

## **The 'Body' in Fragments: anxieties, fascination and the ideal of 'wholeness'<sup>1</sup>**

This is an emphatically non-exhaustive survey paper, which evokes and briefly considers a series of key issues which arise when we think about bodies and fragmentation, and about fragmented bodies, in cultural representation and discourses. I begin by making reference to a selection of images, more and less recent, to illustrate some ways in which fragmented bodies have been represented in cultural objects, which speak to one main point I want to make: that Western culture is haunted by anxieties about bodily fragmentation or disintegration, and fascinated by a pervasive, impossible ideal of bodily wholeness; an idea that is everywhere challenged, but to which we cleave. I then briefly summarise some influential theoretical paradigms of fragmented bodies and selves, embodied and disembodied selves, because I don't think we can ever talk about the body without evoking the relationship with the self. Finally, I turn to some further examples, both textual and performative. This paper is not claiming to sketch any sort of overarching genealogy, but is rather a tentative suggestion of how we might engage critically with fragmented bodies as we encounter, create, and experience them in culture. Overall, the story I want to tell goes something like this: it's not how many fragments you are split into, it's what you do with them that counts; or, the tale of how the inevitably fragmented body can be unified in disunity through the deployment of (feminist) agency; or how we might move beyond paradigms of fragmentation/wholeness.

### **1. Cultural Representations of Fragmented Bodies**

The first fragmented body I want to evoke is the *Belvedere Torso*: a fragment of a marble statue, possibly of Hercules, rediscovered in Rome in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, which influenced many Renaissance artists.



Source: [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torso\\_di\\_Belvedere](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torso_di_Belvedere)

The statue itself has not been restored, although several artists, including Michelangelo, have sought to complete it somehow, for example in the *ignudi* figured on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, where, it has been suggested, Michelangelo hypothesized many times about the actual positioning of the missing limbs. Leonard Barkan has described the *Torso* as 'sublime in its fragmentariness [...] the (literal) embodiment of an art based on inward struggle' (1999). Barkan has also described Michelangelo as 'the tragic hero of the fragment', because of his interest in what is imagined but unseen, and the unfinished 'open' character of many of his works.<sup>ii</sup> We might think of Michelangelo's reworking of this stone remnant as attempts to recover the lost 'self' of the statue (or to imbue an artwork with a projected 'self'). Here a fragment of a representation of a body is completed, supplemented, and made 'whole' in further representations, so the original open work is both 'closed' and left open through the multiple reworkings.

My second example is Mark Quinn's *Self*, a cast of the artist's head made out of 4.5 pints of his own frozen blood, which he has been remaking every five years since 1991.



Source: <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/kostabi/kostabi5-24-16.asp>.<sup>iii</sup>

This is made of part of the artist's own body, frozen in time; a reification of our status as culturally, historically and temporally located beings. It is solid and yet would return to liquid if not kept frozen. It claims to show the 'self', through a cast of the 'body' made of fragments of that body. Here, I think, we can see interest in a different kind of 'wholeness': that of the interior and exterior of the body, of the surface and the innards, of the body and the evoked 'Self', and of the self and body at different points in their existence. Yet the palimpsestic character of the work, its fragility as a concrete object and its status as an externalised model of the multiply evoked self render it potentially uncanny in the Freudian sense (known and not known, the self and not the self), and abject in Kristeva's sense ('not I').<sup>iv</sup> Thus any possible 'wholeness' of the body or self is necessarily illusory, precarious and troubled.

My third example is René Magritte's *L'Evidence éternelle* [The Eternally Obvious]. Magritte created two versions of this, one of his wife Georgette (1930) and one of a model (1948). Here we have an example of a construal, whereby the viewer is encouraged to complete the fragments to form a 'complete' woman, but this is only possible if the viewer stands directly in front of the displayed work.



Source: <http://www.menil.org/exhibitions/BodyinFragments.php><sup>v</sup>

This is an example of Magritte's exploration with different types of looking, seeing and knowing, which have been analysed in relation to Gestalt theories of visual perception (Halper). It is also a work that can be productively analysed from a feminist perspective, since here we have a gendered fragmentation, and can identify what Laura Mulvey (1975) identified as the controlling male gaze, objectifying, fragmenting and fetishizing parts of the woman for its own pleasure, both implying and denying autonomous 'wholeness' to the women and the female body.

Finally, in a more contemporary vein, Silvio Berlusconi has recently performed sculptural cosmetic enhancement on a roman status of Mars, at an estimated cost of 70,000 euro, adding the missing hands and penis which had been damaged (Squires 2010).



Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/8144012/New-penis-for-statue-in-Silvio-Berlusconi-Rome-office.html>

On one level this is cultural restoration; on another, we might think about castration anxiety and the inability of a man whose self-image seems to rely almost entirely on an extremely hegemonic notion of heteronormative sexual vigour to tolerate any phallic lack, even of inanimate objects.

These four examples and my brief reflections raise some important points about the two disputed terms in my title: the 'body' and 'wholeness'. That is, when we talk about or represent the body, we evoke something that is both physical and imaginary, whose significance, boundaries and relation to the 'self' are contested. This means that bodily 'wholeness' cannot be entirely material, but always involves an immaterial supplement, an absent presence, which both completes and leaves open the body-as-conception. Indeed, critics such as Paul Schiller (1978) and more recently Elaine Scarry (1985) have argued that our bodies do not stop at the apparent boundary of the skin, but we incorporate external objects into our self image, extending the self prosthetically. In this view, the boundaries of the 'whole' body, are ever shifting and elusive, reaching out to incorporate new fragments of the world, making 'wholeness' impossible. In addition to being both material and immaterial, and prosthetically extendable, the body is also both sexed and gendered, and its meanings and status are constructed within socio-cultural discourses, shaped by shifting and unequal relations of power. As much as we may try

to remain authors of ourselves, or to achieve a sense of 'wholeness', this is subject to fragmentation (among other things), in representations and in how we are perceived. Representation plays a crucial part in how we understand our own and others' bodies; for example, ideals or norms of physical beauty may be established or reinforced through the circulation of representations of bodies or parts of bodies. Representation may consolidate a sense of embodied self through the internalisation of whole or fragmented cultural artefacts. Yet representation, in stone, oil paint, photography or organic matter, may also explicitly draw attention to the inescapable impermanence of our material bodies.

## 2. Theories of Bodily Fragmentation

The images I have cited depict material bodily fragments, but also evoke the fragmented self, rent and fractured in less concrete ways: the split subject, whose experience of embodiment is characterised by discontinuities, as has been explored in critical thought on the body. Here I want briefly to outline some key theoretical paradigms of the relationship between body and self, that demonstrate anxiety about and fascination with fragmentation:

- 1) René Descartes' dualistic logic of the superior *res cogitans* that he distinguished from both nature and the body, deeming the latter to be mere *res extensa*: leaky, unreliable and moving inexorably towards decomposition.<sup>vi</sup>
- 2) The Freudian split subject, ego and id, whose sense of self (ego) is constituted by a mental image, a psychological representation of the body. For Freud, we come to know our bodies in a partial way, for example through pain or erotogenicity in a particular place or organ.<sup>vii</sup> Moreover, Freud's theories devote significant attention to anxiety about fragmentation, for example through castration.<sup>viii</sup>
- 3) Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1968) phenomenological concept of body image: not only a map of the material body but, like Freud's interpretation, a psychological representation of the body. Significantly, this map does not necessarily entirely coincide with the corporeal 'reality' of that body, for example in the case of phantom limbs (or its opposite, agnosia).

- 4) Jean Paul Sartre's (1943) tripartite ontological phenomenology of the body: for-itself, for-others, and the alienated body. The body-for-itself is the point of view on the world that we must assume, which structures our consciousness in relation to the objects we perceive; the body-for-others is our fleshy form, as apprehended by others; and the alienated body is experienced by the subject that exists for itself as its body is known by others—in other words, the subject is compelled to take the point of view of the other on its own body, which becomes objectified.
- 5) For Jacques Lacan, the 'body in pieces' is symbolically melded together through the mirror stage: the formation of the ego, during which a myth of apparent wholeness comes to stave off a Freudian anxiety about fragmentation, counteracting "images of castration, emasculation, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body" (1977: 11).
- 6) Drawing on Lacanian theory, for J. M. Bernstein (2004, 2006), the human subject is constructed on the basis of the Enlightenment repudiation of the animal body, which nevertheless resurfaces as an element in the imagined construction of the socialized, intact and coherent self—a narrative that we reassert continually to affirm our integrity as individuals. Bernstein uses Lacanian terminology, describing this process of investing the body with a coherent narrative of the self as 'memberment'. If this narrative is somehow rent asunder, we experience a process of 'dismemberment', which may be both psychic, as our imagined selves prove illusory, and physical, as our material bodies suffer.

To reiterate my original caveat, I am certainly not claiming that this is an exhaustive genealogy of thought on the body in pieces. Indeed, the thought of Freud, Lacan and Merleau-Ponty have been criticised by feminist scholars for their universalising use of the male body in their theorisation (Grosz 1994); I agree with Grosz's critique and come to feminist thought on the body in due course. What interests me is that, taken together, these theorisations imply an almost inevitable fragmentation in the ways our bodies are experienced, whether through, for example, willed repudiation of the material body that the subject wishes to disavow, through non-coincidence of perceived and actual body,

or as a result of apparently inevitable and universal psychic development.

Psychoanalysts outline the unconscious processes by which we seek to achieve livability, which may smooth the cracks and create the illusion of wholeness; and this illusion then becomes 'real', insofar as the body is always experienced as a psychical projection. But the illusion remains illusory, and the fragmentation persists. And in this logic fragmentation provokes anxiety. Coupled with the assumption of maleness on the part of the theorists cited above, I am prompted to remark that anxiety about bodily fragmentation seems gendered.

However many scholars taking many different approaches to a range of contexts and concepts have deemed the fragmented body to be emblematic of poignant longing and suffering. Linda Nochlin's essay *The Body in Pieces* (1994), charts how the Romantic sense of inevitable incompleteness and the fragility of bodies leads artists to obsess over classical fragments, and to adopt partial representation, the fragment, as a way of dealing with the lost relationship to the heroic age of antiquity; for example, she discusses Henry Fuseli's 'The Artist Overwhelmed by the Grandeur of Ancient Ruins' (1778-79), in which the emotionally overwhelmed artist weeps in the shadow of the colossal fragments of the statue of Constantine, on the Capitoline hill in Rome. Nochlin follows this trend in representation as it develops in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where photographic representation allows for the multiplication of images, and for the framing of fragments of bodies. Here we see a different kind of longing, which, as Nochlin points out, is epitomised in Eugène Disdéri's fetishistic fragmentation of women's legs and ankles in his montage of Opera cards (c.1860). Both types of depiction, fragments of classical sculpture and fragments of women's bodies, crave, through mourning or desire, what is lost or unattainable: the absent presence.

In a similar vein, for Galili Shazar suffering is inevitably conveyed by the fragment, whether bodily or textual, since both types of fragment 'have the texture of a cut'; both are ' "allegories" of crisis and loss in history [...] and represent moments of absence and longing in the process of civilization [...]. Like the wounded body, the fragment bears the



form of a rupture and stands as evidence of deficiency and imperfection [...] of absence and pain' (2007).

Against the seemingly inescapably torn subject, the dismembered body, and the aesthetics of loss, stands a further variegated strand of thought: various postmodern and poststructuralist conceptions of the disunified, discursively constructed body-in-pieces: 'scrambled' multiplicity (Adkins 2002), or patchwork pastiche of differences. Whether fragmentation is to be mourned or luxuriated in, it is our condition. Some feminist critics working in this area have welcomed fragmentations such as the deconstruction of monolithic categories of identity; yet, in a way we might see as resonating with the androcentric theoretical views outlined above, these feminist scholars have also sought to heal other bodily fractures perceived as harmful, such as Cartesian dualism: Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and Toril Moi (2001), among others, have argued against the Cartesian separation of psyche and soma, and against the association of women and femininity with bodies and nature while men and masculinity are associated with abstract, rational thought. They replace this with a view of body and mind as indistinguishable, in which the body is sexed, gendered and valorized. For Grosz, this new mind/body relation takes the form of the Mobius strip, a paradigm of continuity (1994: 22). Similarly, philosopher Rosi Braidotti argues for the protection and valorization of the material embodied self as a coherent whole, and warns of the risks of bodily fragmentation in the age of hyper-technologization where individual body parts can be replaced and 'bodily' processes may take place *outside* the body. She fears that 'by officializing the instrumental denaturalisation of the body [technology will] institutionalize dismemberment as the modern condition, thus transforming the body into a factory of detachable pieces'. (Braidotti 1994: 61)

Thus whether we are approaching the issue through male-centred or feminist scholarship, the overall picture remains one of fragmentation as a condition that engenders suffering and is to be endured, or appeased in some way by creating narratives of a coherently membered self, or by reconceptualising the relationship between body and mind as comfortingly seamless. Whether intentionally or not, a myth

of an idealised wholeness pervades many of these positions and interpretations. Even for Grosz, who approaches the body through the lens of postmodern feminist thought (1994: xiv), the aim is to formulate a discourse of embodiment that smoothes together constituent elements of embodied selves. She critiques depictions of the postmodern subject as composed of multiple 'interlocking axes' of the self and body, perhaps finding these too akin to Braidotti's 'factory of detachable pieces', as if we could just break off a bit of ourselves at will without any further consequences. Grosz prefers to blend these into mutually constitutive parts that cannot be disassembled (1994: 19-20), that cannot be easily cast on and off like clothes. Here, her position resonates with Judith Butler's comments about gender; she clarifies that while gender is performative, this does not mean that it is akin to an item of clothing chosen at will from a cupboard and removed and stowed away at night (1993: x). Indeed Butler, who dissolves fragments of sex, gender and identity into an endlessly overlaid, congealed illusion of an abiding, coherent self, all constituted within normative discourses, can also be seen to propagate a myth of idealised wholeness. Her work is driven in part by a search for a missing 'fragment', of the subject, which we need to recover to become complete: she is seeking the 'unconscious', of sex, 'its remainder, its outside', or what has been excluded by the heteronormative regulatory regime (1993: 22). She implies that perhaps by articulating and embodying the unconscious of sex we might become whole, in terms of our perception of the range of possible sexualities, desires and practices available to us, and the ways in which the erotogenicity of parts or all of our bodies might be experienced.

### **3. Beyond paradigms of fragmentation and wholeness?**

Having raised some key issues and briefly sketched a series of theoretical approaches to the body and fragmentation, which to my mind share an interest in wholeness as an antidote to our status as incomplete, painfully and problematically fragmented beings, I now briefly discuss a few examples drawn from the work of three, quite distinct, twentieth-century and contemporary writers and artists. These are examples that emerge from my own current and recent research,<sup>ix</sup> which fascinate, interpellate and

exercise me, and which, I believe, can be seen to resonate with, contrast with, or even possibly replace, the pervasive myth of unattainable wholeness.

My first example is an extremely tormented body, which is mentally split into fragments by the suffering subject. In Primo Levi's testimonial account of his experiences in the Buna Monowitz concentration camp, we hear how the bodies of the prisoners are fragmented as they arrive:

Ci hanno tolto gli abiti, le scarpe, anche i capelli [...] ci toglieranno anche il nome [...] consideri ognuno, quanto valore, quanto significato è racchiuso anche nelle piú piccole nostre abitudini quotidiane, nei cento oggetti nostri che il piú umile mendicante possiede: un fazzoletto, una vecchia lettera, la fotografia di una persona cara. Queste cose sono parte di noi, quasi come membra del nostro corpo [...] Si immagina ora un uomo a cui, insieme con le persone amate, vengano tolti la sua casa, le sue abitudini, i suoi abiti [...] sarà un uomo vuoto, ridotto a sofferenza e bisogno, dimentico di dignità e di discernimento, poichè accade facilmente, a chi ha perso tutto, di perdere se stesso. (Levi 1997: 20-21)

[They have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair [...] they will even take away our name [...] Consider what value, what meaning is enclosed even in the smallest of our daily habits, in the hundred possessions which even the poorest beggar owns: a handkerchief, an old letter, the photo of a cherished person. These things are part of us, almost like limbs of our body [...] Imagine now a man who is deprived of everyone he loves, and at the same time of his house, his habits, his clothes [...] he will be a hollow man, reduced to suffering and needs, forgetful of dignity and restraint, for he who loses all often easily loses himself.] (trans. Woolf 1987: 33)

Detainees are stripped of their possessions, clothes, hair, names, habits, memories: which Levi posits as the material and internalised fragments of self through which we achieve 'memberment'. As he begins to suffer the effects of imprisonment and deprivation, Levi fragments still further, dissociating himself from his wounded, leaky, degraded body, effecting a Cartesian split of intellectual self from physically needy, abject self:

già il mio stesso corpo non è piú mio: ho il ventre gonfio e le membra stecchite, il viso tumido al mattino e incavato la sera. (Levi 1997: 31)

[already my own body is no longer mine: my belly is swollen, my limbs emaciated, my face is thick in the morning, hollow in the evening.] (trans. Woolf 1987: 43)

The body becomes 'not I', in Kristeva's terms, as the prisoners symbolically distance themselves from the sensations and markers of physical decrepitude in and on their material bodies.<sup>x</sup> We see Levi undergoing a 'dismemberment', as his Enlightenment

narrative of the rational, civilized self is rent asunder. His body is sunken, yellow, hungry, wounded; other than himself. Other prisoners are described as hollow vessels, mere husks, remnants of the human subject they once were:

vuoto interiormente, nulla piú di un involucro, come certe spoglie di insetti che si trovano in riva agli stagni, attaccate con un filo ai sassi, e il vento le scuote. (Levi 1997: 36)

[empty inside, nothing more than an involucro, like the slough of certain insects that one finds on the banks of swamps, held by a thread to the stones and shaken by the wind]. (trans. Woolf 1987: 48)

After liberation, as Levi slowly regains his health and undergoes the process of 'rehumanisation', he feels his self flowing back into his limbs:

sentivo un bisogno imperioso di riprendere possesso del mio corpo, di ristabilire il contatto, rotto da ormai quasi due anni, con gli alberi e con l'erba, con la terra pesante e bruna in cui si sentivano fremere i semi, con l'oceano d'aria che convogliava il polline degli abeti. (Levi 1997a: 295)

[I felt an imperious need to take possession of my body again, to re-establish a contact, by now broken for almost two years, with trees and grass, with the heavy brown soil in which one could feel the seeds chafing, with the ocean of air wafting the pollen from the fir trees, wave upon wave.] (trans. Woolf 1987: 278)

As he retakes possession of his material form, the remaining fragment of self which had retreated into his mind filters back throughout the rest of the body, and is felt to reconnect with nature, no longer alienated from the external world. Levi's fragmentation of self from body is experienced through both physical suffering and psychical projections of the body, as he records how the membered self is disintegrated, and how he copes with physical trauma by severing the body from his conception of self. Ultimately, the 'healed' body is the body that Levi valorises in the rest of his work, the fully corporeal self, the thinking body, a seamless combination of co-extensive intellect and physical materiality that reaches out to its surroundings, prosthetically extending the self and internalising the external world. Yet Levi's readers are also familiar with a pervasively split self, divided by what he calls a 'paranoid cleft' between his two halves of writer and chemist (Fadini 1997: 107). He is a self-identified centaur who endures his own disciplinary fragmentariness rather uncomfortably, while eulogising bridges, unified knowledge (the interconnections between scientific and literary cultures), and the fully

embodied self. Although, I would argue, his work can be read as mythicizing mind and body wholeness, he remains seemingly unable to achieve that for himself. Ultimately, he is not able to move beyond the paradigm of fragmentation/wholeness, marked by a sense of fragmentation as necessarily emblematic of problematic incompleteness, inadequacy or suffering.<sup>xi</sup>

Turning to a very different writer, lesbian feminist Monique Wittig famously gave us another type of split subject (j/e), as well as the fragmented lesbian body (dis)articulated in her powerful prose. The narrator of *The Lesbian Body*, who is herself torn into fragments and consumed during the course of the novel, takes apart, devours and witnesses the recomposition of her lover:

I begin with the tips of your fingers, I crunch the metacarpals, the carpals, I slaver at your wrists, I disarticulate the ulnae with great delicacy, I tear away the biceps from the humerus [...] Separated from the acromium both your arms are detached from your shoulders. (Wittig 1986: 121)

As many critics have pointed out (e.g. Gilmore, Cleveland) Wittig violently disarticulates and then rearticulates the female body in an economy devoid of the male signifier, resignifying biomedical discourses of the body and phallogocentric discourses of sex and gender, by enumerating each bodily fragment, and reconstituting them as the lesbian body.

THE CORPORA CAVERNOSA THE VAGINAL BULBS THE SKELETON THE VERTEBRAL COLUMN THE CLAVICLES THE RIBS THE STERNUM THE HUMERI THE RADII THE ULNAE THE CARPALS THE METACARPALS THE PHALANGES THE ILIAC BONES THE PELVIS THE SARCUM THE COCCYX THE FEMORA THE PATELLAE THE FIBULAE THE TIBIAE (Wittig 1986: 115)

This process enables her eventually to discover the lesbian body and the lesbian subject, first mutilated and multiple, and then finally, shingly whole. But still fragmented. Janne Cleveland (2001) has observed that Wittig's textual violence and remaking creates

[a] transitive body that has no stability within the conventional social arena. [...] at once fragmented and made whole in the process of naming [...] a body that is beginning to cohere

differently from that proposed in the Lacanian theory of the mirror stage [...]. The polemics of complete/incomplete are revealed to be inadequate to this body which is simultaneously both. (Cleveland 2001)

If we accept this view, this de-re-composition shows how our inevitable fragmentariness need not be disavowed; indeed, embracing it can be a way out of imposed constructions of the body. If the body is discursively constructed through regulatory norms, then we can use text to take ownership of our pieces, forging right to the very core and back again; grasping at the unseen 'remainder' of the self, hidden from view, but, especially in this instance, oh so visceral. Gone is the superficial veneer of a coherent narrative, a surface illusion of symbolic wholeness that trembles before possible decomposition. But this is also far from apolitical postmodern bricolage of the self. Through interpellating each morsel, turning the body inside out and back again, taking ownership of and lovingly appreciating the 'object' within us, Wittig paradoxically unifies the 'diversified' 'different' 'innumerable' body and subject (1986: 152), leaving her finally, 'most intact', because defined on her own terms (1986: 155).

In my final example, I suggest that something similar might be going on. The text is a play, *Hey Girl!*, created in 2007 by the Societas Raffaello Sanzio (Cesena), led by Romeo Castellucci.<sup>xii</sup>



Photo Francesco Raffaelli. Source: <http://www.tdg.ch/actu/culture/romeo-castelluccile-corps-delire-2009-03-22>.

Here we see in the opening scene the female protagonist in the process of waking up, leaving her skin behind her, shedding her past, undergoing a rebirth, emerging from the implied mother/child whole to make her way as a skinless, exposed fragment, vulnerable before history. The play, which has virtually no dialogue but is composed of a series of tableaux, tells both a day in the life and life in a day. Fragments of bodies are used to emphasise fragility, the protagonist's infantile qualities, what is lost as time pulls us forwards, and the replication of the self.



Source: <http://ericvautrin.wordpress.com/2008/07/04/de-travers/>

Here we see an oversize model of the protagonist's head, which she and other actors wear, questioning individual subjectivity and raising issues about socio-cultural homogenisation, or the self and the body in an age of conformity and mass-production. Castellucci also invests these bodily fragments with a racial twist, evoking Fanon's white masks (1971), as the white head of the protagonist is put on by a black female actor. The body is not innocent, and it symbolises more than ourselves.

The dripping shed skin remains on stage throughout the play, a symbol of loss; but the protagonist incorporates new fragments into her body, taking up a sword in an overtly phallic pose, for example. Similarly to Wittig's reconstituted lesbian body, here we can identify a female subject seeking to fully inhabit or make sense of her body on her own terms. What is at stake here is not wholeness, but self-definition of how the fragments

are assembled. This is beyond the kind of appeasing symbolic wholeness that may be achieved in the mirror stage but which remains haunted by the fear of mutilation and castration. This is the difference between productive and destructive fragmentation, whether self willed or imposed by others. It is the difference between Quinn's bloody, multiple Selves and Magritte's segmented female nude. It is the difference between the split subject constructed by phallogocentric discourses and the split subject resignified in a feminist economy. It also shows a way in which the alienated body-for-others can become the body-for-itself, without cancelling out the multiple constituent elements of the body as physiological, social and cultural self, with a material component but constructed within competing discursive regimes. And the subject is certainly not limited to the individual or a finite notion of the body, since Wittig's subject has mingled with both her own disarticulated entrails and those of the other and bears those traces; Castellucci's 'girl' continues to incorporate new fragments into her embodied self, supplementing a provisionally complete entity.

To conclude, in as broad and open a way as possible, I am not seeking to forge a coherent understanding of bodies in pieces; rather I suggest that by looking again to texts such as Wittig's and relating them to ongoing representations of fragmentation, we can go beyond the inadequate polemics of 'complete/incomplete' that Cleveland identifies. We can think about the fragmented self and body in terms other than whole/partial, which, in my view, encourages more productive reflection on issues of agency and power, and of multiple potential modalities of material and phantasmatic embodiment. It opens the way to understandings and experiences of the body that are less in thrall to the pervasive, and often problematically sexed and gendered, notion of lack.

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<sup>i</sup> This paper presents a series of reflections that have emerged from research I have completed recently and from ongoing projects, which are far from resolved. Comments, corrections and suggestions from colleagues are most welcome.

<sup>ii</sup> Cited in Sharfstein 2009: 169. See Barkan 1999. The torso is now in the Vatican Museums.

<sup>iii</sup> This is the 1991 piece, which is in the Saatchi Gallery.

<sup>iv</sup> Freud 1919; Kristeva 1982: 5.



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- <sup>v</sup> René Magritte, *L'evidence éternelle (The Eternally Obvious)* 1930. Oil on canvas, 63-1/4 x 11-1/2 inches, The Menil Collection, Houston. Photo: Hickey-Robertson, Houston.
- <sup>vi</sup> See Descartes 1968. For a feminist critique of Descartes' thought, see Bordo 1999.
- <sup>vii</sup> See the discussion in Butler 1993: 58-59. She refers to 'The Ego and the Id' (1923) and 'On Narcissism' (1914).
- <sup>viii</sup> See 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' (1924).
- <sup>ix</sup> For more details see <http://www.italian.bham.ac.uk/staff/ross.shtml>
- <sup>x</sup> This is not unique to Levi, but can be seen in the testimonial work of other survivors, for example, Elie Wiesel, *Night* (1955).
- <sup>xi</sup> I explore these ideas in more detail in Ross 2011.
- <sup>xii</sup> The lead roles are played by Silvia Costa and Sonia Beltran Napoles.

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