

2: Bodies that co-create: The residues and intimacies of vital materials

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Introduction

The contributors to this volume emphasize the blurred and transformative boundary of the human body by disputing the life/matter binary. I too address this predicament by exploring the fluctuating and coalescing relationships that body matter (hair, nails, skin, bacterial agents) and non-body-originating matter (such as carbon or cinnabar) have with and within past and present human bodies. The inherent porosity of the boundary between humans and substances becomes particularly apparent when considering the carbon residues found on the vertebrae and ribs of Neolithic human bodies at Çatalhöyük (Birch 2005, 593; Andrews et al. 2005, 277). When found in such contexts, the carbon residues are linked to smoke inhalation and act as biomarkers – or ‘tell-tale’ materials – for potential diseases. The presence of these carbon substances demonstrates the permeability of the human body, and, as such, confronts the ‘life–matter binary’ that pervades our thinking (Bennett 2010, 20). By foregrounding the capacities of these materials during encounters with humans, I contend that vital materials like carbon and cinnabar shaped human bodies. It is only by acknowledging the capacities of these substances that we can enhance our empirical understanding of the quality of unique Neolithic lifeways 9,000 years ago.

The contemporary use of the term ‘dirt’ in archaeological interpretation is in tension with my presentation of the vitality of carbon. At Çatalhöyük, the structuralist clean–dirty binary has been utilized to interpret social uses of areas inside buildings at the town (see Hodder and

Cessford 2004). I challenge this analytical method by reframing the residues currently described as ‘dirt’ as vital materials with capacities, forces and trajectories of their own (see Bennett 2010, viii). Ethnographic research carried out with performance artist Suze Adams provides a vignette of the ‘dispersal of self’ and becomes a further opportunity to rethink the ‘ontological contours’ (Malafouris 2008, 6) of the human body via the artist’s co-produced drawings with ‘dirt’ (body) matter. Thus, the greyiness of the body matter category as identified by Bennett (2010; see discussion below) – of what discourse and social mores allow to constitute body matter – destabilizes the demarcation of the ‘whole’ Cartesian body, which I contend is constructed through socialization processes which typically obscure the potency of materials, such as the culturally contingent concept of ‘dirt’ (see Douglas 2002). But let us first discuss the connective tissue between past and present bodies: humans, the ‘walking minerals’ of planet Earth (for more on mineral bones, metal blood and electric neurons see Bennett 2010, 10–11).

Dirt: Human traces and residues/dealing with substances

Whilst fleshy human bodies of prehistoric individuals are transformed by the passing of time and often disappear from archaeological view – here we might recall those enticing words Attala and Steel used in their introduction, such as oozing, suppurating and desiccating – the ‘mineral’ structure of the body often remains (see Bennett 2010, 11). At Çatalhöyük, carbon substances have been found on human rib bones; thus, it is possible to state that both substances (carbon residues) and things (human remains) have tangible presences in the archaeological record, recalling the argument that ‘everything in the world is equally a thing’ (see Witmore 2014, 241). The question that then arises is: how do we determine difference in relation to substances and things? Is it a question of scale, complexity or agency that

transforms our understanding of the material from substance to thing? The more elaborate and complex the capacities, affordances and agencies of the substance, the more thing-like it appears. In the discourse of Materialisms, and following on from the establishment of ‘material agency’ (Knappett and Malafouris 2008; cf. Gell 1998), should substances be deemed ‘quasi-agents’ (Bennett 2010, viii)? Or, are substances the ‘ultimate substratum’ (Whitehead 2000, 22, cited in Buchli 2016, 34), a metaphysical realm on which we fix our ‘contingent sense of the world’ (Buchli 2016, 34)? In this chapter, I flux between these two points, but ultimately it is the ‘doings’ that anchor my understanding of what constitutes bodies.

When analysing human–material relations *ex post facto*, the consideration of the capacities of substances facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the potentiality of an event like smoke in the lungs – and it is this type of event that is insinuated from the presence of these carbon residues on the ribs and vertebrae. Carbon substances routinely appear inside the buildings at Çatalhöyük and they are often found embedded between layers of plaster on mudbrick walls (Matthews 1998, 2005a, 2005b; Matthews et al. 2006). The vital materialist perspective reminds us that both plastered wall and fleshy human lung hosted the residues of the smoky activities inside the human-made Neolithic structures. According to microartifactual analysis, the northern areas of the internal spaces tend to be cleaner, in contrast to the dirtier southern areas near the hearth and the rooftop entry point to the building (Cessford 1998; Hodder and Cessford 2004). In a bid to understand the surprising practice at Çatalhöyük of producing undecorated cooking pottery, Hodder extends the clean–dirty binary to the surfaces of pottery which – despite being initially burnished – remain plain (2016, 38). He argues ‘This lack of decoration fits into a wider set of practices that distinguish the plain “dirty” southern areas of

main rooms from the northern “clean” and ritually marked and decorated areas’ (2016, 38). I find the use of the clean/dirty binary problematic in this interpretation. The ethnoarchaeologist Boivin discusses a plaster sample taken from a wall in a particular building at the settlement (B.5) which evidences cyclical replastering of the wall. She describes the plastering habits of the creative practitioners in the building as ‘fastidious’ because the wall demonstrates a ‘distinctive and conspicuous cyclicity’ (2000, 380). Matthews’s (1998) analysis of the plaster wall revealed layers of soot covering thin layers of plaster which were punctured by single coats of a noticeably thicker plaster (Boivin 2000, 382). Boivin notes that B.1 did not evidence the same sequence of plastering as B.5 which, she argues, is significant as it suggests that ‘different temporal rhythms unfolded in different buildings’ (2000, 383). Thus, the idiosyncrasies of the wall plastering practices between different buildings are not accounted for in Hodder’s meta-interpretation of undecorated pottery at the settlement.

Invariably, the footfall at the entry point to any building will be more pronounced and, as the hearth is situated under the roof-entry point to allow for the release of smoke, cooking also takes place in the area. It appears that for social reasons there could be more activities around the hearth and, hence, more bodily residues and intimate traces of living (or ‘dirt’). There is also the possibility that textiles (woven reed mats) were used in certain areas of the space, which Hodder and Cessford acknowledge would impact on the density of microartifactual remains incorporated into certain areas of the building (2004, 24). Micromorphological analysis can yield rich data sets of information regarding floor deposits, such as the presence of charred cereal grain or bone fragments (Hodder and Cessford 2004, 25); however, it is their translation of these assemblages into ‘clean’ or ‘dirty’ that I find problematic. Notably,

in their discussion, Hodder and Cessford also describe an assemblage profile as ‘low traffic’ (2004, 24), which is perhaps a more useful category, one that conveys the ‘busyness’ rather than ‘dirtiness’ of activities in the building.

Vitalism

Vital materialists are concerned with what materials ‘do’ (see Bennett 2010, 60), and this fits neatly within the New Materialities approach adopted by Attala (2017), which takes a radical posthuman approach by offering a more-than-human perspective to materials and how different species co-construct worlds. For Attala, water is the body, and plants have a ‘voice’ which emerges through active relationships with human partners (Attala 2017, 126, 128). Thus, the affect and capabilities of materials are showcased in a bid to dethrone the human and unmask the phantom boundaries between species (2017, 139).

I use the terms vital materials and vital materialisms to indicate my lineage in the New Materialities discourse. These terms are used by Bennett, who refers, in turn, to Kafka, DeLanda and Vernadsky, who all suggest humans are ‘composed of vital materials’ (2010, 11). Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s acknowledgement of a ‘material vitalism’, Bennett invigorates the usage of the term ‘vital’ by arguing that it is no longer adequate to frame substances as ‘passive, mechanistic or divinely infused’ (2010, xiii). Matter is no longer a ‘raw material’ for human intervention and might; it is human bodies, ‘but also, the bodies of Baltimore litter’ (Bennett 2010, xiii). By identifying and focusing on a vitality intrinsic to materiality, a conceptual space opens up for the capacities of things (Bennett 2010, viii) – capacities being the non-constitutive potentialities of materials (see DeLanda 2006, 7, 125).¹

Bennett describes how things, such as edibles and metals, can prevent human intentions, blocking both human ‘will and design’ (Bennett 2010, viii). She notes how things can act as ‘quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own’ (Bennett 2010, viii). By emphasizing the ‘common materiality of all that is’, Bennett grounds the body in matter (2010, 122). For the purpose of this chapter, it is her reconfiguring of the body to bodies that particularly resonates with the theoretical underpinning of the volume – a place where ‘the messy material reality of the body’ is exposed (see Attala and Steel, this volume). On this matter, Bennett explains that there are colonies of other bodies, namely bacteria, inhabiting the crook of the human elbow which help to moisten the skin allowing for the ease of movement; thus, humans are not a single entity but an ‘array of bodies’ with fluctuating porous boundaries (2010, 112). This notion ties in with my discussion of carbon and cinnabar, and the ‘its’ that inform the mechanisms of the Neolithic flowing body.

Bennett begins her ‘onto-tale’ by grounding everything – humans and things – as ‘materials’ (2010, 112, 117). She argues that ‘materiality is a rubric that tends to horizontalize the relations between humans, biota and abiota’ (2010, 112). By drawing parallels between human bodies and Baltimore litter, she appears to create a symmetry between humans and things. However, I am inclined to argue that Bennett does not explicitly commit to dissolving the division between humans and things; I, however, commit to the dissipation of the phantom boundary, via the work of Karen Barad (2003, 2007, 2012). Nonetheless, Bennett does offer several examples that suggest a blurred, perhaps permeable boundary between the two, particularly in relation to the agency that emerges from assemblages of human and non-human elements (2010, 25). For example, she discusses the agency that emerges from the North American blackout, which she describes as an assemblage of coal, sweat,

electromagnetic fields, and other agents (2010, 25). Rather than think about these interactions as assemblages, I prefer to think about the body and its relationship with smoke as ‘in-phenomena’ (Barad 2003, 817).

The ‘Cartesian cut’

I follow physicist and feminist philosopher Karen Barad (2003, 2007, 2012) and contend that bodies and norms are co-constituted in practice (Marshall and Alberti 2014, 25–6). Barad discusses the ‘Cartesian cut’ in her presentation of a relational ontology (2003, 815; Marshall and Alberti 2014). The Cartesian cut refers to the work of philosopher René Descartes, who made a clear distinction between the subject and the object and between persons and things (Barad 2003, 815). Barad blurs the line that defines where a human ends and things begin by offering an innovative approach to the body and agency which questions the conceptual validity of the ‘thing’. To develop her argument, Barad utilizes the work of physicist Niels Bohr to reject atomistic metaphysics and redefine things as ‘relationships’ rather than ‘distinct entities’ (2003, 813). Barad provides a convincing argument for the significance of relationships and not entities; however, this reading is ontologically challenging as it rejects the notion of things as basic entities (2003, 813). For Barad (2003, 815), this argument impacts upon agency, which, she argues, is not applied to something or someone, but is instead ‘a matter of intra-acting’ (‘intra’ over ‘inter’, as the latter postulates the existence of separate entities).

Barad wishes to displace the notion of ‘independently existing individuals’ by providing ‘a new understanding of causality’ (2012, 54), and argues that difference is not intrinsic to

things (Marshall and Alberti 2014, 27). She uses the example of the electron, and how contemporary research has revealed that the electron can be either a particle or wave, depending on the experiment used to measure it (Barad 2012, 60). This observation goes against classical physics, which states that there are only two types of ontologically distinct entities – particles or waves – and that they do very different things (Barad 2012, 60). Barad notes that the ontology of the entity is dependent on the apparatus used to make the measurement (2012, 60–2); thus, if the apparatus is changed a different entity is produced (Marshall and Alberti 2014, 26). Referring to Bohr, she explains that there are ‘no things before the measurement, and the very act of measurement produces determinate boundaries and properties of things’ (Barad 2012, 62). Therefore, things are in-phenomena – they emerge from the intra-actions of humans and materials.

Despite shifting the ‘localization’ of agency from humans to an enactment, Barad is adamant that intra-actions still reveal power imbalances as an array of complex material practices, and different sorts of causality are revealed through the approach (Barad 2012, 54–6). Barad’s work has clear repercussions for archaeology, and Marshall and Alberti (2014) have introduced her agential realist relational ontology to the archaeological discourse, focusing on the causal relationship between discourse, practice and matter. They note Barad’s agential realism collapses the ontological gap between bodies and social structure – and other norms, such as discourse or regulatory regimes – through her dismissal of an a priori causal link between social structure and human action (Marshall and Alberti 2014, 25–6). Thus, Barad challenges the idea that practices mediate human actions and the pressures of social structures by arguing that bodies and norms are co-constituted in practice (Marshall and Alberti 2014,

25–6). Her argument presents a different causality and way of thinking about the complex relationships between material practices (Barad 2012, 56).

Collaborating with smoke

Therefore, building on the argument that matter is vibrant, and that humans and things are ‘in-phenomena’, let us consider the vital materials whose potency grows proportionately with their accumulation, such as oil spills, cancerous tumours or, for the particular purpose of this chapter, carbon in the lungs. When Bennett discusses the ‘vitality’ of things, she spotlights the capacities of material entities (2010, viii). Smoke is a vital material, but not all smoke is equal: from the toxicity of the smoke produced from burnt plastic (Fardell 1993); to the toxic pollutants produced by burning wood (Fitzjohn 2000); to culturally contingent responses; to the aesthetics of smoke, such as the appearance of white smoke during conclave; to the physical impairment caused by cigarettes, such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Thus, different types of smoke, like the different types of matter subsumed under the umbrella term ‘dirt’, have different capacities and trajectories, and it is vital that we attend to the ‘character’ (DeLanda 2006) of the different relationships.

Organic fuels like animal dung or wood can pollute the air, and an analysis of the middens and hearths both inside and outside of buildings at the Çatalhöyük has established that these were the town’s two major fuel sources (Matthews 2010; Bogaard et al. 2014; Hodder 2016, 32). Daily collaborations with smoke inform the day-to-day workings and movement of human bodies who coexist in the same space. Smoke can be damaging for humans, particularly when routinely inhaled in small enclosed buildings. Archaeologist Matthew

Fitzjohn (2000) discusses air pollution in mudbrick buildings and provides an in-depth discussion of potential illnesses developed from exposure to air pollution in the home. He offers a ‘disease demography’ that interweaves cooking at the hearth and the likelihood of disease (Fitzjohn 2000, 10–14). To explain the impact on individuals that burning this type of fuel in domestic buildings can cause, Fitzjohn highlights experimental archaeological research carried out at Lejre, which reconstructed two Iron Age Longhouses (2000, 9). Fitzjohn notes that though the houses were ventilated, they were still very smoky and ‘irritated the participants’ eyes and their respiratory systems’ (2000, 9). Analysis of the air quality inside the building revealed that over the course of one week ‘dangerously high levels of various toxic pollutants that were derived from the wood smoke’ were recorded (2000, 9). The fact that archaeologists now detect lung damage from the analysis of carbon present on bones indicates how deeply these vital materials penetrated Neolithic human bodies.

In terms of the vital materials in the Neolithic, cinnabar routinely appears in various socio-cultural contexts (for an interesting example of cinnabar use in a Neolithic mass burial in Spain see Martin-Gil et al. 1995). Cinnabar’s capacity to mark surfaces with a highly saturated orange-red vermillion colour was known to the people of Çatalhöyük, and the practice of grinding and washing the mineral, adding fluid and applying to plastered surfaces indicates that the creative practitioners were aware of this particular capacity (for an in-depth discussion of pigments at Çatalhöyük, see Çamurcuoğlu 2015). However, the appearance of ground cinnabar in burial contexts raises a further issue. In addition to its luminous redness, cinnabar has the capacity to preserve human bones, as the mercuric content of cinnabar prevents fungi or micro-organisms interacting with the bones (Martin-Gil et al. 1995, 760). Examples of cinnabar use at Çatalhöyük include a female individual with cinnabar painted

across her skull in EVI, 20 (Mellaart 1964, 93), a teenage female whose body was covered with red ochre and whose skull was coated with cinnabar paint (1964, 93), and the burial of an elderly female individual SK19500 (Unit 19295, Çatalhöyük Database), which included a large amount of cinnabar pigment (Doherty 2011, 92). Thus, the presence of cinnabar scattered over bodies or painted on body parts in burial contexts at Çatalhöyük might indicate that the inhabitants of the town collaborated with the mineral because of its preservative effects on the skeleton (see Brenner 2014, 317). Cinnabar also has the capacity to encourage altered states of consciousness in humans (Liu et al. 2008; Emslie et al. 2015). The hypnotic, sedative and potentially hallucinogenic vapours released when the mineral is heated or when the mineral is consumed (Liu et al. 2008; Emslie et al. 2015) may be a further capacity exploited by the peoples of the Neolithic town. The capacities of cinnabar as a potential physico-chemical is worthy of consideration; using Attala's (2017) Edibility Approach, we could state that such materials are 'reactive' and 'formative' agents (cf. Ingold 2010, 3), whose physicality enables them to 'instigate actions and behaviours' (Attala 2017, 130). Thus, humans did not simply 'use' these materials; they may have actively desired (or even craved, see Fahlander 2010) the feelings associated with sedation or altered states of consciousness; this hinged on experiences with vital materials such as cinnabar, which, like phyto-matter, became an active partner when digested or inhaled (see Attala 2017, 130). In terms of edibility, Attala frames the experience as an 'interpenetrative event' that encourages humans not simply to 'know of' but to 'revisit' and attend to these materials (Attala 2017, 139). These examples demonstrate some of the capacities of cinnabar, and indicate the usefulness of considering the potentiality of matter (or adopting a material-centric perspective) when interpreting the residues of material interactions, particularly in archaeological contexts.

Smoke is a difficult substance for humans. It has the capacity to dry human eyes and cause them to water, and when humans inhale it they tend to cough. Smoke inhalation was part of daily life in the Neolithic town, and evidence of the damage caused to humans due to engagement with this vital material has been found in inhabitants' lungs (Birch 2005, 593; Andrews et al. 2005, 277). Andrews et al. (2005, 277) explain that during life smoke accumulates in the lungs, and then as the lungs decay after death the residues deposit on the ribs and vertebrae. The cacophony of coughing as residents entered and left the building or as they went to sleep at night, and the potential 'shortness of breath', can only be imagined (Birch 2005). Coughing is a reflex action and is directly linked to the residues of smoke in the lungs after a day of inhalation. In response to the smoke the body produces phlegm and lung capacity is reduced which can cause wheezing; there is also an increased risk of 'respiratory infections' (Fitzjohn 2000, 12). Therefore, if the body collaborates with smoke over a period of time, it can become susceptible to (or more accessible for) bacterial agents – depending on whether the perspective is human or bacterial.

The capacities of smoke are important to recognize in a discussion of vital materials inside the building, especially when trying to understand how these agents informed the experience of the space. These proximal agents are taken within, and held intimately in the lungs; these are the 'its' that challenge the onto-foundations of human bodies as unique entities (see Barad 2003, 2007, 2012). For the vital materialists amongst us, the colonies of bacteria that moisten the skin on the inner arm, allowing for ease of movement, are not of incidental import, but make a certain way of moving – a human way of moving – possible. These are essential collaborations; these are bodies that co-create. Next I shall introduce some primary

anthropological research I conducted with performance artist Suze Adams in a bid to experiment with these collaborations.

Bodies that co-create

In this section I consider the human and material relationships in flow during Adams's performance piece 'At One Remove', in a bid to address some of the difficulties faced by vital materialists when attempting to frame and understand the role of 'vibrant matter' in human-material intra-actions (Barad 2003; Bennett 2010). For the 2016 Fringe Arts Bath, Adams created a performed residency at the 'Cartesian Cut?' exhibition.² Her piece involved the artist occupying the window area at the exhibition and spending the day working and becoming (rather than being) in the space. After one week in the window Adams removed her physical self from the performance space, leaving her work and things on show for the remainder of the exhibition. As the last few days of the exhibition passed cups of orange juice gathered green mould and slowly exuded pungent scent, Adams's flowers wilted, their petals collapsing onto her beloved desk, whilst the bin in the performance area remained full. Therefore, the window spotlighted a host of organic and social processes, some in full flow, whilst others were stunted by the transition of the space from shop to exhibition, from bin to artwork. Her work table betrayed clues to the cognitive explorations she had conducted during her performance; olive stones and drawings of olive stones, quotes, and crumbled-up pieces of paper containing unwanted or redundant ideas were left on the table. Metonymic devices, such as a dental X-ray, and an envelope with highlighted words, offered the audience access points to the artist's subject of inquiry. What was not left on show were the products of what became the most distinctive moment of the whole performance, an action that Adams would later refer to as the 'dirt moment'.

The ‘dirt moment’ occurred when Adams got onto her knees and rubbed two pieces of paper on the floor at the end of her occupation, and by doing so created abstract drawings co-created by the artist and collective ‘dirt’ (Fig. 2.1). Adams describes all of the materials on show at the site of her performance as traces; these are the remnants and residues of her activities (Adams, 2016). She sees the assemblage of things as a ‘dispersal of self’ and deemed her performance as capturing a ‘body in transit’ (Adams 2016). Adams describes the objects at her desk as ‘appendages’, perceiving the chair, pencils, olive stones and books as still attached to her being. Through her interaction with the dirt, Adams had created a further appendage, a portable device that had commodifiable potential: a drawing. The transformation of substance to material reframed the dirt as a thing, and offered insight into a specific material trajectory. The transition brings into focus the notion of an ‘appendage’ vis-à-vis a ‘remnant or residue’. The remnants and residues of Adams’s activities in the window were, according to the artist, traces and not appendages, and these traces were an aggregate of collective matter, as not all the substances used in the dirt drawing were her own, but inevitably the residues of other proximal agents (Adams 2016). Adams’s use of term ‘remnants’ to describe the substances indicates both a loss and separation between body and body parts. She describes these substances as excess and refuse, the ‘stuff we don’t need’ (Adams, 2016).

[Fig. 2.1 about here]

Through interaction with the artist, the substances on the floor were transformed into a drawing, and during the process were transformed from substance to thing. Through human

intervention, the dirt, as a raw material, was used to make art. However, in this interpretation the capacities of the substance are once again subdued and colonized by the narrative of human exceptionalism. By this I mean that the central role of the human in the transformation process sustains an anthropocentric model of material interactions, and reiterates the vitalist stance inverted by Bennett during her discussion of vibrant matter. The New Materialisms discourse demands that we move beyond this narrative; therefore, it is not enough to simply focus on describing the materials or observe the ontological categories of the materials, there is also a reason to examine the ‘doings’ in this particular event. There are different ways to approach the relationship between human and substance: two examples are examining such events as an ‘assemblage’ (DeLanda 2006, 3; Bennett 2010; Harris 2014) and to ‘follow the thing’ by focusing on the matter (Witmore 2014, 205). The latter could be described as ‘thingification’ – a term used to describe the objectification of relations into things and unique entities (Barad 2003, 812). As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, I propose a Baradian approach, and frame the co-constitutional relationship as co-creative; I do not attend solely to a final object but also recognize the flux of substances forming and reforming.

Reflecting on Adams’s work, it seems reasonable to suggest the window dirt was integral to the artwork due to its central role in the event. Its presence beckoned to the artist and caused action. These drawings could not exist without the coagulations of these sedimentations, their capacities to mark paper and create rhythms with the human hands – all were utilized by the artist. I argue that from the perspective of a vital materialist, in the context of the performance, the dirt could be considered a ‘co-creator’. This notion is much easier to accept if we take on Karen Barad’s (2003, 2007, 2012) agential realist position which disputes the Cartesian cut, and states that things as unique entities do not exist as things are always in

phenomena. Thus, the artist and collective matter during the performance were in-phenomena; like the smoke in the lungs of the resident at Çatalhöyük, these co-constituting vital materials are bodies that co-create.

The homogenized body

Shedding skin, hair and other matter classed as ‘dirt’ offers further possible avenues of enquiry regarding the permeable qualities of human bodies (see Coard this volume). Few humans organize these minutiae and thus, these residues are abandoned and shunned through the notion of dirt. Anthropologist Mary Douglas notes that ‘reflection on dirt involves reflection on order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness’ (2002, 6). In her monograph *Purity and Danger* she indicates that notions of dirt are culturally configured, and notes that communities who have been influenced and shaped by nineteenth-century advancements in bacteriology have an understanding of dirt that is ‘dominated by the knowledge of pathogenic organisms’ (2002, 44). One important point of consideration is whether the concept of dirt and the separation between humans and their material traces is part of a socially informed ‘organization process’ that ensures the body remains carefully ‘stratified’ (Deleuze and Guattari (2005, 161). On the theme of constructing body identities, Helene Brembeck (2013, 32) discusses ‘homogenized body ideals’ and how the process of ‘individualization’ begins with ‘an idealized image of what a body should be and express’. I argue that the ‘homogenized body’ (or ‘whole’ Cartesian body) is a product of socio-cultural homogenization processes that produce rigid body motifs. Elsewhere, in the archaeological discourse, Lambros Malafouris has discussed how material culture extends the boundaries of the ‘body schema’ creating permeability between ‘neural and cultural plasticity’ (2008, 116).

In this chapter I have addressed the permeability of body matter by identifying body ‘parts’ that are detached and rendered void.

Thus, I envisage the whole Cartesian body as a socialization process that continues to inhibit archaeological interpretation of past bodies, and argue that when residues of vital materials like carbon or human hair are framed as ‘dirt’ and ordered away from the fleshiness of being human, the illusion of distance is placed between co-creative and co-constituting bodies. Socio-cultural processes create homogenized bodies; therefore, narratives centred on the ‘body’ are culturally contingent positions presented as universal truths. This chapter has, in part, attempted to address the problem, by contrasting a prehistoric and a contemporary intra-action and spotlighting the capacities of the materials involved and their co-creative (and often detrimental) role in the existence of human bodies. I contend that by addressing these substances – by pressing and conjoining forces with the gatherings of matter – the flowing of bodies is revealed.

Conclusions

To conclude, I argue we do not simply host these substances, nor form these substances, these vital materials, but co-create with them. Thus, these proximal, quasi-agents, which exist in polluted air, become key and debilitating agents when nestled in the lungs, and make humans co-creating life matter. In this chapter I have questioned whether the discrete status of human bodily traces is simply a by-product of a social formation process that ensures the body remains ‘whole’. The following quote from Bennett is at the heart of this chapter, ‘[it is an] oxymoronic truism that the human is not exclusively human, that we are made up of its’ (Bennett 2010, 113). How we tackle and take forward the life–matter predicament is a new

and exciting realm of study, with great potential for future archaeological interpretation.

Separating bodies from their material flows impedes our ability to explore the empirical and sensuous qualities of becoming bodies, both now and in the past. Deeming dirt in terms of a binary is an epistemological move that is no longer sufficient, and deeming smoke an incidental by-product, no longer exact.

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Notes

¹ The word ‘capacity’ is used by Deleuze and Guattari (2005) and unpacked by DeLanda in his analysis of their work (2006). DeLanda distinguishes between the properties and capacities of matter; he notes that capacities indicate what social entities are capable of in interactions and whilst these capacities are not always exercised they can still be framed as possibilities (2006, 7, 125). Capacities are not fixed, they can develop and grow through the acquirement of new skills or through new interactions (2006, 50) and could be imagined as an ‘open list’ rather than countable like properties (2006, 10, 50). Thus, capacities are not ‘a constitutive property’ (2006, 10).

² ‘The Cartesian Cut?’ exhibition was curated by Eloise Govier in association with Fringe Arts Bath (27 May 2016–12 June 2016). Exhibition artists: Suze Adams, Nikki Allford, Lou Baker, Rowan Evans and Maisie Newman, Eloise Govier, Ellie Harrison, John de Mearns, Laura Waite, Daniel Witnicki.