

A phenomenology of excorporation, bodily alienation and resistance: rethinking sexed and racialized embodiment

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Rethinking Sexed and Racialized Embodiment

Abstract

The article examines how some culturally shared and corporeally enacted beliefs and norms about sexed and racialized embodiment can form embodied agency, and this with the aid of the concepts of incorporation and excorporation. It discusses how the phenomenological concept of excorporation can help us examine painful experiences of how one's lived body breaks in the encounter with others. The article also examines how a continuous excorporation can result in bodily alienation, and what embodied resistance can mean when one has undergone or undergoes excorporation. Elaborating on the work of, among others, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, Drew Leder, and Sarah Ahmed, I discuss incorporation and excorporation of beliefs and norms regarding sexual difference, such as beliefs and norms regarding female and male embodiment, through a reading of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel Middlesex. I also suggest that it is useful to understand the postcolonial scholar Frantz Fanon's narrative of how he could not but attend to his own skin color while living in France in the 1940s and 1950s, in terms of excorporation. Whereas these are different narratives in many ways, I regard them as helpful for clarifying what excorporation implies and what analytic work this concept can enable.

A Phenomenology of Excorporation, Bodily Alienation and Resistance:

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1. INTRODUCTION

A growing number of scholars suggest that phenomenology of the body is a useful starting-point in examinations of how the singular body, i.e. the body as unique and different from other bodies, can form and inform our embodied selves and influence our ways of interacting with others and the world (e.g. Young 2005; Diprose 2002; Weiss 1999). While holding on to the conception of the body as a mode of intentionality and a grasp of the world, such scholars examine how cultural, historical and individual differences can matter for the subject's bodily being-in-the-world together with others.

My aim is to contribute to this development by discussing how some culturally shared and corporeally enacted beliefs and norms about sexed and racialized embodiment can form embodied agency, and this with the aid of the concepts of *incorporation* and *excorporation*.

The concept of *excorporation* is not an established phenomenological concept, but it can help us examine painful experiences of how one's lived body breaks in the encounter with others and how this makes one unable *not* to attend to certain beliefs and norms about one's own lived body. It has been first elaborated upon by Erik Malmqvist and me (2010) in an analysis of the interplay between individuals' actions and cultural patterns of understanding and behaviour when a child is born with so-called ambiguous sex. Here, I broaden the discussion. Drawing on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2006), Simone de Beauvoir (2010), and Franz Fanon (2008), I discuss incorporation and *excorporation* of beliefs and norms regarding sexual difference, such as beliefs and norms regarding female and male embodiment, through a reading of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *Middlesex* (2002). I also suggest that it is useful to understand the post-colonial scholar Franz Fanon's (2008) narrative of how he could not but attend to his own skin-colour while living in France in the 1940's and 1950's, in terms of *excorporation*. Whereas these are different narratives in many ways (one is Fanon's lived experience told in a non-linear form, the other is fictitious and linear), I regard them as helpful for clarifying what *excorporation* implies and what analytic work this concept can enable. Furthermore, I examine how a *continuous excorporation* can result in *bodily alienation*, and what *embodied resistance* can mean when one has undergone or undergoes *excorporation*.

My concern is with conceptual development, and some conceptual clarifications are needed from the start. The concept of "race" is problematic to use in some

contexts because of how it has been associated with racist identity politics.<1> Nevertheless, Linda Martín Alcoff (2007) emphasizes, we need critically to examine how and why racialized embodiment, in practice, may correlate with social inequalities. Alcoff (2007, 3) describes race as a “very real aspect of social identity, one that is marked on the body through learned perceptual practices of visual categorization, with significant sociological and political affects as well as a psychological impact on self-formation.” She contrasts race with ethnic terms that “signify a group’s relationship to historical experiences and cultural practices, and they are indicated more by practices than by physical appearance” (ibid.).

I will talk about racialized embodiment (rather than ethnicised) since I am concerned with lived bodies and with how different bodily marks have been interpreted and given specific meanings in different socio-cultural and historical settings, through and in interaction with others.<2> I also see Alcoff’s description as a useful starting-point for a discussion of sex. I understand sex as a “very real” aspect of social identity. Bodily marks at stake here, which I take to include internal and external organs, hormone levels, chromosomes etc., are interpreted – for example – when a child is born with ambiguous sex. The category of sex has had and continues to have sociological and political effects, and psychological effects on self-formation. Though it would lead too far to engage in a detailed discussion of possible similarities, differences and the interplay between categories such as sex and race, I see these categories as cultural “readings” of particular bodily marks.

2. PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE BODY

Merleau-Ponty (2006) emphasises that my body is both an object for others and my lived reality, and I exist neither only as a thing nor only as consciousness. This is highlighted with the concept of the lived body: the lived body is a mind-body unity, acting and experiencing in a specific situation. It is our lived relationship, as embodied beings, to a world immersed in meaning that we constantly interpret and make meaningful to ourselves through interaction with others. As Beauvoir (2010, 46) puts it, my lived body “is not a thing, it is a *situation*: it is [my] grasp on the world.”

As an embodied being, my experience of my own body is often pre-reflective and practical as becomes evident if we consider how the body, in movement, co-ordinates its different parts for the sake of action. When walking or performing other skills, we seem to act on the basis of a tacit, bodily know-how that makes it possible for us to engage in various activities without thinking about how to do so. Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of the body schema in order to highlight this bodily know-how that makes the correspondence between embodied subjects and their situations smooth and seamless. The body schema is an implicit, practical awareness of our bodies, motion and space. It is a system of practical and pre-reflective sensory-motor skills

that enables action since it makes possible the tacit and seamless co-ordination of different bodily parts in relation to space.

Two more things are noteworthy. As emphasised by many (e.g. Beauvoir 2010; Heinämaa 2003; Ahmed 2007), it is not enough to consider the body without further qualification. I am a particular body with a certain sex, ethnicity or physical ability and this matters for but does not determine my being-in-the-world. Finally, intersubjectivity is crucial to this reasoning. We are born into a world already inhabited, shaped and made familiar to us by others. The familiar is both that which is given to us by others and that “which in being given ‘gives’ the body the capacity to be oriented in this way or in that,” as put by Sarah Ahmed (2006, 7). The familiar is an effect of how others have already inhabited and continue to inhabit this world, and there is a bodily dimension to this. In Ahmed’s vocabulary, to be oriented is to be in line. It is to follow lines that others have already drawn and that others already follow. “We are ‘in line,’” she says, “when we face the direction that is already faced by others. Being ‘in line’ allows bodies to extend into spaces that, as it were, have already taken shape” (Ahmed 2006, 15). This has implications for what we can be or do: certain things (acts or ways of being or thinking) will be very difficult, or indeed impossible, for us because of our orientation and what is “in line” with our orientation. And we may not even notice that we are oriented in a particular way until something happens that makes us lose our orientation.<3>

3. INCORPORATION

Merleau-Ponty discusses how our sensory-motor capabilities may be diminished through illness and how this can matter for the world that these capabilities open up to us. Our sensory-motor capabilities may also be extended. This is the case for the blind man with the stick who no longer perceives his stick as an object but as an integrated and extended part of his lived body (Merleau-Ponty 2006, 165-166). When this is the case, the man has *incorporated* the stick into his lived body. It opens up new possibilities for him. He can find his way more easily, he can “see” the world with or through his stick. His body schema, his system of sensory-motor capabilities, is transformed. Gradually, and through repetition, the blind man has learnt how to move his body when walking, until he no longer needs to attend to his bodily movement or to the stick when so doing.

This receding of the incorporated object from the subject’s attention is not accidental (see Malmqvist and Zeiler 2010). If the blind man should concentrate on the stick itself, i.e. if he should attend thematically and reflectively to the stick and not where he wants to go, this would disrupt his sense of the space in which he moves. He may risk bumping into things. In order to explain this phenomenon, Drew Leder (1990, 26) uses the term “focal disappearance.” The idea is that I cannot at the same time attend *to* my stick as an object of attention and *from* the stick *to*

something else. This helps explain why incorporating the stick is important for the blind man's movement. When incorporated, the stick has become part of that *from* which the man perceives and engages with the world, and not that *to* which he directs his attention. This is possible precisely because the stick can recede from his reflective awareness. At the moment when the blind man uses the stick, it has become transparent for him. Importantly, however, this transparency is "never complete" (Leder 1990, 179, see Idhe 1979). Even if incorporated physical objects recede from my reflective attention when I engage with others and the world from them, I will be implicitly aware of them as *my* object.

Leder's discussion is useful in highlighting how, in more detail, we can understand this process of disappearance. It is also important to note, however, that the to-from structure is not as clear-cut as the description above may lead us to assume.

First, there are nuances to be explored in cases where the blind man fails to see the world from his stick. What if the stick breaks in the course of blind man's activity of seeing the world from it? What if it gets stuck in between two stones in the pavement when the man is out walking? In such scenarios, the man will need to attend *to* the stick as an object of attention *in his very activity of seeing the world from it*. To me, this evokes questions of the to-from structure. Whereas Leder's use of the to-from structure helps him explain how action is enabled because the stick can recede from reflective awareness, it is also important to acknowledge that this structure is not clear-cut. In the cases above, the stick does not stand forth as an object equal to other objects and the man will not attend *to* his stick in the same way as he previously attended *from it to* other things.

Second, the to-from structure may lead in other unintended and problematic directions. This is the case if this conceptualisation leads to the assumption that there is a sharp dividing-line between on the one hand the lived body as that from which we engage with others *and* on the other hand the world. Possibly, such a dichotomous reading may be less encouraged if we reframe the phenomenon as a to-through structure rather than a to-from structure. In such language, the blind man engages with the world through his incorporated stick. This is also in line with Leder's vocabulary. Though he emphasises the way the to-from structure can enable our understanding of how the body can disappear from thematic attention, he also suggests that when the stick "is mastered [the blind man] begins to feel *through* it to the experiential field that it discloses" (Leder 1990, 33, my emphasis).

Incorporation takes place, as some more examples, when we learn to write or bike. Importantly, it implies that physical objects or skills can be experienced as of-a-piece with the individual's experience of her or his body.

Whereas Merleau-Ponty mainly discusses incorporation of objects and skills, Malmqvist and I (2010) have suggested that it makes sense to think of some culturally shared and bodily expressed beliefs and norms as incorporated in a way

that is, in some respects, similar to the incorporation of objects. Such reasoning is based on the idea that a range of things (from physical objects and skills to cultural patterns of understanding and behaving) can become parts of our taken-for-granted being-in-the-world and form and enable our bodily existence and co-existence. It also rests on the idea that we enact for example expectations about female and male embodiment, and that such expectations involve beliefs and norms about female and male bodies, and about sexual difference. Gendered patterns of behaviour exemplify such an enactment. I shall examine this reasoning in a number of steps. First, however, it is important to note that beliefs and norms that are likely candidates for being incorporated are beliefs and norms regarding the body i) that are primarily at work in the taken-for-granted, pre-reflective domain of bodily existence, “in the domain of the habitual,” and ii) that can be particularly deeply rooted in our embodied way of being-in-the-world because we enact and live them as embodied beings (Malmqvist and Zeiler 2010, 144). This is the reason why I discuss beliefs and norms as regards *sexed and racialized embodiment* as translated into materialities in the form of the lived body, i.e. into the subject’s bodily grasp of the world.

Now, in the perspective of phenomenology of the body, human existence is characterized by a bodily openness to others. Rosalyn Diprose (2008) uses the concepts of “corporeal generosity” and “corporeal giving” in order to highlight this. Diprose underlines that we “give” bodily habits, gestures and postures to others and we receive such habits, gestures and postures from others. This giving is not necessarily as active a phenomenon as giving in everyday language. Often, it takes place on a pre-reflective level and we may not note that we “give” a certain bodily gesture to others.<4> Still, others may take up and repeat the gesture. If this gesture is repeated over time, it may become a part of these others’ corporeal styles.

This bodily openness is basic to human interaction. This is also the starting-point for the present discussion. We not only “give” bodily habits, gestures and postures in general. As gendered beings we also give gendered patterns of behaviour to others, that we ourselves have been given by still other others. As young children, we may appropriate gender, class and ethnicity-specific patterns of behaviour, in close relation to others, and we often do this on a practical and pre-reflective level.

Just as was the case with incorporation of physical objects, incorporation of beliefs and norms as regards female and male bodies is effected through “the motor grasping of a motor significance” rather than through explicit thoughts or mechanical responses to particular stimuli (Merleau-Ponty 2006, 165). This motor grasping takes place when young girls mimic the behaviour of older girls or women or when young boys mimic the behaviour of other males. In other words, incorporation of gendered body-world relations does not require that young children tell themselves “this is what girls/boys look like, this is how they should behave,” but that children repeat gendered patterns of behaviour over time. Important for this reasoning is the idea that culturally shared patterns of enacting one’s gender step by step can become

integrated parts of someone's lived body. Through habituation and repeated action, gendered patterns of behaviour that involve the said beliefs and norms can recede from our reflective attention and become what we "just do." They become that *through* which we engage with and see the world, and they can recede from our reflective awareness (even though they will be semi-transparent in the sense that whilst I may be implicitly aware of them as beliefs and norms that *I* enact, I do not become explicitly aware of them except when asked to explain or justify my behavior). Incorporation implies that we develop specific body-world relations.

Once incorporated, beliefs and norms about sexual difference and female and male bodies enable a smooth and seamless interaction with others as long as these others have incorporated the same beliefs and norms. In this way, incorporated beliefs and norms can enable some orientations in space – some ways to extend one's body in space – more so than others. To draw on Ahmed's (2006) reasoning: when I orient myself in line with others' orientation, this can strengthen the line and make deviations from it by others more difficult for them. When I act from my incorporated beliefs and norms, in interaction with others, I also strengthen the "invisibility" of these beliefs and norms for others who have incorporated the same beliefs and norms.

A comment on the temporal dimension of the transformation of lived bodies is also useful. Merleau-Ponty sometimes uses the concept of sedimentation in order to emphasise how past experience can feed into, and restrict, our bodily becoming. Sedimentation is the result of the fact that an "attitude towards the world, when once it has received frequent confirmation, acquires a favoured status for us" (Merleau-Ponty 2006, 513). In a similar way, expressed and enacted beliefs and norms cannot only become incorporated but also "sedimented" into the lived body, through repeated practice, and acquire a "favoured status" that is not easy to change.

4. EXCORPORATION

Consider now a scenario in Eugenides' (2002) novel *Middlesex*. In this book, the readers encounter a young Greek-American girl named Calliope, her friends and family. The story of Calliope's tells us about her teenage experiences. When her classmates enter puberty, Calliope does not. Instead, she fakes menstruation pain in order to fit into teenage girl behaviour. Time passes and when her parents finally take her to a medical specialist, they are told that everything will be fine if Calliope undergoes genital surgery and hormone treatment. If not, she will develop secondary sex characteristics as a male. She will not develop breasts and she will develop facial hair. Calliope is not informed herself but she learns from reading the doctor's notes that he mistakenly has left on his desk, that she is genetically male. She has a low level of 5- α -reductas, which has resulted in her external genitals looking like a

girl's. She flees from the clinic, from her parents and from her previous life. She is shaken in her innermost being.

Calliope has never heard of similar bodily changes. Indeed, they are unusual, though more common in some regions of the world than others. When Calliope looks up the term hermaphrodite – a term associated with 5- α -reductase deficiency in an old dictionary – she painfully notes the phrase “see synonyms at MONSTER” (Eugenides 2002, 463). The term has a force of its own and Calliope cannot but hear the voice of the dictionary telling her “monster, monster.” She hides all this from her parents and starts to work in a nightclub. She needs time to think; she explains that she cannot just say yes to surgery – maybe, after all, she is more male than female? And, what does it mean to be female or male?

Calliope's story can be read as a story where she painfully *excorporates* cultural beliefs and norms regarding sexual difference. More precisely, she excorporates beliefs and norms as regards the role of genital appearance for one's sex, and how genitals should look. Excorporation is a reverse incorporation. Whereas incorporation happens slowly, through repeated actions and habituation, excorporation is often abruptly and unexpectedly initiated *even if* it also can continue for longer periods of time and be “aggravated” over time.

Excorporation implies that something that has been part of one's lived body on a pre-reflective and practical level becomes a thematic object of one's attention. It is unwanted and typically painful for the subject undergoing it (even if she or he may in retrospect see this in a somewhat different light).

For Calliope, excorporation takes place when her own body, in combination with friends', parents' and medical professionals' behaviour and words, “forces” her to attend to beliefs and norms regarding female and male bodies that she has previously lived as taken-for-granted parts of her lived body. These beliefs and norms no longer function as that through which she engages with others and the world in a smooth and seamless way. They become that to which she cannot but attend, reflectively, and this in the very activity of her trying to engage with others and the world through them. This is a painful breakdown of her gendered lived body and particularly so since gendered existence is not merely deeply connected with, but one dimension of, her being-in-the-world. Temporarily at least, Calliope loses her grasp of the world.<5>

Let me now return to the case of the blind man with the stick. Let's say that the stick breaks into two parts in the man's activity of walking: the broken stick stands forth as a hindrance to what the man wants to do. In the language of incorporation and excorporation, the stick has previously been incorporated, but now becomes excorporated. It can no longer function as an extension of his lived body nor enable him to find his way when walking. This can be an emotionally painful experience as the blind man no longer can orient himself in the world as before.<6>

Excorporation for Calliope can be said to follow a similar pattern in some important regards. Whereas she has previously lived beliefs and norms regarding female and male bodies, these beliefs and norms no longer enable action on a pre-reflective and practical level. Instead, they stand forth as hindrances to her way of being-in-the-world as a gendered lived body. She cannot but attend to them. In other words: excorporation constitutes as an object a range of beliefs and norms that previously was lived as parts of who the subject's being-in-the-world, up until now. It also implies a focus on the on-going *confrontation* that takes place when one's style of being-in-the-world is formed by beliefs and norms that are becoming objects for the subject.

One more feature is noteworthy. The blind man's style of being is thoroughly shaped by the stick, and the stick never *only* becomes an object similar to other objects for him. Also when absent, it continues to inform his bodily being in terms of his not being able to see and find his way in the world as easily as before. In the case of Calliope, beliefs and norms about sexual difference will not become just like any objects of attention, because of our – as bodily beings – being so thoroughly formed by them.

The concept of excorporation takes seriously the bodily dimensions of experiences when that which one has previously lived, in a direct and non-thematised way, becomes an object that one cannot but attend to.<7> Let me now elaborate somewhat more on the concept of excorporation, but this time in relation to some of Frantz Fanon's experiences as a black Martiniquian man living in the France of the 1950's as told in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Fanon's study on black embodied subjectivity has had a profound impact on many critical race studies (see Gines 2003, Weate 1998). Furthermore, he situates himself in a phenomenological tradition *and* shows how insufficient it is to examine the role of the body for human meaning-making without also examining how one's skin-colour can open up the world in different ways in different contexts. In the essay entitled *The Lived Experience of the Black Man*, Fanon (2008, 90-91) takes Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body schema as a point of departure and intertwines his analysis of the "white gaze" and black subjectivity with a non-linear story of the following event, when a mother and her small boy passed by his seat on a train. The boy speaks, and Fanon recalls his own reaction:

'Look! A Negro!' It was a passing sting. I attempted a smile.

'Look! A Negro!' Absolutely. I was beginning to enjoy myself.

'Look! A Negro!' The circle was gradually getting smaller. I was really enjoying myself.

'*Maman*, look, a Negro; I'm scared!' Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question. (Fanon 2008, 91)

Fanon describes the pain in this experience. While starting his discussion with the body schema that enables action on pre-reflective levels, he also describes how he is forced to be reflectively aware of his bodily self, not in the first person, and

no longer in the third person but in triple. In the train, instead of one seat, they left me two or three. I was no longer enjoying myself. I was unable to discover the feverish coordinates of the world ... Disoriented ... Yet this reconsideration of myself, this thematization, was not my idea. (Fanon 2008, 92)

In Fanon's analysis, the body schema collapses. The "genuine dialectic" between body and world no longer functions as before: he can no longer coordinate his locomotion out of habit, because of the atmosphere around him and because of his encounters with "the Other, the white man." He needs to attend to his body, to think about how to move it when reaching out for a cigar in the desk.

Fanon examines the situation where his body schema disrupts. Under this body schema, he suggests, and not apparent until his body schema disrupts, lies a historical-racial or epidermal-racial schema. This schema is different from the body schema in some important respects. It is not a system of sensory-motor abilities that enables action on a pre-reflective and practical level. Fanon does not discuss the relation between these two schemas in detail, but he states that the historical-racial schema is not created by "residual sensations and perceptions primarily of a tactile, vestibular, kinaesthetic, and visual order" as Merleau-Ponty suggested in relation to the body schema. Instead, it is created "by the other, the White, who has woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes and stories" (Fanon 2008, 91). These are not just any anecdotes and stories, but "the legends, the stories, history, and especially *historicity*" that made the child react with fear when seeing a man with black skin. The effects are far-reaching for Fanon:

disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from myself, and gave up myself as an object. (Fanon 2008, 92)

Fanon's analysis of the historical-racial schema highlights that the subject is constitutively relational. Not only do I depend on others at a young age for food, support, shelter etc. I am also constituted by others' stories and ways of acting towards me. Fanon's body is always already inscribed by history and historicity, as are all our bodies, but with different possibilities and difficulties in terms of how we can relate to others and the world. Furthermore, his analysis highlights the thoroughly disorientating effect that a breakage in the lived body can have.

Impressive as his analysis is, I suggest that the concept of excorporation can throw new light on Fanon's and similar experiences. As previously said, excorporation is often suddenly initiated even though it also can be aggravated over time. It implies an unwanted disruption of one's body-world relations where certain beliefs and norms as regards the subject's own bodily existence, that she or he has previously incorporated, now stand forth as hindrances to her or his being-in-the-world. In the case of Calliope, it was a question of beliefs and norms about sexual difference and the importance of genitals for one's gendered body-world relations and one's self-identity.

Consider now the case of Fanon. In his descriptions, it is others' reactions towards him that make his previously taken-for-granted body-world relation impossible. He can no longer act as before. Amusement and laughter, for example, are no longer possible. Furthermore, and to use his vocabulary, he cannot but be aware of the historical-racial schema. This schema consists of expectations, norms, beliefs – woven through legends, stories and history – about him that others force upon him and that he cannot escape from even though he does not recognize himself as seen through the eyes of others.

I suggest an alternative reading of Fanon, where this historical-racial schema is not so much what lies beneath the body schema, but that which initiates excorporation. Rather than residing beneath the body schema, it can be seen as that which makes his body schema rupture: Fanon's body schema disrupts in the encounter with the white man who avoids him, stares at him, leaves him three seats in the train and in other ways confronts him with "the white gaze" (Fanon 2008, 90).

In this way, there is a parallel to Calliope's experience when she sees the word monster in the old dictionary. Others' way of telling and relating to her as a lived body initiate her excorporation. For Calliope, excorporation is the result of a combination of bodily changes and others' reactions to them. For Fanon, it is the encounter with "the Other, the white man" (ibid) that initiates excorporation. For both of them, this is a painful experience. For neither of them is excorporation "their" idea.<8> Furthermore, both Fanon's and Calliope's stories highlight that excorporation can be seen as a continuous, repetitive and disruptive movement: it can continue over time. Whereas Fanon recalls the encounter on the train in particular, he also gives many other examples of how he is continuously forced to attend to his own body. In the novel, this is also the case as Calliope flees from her home-town and encounters others who, though not always as explicitly as at the doctor's, force her – later him - to reflectively attend to the gendered body.

Let me once more turn to Fanon's text and this time to his description of the result of the unwanted thematisation of his own lived body. Here, Fanon (2008, 92) states that "I wanted quite simply to be a man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together." Thus it is described as a question of a desire, and this at a time when Fanon describes the

painful experience of not being treated as a man among men – and the devastating effects this had on his self-perception. We are also given details as regards when the body schema disrupts. At home in Martinique, Fanon says, he was aware of racial oppression but this was an “intellectual comprehension” and not a lived experience. Once in Paris, this changes. It is in concrete encounters with white persons that he experiences the disruption.<9>

Given this, beliefs and norms that are possible candidates for being excorporated, in Fanon’s story, are those that concern equality. This suggestion is backed up by his repeated statement that he “wanted to be a man, nothing but a man” (Fanon 2008, 92) and his thorough analysis of how the Other, the white man, did not recognize him in this way but only saw the black man they had “fabricated for him” out of previous stories (Fanon 2008, 100). The world, he says, “had rejected [him] in the name of color prejudice” (Fanon 2008, 102). At the time when he writes the book – in my reading – he can no longer live beliefs and norms about equality as taken-for-granted starting-points, and this matter for his embodied agency. His own body, he writes, is returned to him “spread-eagled, disjointed, redone” (Fanon 2008, 93, 95).

5. BODILY ALIENATION

What happens if excorporation is *continuously* lived for a long period of time? Can the disruptive movement that breaks my lived body apart become an integrated part of the same lived body? This would not imply a re-incorporation to a previous mode of being. A continuous repetitive and disruptive process of excorporation may, instead, result in bodily alienation.

The phenomenon of bodily alienation lay at the heart of Beauvoir’s (2010) *The Second Sex*. While starting her analysis with the concept of the lived body that I can experience as that which I am and as other than me, she provides this phenomenological insight with a gender dimension. While both women and men can experience their bodies as other than themselves when ill, the female body also reveals an alien vitality beyond the woman’s control in a different way than is the case for the man (Beauvoir 2010, 41; see Heinämaa 2003). For the woman, according to Beauvoir, pregnancy and menstruation highlight this. Menstruation is “when she feels most acutely that her body is an alienated opaque thing; it is the prey of a stubborn and foreign life that makes and unmakes a crib in her every month” (Beauvoir 2010, 41).<10>

Descriptions such as these have been much debated, and it is possible to read Beauvoir’s work as highlighting two separate discussions of bodily alienation: one biological (in the first part of *The Second Sex*), and one from the perspective of women’s lived experience from childhood to old age (in the second part). I suggest an alternative reading. Whereas Beauvoir does discuss bodily alienation in relation to some female bodily functions, she also emphasizes that her concern is *not* bodily

functions as such. “The question” she says, is “how nature has been taken up in the course of history; the question is what humanity has made of the human female” (Beauvoir 2010, 48). I see this as a useful approach to the phenomenon of bodily alienation: in order to understand this phenomenon we need to examine how bodies – with different bodily functions or different bodily marks – have been attributed meaning in interactions.

I take my point of departure in Beauvoir’s examination of how a certain kind of socialisation has formed female embodiment so that the woman *comes to identify with a passivity* that is imposed on her by others. This is also Kristana Arp’s (1995) suggestions: the woman, for Beauvoir, comes to identify herself with her body as an object because of how she has learnt to see herself, through and in interactions with others. When this is the case, the woman may experience herself as if “she has been doubled; instead of coinciding exactly with herself, she now begins to exist *outside*” (Beauvoir in Arp 1995, 171). Following Beauvoir, this may be the result if the young girl is encouraged to identify with the passive doll, and it is further promoted in the young woman’s puberty when she is encouraged, by her society, to see her body as a sexual object both for others and herself.

Now, I suggest that this approach is useful in order to understand *what a continuous disruptive movement of excorporation, for women and men, can imply*. In Arp’s (1995) reading, the process of alienation could not start without an initial step where the subject as a lived body becomes a thing under the gaze of the other. She also notes that Beauvoir discusses alienation as the result of being defined as the Other, and the inessential, by subjects who define themselves as the essential. This implies an opening, from within Beauvoir’s work, for the view that bodily alienation may not be usefully applied *only* to some women’s experiences.<11>

If we see bodily alienation as the result of a certain kind of socialisation, where the subject comes to see her- or himself in duplicate (or triplicate), then this also has a bearing on Fanon’s telling of how he comes to see himself through the eyes of the other and how this results in a loss of agency. Indeed, if the subject continuously lives the disruptive movement that breaks the lived body apart, it means that she or he cannot but attend continuously to her or his body as an object. This is the case partly because of the way self and others interact, or fail to interact, and it will have far-reaching detrimental effects on the subject’s being-in-the-world.

Finally, some words are needed about the interrelation between excorporation and bodily alienation. Excorporation can lead to bodily alienation. There is also a qualitative difference between these two, where alienation implies a more thorough and deeper breakage of the subject’s lived body where the self can come to experience and even identify with a passivity imposed on her or him by others.

6. EMBODIED RESISTANCE

In order to be able to criticize beliefs and norms about sexed or racialized embodiment, we need to become reflectively aware of them (Alcoff 1999). Such a critique is what excorporation makes possible.

Importantly, however, neither incorporation nor excorporation are static phenomena. Let me make a detour to the theme of reversibility in Merleau-Ponty's work on the phenomenon of touch when the right hand touches an object and the left hand touches the right hand. Merleau-Ponty notes that the right hand, being touched by the left hand, is never merely an object *and* that it has the capacity to reverse the situation. The dynamic involved in the experience of being the subject of perception (touching) and being a perceiving object (as is the case for the left hand being touched by the right hand while also touching the right hand), highlights this capacity of the lived body. This matters for my present discussion.

At this point, is it useful to distinguish between i) a continuous modification that can take place when a subject who has incorporated an object learns to use it in slightly new situations and ii) re-incorporation after excorporation. In the *first* case, there is an on-going modification of the body schema in everyday situations.<12> The blind man may learn to use the stick when walking on pavement and in the forest. A woman who has incorporated certain gendered patterns of behaviour, beliefs and norms that others have shared in her cultural context may move to another country and somewhat modify these patterns of behaviour, beliefs and norms. Such situations do not imply excorporation. The on-going modifications would not have as thoroughly disruptive effects as in excorporation. The reasoning in the *second* case of re-incorporation after excorporation draws on the discussion of the subject's capacity to reverse situations, but with some important modifications. Re-incorporation as discussed here implies not a mere reversal in the sense a return to a previous stage. Furthermore, it would be misleading to think of this re-incorporation as being about a "missing" object simply once more becoming "included" in the lived body.

Two features are noteworthy. The idea is not that re-incorporation is important for the subject to fully overcome her or his own object-ness, so to speak, since we will – as human subjects – experience ourselves as both subjects and objects. However, and while acknowledging this basic bodily ambiguity, re-incorporation *can* enable smooth and seamless interaction in a sense that was not possible in excorporation, and this can be seen as positive for the individual.<13>

I will once more return to Eugenides' story about Calliope in order to explain this reasoning. As the story unfolds, Calliope changes her name to Cal, through repeated practice learns to walk like a man, and in other ways tries to develop new gendered body-world relations. Still, this should not be seen as a matter of re-incorporation *and return* to a previous mode of being-in-the-world. Even though Cal may not explicitly question the idea of sexual difference, his way of refusing surgery and expressing his own body in new ways can be seen as embodied resistance to particular "solutions," articulated by others.

This can be seen as embodied resistance to the process of continuous excorporation. When Cal develops new gendered body-world relations, he may re-incorporate some beliefs and norms about sexual difference (such as the belief that sexual difference cannot be understood in strictly dichotomous terms). However, because of his new experiences, he seems not to re-incorporate the *previously* lived, taken-for-granted beliefs and norms.

Embodied resistance is also at stake in the work of Fanon when he states the importance of a continuous creation of human existence. He frames it as a desirable and endless creating of the self, in bodily interaction with others, and declares that it is

through self-consciousness and renunciation, through a permanent tension of his freedom, that man can create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world. Superiority? Inferiority? Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other? (Fanon 2008, 206)

The touch of the other as an equal may, then, put an end to the continuous process of excorporation and initiate a re-incorporation. This, however, is most likely not an easy process if one has undergone excorporation. After all, excorporation implies a breakdown of the lived body and disrupted intentionality, where a belief or norm that has previously been part of that from which one engages with others now stands forth as a hindrance.

Embodied resistance, in this context, implies resistance to a continuous excorporation that eventually may lead to bodily alienation. Such resistance takes place when subjects try to find new ways of expressing their bodily selves, new ways of living as bodily beings, even if this is done in ways that others implicitly or explicitly question. In relation to beliefs and norms about sexed embodiment, this can take place when subjects try to express their bodily selves in other ways than in stereotyped female or male ways, if they live in a society where these ways are the taken-for-granted ones. In relation to beliefs and norms about racialized embodiment such as those that Fanon described – i.e. racist beliefs and norms – embodied resistance can take place when we actively seek to question these beliefs and norms in interaction with others, discursively and through our ways of living together.

Such a questioning mode of existence may be integrated into our lived bodies, to the extent that we *cannot refrain* from questioning certain beliefs and norms about sexual and racialized embodiment. When this is the case, this is how we engage with others and the world. This may be the case if that which is incorporated is the wish in the prayer of Fanon (2008, 206): “O my body, always make me a man who questions!” If so, a questioning mode has become our taken-for-granted mode of existence and co-existence.

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NOTES

1. See Gudrun-Axeli Knapp (2005) for a discussion of the German context. I see related difficulties in Sweden.
2. However, a concern with how social identity has been marked on the body through the use of certain cultural categorizations will also be a concern with certain cultural practices.
3. Still, I may be "off" a dominant line that many others have drawn and follow, and have a direction and be in line with alternative lines – and my orientation in line with alternatives modes of being, thinking and acting may remain even when I experience disorientation in relation to the dominant lines.
4. The body can be seen as an "archive of corporeal gifts" (Cadwallader 2010).
5. This is qualitatively different from how we may all temporarily lose our grasp of the world when something unexpected happens – through the shock of learning that a person close to us has been taken seriously ill or through the shock of losing our job. But such experiences of shock (however profound they may be) do not involve bodily levels of existence as in the case of Calliope. Though unwanted, they do not imply that parts of our previously lived bodies now stand forth as thematic objects of attention.
6. This has been discussed in relation to Heidegger's carpenter whose hammer breaks in the activity of hammering (Malmqvist and Zeiler 2010). As another example, consider the case for the woman in high heels whose heel gets stuck between two stones in the pavement.
7. Excorporation can be understood in relation to Ahmed's (2006:50) "bad objects," i.e. objects that "fail to enable the action with which it is identified." However, Ahmed focuses on the encounter with objects that the subject more or less immediately perceives as bad, as "too this or too that" (the table is too high, the chair too low). The focus in my discussion of excorporation is different: it is on the process where something that has been a taken-for-granted part no longer functions in this way. The result, of course, can be that an object is perceived as bad.
8. A clarification: both racial-historical and gendered beliefs and norms about oneself can be incorporated; and when incorporated, they are part of the body schema, not beneath it. In this regard, racial and gendered beliefs and norms are similar. In Fanon's case, however, some very specific racial-historical beliefs and norms make him excorporate beliefs and norms about equality.
9. This is relevant in relation to cases where students in gender theory learn to question certain assumptions about sex and gender and where this result in a heightened awareness on a theoretical level. This is not enough for excorporation. Still, of course,

taking a course in gender theory need not (and hopefully isn't) only a theoretical enterprise but also a life transforming process.

10. For an analysis of the phenomenology of menstruation and pregnancy, see Young (2005). For an analysis of how pregnancy may be a case of eu-appearance, i.e. a mode of being where the body stands forth as strong, good and pleasurable for the subject, see Zeiler (2010).
11. However, whereas Beauvoir discusses how black men and women in America and Jewish men and women in Europe have been defined as the Other, she also holds that it is only in the woman's case that oppression can be understood as due to how some biological facts have been lived, such as that of pregnancy.
12. Gail Weiss (1999:121) suggests that there is a "space of disincorporation ... that sets the terms for the reversible relationship between man and machines" and makes "reversibility possible." This can perhaps exemplify the case of an on-going modification of the body schema in everyday situations where medical technologies can be incorporated and, when incorporated, continuously renegotiated (Weiss 1999:126).
13. Re-incorporation would enable action, but the transparency of re-incorporated beliefs and norms – that have previously been excorporated – may be less than before. Though re-incorporated, they may not be as deeply rooted in the lived body as before.

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