contributions to writing about the body. With its grounding in the materiality of human experience, archaeology offers to scholarship on the body a unique perspective anchored in bodily physicality. As a discipline that emphasizes repetition over time as the basis for recognizing culturally intelligible practices, archaeology outlines ways that different forms of embodiment were historically produced, reproduced, and transformed. At the same time, archaeologists are intensely aware of the gap that exists between the materiality of the traces of past human experience and the interpretations of those traces that they propose. Archaeological inquiry into the body thus foregrounds the challenges for wider scholarship, both within anthropology and outside it, inherent in the move from apparently solid physical facts to social and cultural understandings.

Explicit archaeological discussion of embodiment is relatively recent, despite the fact

that archaeologists have long offered interpretations of material they recover that imply body practices, body ideals, and differential experiences of the body. Introducing a recent edited volume, Rautman & Talalay (2000, p. 2) identify two well-established senses of the archaeological body: on the one hand, the “physical or skeletal components that define the human species” “seen as a record of ancient diet, health, life span, and physical activities,” and on the other, representations through which “cultural ideas of maleness and femaleness, masculinity and femininity, are played out.” Neither of these senses of the archaeological body is particularly new. Classic archaeological works regularly identified certain objects as body ornaments and discussed the potential or actual uses of other objects in body practices. Archaeologists drew on representations of human beings to propose interpretations of idealized beauty; social signs of age, status, and gender; and other aspects of embodiment. Archaeological excavations routinely brought to light human remains, whose identification as sexed, aged, and raced bodies in fact dominated the archaeological literature of the body through the 1980s.

Starting in the 1990s, and accelerating during the past five years, the topics of archaeological publications concerned with embodiment have diversified. At the same time, the pace of publication on long-established topics in archaeology of the body has intensified. Three trends are evident over time. First, a dramatic rise in the frequency of archaeological articles explicitly concerned with the body in a sample of anthropological journals, from an average of one per year before 1990 to almost six per year after that date, is evident (**Table 1**). This increase may be attributed to the development of postprocessual critiques in archaeology that emphasized redressing the previous lack of attention to human agency and aspects of identity, such as gender, closely tied to archaeological research on the body (Brumfiel 1992). However, simultaneously, the frequency of articles concerned with the body, considered from the

TABLE 1 Journal articles from 1965 to 2004 on archaeology of the body^a

Date range	Main thematic emphasis				Total N	Explicit theory
	Physical anthropology	Ornament, dress	Representation	Body practices		
1965–1969	2				2	
1970–1974	4				4	
1975–1979	5				5	
1980–1984	3	1	3	1	8	
1985–1989	7				7	
1990–1994	16	3	6		25	2
1995–1999	12	2	8	2	25	6
2000–2004	15		13	6	38	16
Subtotals	64	6	30	9	114	24

^aBased on a sample of journal articles yielded by a search of the key words “body,” “embodi*” and “archaeolog*” on Anthropology Plus, an index combining Tozzer Library’s Anthropological Literature and the Anthropological Index of the Royal Anthropological Institute. This sample was compared with results from a similar search of Web of Science/Web of Knowledge, which resulted in the addition of two more recent articles to the sample. Individual articles were classified according to the dominant thematic concerns, and a separate count was made of articles proposing theoretical approaches to embodiment. Some of the latter articles did not have an obvious thematic emphasis other than theoretical discussion. Although the selection of publications that are indexed means that this is not a complete survey of the literature, it is a uniform sample of major journals in the field over time and so does serve to show trends over time. These data should not be used as indications of the total number of articles on these topics.

perspective of bioarchaeology, has sharply increased, and these contributions are in no obvious way postprocessual. Both positivist and interpretive archaeologists have found the body to be an increasingly compelling subject during the past 15 years.

What is most distinctive about the most recent archaeological literature concerning the body is the degree to which interpretations are being grounded in social theory, both from within anthropology and outside it. Articles that explicitly theorize archaeological engagement with embodiment become common after 1990 (Table 1). Phenomenology, feminist theory, and the work of Foucault have all been influential in archaeology of the body (Fisher & Loren 2003, Golden & Toohey 2003, Hamilakis et al. 2002, Meskell & Joyce 2003, Montserrat 1998, Rautman 2000). Increasingly, as is the case with other anthropological work on embodiment, archaeologists are finding it necessary to clarify the assumptions they make in moving from theorizing perception to attempting to understand experience. Archaeology, which approaches both

perception and experience through those material traces that survive over time, contributes a unique dimension to anthropologies of embodiment.

This review connects the contemporary archaeology of the body to earlier archaeological concern with the symbolic communication of identity through body ornaments and costume. Following Grosz (1995, p. 104), I view the body as a “concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, skeletal structure and substances, which are given a unity and cohesiveness through psychical and social inscription of the body’s surface.” Archaeological interest in the surface of the body was closely linked to the rise of archaeologies of sex and gender, seen as inscribed in dress, ornamentation, and body modification (Marcus 1993, 1996; Sørensen 1991, 2000). The demonstration that constructions of sexed/gendered bodies are always simultaneously constructions of age, class, ethnicity, race, and social status has shifted the attention of archaeologists to a wider gamut of practices shaping embodied personhood

(Joyce 2004, Meskell 2001). Some archaeological analyses reflexively relate bodily practices to representational practices through which images were produced that served both as models for embodiment and as commemoration of selected experiences of embodiment (Clark 2003, Hill 2000, Joyce 1998). Some archaeological analyses argue that representational practices literally expanded the site of the embodied person, incorporating representations, spaces, and items of costume in the person, even when these items were removed from direct bodily contact (Gillespie 2001, 2002; Houston & Stuart 1998;Looper 2003a,b).

Contemporary archaeological consideration of the complex relationships between body practices and practices of representation shows that the concept of an easily defined body “surface” at the boundary between an interiorized person and exteriorized society is problematic (Looper 2003a). Archaeological exploration, using bioarchaeological techniques, of the ways in which habitual practices and dispositions literally shape flesh and bones (Boyd 1996) further questions the isolation of a public, inscriptional body surface covering an uninterpreted physical interior because the biological person is both the medium and product of social action. Today, to invoke an archaeology of the body’s surface is to place in question automatically the body, the person, and relations between embodied persons in society.

FROM BODY ORNAMENTS TO ORNAMENTED BODIES

Costume, body ornaments, and representations of costume in artworks have long been used by archaeologists as evidence of distinct statuses on the basis of an implicit understanding of the surface of the body as public. As Robb (1998, p. 332) notes, under the “information transmission” view of the symbolic functions of artifacts (Wobst 1977), archaeologists assumed that objects conveyed relatively clear meanings within their cultures

of origin. Many of those assumed meanings were concerned with identity. This assumption continues to be part of contemporary research in archaeology. For example, Lee (2000, pp. 114–15) explicitly bases her discussion of Minoan representations of masculine and feminine bodies on the assumption that “dress functions as a primary means of non-verbal communication” emitting “constant, complex social messages that would have been *intended* by the wearer and understandable by the viewer” (p. 114).

From this perspective body ornaments are understood as marking already-given aspects of social status of the individual person, or as media for the communication of given social identities. The assumption that specific costumes corresponded to different categories of persons in the past meant that a person’s social status and history could be “read off” the body. There is a strong connection between discussions of costume and identity and the archaeology of economically and socially stratified societies (Anawalt 1981, Kuttruff 1993). As a result, some of the most significant discussions in archaeology of the marking of the body surface originated in studies of political economy, tracing links between the relations of production and the effectiveness of costume in marking differential status.

Peregrine (1991) reviewed the history of archaeological arguments for the significance of costume ornaments as indications of specific social statuses in societies with “prestige goods economies.” Noting that costume ornaments were commonly employed in ceremonies of social reproduction, Peregrine stated an interpretation shared by other archaeologists interested in pursuing the connection between social reproduction and the production of embodied persons. Hayden (1998) suggested that such objects were particularly important in societies at this level of integration because of the significance of social displays in building individualized status for “aggrandizers,” the minority of people in a society who seek to distinguish

themselves from others for their own economic benefit. A recent analysis of Hohokam shell body ornaments thus concludes that these were “material symbols of group membership and identity” and “insignia of office,” simultaneously signifying identification with a group and distinctions within it (Bayman 2002, p. 70).

All these authors replicate, and several explicitly cite, the logic of Earle’s (1987) groundbreaking work on specialization and wealth in Hawaiian and Inka societies, which considered the links between precious materials incorporated in distinctive costume items like Hawaiian feather cloaks and the social statuses and roles signified by such costume. Earle argued that Hawaiian cloaks were in fact material signs of status. Commenting on Inka use of cloth and of metal and shell ornaments in costume, he argued that different costumes visually distinguished different ranks within this complex society.

Discussions of costume and identity based on the information transmission model are not limited to studies of chiefdoms and early states. White (1992, p. 539) explicitly considered why objects like body ornaments were products of the Upper Palaeolithic in Europe, a period of innovation in “the material construction and representation of meaning” (see also White 1989). White (1992), like Wobst (1977), argued that highly visible marks incorporated in costume would be widely interpretable within a community. In his view, “personal ornaments, perhaps more than any other aspect of the archaeological record, are a point of access for archaeologists into the social world of the past” (White 1992, p. 539). Following Weiner (1992), White (1992, p. 541) drew attention to the potential for ornaments made of durable materials to persist beyond a single human life span, creating intergenerational continuity in identities and social distinctions, and to exteriorize assertions about social identity that might be more controversial or contested as verbal statements, like the claims of power and veiled threats of military might that Earle (1987)

suggested were made by wearing Hawaiian feather cloaks.

These long-established assumptions about the relation of body ornament and identity continue to be influential in archaeological research. More recent work considers these relationships as products of active construction of identity, not simply as signaling of independently existing identities (Fisher & Loren 2003). Attention is focused on the degree of intentionality that can be assumed in the use of costume and the way that costume serves to perpetuate embodied identities. Stone (2003) notes that archaeologists today are divided about the degree of consciousness required for the use of material culture as symbols of ethnic identity. Personal ornaments or distinctive costume can be understood as desirable media of identity when self-consciousness is assumed because they could be displayed or not as situations warranted. Taking a similar perspective, intergenerational transmission of body ornaments in Mesoamerica has been interpreted as a means of recreating embodied personhood within a line of related persons (Joyce 1998, 2003a; Meskell & Joyce 2003). Exemplifying such recent work, Bazelmans (2002) argues that differences in dress represented in medieval burials index a complex interplay of religious and class-based intentions and understandings. Treating the body as a “cultural project,” Bazelmans (2002, p. 73) attends closely to the use in burial rituals of “items which feed, intoxicate, and dress the body” not simply as reflections of a coherent “identity,” but as informative about the enactment of embodiment in mortuary contexts.

The assumption that the visibility of items of dress contributes to the public legibility of a personal history remains a productive part of contemporary archaeological analysis (Isaza Aizpurua & McAnany 1999; Joyce 1999, 2002a; Loren 2003). The textualization of the body’s surface is increasingly viewed as a more or less deliberate social strategy through which embodied identities were shaped, not simply signaled.

Inscribing the Body's Surface

Citing Turner's (1980) concept of "the social skin," White (1992) identified archaeological body ornaments as demarcating and inscribing the body's surface as the point of articulation between an interior self and an exterior society, between a physical body and its symbolically transformed social presentation. Turner's work was influential on many archaeologists who began in the early 1990s to explore the way that artifacts preserved in archaeological sites could be used to construct an understanding of the social processes of embodiment in past human societies (Fisher & Loren 2003, Joyce 1998, Loren 2001). Work on the social inscription of the body's surface eventually led to archaeological critiques of an easy assumption of a distinction between skin and what lies "beneath," of the collapse of "the body" into surface representation in place of concern with the experience of embodiment (compare Csordas 1994, pp. 9–12; Grosz 1994, pp. 115–121). One reason for the early dominance of studies of the archaeological body as an inscribed surface was the dependence on visual images, literally inscribed surfaces, as a proxy for living bodies (Joyce 1996, Shanks 1995). As analyses progressed, researchers identified difficulties with the original model that equated stable and singular identities with categorical sets of markings of the body's surface.

Sørensen (1991) exemplifies the initial approach to archaeological understanding of the body as a product of costuming acts. In her influential analysis, she proposed that gender difference was signaled through standardized forms of dress. The implication that gender identity was preexisting, expressed in, but not formed by, acts of dressing, was unsettled by the framing of the argument as about the "construction" of gender. An assumed stability of bodily identity, broadly endorsed in archaeology at the time, also supported discussions of cross-dressing or impersonation across lines of gender-specific costuming that produced a contradictory implication of a dis-

junction between the body surface and interiority (Arnold 1991, Stone 1991). Thus, although framed initially in terms of the signaling of a stable, preexisting, essential identity, work published and presented at conferences during this period quickly raised key issues that required archaeologists interested in embodied identity to rethink their analytic frameworks.

Yates (1993) used a detailed study of anthropomorphic images in Scandinavian rock art as a platform for an early attempt to theorize the body. The norm then (and even today) was to identify as masculine figures with apparent phallic features, and as feminine those that lacked such marks. Yates underscored that this view of sexual identity as based on having or lacking a phallus was rooted in contemporary western European understandings of sexed subjectivity. Wanting to understand how other understandings of gender might be represented in schematic anthropomorphic figures, he found it necessary to reconsider the ontology of the subject of representation. His resolution of the challenge he faced was to view the body as "a plain over which the grid is laid in order to mark certain points of focus and intensity...the body... begins life as a featureless plateau—a plane of consistency or 'body without organs' to use Deleuze and Guattari's terms—onto which signs are written by culture...The organs and their associated meanings are applied onto this plain by a process of cultural inscription" (Yates 1993, p. 59). This proposal neatly made the data available (inscribed rock surfaces) homologous with the theorized body. It exposed the inadequacy of archaeological views shaped by engagement with inert images and dead bodies, of the body as a passive thing waiting to be marked with signs of meaning.

In contrast with approaches that assumed a uniform, transhistorical role of body markings, ornament, and dress as signal, more recent archaeological work seeks to situate body practices and representational practices historically in relation to the production of

different embodied experiences. Rainbird (2002) argues that tattooing needs to be understood as the inscription of a history on the body, a “wrapping in images” that does not just mark but actually forms the skin of the person. Tattooing, an irreversible modification of the skin identified archaeologically both directly (Alvrus et al. 2001, Barber 1999) and indirectly (Green 1979, Rainbird 2002, Thompson 1946), raises interesting questions about the archaeological interpretation of marks on the body’s surface. Literally demarcating the skin, tattoos and related body practices (such as scarification or body piercing) create permanent marks, unlike the use of clothing or ornaments, which can be adopted or changed more easily. Practices like tattooing require explicit consideration of the significance to bodily identity of the interplay of permanence and impermanence (Grosz 1994, pp. 138–44). The fluidity of embodiment has been addressed in recent archaeological discussions of bodily performance and experience that consider the substantive impact that archaeologically invisible body practices, such as habitual patterns of dress and ornament, would have had on the experience of embodiment.

Boyd (2002, p. 142) has critically summarized the implications of much traditional archaeological research on body ornamentation: “[B]ody decoration is seen as part of a representational formulation of the body. Decorative elements symbolically represent particular ideas, particular subjective meanings, which are materially ‘inscribed’ on the body in order to convey those ideas and meanings. However, the body itself remains an object, only given meaning through the use of decoration.” As he notes, the limited view of inscription here ignores the already-existing history of the embodied person. Acknowledging this prior history, he suggests that the arraying of the dead body in Natufian burials in the Levant be viewed as “a *practice* relating to perceptions of the body. . .bodily action by the living on the bodies of the dead” (Boyd 2002, p. 142).

In a similarly critical study of standard practices in burial analysis, Gilchrist (1997, pp. 47–50) noted that in a sample of medieval cemeteries in England “weapons were associated with men with the tallest stature and strongest physique” (p. 49). She suggested that weapons here make less sense as signals of male gender than as traces of the embodied experience of certain men as warriors, experience whose effects penetrated to the bone. Archaeological analysis, as it is increasingly evident, can tell us about the embodied life of deceased persons, but only through an understanding of the reflexive relations between body practices, perceptions, and experience among persons. Contemporary archaeologists move beyond the textualization of the body’s surface and call attention to the discernable effects of the use of ornaments or styles of dress on the experience of the person whose body is literally shaped by a manner of dress.

PERFORMING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BODY

Archaeologists interested in linking material media, including representations, to embodied experience have built on Butler’s analyses (1990, 1993) of the ways that the physical characteristics of the body are given social meaning through repetitive performance (Perry & Joyce 2001). Contrasting fundamentally with the beginning point of the information signaling model of dress, analyses drawing on Butler’s work begin from the position that “there is no atemporal, fixed ‘core’ to a person’s identity. . .outside the acts and gestures that constitute it” (Alberti 2001, p. 190). From this perspective representations of the body can be seen as records of stereotyped embodied performances that served as models, or in Butler’s terms citational precedents, for the embodied gestures of living people (Bachand et al. 2003; Joyce 1993, 1998, 2001b,c, 2002a, 2003a,b; Joyce & Hendon 2000).

The fleeting performativity of living bodies can be traced archaeologically through

reflexivity between representations and the use in body practices of objects like those represented (Joyce 1993, 1998, 2001b). An extended analysis of stereotyped human representations in small, hand-modeled figurines of the Honduran Playa de los Muertos culture culminated in the proposal that these highly detailed, individualized images would have served as intimate sources of bodily precedents for the young women who are the majority of identified subjects (Joyce 2002a, 2003b). By relating ornaments depicted at particular bodily sites (the hair, ears, neck, wrists, and ankles) to durable objects recovered archaeologically, including from burials, it was possible to argue that specific figural images were likely idealized representations of persons of different ages. What could not be discerned from the durable traces in archaeological sites were the stereotyped postures associated with different ages, standing or dancing with young women, seated postures with older individuals. Nor did the archaeological remains include any way to observe the diversity of treatment of hair within each age-related group of figures. By tacking back and forth between the representations and the archaeologically recovered durable objects, this study argued for both citationality of age-specific bodily postures and practices of dress, and for individuality within even the highly stereotyped representations. Basing this analysis on the framework provided by Butler (1993), it was argued that both the figurines and the living bodies that surrounded children were sources of bodily ideals against which they would have measured their own embodied performances. The greater durability of the figural representations, and the differential durability of some body practices, would have made these more effective in the long-term reproduction of specific forms of embodiment, even over multiple generations (Joyce 2000a, 2001c, 2003a).

Other archaeological analyses similarly juxtapose bodily performance and representation, now seen not simply as documentary but as disciplinary or normative. German (2000,

pp. 102–4) asks how representations of the human form on seals from the late Bronze Age Aegean could inform us about the corporal bodies of human subjects. Noting that despite the inclusion of highly specific details, the bodies depicted are ultimately not realistic in proportion, and are selective in their presentation of bodily architecture, she underlines the homogeneity of classes of bodies in representation. Citing Butler (1990), she suggests that these seals present specific embodied actions as conventional gender performances seen in details of differential body positioning as much as in the specific activities each gender was presumed to carry out (German 2000, pp. 104–5). Palka (2002) builds on a scrupulously detailed analysis of visual representations of human figures to argue for both experiential and symbolic dimensions of handedness among the Classic Maya.

Emphasis on performativity contributes to more critical examination of items of dress that previously have been viewed simply as reflections of categories of people. Thus Danielsson (2002) denaturalizes the singling out of the head in Scandinavian traditions of the use of helmets and head ornaments, relating the use of these items to the isolation of the face as a figural motif in art. Arguing that the use of helmets and head ornaments and the representation of isolated faces need to be understood in terms of “masking” as a cultural practice, Danielsson (2002, p. 181) suggests that “masks enable embodiment of disembodied states,” transformative performances during the life course. Work on Central American societies also identified a relationship between emphasis on the head as the site of identity in representational images and actual practices of dress and ornamentation, including masking, through which the head was shaped and inflected in life (Joyce 1998). Explicitly grounding the analysis in the theoretical work of Butler (1990, 1993), these studies argued that specific body practices were part of a repertoire of charged performances that marked transitions during the life

course in prehispanic Central America (Joyce 2000a).

Beginning with concern with the body as a site of representation and a represented object, archaeologists working on the relations of costume, body ornament, and body practices have been led to engage with more phenomenological approaches to the experience of the persons whose bodies were literally shaped by these practices (Joyce 2003a, Meskell & Joyce 2003). Under the influence of approaches to archaeology that emphasize the importance of cross-cutting dimensions of social identity and the active negotiation of social positions, scholars interested in embodiment have begun to draw on other lines of evidence to flesh out flat and stereotypic views of bodies in past societies derived from normative representations. Through examination of traces of body modification that would have affected the exteriority of the body, evident in human skeletal remains, archaeologists have begun to raise questions about varied embodied experiences. Moving away from discussions of normative bodies, archaeologists have begun to include consideration of sensory experiences once considered impossible to detect archaeologically.

Experiencing the Archaeological Body

Kus (1992) issued an early call for the necessity of including sensory experience as part of any archaeology of embodiment. Building on her ethnographic experiences, she argued that archaeological interpretations that did not directly address the senses would miss significant aspects of human experience in the past, experiences that motivated people to act in particular ways.

Archaeological research on sensory experience since then has taken varied forms. Drawing on European texts recording Central Mexican concepts in the sixteenth century, López Austin (1988), Ortiz de Montellano (1989), and Furst (1995) detailed indigenous models of physiology and embod-

iment. Houston & Taube (2000) presented an overview of epigraphic and iconographic evidence for sensory perception among the Classic Maya nobility, and Houston (2001) drew on human representation to propose codes of decorum typical of the same group. Sweely (1998) considered in detail the possible implications for intervisibility, and thus differential knowledge, of persons who might have been at work in one sector of ancient Ceren, El Salvador, a site whose burial by volcanic eruption allows a finer-grained modeling of everyday interaction than is ordinarily possible in archaeology. Dornan (2004) draws on neuro-phenomenology to propose interpretations of individual religious experience in Classic Maya society.

Models of embodied experience have sometimes relied on assuming universals, and here archaeological research has been critical in reinforcing the historicity of specific perceptual, sensory, and experiential regimes (Meskell & Joyce 2003). Constructing credible models of past experiences of embodiment becomes more difficult once universality is questioned because the archaeologist cannot begin by assuming the position of a typical person. Where iconographic or literary sources are available, as for the classical Mediterranean, Classic Maya, ancient Egyptians, and many of the societies studied by historic archaeologists, approaches to such models have been productive, although not without points of disagreement (Houston & Taube 2000, Meskell 2000a, Meskell & Joyce 2003).

Representational media, whether texts or images, bring with them an additional set of interpretive challenges. They must be viewed not simply as reflections of existing concepts of embodiment, but as part of the material apparatus through which such concepts were naturalized. Analysis of less discursive archaeological materials, even in situations where extensive textual or iconographic sources are available, provides a valuable way to tack from acknowledged bodily ideals to bodily experiences that sometimes were in

conflict with expressed ideals. For example, examining medieval British society, Gilchrist (1999, pp. 109–45) adopts a phenomenological perspective, considering the spatial organization of castles and the experiences of persons in them as the bases for understanding gendered experiences of embodiment. Morris & Peatfield (2002) use representations of bodily gestures inscribed in figurines recovered from hilltop sanctuaries in Crete to explore the “feeling body” experiencing ritual, entering into altered states of consciousness. Explicitly grounded in comparison with ethnographic research, particularly on shamanic experiences using controlled posture to induce trance states, their argument essentially assumes that the figurines they study iconically represent actual postures assumed by ritual participants at the sanctuary sites (compare Tate 1996). Tarlow (2002, p. 87) explores how the physicality of the body in nineteenth century England was experienced by those who survived the deceased person, simultaneously illuminating the sensory affect of the dead body for the living (compare Kus 1992) and the existence of a philosophy of incorruptibility of the body that shaped the lives of survivors and their now-deceased loved one.

For archaeologists working in areas lacking documentary sources, phenomenological approaches may be one of the only ways to even begin to explore embodiment. In a series of publications juxtaposing excavated contexts in Neolithic Britain and Europe, in which disarticulated human remains were deposited, with analyses of formal constructed spaces in which human body parts were sometimes depicted in visual images, a number of archaeologists have suggested lines of approach to both an experiencing body and the body as experienced by others (Fowler 2002; Richards 1993; Thomas 1993, 2000, 2002; Thomas & Tilley 1993). Emphasizing the fragmentation of the remains of human bodies across different contexts, these researchers have argued vigorously for an experience of embodiment that was partible and collective. Thus, in sites

in Brittany “the physical body... has gone from a living whole of flesh and bone, to a chaotic mass of bone and sinew, partly articulated, to a rearranged whole as stacks of ribs. The new figure... is the social whole, the body of the social collectivity, into which individual egos have merged... one can be part of society or one can die alone... One can imagine that as well as the artwork, the message was conveyed through the use of actual human remains” (Thomas & Tilley 1993, pp. 269–70).

In a particularly striking study of material from Neolithic Scotland, MacGregor (1999) challenges the visual bias of much archaeological analysis and demonstrates how objects that in no way can be directly linked to bodies (either as body parts or representations) may provide a basis to conceptualize embodiment. He considers in detail the sensory experience of decorated stone balls, which occupants of these sites may have enjoyed, as an alternative to functionalist explanations of the production and use of these objects, explicitly relating these bodily experiences to the creation and re-creation of social identities. He argues that most archaeological analysis privileges visual experience over the use of other senses (compare Hamilakis 2002). Instead, he emphasizes the tactile qualities of the artifacts he is examining (compare Ouzman 2001). MacGregor advocates that archaeologists employ “haptic analysis” in addition to the more common visual analyses of material culture to remain attentive to the likelihood that other cultures in the past elaborated distinctive sensory regimes. As Csordas (1994, p. 61) notes, “work on haptic touch is useful in developing a sense of the agency of the body in both individual and social existence, and may thus contribute to the elaboration of the model of embodied feeling.”

Other routes for archaeological understanding of embodied experience come from the application of biological techniques to reconstruct health, work patterns, and body modifications throughout the life course (Boyd 1996, Cohen & Bennett 1993, Cox & Sealy 1997). Differential access to dietary

resources can provide information about status identities reflected in living bodies as differences in stature and body size. Reconstruction of repetitive activity constitutes evidence of habitual adoption of postures, sometimes specific to gender or other identities. Far more than skin deep, the biological experiences of people in the past, similar to their experiences of identity and personhood, defy any attempt to separate surface and interior.

Is “Surface” to “Interior” As “Public” is to “Private”?

Following Grosz (1995), Gilchrist (2000, p. 91) argues for “a more materialist consideration of the body, one which would examine how the processes of social inscription on the *exterior* surface coalesce to construct a psychical *interior*” through “the inclusion of the dimensions of time and space.” Peterson (2000) exemplifies the work of bioarchaeologists whose studies of human skeletal remains challenge the dichotomy of surface and interior in precisely the way predicated by social analyses such as those by Grosz (1994, 1995). Bioarchaeologists trace the evidence in the more durable parts of the human body of habitual patterns of movement and action and of differential life experiences (Agarwal et al. 2004, Becker 2000, Boyd 2002, Cohen & Bennett 1993, Robb 2002). In traditional physical anthropology, such traces of individual embodied experience were abstracted to characterize categories of people (sexes, races, or age groups, for example). Today, the same observations are open to more idiographic interpretation as evidence of diverse experiences of embodied persons (Robb 2002). Particularly interesting from such an osteobiographical perspective are studies of the dramatic manipulation of the living body, reflected in skeletal remains as well as in artistic canons. In many times and places, human populations have shaped the still malleable head of infants and young children (Boyd 2002, pp. 145–46; Joyce 2001a,c). Dentition is another bodily

site where traces of practices during life are preserved. Extraction of teeth, filing, inseting materials, and supplementing teeth with dental “appliances” are specific practices that have begun to be viewed as evidence of bodily experience and the cultural shaping of embodied personhood (Becker 2000; Boyd 2002, pp. 145–46; Joyce 2001c; Robb 1997, 2002).

Just as bioarchaeological studies of bodily interiority yield understandings of embodied experience and public appearance, so also do reexaminations of costume and representation challenge the equation of the body with a public surface. Rissman (1988), in a contextual analysis comparing the contents of buried hoards to human interments in the Harappan civilization, argued that costume ornaments worn by the dead, traditionally viewed by archaeologists as evidence of the internalized, private, uncontestable “identity” of the person, were viewed by a wider public during mortuary rituals as part of contestation of the status of dead persons and the groups to which they belonged. Sweely (1998), citing Joyce (1996), suggests that experiences of the inhabitants of ancient Ceren in more and less intimate spatial settings served to naturalize their sense of their own position and relations to others as they grew from childhood to adulthood. Gilchrist (2000, p. 91) proposed to examine the “*interior, experiential* qualities of sexuality, as it was expressed through the materiality of space and visual imagery” among celibate medieval women (see also Gilchrist 1994). In these and similar studies, the boundaries of “the body” and of the spatial context “around” it are shown to be inextricably related (Potter 2004).

The products of such new approaches in archaeology are no longer categorical expressions of preexisting identities. Instead, contemporary archaeology of the body, moving beyond the dichotomy of surface and interior, considers the ways that body practices and representations of bodies worked together to produce experiences of embodied personhood differentiated along lines of sex, age, power, etc.

ARCHAEOLOGIES OF EMBODIED PERSONHOOD

Meskeil (1996), noting that “the body” discussed in then-current archaeological writing was almost always the female body, urged explicit archaeological attention to masculinity, a theme addressed most directly by Knapp (1998). Scott (1997, p. 8) noted the irony that critiques of the common archaeological use of a masculine subject position had done little to explicitly theorize masculinity itself, instead focusing on delineating feminine experience. Although she suggested that “preoccupation with the body as a defining force is a peculiarly late modern social development” (p. 8), and argued from ancient Roman and Greek data that masculinity in the past was “not in fact measured by levels of direct sexual activity or paternity. . . nor bodily prowess, nor dress” (p. 9), a number of archaeological analyses have productively traced discourses through which embodied masculinities were shaped.

Gilchrist (1997, pp. 47–50) is among the archaeologists who have, in different ways, underscored the production of masculinities expressed as differential strength as often a difference among male subjects as between male and female. Relating a suite of objects placed in burials of males in Bronze Age Europe to cultivation of the body and participation in warfare, Treherne (1995) proposed that an exemplary warrior masculinity was a product of circumstances of this time and place. Yates (1993, pp. 35–36, 41–48), in his analysis of human images in Scandinavian rock art, identified representational schema depicting distinct masculinities, contrasting in their degree of phallicism and aggression, with prominent calf muscles acting as a marker of a particular *kind* of male body. Winter (1989) pursued an analysis of the way that the able body in texts describing a Mesopotamian ruler was referenced through visual emphasis on musculature in portraits of the seated ruler. She further proposed that the body of another ruler was sexualized for the visual consumption of viewers as a production

of a kind of hyperbolic masculinity (Winter 1996). Analyses of Classic Maya images in which young men’s active, vigorous bodies are presented as objects for the admiring gaze of older males and women alike offer an analysis of these images simultaneously as precedents for the embodied performances of cohorts of young men and as inscriptions of an idealized young male body (Joyce 2000b, 2002b).

Broadening the scope of embodied personhood beyond the feminized body has also involved radically questioning the indivisibility of embodied persons. Thomas (2002) suggests that the archaeology of Neolithic Britain can best be understood as evidence of a form of personhood distinct from contemporary Western individuality. His argument, based on careful examination of contexts in which human skeletal elements and artifacts were split and rearranged, is that in Neolithic Britain the embodied person may not have been bounded by the skin, but extended substantively by objects of various kinds (Thomas 2002, p. 41). “Both artefacts and bodies were governed by the principles of partibility and circulation. Both formed elements in a more general ‘economy of substances’ which involved other materials. Both artefacts and bodies could be broken down into parts, and artefacts at least were made by putting different substances together” (Thomas 2002, p. 42; compare Fowler 2002). Understandings of personhood as partible and dividual have been employed by other archaeologists in analyses of the extension of material culture of the body in a number of ancient societies (Fowler 2003,Looper 2003a, Meskeil & Joyce 2003). To understand the body in the past, archaeologists are increasingly engaging broader theories of embodiment and materiality.

THEORIZING THE BODY IN ARCHAEOLOGY

A central assumption, often left inexplicit in archaeological work on embodiment, is that social understandings were “created, ordered, and perpetuated in respect to associations

with material culture” (Lesick 1997, p. 38). These associations shape experience throughout childhood, contributing to the production of adult social positions (Joyce 2000a). Sofaer-Derevenski (1997, pp. 196–97) argues that “the developing child imports, transfers, and ascribes gendered meanings to objects and actively transforms them into the gendered world in which s/he lives.” Although her analysis is based on studies of Western childhood, she assumes that children in other societies, with other gender constructs, would nonetheless have passed through similar stages of development, albeit processing distinct cultural content. Archaeologists sharing such understandings call for analysis of “material culture which work[s] to structure cultural experience” (Lesick 1997, p. 38). Archaeological explorations of embodiment, distinct as they may be in other respects, share an understanding of the material environment that archaeology delineates as shaping past experience, and consequently, as potentially a point of connection with such past experiences.

Meskel (2000b) has argued that archaeological writing on the body needs to be more rigorously theorized. She describes archaeology of the body as proceeding from two theoretical positions. In the first position she identifies the body as “the scene of display,” a perspective she traces to reliance on the work of Foucault (see also Meskel 1998b). Meskel sees this line of work as primarily concerned with “posture, gesture, costume, sexuality, and representation” (p. 15). The second project, which she calls “the body as artifact,” she associates with Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory. She sees “the body as artifact” as concerned with “sets of bodies” as “normative representatives of larger social entities fulfilling their negotiated roles, circumscribed by powerful social forces,” passive bodies “described in relationship to [the] landscape or as spatially experiencing the phenomenon of monuments” (p. 16). She was strongly critical of both archaeological approaches, seeing them, as practiced to that date, as lacking concern with the body as a site of lived experience.

Related arguments have become more common since Meskel formulated her discussion, which although published in 2000 comments on a conference held in 1996. Boyd (2002, p. 137) criticizes archaeologists working on sites in the Levant for a lack of attention to “the social body and embodied agency,” noting that, as is generally the case in archaeology, the body is mainly approached as “an objectified entity in physical/biological anthropological studies” or, as the dead body of mortuary studies, as an index of social organization, or as a focus of symbolism. His comments characterize much contemporary archaeological practice. To move forward, Boyd (2002, p. 138) proposes a shift to examine together “food consumption, treatment of the dead body, treatment of the living body and body representation.” Hamilakis and colleagues (2002, p. 13) propose that such distinct strands of archaeological research on the body may begin to be integrated in an emerging emphasis on what they call “the experiencing body,” “in which critically-aware sensory and phenomenological archaeologies may be used to enrich existing traditions such as physical anthropology, gender studies, and mortuary archaeology.” They include in their appraisal such developments as archaeological attention to the incorporation into the body of food and drugs (Boyd 2002, Hamilakis 1999, 2002, Wilkie 2000) and concern with material technologies as shaping the body [in the manner captured by Mauss’s (1992) elucidation of “techniques of the body”] and as bodily extensions, or what Hayles (1999) calls prostheses.

An archaeology of the body as site of lived experience—as the site of “the articulation of agency and structure, causality and meaning, rationality and imagination, physical determinations and symbolic resonances”—is a project Meskel (2000b, p. 18) aligns with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and with feminist theory. Meskel is careful to separate her call for attention to lived experience from an equation of an archaeology of the body with the reconstruction of biography of named, historical individuals, something that is

possible where archaeological data are sufficiently rich and particularistic (Meskell 1998a, 1999, 2000a). Instead her proposal, illustrated by her own work on Egyptian personhood drawing on a range of data from burials, houses, and documentary sources, is that archaeologists take up the challenge of “a search for the construction of identity or self” (Meskell 2000b, p. 20) that would include but not be restricted to embodiment.

There are points of intersection between studies of embodiment and subjectivity in the social sciences at large and archaeology in particular (Joyce 2004). Grosz (1995, p. 33) discerns two lines of discussion of the body in contemporary social theory, one “inscriptive” and one dealing with the phenomenological “lived body”: “[T]he first conceives the body as a surface on which social law, morality, and values are inscribed, the second refers largely to the lived experience of the body, the body’s internal or psychic inscription. Where the first analyzes a *social*, public body, the second takes the body-schema or imaginary anatomy as its object(s).” Most archaeology, until recently, has treated the body solely as inscriptive.

Archaeology developed from the Western tradition that separated mind, the nonmate-

rial site of identity, from body and traditionally understood itself to be limited to addressing the body as a public site or object of social action (Grosz 1994, pp. 3–10; Knapp & Meskell 1997, pp. 183–87; Meskell 1996, 1998b, 2000b, 2001; Turner 1984, pp. 30–59). Phenomenological approaches adopted by archaeologists offer instead a perspective on the body as “the instrument by which all information and knowledge is received and meaning is generated” (Grosz 1994, p. 87, commenting on Merleau-Ponty 1962). Csordas (1994, pp. 10–11) suggests that contemporary approaches to embodiment rooted in phenomenology require an emphasis on “lived experience.” He sees this shift from analysis of an objectified “body” to understanding of active “embodiment” as involving replacement of semiotic approaches with hermeneutic interpretive perspectives. Under the influence of phenomenological approaches, in the contemporary archaeology of embodiment, the semiotic perspective of the information transmission and identity signaling models and the description of inert (often literally dead) bodies are being replaced by analysis of the production and experience of lived bodies, in which surface and interior are no longer separated.

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