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The Culture of Corporeality outlines a history of the body as organism and metaphor in American society between 1945 and 1960. For the past couple of decades, the post-World-War-II era has been widely regarded as a time of petrification and stagnation. Many critics saw it simply as a “hole in history” – a stage of indistinct shape placed between the more colorful periods of the 1930s and the 1960s. In this view, the Forties and Fifties were merely ‘transitory’ years. Only recently, the postwar epoch has been rediscovered as a formative stage in the shaping of twentieth-century America. The book argues that the body, as a cultural, symbolic, and ‘lived’ entity, was strategically foregrounded during the Forties and Fifties, pervading discourses such as literature, cinema, television, music, the visual arts, architecture, design, medicine, and philosophy. The emphasis on the body in postwar thinking was not simply coincidental. It enabled Americans to redefine society as a dynamic spectacle of cultural exchange. The chief protagonists in this spectacle, figures such as Allen Ginsberg, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, embodied, in their cultural personas, the presence of a dynamic corporeality. However, the formation of a corporate cultural hegemony in the 1940s and 50s signaled much more than a trend towards a more conspicuous representation of the body; it functioned as a radical paradigm shift in the process of cultural self-fashioning.

Methodologically, the focus is placed on seven key oppositions: a.) body and world; b.) body and matter; c.) body and history; d.) subjectified body and objectified body; e.) body and mind; f.) the body as sameness and otherness; and g.) the lived body and the dead body. These oppositional pairs were deployed in canonized texts both as markers of boundary constitution and, in their obvious fragility, as indicators of potential change. As demonstrated in close analyses of various literary and cinematic works, cultural concepts of the body keep reinventing and reforming themselves through the exploration of boundaries. The ‘body text,’ I contend in the book, provided the cultural, metaphorical, and sentient stage for negotiations regarding the specific situation after World War II. It facilitated a maintenance of the illusions of homogeneity and cultural unity, while also leaving room for acts of rebellion and self-empowerment.

The first chapter traces the modes and strategies through which the postwar years were symbolically mapped as a 'body.' Here, I argue that postwar culture managed to create new narratives under the auspices of postmodernity in order to negotiate the terrors of the past and build up efficient models for the future. In Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), the American Dream seems fragmented into an array of episodic quests, all of them being endowed with different premises and goals. The purpose of Augie's quest is movement itself. Constantly driven by "the *animal ridens* in me," the character learns that he has to "make his peace with change" and accept the unpredictable nature of life itself. The idiosyncratic relation between body and world is further explored in the 2nd chapter. Following Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach, I discuss the hegemonic modes of world perception in the postwar era with regard to their sensory and carnal implications. My use of phenomenological theory is informed by a thorough discussion of the subtext of Cartesianism. As I demonstrate in my analysis of Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952), the impetus to deconstruct the Cartesian body-mind model was a key project of postwar literary discourse. The body-mind dialectic here emerges as a tangible concept through which fears and desires concerning the status of (black) subjectivity are negotiated. Chapter 3 puts forth an argument for extending the Cartesian subtext into a discussion of the organo-technological images employed by postwar cinema and television. Here, I discuss the various strategies through which the erosion of boundaries was staged in public discourse, one major strategy being the constitution of "cybernetic bodies." As I demonstrate in an analysis of Paddy Chayefsky's *Marty* (1953), the idea of television as an "organic medium" was negotiated effectively in the genre of television drama. The notion of space is extended in chapter 4 by the component of time. Here, I want to shed light on the function of the body in the construction of what I call the "fictional timespace" of the American Fifties. While invoking Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope," the chapter also makes use of the New Historicist idea of "cultural poetics." The interlacing of the Bakhtinian and the New Historicist approach allows me to synthesize historiography, film criticism, and literary theory into a new method of cultural hermeneutics. The idea of "embodied space," that is, of a space symbolically and sensually imbued with organic activity, is illuminated with respect to Elia Kazan's movie *On the Waterfront* (1954). Chapter 5 delineates the emergence of the sexual body as a public spectacle. Here I ask how far the eroticized body was used to negotiate prevalent conflicts concerning identity patterns. What impact did the second sexual revolution triggered by the Kinsey Report have on the discourses of domesticity and sexual emancipation? In films such as Billy Wilder's *The Seven Year Itch* (1954) and Howard

Hawks's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), the theme of 'conspicuous sexuality' is utilized as an indicator of the postwar culture of performance. In Chapter 6, I contend that the interplay between the culture of alienation and the culture of consensus was negotiated as a clash of *sensual* experiences. The body figured simultaneously as a target of mass consumerism and as a site of individualism and resistance to conformity. My interpretation of Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" (1956) shows that the motif of alienation assumed the quality of an existentialist dilemma in the countercultural imagination, grounded in the urge to overcome the split between body and mind. The acts of writing, reception, and performance are exposed in Ginsberg's poem as shared experiences, articulated in the aesthetic event of the literary text. Chapter 7 elaborates on the aesthetic construction of sexual and ethnic alterity in postwar discourse. My interest here lies on the strategies of containment through which 'otherness' was produced as an enfolded, ideological condition. Judith Butler's concept of an "exclusionary matrix" is very helpful in this context to comprehend the ways in which hegemonic culture develops and allocates categories of the 'abject.' The linguistic construction of blacks and gays as 'grotesque bodies' served an important function within the politics of containment. In my discussion of James Baldwin's novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956), I pay special attention to the spatial formation of the 'grotesque' in this rhetoric. In the final chapter, I demonstrate that the dead body, or rather, the eerily 'undead' body, was increasingly deployed as a signifier of hidden desires, fears, and anxieties. As a cultural construct, the "undead body" (that is, the moribund body or animated corpse) enabled Americans to negotiate the intermediate sphere which separated death from life. In my interpretation of Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), I argue that America at the turn of the decade was beginning to abandon its previously optimistic viewpoint. Death is constructed in *Psycho* as an entirely unexpected event, revealing the subliminal presence of evil in Cold War society. This final chapter also offers a critical outlook towards the Sixties, the era that brought an end to the carefully maintained illusions of innocence and unspoiled carnality.

Retold as a history of 'ecstatic bodies,' the era from 1945 to 1960 appears in a new light. The book asserts that the marshaling of themes associated with corporeality surfaced during this phase as a strategy of (re)shaping national experience. By demonstrating that the body, in its cultural, symbolic, and sentient aspects, materialized as a pivotal factor of national self-fashioning, *The Culture of Corporeality* wants to contribute to the on-going research regarding the inner eventfulness of the Forties and Fifties. It is through an analysis of the interpenetrations of textual and bodily relations in the postwar years that we can best comprehend the complexity and dynamic of this crucial epoch in American history.