

## Corporealities: Body Limits

Bodies don't take place in discourse or in matter. They don't inhabit 'mind' or 'body'. They take place at the limit, *qua limit*.

Jean-Luc Nancy

Above all, no body, no body proper has ever touched – with a hand or through skin contact – something as abstract as a limit. Inversely, however, and that is the destiny of this figurality, all one ever does is touch a limit.

Jacques Derrida

Treatments of corporeality have piled high in literary and cultural studies, especially in the last twenty years or so, while questions of embodiment continue to proliferate in philosophical discussion. At the same time, metaphorical bodies loom large: humanities scholars have shown renewed critical interest in variously shaped ideas of the body politic, past and present; corpus linguistics works with ever-larger 'corporae' of everyday language. Bodies, 'real' or 'imagined', never lose the potential to unsettle. However, discussions of corporeality tend to be carried, more or less subtly, by the reassuring promise of the material body as a site of indisputable fact.

We invite contributions that resist notions of bodies as self-evident and instead investigate their limits. Poststructuralist theory provides useful beginnings here: Deleuze and Guattari develop notions of 'bodies without organs' that question where a body might end and how it might relate to its realities, its limitations and its possibilities. Jean-Luc Nancy has done much to offer ways of conceiving of bodies not as vessels but as limits: as skins which, while they describe spaces in their various folds, are by definition permeable, open and indefinite. Jacques Derrida's late work, meanwhile, can be read as showing limits as bodies: here, conceptual limits, such as that between 'man' and 'animal', cannot police the two-dimensional, idealist division they proclaim; instead, they are *limitrophies*, plural, heterogeneous, multiply folded and changing frontiers.

Thinking bodies as limits rather than facts has profound political implications. It offers resistance to racist and (hetero) sexist discourses that inscribe their ideologies on bodies in order to present them as sites of tangible truth; it also challenges representations of science as the key to universal and unlimited body knowledge. Further, it offers ways to consider those areas of contemporary life that are increasingly sites of the multiplication of limits: where relationships between bodies and machines are increasingly complex, and the links between the two increasingly obvious, what does this mean for notions of the body/bodies? *Tekhne*, Derrida notes, is perhaps always an invention of limits; how then, are the limits of bodies invented in today's technoscience? How are they kept in place? Who/what polices the boundaries? Finally, there can be no thinking of body-machines without thinking of body politics, of the ways in which the bodies of languages, of nations, of institutions old and new, even of the multiple and electronically folded limits of the digital age, are installed as well as challenged.

Topics for contributions may include, but are not limited to:

- Cultural histories of body limits past and present. This includes questions of how contemporary notions of bodies are, or go beyond, 'the body as a Western invention'.
- If writing takes its place at the limit (Nancy), how is literature, past and present, both product and production of body limits?
- Deconstructions and reconsiderations of phenomenologies of bodies and their limits (Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, Max Scheler, et al.).
- Digital technologies and virtual realities: how do we feel the limits of digital bodies of control? And how do they cut across human and other animal bodies?
- Body technologies and the limits they grow – within 'modern technology' as we know it, as well as before and outside it. What are the limits and implications of senses that are prosthetically altered and enhanced?
- What are the politics of any one representation of body limits? This might include staging of bodies in popular, media and consumer culture as well as literature and art.
- How do the bodies of languages, in their untranslatability, as well as in the ways in which they permeate and modify each other, function as limits and *limitrophies*? What are the politics of these *excriptions*?
- Where does a linguistic 'corpus' start and what delimits it, both theoretically and to practical, applicable ends?

We welcome interdisciplinary approaches, ranging across critical theory, literary and cultural studies, linguistics as well as other disciplines in the humanities. Contributors are advised to follow the journal's submission guidelines and stylesheet. The deadline for article submissions is 15 September 2013. Articles should be sent as attachments to:

[wordandtext2011@gmail.com](mailto:wordandtext2011@gmail.com) or directly to the editors of the volume:

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All submitted articles will be blind-refereed except when invited. Accepted articles will be returned for post-review revisions by 15 October 2013 and are expected back in their final version by 30 October 2013.