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The Memory of the Flesh: The Family Body in Somatic Psychology

KATHARINE YOUNG

Family traditions take a somatic turn in a therapeutic practice that focuses on how bodies are passed down in families, not as assemblages of biological traits enjoined on the bodies of children by parents but as intentional fabrications devised by children out of the bodies of parents. Somatic psychology holds that parents offer children models of how to be embodied in the form of corporeal dispositions. Taking up the techniques by which a person makes her body, the somaticist induces her to unmake and remake it.

The Family Body

Within families, memory is passed down, not only as oral lore or material artifacts but also as something that is neither mentifact nor artifact: corporeal dispositions. Children apprehend parents' bodies as solutions to the ontological problem of how to be in the world. Pierre Bourdieu characterizes this in terms of body *hexis*, the pattern of gestures, postures, attitudes and inflections that children pick up from their parents.

> The child imitates not 'models' but other people's actions. Body *hexis* speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern of postures that is both individual and systematic, because linked to a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meanings and values: in all societies, children are particularly attentive to the gestures and postures which, in their eyes, express everything that goes to make an accomplished adult – a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting and of using implements, always associated with a tone of voice, a style of speech, and (how could it be otherwise?) a certain subjective experience. (1989: 87)

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Family bodies, like family stories, provide their heirs positions, situated perspectives, on parents' ways of being in the world, out of which children can devise their own 'presentations of self' (Goffman, 1959). Bodies are judgements about how to relate to the world. Out of a family repertoire of such judgements, children shape a corporeal self. Whether by imitation or resistance, their bodies memorialize the family's way of being in the world. The body is one of our family traditions.

In somatic psychology, the body presents itself as a version of the family body, as memory made flesh. It is a puzzle to be deciphered, not in order to solve a mystery or to retrace a past, but in order to bring to awareness the way the past traces itself on the body, to acknowledge the body as an aspect of one's own intentionality. The business of somatic psychology is to make being a body a conscious project, an act of the imagination.

The Body Image

Jacques Lacan calls the body as an 'imaginary anatomy', which Elizabeth Grosz describes as:

> . . . an internalized image or map of the meaning that the body has for the subject, for others in its social world, and for the symbolic order conceived in its generality (that is, for the culture as a whole). It is an individual and collective fantasy of the body's forms and modes of action. (Grosz, 1994: 39–40)

According to Paul Schilder, the infant experiences its body as a flux of sensations, not as a discrete object. It is only with the realization that Lacan calls the mirror stage that the child is able to distinguish one sensation from another and its interior from its exterior. Catching sight of its own body in the mirror as a thing among things, to draw on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's description (1995: 92), the child experiences the flux of sensation as the inside of a body now differentiated into a relatively stable container for a relatively turbulent interior. Up till then, all sensations are just disturbances of the tissues. The image the child forms of its own body, the body phantom, as Lacan sometimes calls it, has a visual surface, tactile sensations arising from the muscles and viscera, including thermal and pain sensations, and a kinaesthetic knowledge of its position in space, including, as Henry Head noted, of its just previous posture (Head and Holmes, 1911; Head, 1920; Grosz, 1994: 66). 'Beyond that', Schilder writes, 'there is the immediate experience that there is a unity to the body. . . . We may it call it a "body-image".' (1950: 11). Properly speaking, I do not experience a body but a body image.

Body image holds together the flux of sensation as personal experience. Merleau-Ponty describes this persistent sense of self as the habit body in contrast

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to the present body. '[O]ur body comprises as it were two distinct layers, that of the habit-body and that of the body at this moment' (1995: 82). The present body is 'absorbed by its environment' (Grosz, 1994: 44–5), suffused with sensations of a world from which it is not distinct. I am returned to the infantile synaesthetic body before I was aware of my boundaries. The habit body, by contrast, transcends its immediate experience to carry itself from one occasion to another and to retain a persistent sense of itself over time.

> Thus it is by giving up part of his spontaneity, by becoming involved in the world through stable organs and pre-established circuits that man can acquire the mental and practical space which will theoretically free him from his environment and allow him to *see* it. (Merleau-Ponty, 1995: 87)

The habit body, which sustains body image, is at once the locus of the condensation of memory and imagination in the present and the aperture through which the body adumbrates itself into its past and its future.

The Phantom Body

The habit body is slightly out of synchrony with the present body (Grosz, 1994: 84) so that it is possible to experience the presence of a part of my body that is no longer with me, as in the phantom limb phenomenon. The phantom is memory, 'a former present which cannot decide to recede into the past' (Merleau-Ponty, 1995: 85). I remain emotionally invested in the presence of my phantom, despite the evidence of its absence. Jean-Paul Sartre describes emotion as magic because it breaks apart the objective world to construct another reality, in this instance, the phantom limb (1939: 58). Like memory and emotion, the body is a constitutive act. Indeed they are all three the same constitutive act. They are corporeal investments in my own subjectivity. As Merleau-Ponty writes, 'memory, emotion and phantom limb are equivalents in the context of being in the world' (1995: 86). The body is from its inception an act of the imagination, a phantom body. Somatic psychology recovers this primordial imaginative capacity.

Somatic Psychology

Somatic psychology addresses itself to the body image, not the body. It assumes that the substance of the body is replete with mentality, that the flesh, recouped by desire, displays the lineaments of my sensibility. This is not the psychoanalytic notion that some of the experiences pressed out of consciousness impress themselves on the unconscious flesh in the process called somatization. It is the phenomenological notion that flesh is conscious, or rather that the dichotomy

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between consciousness and unconsciousness distorts the spectrum of modes of sentience available to the body, all of which are fleshy and some of which are self-reflective, ways the body doubles back on itself to think itself, perceive itself and influence itself. The soma in somatic psychology is the psyche given as a materiality already engaged with its past and its world.

Somatic psychology illuminates how we might think about what we call 'mind' and 'body' in a different way, not in a way that dismisses dualism out of hand, but in a way that takes account of the discrepancies in our experiences of ourselves that we acknowledge under the rubric of 'mind' and 'body'. Drew Leder writes, 'Times in which the body is most tacit and self-transcending are collected under the rubric of rational "mind". Other experiences where corporeality comes into strong thematic presence, are collected under the rubric of "body" ' (1990: 149). What we think of as mental phenomena: thoughts, memories, emotions, turn out to be corporeal phenomena; what we think of as bodily phenomena: postures, gestures, body habits, turn out to be emotions, memories and thoughts.

> The mindless body is evoked when the body is thematized in consciousness just as the disembodied mind is evoked when the body disappears from awareness. Thematization and disappearance are not ontological oddities, suspect states, but merely two of a spectrum of possibilities of embodiment. (Young, 1997: 135)

The body is the medium of both thoughts and things.

The Workshop

The somatic psychologist, Stanley Keleman, is the founder of the Center for Energetic Studies in Berkeley, California. The therapy session I examine here was part of his 1994 Summer Institute on the Family Body, a four-day workshop over the course of which participants try to figure out how they are related to their relatives, how they are akin to their kin, not, of course, as a question of bloodlines (which would be a physicalist or materialist question) or of psychological traits (which would be a mentalist or essentialist question) but as a question of embodiment.[1] The session begins when one of the participants in the workshop, a Brazilian woman called Victoria Ruiz,[2] comments on a previous participant's account of an unhappy marriage.[3]

Excerpt 1: The Unhappy Couple

> 'I was very moved', Victoria turns her head to the left, closes her left hand into a fist and shakes it twice to emphasize *very moved*, 'about this', she shakes her fist again twice as she says *this*, 'unhappy couple', she shakes her fist twice more on *unhappy*, then drops her hand to her lap, nods, and continues in a husky voice, moving her jaw from side to side and nodding as she

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> speaks, 'Joan talked about.' She pauses, still moving her jaw from side to side, curls out her tongue, breathes deeply, and works her jaw and lips. She takes off her glasses, pinches her lips together, and crinkles her chin. Tears well up in her eyes. 'I'm very sorry about my parents', Victoria shakes her head and tosses her right arm out to the right, constricts her voice, wrinkles her brow, and takes two deep sobbing breaths, 'how unhappy they have been', she shakes her head, 'for so long time', she flings her right arm from the level of her left shoulder across her body to the right, spanning the length of time as if it were as space. She breathes deeply, tears on her cheeks. 'How they insisted', she lifts her right hand, palm up, as if to entreat against their insistence, and drops it again with a dip of her body, 'upon a so unhappy marriage', she repeats the entreating gesture and body dip, 'for so long', she shakes her head, breathing audibly, trembling and crying.

Victoria's parents' unhappy marriage makes her unhappy. The therapeutic project here is to ameliorate Victoria's unhappiness, to transform, as Adam Phillips puts it, terror into meaning (1997).[4] Later in the session, Keleman paraphrases, almost verbatim, a passage from Jorge Luis Borges' essay on his own blindness:

> Everything that happens, including humiliations, embarrassments, misfortunes, all has been given like clay, like material for one's art. One must accept it. For this reason I speak in a poem of the ancient food of heroes: humiliation, unhappiness, discord. Those things are given to us to transform, so that we may make from the miserable circumstances of our lives things that are eternal, or aspire to be so.
>
> If a blind man thinks this way, he is saved. Blindness is a gift. (1984: 120–1)

The somatic project is to make unhappiness a gift, to transform Victoria's body image so that she can use her parents' bodies to make her body without making herself unhappy.

Iconic and Metaphoric Gestures

Victoria's effort has been to keep herself from getting enmeshed in her parents' unhappiness, getting what she calls 'mixed up' in the emotional 'soup'. When she talks about this, her remarks are affiliated with gestures, which David McNeill (1992) distinguishes as iconic and metaphoric. Iconic gestures represent the concrete objects talk mentions; metaphoric gestures give concrete representation to abstract ideas (McNeill, 1992: 12). For instance, in the following passage on emotional soup, Victoria represents the abstract idea of being too mixed up with her parents with a gesture of folding and refolding a malleable substance (Figure 1). The gesture is iconic with respect to the word 'mixed up', itself metaphoric for the idea of emotional contagion. Unlike, for example, signs, which are intelligible because their meanings are conventional, like circling the thumb and forefinger in the gesture for OK, affiliative gestures are intelligible by virtue of the words with which they co-occur. In the case of affiliatives, gesturers tell us what they

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mean by their gestures. Following Lev Vygotsky, McNeill argues that this is so because gestures and words are co-expressive of thought (Vygotsky, 1992: 218; McNeill, 1992: 23). Though both metaphoric and iconic gestures display some consistency for individuals, within groups, and sometimes across cultures, their meanings are not fully typified but particular to their context of production.[5]

Gestural styles are cross-culturally variable (McNeill, 1992: 151). This gesturer is Brazilian so, in comparison to Anglo-American gestures, hers may appear to be unusually developed, even flamboyant or ornate, just as Anglo-American gestures may appear to her to be underdeveloped: crude, diminished or simplified. Nonetheless, both gestures in general and the gestural practice of representing abstract ideas with concrete gestures in particular appear to be universal (McNeill, 1992: 179). The particular metaphoric gesture selected to represent an idea is both culturally and individually specific. Victoria's gestures on this occasion are the affiliative gestures that naturally and spontaneously accompany speaking. In the course of the therapeutic interaction, they may become thematized by being noticed, slowed down, suspended, repeated or transformed. Somatic philosophy does not impose gestural, postural or movement practices on participants. Rather, gesturers exhibit a spectrum of gestural configurations within which the somaticist may focus, for therapeutic purposes, a specific set of gestures that are either different from or permutations of those the gesturer customarily uses. In other words, participants use their own body habits as a resource for changing their habit bodies.

This analysis of gestures and the words with which they are affiliated

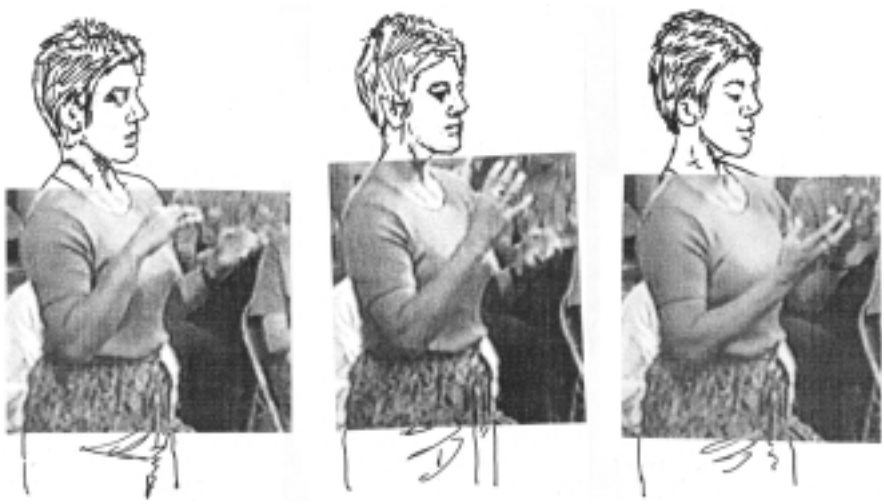

Figure 1 Iconic Gesture, External Perspective: 'mixed up'

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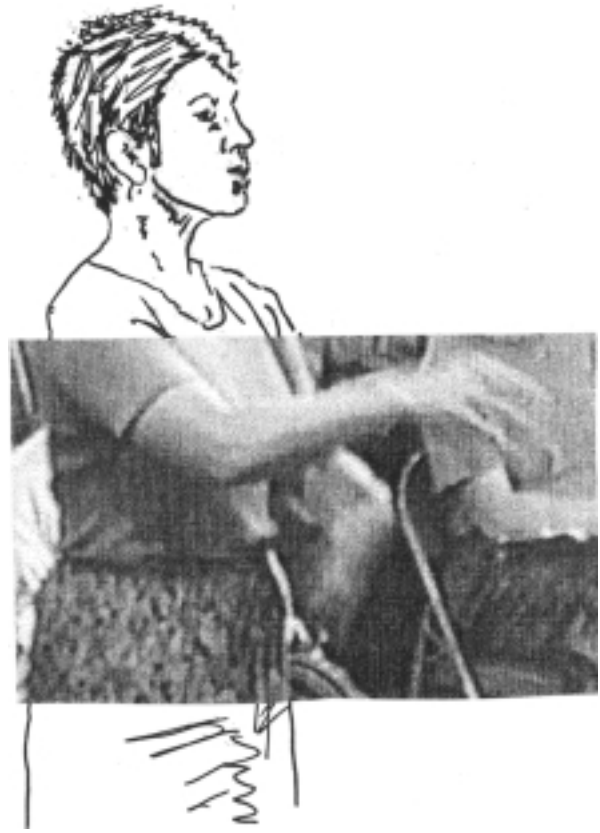

Figure 2 Iconic Gesture, Internal Perspective: 'soup'

illuminates microanalytically phenomena to which Keleman addresses himself macroanalytically, in terms of postures and the emotions with which they are affiliated. Gestures suspended and sustained become postures, more persistent bodily investments in the situation. They become, that is, attitudes and dispositions. In their ephemeral form, gestures evanesce so quickly that they are difficult to catch, let alone use for therapeutic interventions. But they evidence in miniature how narrators are thinking about what they say. The analysis of gestures, retrieved from videotapes on which they can be slowed down and repeated, therefore provides an alternative (and, as it happens, confirmatory) reading of somatic meaning in another modality.[6]

Excerpt 2: Emotional Soup

> 'I'm not too much', Victoria, now standing up, turns her hands toward each other and kneads them in vertical circles, one following the other, gesturally anticipating the metaphor she settles

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on to describe how her parents' emotions affect her, 'mixed up', she continues circling, closing the phrase and the gesture by facing her hands toward each other and patting them together symmetrically, 'with their story', she repeats the gesture of mixing up and squashing together as if their story were metaphorically compacted into a ball, 'and their unhappiness', she circles her cupped right hand upward and outward, halting the curve abruptly at the quarter turn, metaphorically holding the emotion in her hand, 'and their relationship', she circles her cupped left hand out in a mirrored metaphoric gesture, nodding her head to the right and then the left, 'and their loves', she lifts out her right hand, cupping their loves in the twin of her previous gesture, 'and their jealousy', she lifts out her left hand in a twin of the mirror gesture, cupping their jealousy, following the gesture from right to left with her eyes and head, 'and their – '

Stanley cuts in, 'It's a way of life.'

Victoria pauses, drops her hands into her lap, and brushes her nose with her right thumb, sniffing. 'It is', she nods, raises her eyebrows and rubs her nose with her right finger and then her thumb.

'It's a way of life.'

'But I – I – I don't like', she holds her arms out in a horizontal circle, metaphorically encompassing what she does not like, 'to be in that', Victoria begins to stir in huge paddling strokes with both arms, anticipating iconically the linguistic metaphor she comes up with, 'soup', she continues stirring vigorously, leaning forward and back.

The Gesture Space

Gestures conjure up the narrative reality or taleworld in the space in front of the body, which is called the gesture space or the narrative space (Efron, 1941; McNeill, 1992: 86–91; see also Haviland, 2000: 18). The taleworld is then miniaturized with respect to the body of the narrator. The narrator's capacity to contain the taleworld in the gesture space is a sign of her exteriority with respect to that reality, her emotional detachment. She is, in literary terms, an external narrator (Rimmon-Kenan, 1984: 94–6). The event is represented 'as if seen from a distance', as McNeill puts it (1992: 191). But the event could also be 'portrayed [gesturally] as if it were being experienced' (McNeill, 1992: 191), that is, as if the body were engaged with things in a full-size world rather than the hands manipulating things in a miniature one. When the narrative reality is experienced in this way, the gesture space opens out to include the narrator, whose body is thereby naturalized with respect to it. Her body becomes an iconic representation of a character in the narrative who is, in this instance, herself. The gesture space's containment of the body of the narrator is a sign of her interiority with respect to that reality. She becomes, in literary terms, an internal narrator or a narrator-as-character (Rimmon-Kenan, 1984: 94–6). As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan points out, emotionally, the shift from external to internal perspective is a shift from detachment to engagement (1984: 80). My research suggests that it is when her body is enclosed in the gesture space that the narrator becomes emotional, 'not by making the past

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present to the narrator imaginatively but by making the narrator present to the past corporeally' (Young, 2000: 102). So the size of the gesture space with respect to the narrator's body is an index of emotional involvement.[7]

Victoria is from the outset contained in the gesture space. For instance, she represents her emotional entanglement with her parents as if it were a substance she mixed with her hands (Figure 1). With the iconic gesture of stirring the soup, the relationship between Victoria's body and the narrative space changes. Instead of inhabiting a taleworld that is proportionate to her body, the gesture space expands so that it dwarfs her body. For her, the world has become gigantic. The pot of soup is a cauldron so huge that it takes her whole body to move the ladle (Figure 2). Before she acknowledges it to herself or the somaticist points it out to her, this gesture betrays what her discourse denies: that she is already in the emotional soup.

Victoria's solution to the problem of being in the soup, which is the ontological problem of how to be embodied, itself creates a problem. It excludes the parents' bodies as a repertoire of possible solutions, and it excludes them in circumstances in which it is apparent that she is in fact possessed by them. She is haunted by her parents' bodies as her own body phantoms. So, in his intervention, Keleman is concerned to distinguish two things: first, the parents' relationship – their unhappiness, their loves, their jealousies – 'It's a way of life,' he says to her; and, second, Victoria's response to her parents' relationship, her oscillation between enmeshment and what Keleman later calls 'disconnection'. So Keleman's project is twofold: one move, which is explicit in their discourse, is to transmute the way Victoria perceives her parents' relationship and the other move, which is implicit, that is to say somatic, is to transmute the way Victoria embodies her parents' bodies.

Effort-Shape Analysis

In describing her parents, Victoria develops a set of gestures for each of them, which can be contrasted in terms of what Rudolf Laban calls effort flow (1966). Effort flow is an aspect of Effort-Shape Analysis, one of the techniques Laban developed for describing movement (the other is Labanotation). Martha Davis argues that the shape of a gesture and the kind of effort put into making it reflect 'how individuals simultaneously cope with inner feeling states and react and adapt to outer stimuli' (1977: 40). So gestures occur at the site of intersection between the habit body, which shapes emotion, and the present body, which responds to immediate circumstances. Effort flow varies from what is called free (movement that is flowing, fluent and less controlled) to what is called bound (movement that is stiff, tense and more controlled) (Davis, 1977: 42).

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Excerpt 3: Two Bodies – Alternation

'It's a feeling of- ', Victoria straightens out her hands and beats them forward three times, 'I'm coming- ' she curls her hand under, across her chest, and outward so that she describes metaphorically her own trajectory of coming, 'I'm com – ' she pulls a thread out of her pursed left hand with her pursed right fingertips, switching metaphorical gestures to catch the trajectory of coming in her hand, 'I'm starting to come up', she pulls out a longer thread, 'from this feeling', she pulls out the thread again, shaking it slightly, to disturb the trajectory with the feeling, 'of aversion', she turns her palms outward and pats these aversive emotions metaphorically away from her, nodding, 'of that story', she pushes the emotions away again, nodding, 'aversion of that over-sexual drama', she waves her palms, washing away the drama.

'And all that- jealousies-', Stanley puts in. Victoria holds still as he speaks.

'Jealousies', Victoria echoes, sweeping her hands outward in two little circles, scooping up the jealousies, and shaking her head, 'and uh', she circles twice, slowly, gathering together metaphorically all the things to which she is averse, 'and all that', she circles her hands asymmetrically to indicate their variegation, 'all that story of my- my mother', Victoria closes her hands into fists in a bound metaphoric gesture, 'does it too much controlling', she tightens her fists and beats them down stiffly, 'too much victim', she beats her fists as she says *too much* and then lifts them after *victim*, so that she uses the same boundedness to represent the rigidity of control and the anger of victimization (Figure 3), 'and my father at the same time dependent', Victoria opens her right fist and extends her right forearm in a free-flowing metaphoric gesture, relaxing her left fist, 'and at the same time rebellious', she tips her right hand over to the left and at the same time extends her left forearm in a mirrored free metaphoric gesture, locating the contrasts in her father's nature deictically on alternate sides of the gesture space. 'Like a-' Victoria lifts her opened hands toward each other, as if trying to bring the two halves together, holds them a moment, then purses her lips and shakes her head, 'wanting', she swings her right hand out, palm down, and at the same time turns her left palm up, 'and not wanting', she swings her left hand, palm up, and turns down her right, wrists flexed softly, 'at the same time', she tips her hands back and forth in a smaller compass, 'this kind of', she tips them back and forth again, 'couple', Victoria holds her hands out straight, parallel to each other, and palms facing each other, representing her parents' bodies iconically as held rigidly in place, and shakes them twice, 'rigid life', she shakes them again in the same bound iconic, 'that my mo- my mother wanted to have', she repeats the shake.

'And he wanted', Victoria leans to her right, shifts her parallel hands one notch over and drops them into place, 'something else', she circles her hands vertically opposite each other, 'that he doesn't-' she circles her hands again, 'he didn't know what', she opens out her upcurved arms and shakes her head on *didn't know* and repeats it on *what*, 'but he was romantic', Victoria swoops her right hand and arm across her body and out to the right (Figure 4), 'and he wanted things', she matches the previous gesture with a swoop to the left (Figure 5). Her paired gestures now expand the gesture space and capture her body in it so that she now expresses her father's nature deictically on alternate sides of her body. 'And he wanted to have', she pauses, making a fountain from a narrow hold at the level of her chest and bubbling out in two high curves to the right and left just above her head to describe the burgeoning possibilities of this other life in an exuberant, expanding, free-flowing metaphoric eruption of excitement, 'a different life', she repeats the fountain gesture, 'he would feel overloaded', she repeats the fountain again but slower and larger, 'by all', she repeats the fountain on a reduced scale, 'the responsibilities', she repeats the fountain less intensely, 'and all this kind of rigid', she shifts her hands back one notch to the left, holding them rigidly parallel and shaking them twice (Figure 6).

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As she says *rigid*, Stanley starts to say, 'See how you describe people-'

Victoria interrupts to finish her sentence, 'couple', she shakes her rigid parallel hands twice so that her parents' bodies are once again miniaturized, separated from her body, and returned to the gesture space in front of her (Figure 6).

Two Bodies

The father in this excerpt has two bodies. He has the wild, romantic, free-flowing body of the life he desires, and he has the proper bourgeois bound body of the life to which he has acceded. He embodies his wife's body as an aspect of his own disposition. Stanley characterizes this, not in terms of gestures and postures, but in terms of the emotional dispositions that inform them.

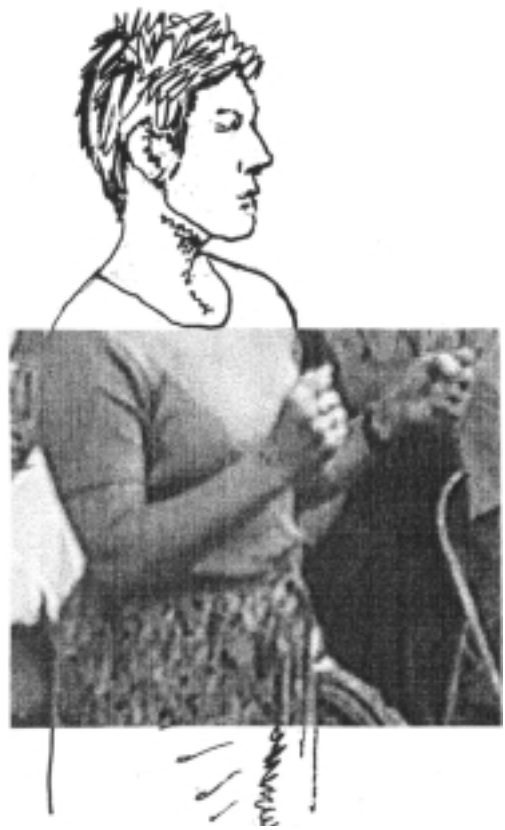

Figure 3 Bound Metaphoric Gesture, External Perspective: 'too much controlling, too much victim'

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Figure 4 Free Deictic, Internal Perspective: 'romantic'

Figure 5 Free Deictic, Internal Perspective: 'wanted things'

Excerpt 4: Disappointment as a Relationship

> 'Let's describe it', as Stanley speaks Victoria holds her parallel hand posture, frowns and tilts her head to the left, 'not as disappointment', he continues; she purses her lips, blinks, and tilts her head to the left again, 'but as the relationship between desire', she sustains her posture, 'and possibility', she straightens up her head and releases her fingers so that the tips touch, and nods. 'Hm?' She nods again. 'Between one's ability to dream', she nods, 'and one's ability to act.' She nods throughout his next remark, fingertips resting together, 'To have it as a dream and to be unable to enact it.'[8]

In putting it this way, Keleman re-describes emotion, which is usually taken to be inside one body, as a relationship between two embodiments. This makes it clear that emotion is dispositional, a patterning of the relationship of the body to itself and its world. Victoria's father is not in conflict with her mother but in conflict with himself, with an aspect of his own nature. The mother appeals to one part of him even as she offends the other. He alternates between his two bodies in a way that is also the alternation between his body and her body. He replicates in his own body the conflict the two of them play out in their marriage.

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Figure 6 Bound Iconic, External Perspective: 'rigid couple'

Victoria, in turn, experiences in her body the conflict between these two embodiments. The variegation in her own bodily attitudes indicates how closely Victoria's body *hexis* is tied to her subjective experience.

At Stanley's suggestion, Victoria enacts this conflict by incorporating one body inside the other: the outer body, which is swollen, fluid and osmotic, envelops the inner body, which is dense, rigid and resistant. The dreamer floods out, overflowing the containment of the realist. In the gestures that are affiliated with this description, Victoria shifts from representing her parents' bodies to embodying them.[9]

Excerpt 5: Two Bodies – Incorporation

'Here I'm over-dreaming', Victoria has curved her arms horizontally around a larger spherical shape. Here she lifts and opens her arms softly, as if the boundaries of her outer body have

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expanded (Figure 7). Then she lowers her head, raises her shoulders, curls her spine and draws in her elbows, making her hands into fists so that her whole body takes on the tension of her fists, 'And here I grow hard?' she shakes her tensed fists slightly, 'Over-realistic?' she shakes her fists, 'Practical?' she shakes her fists, 'Objective', she tightens her hold (Figure 8).

To draw Victoria's attention to the incorporation of these two bodies as aspects of her own body image, Stanley describes her to herself.

Excerpt 6: The Child's Body as the Parents' Drama

'You know', Stanley says to Victoria, 'you have this drama in you.' She nods, maintaining her tight hold on her body. 'I mean, you love drama, you're', she looks up at him, 'fiery, you're uh', she holds her posture, nodding slightly as he continues, 'strong uh, distant, I mean I do- they gave you something.'

Figure 7 Free Metaphoric, External Perspective becoming Internal: 'over-dreaming'

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Figure 8 Bound Metaphoric, External Perspective: '. . . hard? Over-realistic? Practical? Objective.'

The child's body is the parents' drama. Victoria is haunted by her own body as memory. She remembers the bodies of her parents corporeally, not just as postures or gestures but as subjective experience. The bodies that possess her are memories refusing to recede into the past, phantoms conjured by the magic act of emotion. It is her repression of these memories, her paradoxical effort to keep her parents' bodies in mind in order to forget them that troubles her. To bring this to Victoria's awareness, Stanley directs her attention to the way she already incorporates her parents' bodies as her own embodiment.

Excerpt 9: Denial as Incorporation

'You deny your misery.'

Victoria looks down, her hands clasped. She tilts her head sharply but minutely to the left,

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raising her eyebrows and opening her eyes. She pushes out her lower lip, sticks the tip of her tongue out of the right corner of her mouth, blows, and says, raising her head, 'I don't like to expose it.'

'OK.'

'But I have contact with it.' She nods.

'OK, I accept that', says Stanley. Victoria nods again. 'To that degree you have your parents in you.'

'I do.' She nods. 'I do.' She nods again and stands restfully still.

Keleman makes it clear to Victoria that her denial is her parents' denial, the very denial that permitted them to insist, as she said at the beginning, 'upon a so unhappy marriage for so long'. She already embodies her parents' bodies as her own body image: her denial of her unhappiness is the phantom of their denial of theirs.

The Cultural Body as Memory

Keleman's project is to get Victoria to perceive how she might embody her parents' bodies without being tinged with her parents' unhappiness. So he invokes an image from a videotape he had shown earlier in the workshop of two Argentinian dancers doing the tango.

Excerpt 10: The Cultural Body as Memory

'You know there's- in- in the film', Victoria nods intermittently throughout Stanley's description, 'if you enter into the tango, because it's- this is a South American couple, right?'

She nods.

'This is an Argentinian couple. And you get into the social posture', Victoria begins to arch her neck, 'the elegance and their middle-aged bodies', Victoria, keeping her body lifted but still, nods, 'and the sense of movement, of how they have tried to suppress and keep free the animal vitality in a social form, right? In these very postured and polished animals in a social form that doesn't fit them. Right? That kind of temperament in this sort of over-Spanish, over-Christian elegance, right? Being caught in this gilded cage called the Dome, right? And then you get this whole feeling of misery and elegance, right? Animal and social form, right? All in this movement. Hm? That's you.'

She keeps nodding and then grins.

In the tango, the dancer exhibits two bodies: a tense, arched, haughty, fiercely controlled outer body over a fluid, impassioned, sensual, wildly abandoned inner body. The propriety and containment of the dance, far from crushing its sensuous, dreamy, romantic aspect, preserves it, inflames it and gives it form. And in its

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inversionary aspect, the elegance belies the misery within. The tension between these two expressions, maintained as a body hold, is what gives the tango its peculiar lush astringency.

Keleman is arguing that Victoria has missed something about her parents' marriage. If the father's body is volatile, turbulent and changeable, what the mother offers him is containment, stability and protection; and what he offers her is flights of wild fancy, ruptures, dissolutions to which she could not otherwise abandon herself. And here for the first time it becomes apparent how Victoria's mother might have participated in the marriage. Her own propriety might have contained a more molten interior. Keleman contends that the two bodies within the father's body, which are the two bodies of the parents, are also the Spanish Catholic body laid over the indigenous body of the Indians in the course of a cultural history; the closed, proper, bourgeois, modern body laid over the unruly, metamorphic, grotesque, medieval body in the course of a history of European civilization; and the social body laid over the animal body in the course of an evolutionary history. In each instance what might be regarded as the habit body provides a stable container for the more fluid present body, which in turn gives the habit body its vivacity, its sensory presence, and its sense and style of interiority. If the habit body guarantees the present body, the present body vivifies the habit body.

Sensory Memory

Using a technique of somatic practice, Keleman has Victoria alternate between these embodiments. The alternation forms itself into a coupling of the intense sensuality of the tango with its rigid hauteur (Figure 9). Keleman uses the rhythm that arises from this alternation to create a new pattern of postures, gestures and movements for Victoria, one that incorporates aspects of both her parents' bodies in a fluid interrelationship. What somatic participants learn are not gestures, postures or movements imposed by the somaticist. They learn to see the gestures, postures and movements that have seemed natural to them as intentional. Keleman's technique involves repeating on purpose movements enacted unself-consciously in order to become aware of how they make her feel, and then to influence the feeling by influencing the movement. Victoria, who has worked with Stanley for several years, is particularly adept at translating between motion and emotion, gesture and thought, posture and subjective experience. Later Keleman reduces the tango to a walk (Figure 10).

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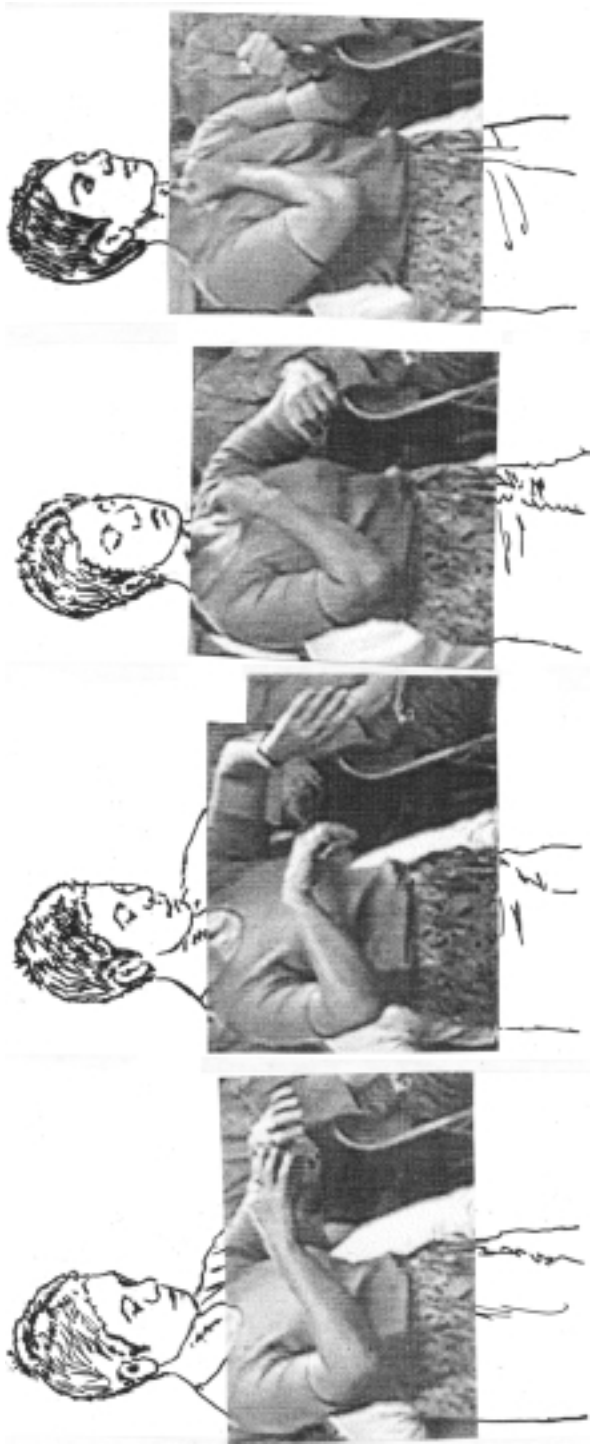

Figure 9 Bound to Free Posture: Tango

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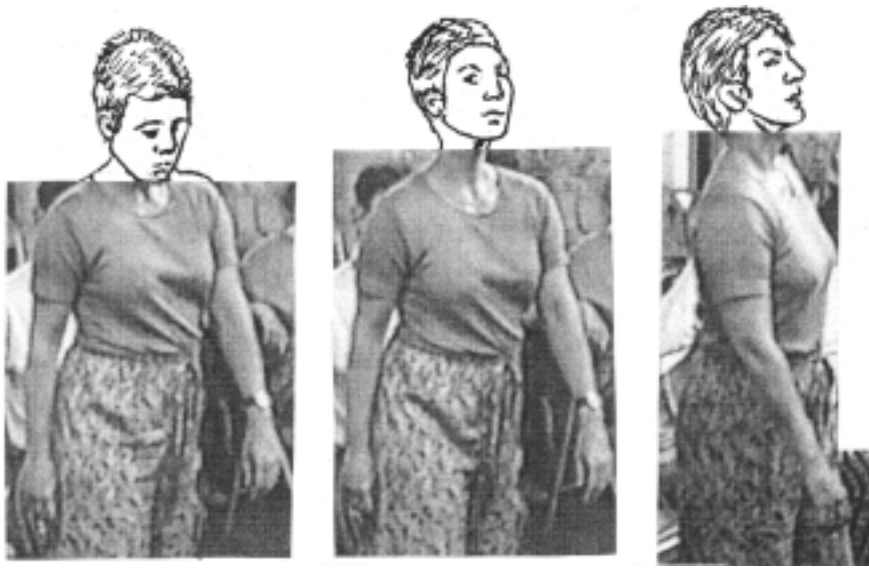

Figure 10 Free Posture: Walk

Walk

Victoria begins to swing her right arm across her body, shifting her weight to her left, then she reduces the movement to a lift of her hip as she swings her torso slightly from side to side, using the alternation between embodiments to make a rhythm that carves out a new habit pathway. Just before each shift of weight she lifts her head on her curved neck, straightens her spine, and tightens her belly, then as her arm sweeps down, she flexes her spine, relaxes her belly, softens her shoulders, and dips her head so that each phase of the walk comes to a crest before it flows into its next wave (Figure 10).

'You could say,' Stanley continues, 'my mother and father made a dance without knowing how to dance.'

Victoria continues her minimal walk, now as ethereal as mime.

'They did a dance', she makes her head movement into a nod that pulsates with her walk.

'This- ' Stanley starts to say as Victoria continues speaking.

' -without knowing that they were dancing.'

'Yes', says Stanley, 'and you know.'

She nods, walking.

If, as I contend here, we invent our own bodies anyway, in part by patterning our body images after the bodies of our parents, then recognizing this frees

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us from being in thrall to our own bodies as already given, and so out of awareness and beyond volition. The body's formations and transformations of itself over its course warrant the somatic psychological project of transforming it and provide a template for doing so.[10] Somatic psychology takes up our capacity to form our own body image as a template for its project of transforming the body image, where the body image is simply my body as it is for me, materially, imaginatively and experientially. If I make my body, I can unmake it. Somatic psychology positions practitioners to address their own bodies as intentional acts, acts of the imagination. Somatic practice makes conscious knowledge bodily knowledge by inscribing it into kinaesthetic memory. Slowing down Victoria's movement modulates the opposition between her two embodiments into a rhythm that she is able to enter into at various levels of intensity. Becoming aware of the differences between intense and less intense versions of her gestures, postures and movements makes it possible for her to choose and calibrate her own style of embodiment. This is the moment in its somatic history when the body image transforms, when an old conception of the self fades and a new one takes hold. She is translated, in just the way that somatic psychology proposes, by making modes of sentience to which the body is disposed slightly more intentional, slightly more open to influence, slightly more perceptible as herself.

In the end Victoria says something that suggests that her mother understood all this from the beginning.

Excerpt 13: A Proposal of Marriage

> 'You know, heh', Victoria, still walking softly in place, flares her right hand open on the downstroke of her arm, 'that reminds me', she brings her right hand up to her face, forefinger extended, 'that my mother tells that uh when my father asked her to- to marry him', she nods, walking, 'they were dancing in New Year's. Midnight', she nods, walking, and smiles. 'Dancing together.'

Ghosts

The therapeutic transformation brought off on this occasion changes our understanding of the imaginary body, conflated here as the habit body, the body phantom or body image, and the imaginary anatomy. The Lacanian narrative naturalizes the prehistory of the body, as if it folded objects it encounters in the world back into itself as body, as if the body found its edge by bumping into the world. Grant children that epiphany, that moment of reflection that becomes self-reflection, the moment the child absorbs the reflection into its body as its double, its image of itself. The body image arises out of the body's experience of objects

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and of itself as an object but not only out of these experiences. The act of imagination that produces the body image is not simply the transcription of an object into the mind as the body. The body image also arises out of the body's imagination. And the body's imagination is necessarily a somatic imagination, a body shape. The child's imaginary extension of its body into the bodies of its parents shapes the image toward which its flesh flows.

The discovery of the ancestral ghost in the flesh of the present amounts to a critique of the realist assumptions of the Lacanian prehistory of the body. I propose an expansion, a slight displacement, of the notion of body image. Not all of what produces my sense of my body proceeds out of my experience of my body. In some respects, the image precedes the experience; the imaginary precedes the real. The way I am aware of my flesh, the way the flesh remembers, does not arise simply out of the conjunction of the body with its world, recouped as the body image or phantom body. The body image takes its form from the patterns of love, yearning and desire, from the fluidity of the imagination as well as from the obduracy of the real. The phantoms created by desire come to be inhabited by the body's materialities. My body is constituted not only out of my imaginary anatomy but also out of others', other bodies toward whom I yearn. Of course these acts of the imagination, too, are embodied experiences but not embodied experiences of the world. They are embodied experiences of a body that holds the world to me in a certain configuration. I materialize in my body the ghosts of my ancestors; my flesh inhabits other images. My body is forfeit to a past it has only partially enacted.

At the somatic therapy session, we are present to a spirit possession or the materialization of ghosts, made visible by the somaticist's practices. But this haunting of our own bodies by the bodies of others is constant, a persistent familiar in our ordinary lives. This is how, as Nigel Thrift, following N. Katherine Hayles, puts it, 'the body practices that comprise "us" have come down to and inhabit us, passing into our being, passing our being back and forth between bodies and passing our being on' (2000: 38). The body is the flesh of memory.

Notes

This paper was first presented at the 1997 American Folklore Society Meetings in Austin, Texas, and last presented at the 1999 Society for Visual Anthropology Meetings in Chicago, Illinois. Versions have been given as invited lectures in 1998 for the Department of Graduate Sociology, School of Nursing, University of California, San Francisco; and in 1999 for the Department of Communication, Linköping University, Sweden; the Department of Ethnology, Stockholm University, Sweden; and the Department of Folkloristics, University of Bergen, Norway. Time to write was provided by the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences during the winter and spring of 1999, and

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inspiration by my colleagues there. I am especially appreciative of Seteney Shami's reflections on prehistory and Nigel Thrift's on exfoliations of the body.

1. I have been observing Stanley Keleman's practice and discussing his philosophy with him since 1994. This therapy session, like all the sessions I have observed, is a form of group work at which others are routinely present, though not usually as outside observers but as fellow participants. Co-participants are understood to benefit from witnessing, and to a certain extent somatizing, the work of their cohorts.

2. To protect their privacy, the names of all participants, except Stanley Keleman and myself, are fictitious.

3. The transcription was taken by permission from videotapes Keleman has made for his own purposes by his technician, Terry McClure. I have written permission from Keleman and his subject to analyze and publish this material. Because this permission issues from the principals and not their fellow participants, I exclude from my analysis any reference to the no doubt significant effect of the presence of an audience.

4. Writing about psychoanalysis, Phillips argues that the analyst's project is not so much to change terror into something else – as he writes, 'metamorphosis is another word for being on the run' (1997: 16) – as to 'make people feel better, but often in unexpected ways'. He calls it an 'intelligent hedonism' (1997: xvi). In terror, people appeal to experts because 'meaning requires accomplices' (1997: 120).

5. That meanings cannot be fixed for body movements but must be specified contextually was precisely Ray Birdwhistell's point in *Kinesics and Context*: ' "gestures" not only do not stand alone as behavioral isolates but they also do not have explicit and invariable meanings' (1970: 80). His work, among others, obliged social scientists to abandon the quest for a dictionary of 'body language'. Because meanings are not fixed does not of course mean that gestures have no meanings or that meanings cannot be specified for the occasion on which they arise. Somatic psychology provides a site for the examination of gestures as situated practices rather than the more customary psycholinguistic investigation of gesture typologies.

6. I reserve judgement, as anthropologists characteristically do, on the efficacy of somatic practice under the criteria of orthodox psychotherapeutic epistemologies, in favor of clarifying its epistemology of the body in its own terms. Nevertheless, I take somatic practice as a phenomenological laboratory for demonstrating, as I think it does, how gestures, postures and movements are related to emotions, thoughts, memories, imagination, consciousness, intentionality, temporality, spatiality, the senses and so on. The sort of gesture analysis through which I approach these matters is indebted neither to somatic practice nor to phenomenology, but to psycholinguistics for its use of an analytic technique which illuminates both. Though I work from his pivotal distinction between iconics and metaphorics, in contrast to McNeill, I hold that gestures are primarily kinaesthetic rather than visual, and that they are self-communication rather than communication to the other. Gestures, that is to say, are attached to the body, not just to the world and the other. If gestures were merely visual representations of something else for somebody else, it is not clear how, or even that, they could influence the gesturer. Somatic practice makes it evident that they do; my undertaking is to make it evident how.

7. McNeill writes about this in terms of the *distance* of the narrator from the event and the *importance* of the event to the narrator rather than in terms of emotional import (1992: 118–19).

8. In this passage, though the somaticist speaks, the camera remains trained on the respondent.

9. Like most participants, Victoria Ruiz also does individual work, to which I am not privy, with Stanley Keleman. So although Keleman's understandings, strategies, decisions and tactics may arise from knowledge outside the occasion presented, mine does not. I do not undertake to account for what Keleman does, or supposes he does, but for what can be understood to be going on from another perspective, the perspective of gesture analysis.

10. Stanley Keleman's own term for his practice is 'Formative Psychology.'

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