On the whole, the books' willingness to engage with key critiques of postmodernist thought, while illustrating the many ways in which postconventional analyses radically transform and illuminate the field of bioethics, makes it a very powerful and stimulating read.

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Carnal thoughts: embodiment and moving image culture

Sobchack, V.; University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles; 2004, ISBN 0-520-24129-0 £15.95 (pbk)

Vivian Sobchack describes this engagingly written collection of essays that traverse the fields of film studies, philosophy, psychoanalytic theory, literary studies, and feminist theory as 'an 'undisciplined' book' (Sobchack, 2004: 1). It is, nevertheless, a characteristically detailed and rigorously argued piece of work that is closely preoccupied with theorizing, and attending to, the corporeal experience of being in the world. This is explored in relation to a diverse range of objects that includes films, television and print media, as well as children's toys and automata, celebrity culture and political protest.

Informing all of these essays to a varying extent is Sobchack's own experience of becoming a 'techno-body', and her introduction to 'the assorted dimensions of prosthetic pleasure' after her left leg was surgically amputated as treatment for cancer (p. 168). This foregrounding of the experience of her own 'lived body' is consistent with the analytical methods of phenomenological enquiry, the philosophical discipline around which Sobchack orients much of her work. However, it also allows Sobchack to approach questions of embodiment and representations of the body with a certain authority and a politicized investment.

As she suggests in the essay, 'A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor and Materiality', she is particularly 'well equipped' to address the theoretical fetishism of the prosthetic metaphor and the way in which this metaphorical figure often serves to reproduce 'a naturalized sense of the body's previous and privileged 'wholeness'', rather than being effectively deployed to challenge unreflective ideas of corporeal unity (p. 210). Elsewhere, in an essay on recent cyber-theory, 'Beating the Meat/Surviving the Text, or How to get out of the Century Alive', her critique of 'the delusional liberatory rhetoric of technophiles' (p. 173) is written from the position of one who is 'technologically enabled in the most intimate way', but who is, 'nonetheless, not a cyborg. Unlike Baudrillard,

I have not forgotten the limitations and finitude and naked capacities of my flesh – nor, more important, do I desire to disavow or escape them’ (p. 172). Although far from being a technophobe, Sobchack argues that a critical emphasis upon the ‘lived body’ is crucial in order to provide an ethical grounding for questions of the intersection of technology and flesh, and so she concludes by wishing Jean Baudrillard ‘a little pain – maybe a lot – to bring him to his senses’, returning him to his body (p. 178).

Different ethical questions are addressed in two essays that concentrate upon documentary genres. In the first of these, Sobchack discusses documentary film and television in relation to their particular capacity to represent death and violence. The essay outlines ‘a semiotic phenomenology of death’, and this is articulated through a series of propositions about the representational, moral and ethical conventions by which death is filmed and shown – and the extent to which documentary filmmakers are implicated in the events they witness – and the ways in which images of death and violence are interpreted by spectators (p. 226). The second essay explores the comic, disconcerting, or confusing experience of viewing fiction films, such as *Forrest Gump* (director: Robert Zemeckis, 1994) and *Zelig* (director: Woody Allen, 1983), that incorporate documentary material into the fabric of the text. Here Sobchack employs ‘a *pragmatic* and *phenomenological* perspective’ in order to examine the way that this insertion of ‘real’ material can shock us out of our absorption in the diegetic irreality of a film, but the essay also challenges the assumption that what distinguishes documentary from fiction is the visible ontological or indexical quality of the image (p. 268). Instead, she argues that our engagement with a film is determined by our lived experience and extra-textual knowledge so that the experience of viewing either a documentary or a fiction film is framed by a set of expectations and a particular experience of being in the world. Consequently, ‘what the generic terms *fiction* and *documentary* designate are an experienced difference in our mode of consciousness, our attention toward and our valuation of the cinematic objects we engage’ (p. 261).

Similar questions of spectatorship and interpretation are addressed in one of the introductory essays, ‘What My Fingers Knew: the Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh’, which explores the gap between the tactile, multi-sensory experience of watching films, and the accounts of this experience by film reviewers and academics whose attempts to articulate this experience fall back upon conventional and sensorily limited models. Sobchack argues, on the other hand, that ‘we do not experience any movie only through our eyes. We see and comprehend and feel films with our entire bodily being, informed by the full history and carnal knowledge of our acculturated sensorium’ (p. 63). This essay takes account of some of the theory on affect and cinema that has been published since Sobchack’s important monograph, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1991), and it also goes some way to

addressing one of the problematic tendencies or restrictions of this phenomenological model, which is that it understands films primarily as realist, and therefore struggles to distinguish between the cinematic experience and our experience of 'reality'.

The remaining essays explore, in different ways, the representation and experience of the (female, ageing, raced) body, and the spatial orientation, co-ordination and movement of this body. Sobchack explains that the central theme of the book is 'the embodied and radically material nature of human existence and thus the lived body's essential implication in making 'meaning' out of bodily 'sense.'" (p. 1) Despite her self-deprecating caveat that it is 'undisciplined', this book's careful argument, its lucid, sometimes intimate style, and an impressive breadth of examples, make a persuasive case for the value of carnal cultural criticism.

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Other Germans: Black Germans and the politics of race, gender and memory in the Third Reich

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ISBN 0-472-11360-7, £13.71 (hbk); ISBN 0-472-03138-4, £14.50 (pbk)

Over the past 20 years a growing number of publications have dealt with the experience of black Germans during the Third Reich, a minority group that has been neglected in histories and historiographies of Nazi persecution. Recent publications range from comprehensive historical studies, such as Clarence Lusane's *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era* (2002), to autobiographical accounts such as that by Hans J. Massaquoi, *Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany* (1999), which have reached a wider audience. Tina Campt's *Other Germans* differs from these, as the centre of her study is memory analysis, her aim being to show 'how an examination of the memories of Afro-Germans highlights the workings of memory as a technology that produces not only dominant accounts of history but also the potential for alternative forms of knowledge production and meaning making' (p. 82). Rather than presenting new historical facts, this study explores the complex connections between gender, race and nation, and how Nazi state policies affected subject formations of individual black Germans. Campt achieves this by analysing and interpreting two in-depth interviews that were carried