Introduction

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The present volume contains a selection of papers that were originally given at the 28th annual conference of the Austrian Association for American Studies (AAAS), October 26-28, 2001, at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. The conference theme, which was broadly defined as "The EmBodyment of American Culture", originated from the organizers' conviction that American culture has literally become fixated on the body at the same time that the body has emerged as a key term within critical and cultural theory. The fixation on the body is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that for more than a year the United States of America was much more interested in its president's body than in his politics, let alone in the body politic. In contemporary intellectual debates the body is generally looked at as a symbol displaying and revealing hidden 'truths' about the individual and his or her behavior. The horrifying events of September 11, 2001 added a totally unexpected dimension to our original understanding of the conference theme. Following Jessica Johnston, we had taken the term "embodiment" to mean "to represent in bodily or material form. To deprive of abstractness, to give tangible or discernible form to. To make part of a system or whole; to incorporate." (The American Body in Context 321.) In the wake of 09/11, the status of the body shifted fundamentally, from a locus of wholeness and presence towards a figure of crisis and fragmentation. The following thoughts by the American linguist George Lakoff are a good example both of the extent to which 09/11 fundamentally changed the world and of the semantic shift of the term "embodiment":

The World Trade Center was a potent symbol, tied into our understanding of our country and ourselves in a myriad of ways. All of what we know is physically embodied in our brains. To incorporate the new knowledge requires a physical change in the synapses of our brains, a physical reshaping of our neural system. The physical violence was not only in New York and Washington. Physical changes — violent ones — have been made to the brains of all Americans.
All of us from the Austrian Association for American Studies (AAAS) were deeply affected by a grief and sense of shock over the attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., and by the tragedy in southwestern Pennsylvania. And all of us struggled to deal with the enormity of the crisis, which also led us towards recognition of the awful vulnerability of our civilization and, concomitantly, of the human body. Also in response to the terrorist attacks, many words of support and solidarity were exchanged between representatives of various American Studies organizations world wide. George Sanchez, who was then President of the American Studies Association (ASA), called upon his respondents to find a civic voice and to engage multiple publics from around the world in a dialogue of openness and respect for others.  

Philip J. Deloria from the Department of History at the University of Michigan, who was one of our designated keynote speakers, did not finally come. In a public statement that was read out to conference participants, Professor Deloria explained his reasons, which were all related to the acts of terror committed to the U.S. on September 11, 2001. The editors have permission to reproduce his statement here:

My engagements with global American studies scholars, in Finland and Japan, have been among the most rewarding of my career. I was very much looking forward to the personal and intellectual exchanges that would no doubt have characterized this meeting of the AAAS. The events of September 11th, however, have deeply affected myself and my family, and the probability of further waves of terrorism, suggested not just by the American government, but by intelligence agencies in a number of other nations, have led me — reluctantly — to decide against traveling to Europe at this moment in time. My hesitation stems not so much from fears associated with flying or from the thought of an incident in Austria itself as from the frequently and strongly expressed anxieties and concerns of my parents and my children. Their worries are important to me, so much so that I feel it my first obligation to reassure them in as serious and substantial a way as possible. Like you, I look forward to a different day, when fear and terror have a less powerful grip on all our lives. Please accept my deepest apologies and my very best wishes for a successful conference.

Phil Deloria, October 21, 2001
The conference was devoted to looking closely at the position of the human body both as a site of aesthetic realization and as a physical presence in American culture, as well as to taking stock of the status which the body has held in recent theoretical discourses. While common sense may still view the body as a natural biological unity, when looked at as a cultural object, the body appears to be subject to an enormous range of interventions, interrogations, and interpretations. French feminism of the 1970s undoubtedly changed the theoretical climate in a wide range of disciplines in the period to follow. Especially in the fields of literary criticism, cultural studies and gender studies, the mediated or representational body has dominated theoretical discourses for the last two decades. Judith Butler in her influential book *Bodies That Matter* has looked at the body as a historical phenomenon that is not so much the effect of constructing social identity as it is the material basis for and the site of formations of identity. In another influential study by Susan Bordo we are alerted to the long historical continuity of constructions of the body as something apart from the true self (*Unbearable Weight* 5). Yet Bordo also demonstrates that there is no such thing as the dissolution of this dualism. On the contrary, the more recent obsession with the body is truly not identical with accepting the body, let alone of humans becoming body-loving (*Unbearable Weight* 15).

The very postmodern imagination of the body as malleable plastic, to be shaped to the meanings we choose is, then, less a celebration of the body than, in Susan Bordo’s words, a very concrete “effacement of the body’s materiality” (*Unbearable Weight* 38) — whether through plastic surgery, sex-change operations, tattooing, weight-training, or dieting. Thus not only girls and women but, increasingly, men and boys as well, are subject to a complexly and densely institutionalized system of values and practices within which they all come to believe that they are nothing, or treated as nothing, unless they are “trim, tight, lineless, bulgeless, and sagless” (*Unbearable Weight* 32). Among the questions put forward by Susan Bordo are, What are the normalizing disciplines that affect those who conceptualize themselves as overweight? and, How do American women and men conceptualize themselves and their bodies as they attempt to transform their bodies into ideals of health and fitness? Clearly in this shape the body is no longer “located on the nature side of a culture/nature divide” (*Unbearable Weight* 33). Especially the muscled male body is a case in point here insofar as it no
longer suggests uncultured or uncivilized (thus "Nature", as in Marlon Brando's legendary role of Stanley Kowalski), but has become a cultural icon.

We might say, then, that through a major transformation that re-imagines the body as a historical and not merely as a biological arena the body has finally taken up residence within culture. Yet if today bodies are cultural forms, the question is, in what ways? To repeat an argument developed by Susan Bordo, culture has both a direct grip and a representational influence on our bodies, the former through the practices and habits of everyday life, from table-manners to toilet-habits, the latter in terms of how the body is represented in various cultural texts, in the arts, in philosophy, religion, medicine, etc. This is not to claim that the body is a *tabula rasa*, merely awaiting inscription of culture. Such a claim would indeed lead towards treating the body as pure text. Some might in fact like the idea of giving free reign to "meaning." Others have, however, warned against "de-corporealizing the subject" or, furthermore, against "suppressing the body." Caroline Bynum has been among those exploring the paradoxical effect of reducing the body to yet another discourse, of dissolving it into language and, in doing so, ignoring the body that eats, that works, that dies, that is afraid — and thus to dislocate the body from history, social practice, and culture. In her attempt towards reconstructing the category of the body, Bynum has also drawn attention to the preservation, in a variety of theoretical discourses, of a traditional Western dualist perspective that sees body and mind in opposition to each other.

While Caroline Bynum has found that medieval philosophers thought of the person as both body and soul, others have shown a keen interest in how the body encounters place, or in the meaning of being in place in the environment. And medical research has shown that the neuronal apparatus responsible for our memory is replete with "somatic markers" recording what we have experienced. Perhaps it would be best, then, to theorize the body in terms of uncertainty. This could mean to situate the body at the intersection of culture and biology, to posit that the body is always necessarily touched by culture, while there is of course no denying the role of biology. To think in such a way might even point a way towards breaking up the binary opposition between nature and culture. Yet is it at all possible to mediate between culture and biology, between non-essentialist and essentialist approaches, that is, between those that describe the body as produced through certain discourses, and
those that describe it as a natural biological unity? Whatever the answer may be, the widespread attention the body has attracted calls for a sharpening of our awareness as American Studies scholars of the many instantiations of the body in American culture.

Clearly within American Studies, the mediated or representational body has attracted attention not only in relation to former President Clinton’s private, or rather public, parts, which he had to act out on the media stage as part of the Clinton, Monica Lewinsky and Kenneth Starr triangulation. For instance at the Klagenfurt conference of the Austrian Association for American Studies, Philip J. Deloria was going to show how his own grandfather, Vine Deloria Sr., “always understood that his power was of his body.” Such an understanding, we were to be told, was “not simply a reflection of his athletic skills; rather it included a recognition of the ways that he himself embodied the virtues (and, as it turns out the difficulties) of Indian-white social and cultural contact.” By the same token, Vine’s sister, Ella, situated herself in the world by “placing other people in a kinship pattern and then embodying a series of behaviors.” All these relations were of course defined through language and bodily performance in a way that was “particularly Dakota”. Yet both Ella and Vine were, “at least for a while, Indians in the city.” Thus their stories, Philip J. Deloria suggests, “give us the occasion to consider the ways we have framed issues of cultural contact, and the formation and performance of identities in cross-cultural situations that speak not only to their specific case studies, but also to larger questions about culture, power, and change in America.”

Jessica Johnston, too, conceptualizes the body as a major site of social struggle in contemporary American culture, a struggle that, as she writes in her contribution to this volume, clearly reflects “hegemonic power relations and cultural tensions.” Consumer culture in particular can be seen as “a vehicle of social control as individuals come to voluntarily discipline themselves to be more in line with its mandates.” Thus what needs to be looked at closely are “not only representations and images of the body, but also the ways these representations affect social interaction and social relationships as individuals both accommodate and resist regulation of their bodies.” This is to say that Marilyn Monroe might have to look for a different job today, while a look into Ebony magazine reveals African American women who are obviously ‘heavier’ than women ‘used’ for a ‘white’ market. The figures are staggering: between 1943 and 1960 a woman’s ‘ideal’
weight came down from 130 lbs. to 123 lbs., at the same time that the ideal weight of a man of the same size went from 140 lbs. to 134 lbs. A recent poll revealed that 35 percent of adult Americans are in some way trying to lose weight, yet 90 to 95 percent of those attempting to lose weight are unsuccessful at keeping that lost weight off for over five years. In 1990, the market volume for dieting was in the range of $33 billion. Combined, these statistics reveal a brutal dynamic as people continually strive, unsuccessfully, to reshape and remold their bodies into socially and personally acceptable states. The insights that Jessica Johnston derives from her analysis of the specific ways that women use to negotiate and reproduce, to accommodate and to resist contemporary hegemonic discourses on the body are chilling: overweight individuals come to voluntarily discipline themselves in order to be more in line with dominant cultural mandates as they live their lives in a continual state of embodied dissatisfaction.

Overall, the organizers encouraged interdisciplinary contributions from different fields, such as literary and cultural studies, film and media studies, history and sociology, and women studies. Accordingly, the contributions to the present volume deal with representations and discoursifications of the body in a broad array of texts, in literature, the visual arts, theater, the performing arts, film and mass media, science and technology, as well as in various cultural practices. As regards the contributions that fall into the media’s construction of the body, they teach us, for instance through the persuasiveness of advertising, to read bodies as symbols displaying and revealing hidden ‘truths’ about the individual and his or her behavior. Other papers analyze the body as a symbol and metaphor, in poetry as well as in fiction and film, discussing how it has the power to define and influence the characteristics of gender, race, age, and education attributed to certain bodies. Yet another group explores the various forms of discipline, whether with or without technological intervention, as they bear down on the body. Finally, there are papers that focus on individuals’ acts of resistance to, and negotiation with, disciplinary measures. Individuals after all do assert their own interpretations of the body, interpretations that are often in opposition to the hegemonic ways of thinking and knowing the body. If they are, that is, as resistance may well be simply an elusive concept that allows us to assume that we have a measure of ‘freedom.’ After all, how does one think beyond the cultural knowledge structures we are born into? In other words, now that we know about the cultural
determinations of the body, now that we have explored the various social mechanisms through which the body is conceptualized and disciplined, what is it that we can or should do about them?

Difficult as it may be, the editors have decided to allow the papers collected in this volume to fall into two broad categories, which we called cultural studies and textual studies. This division reflects the standard practice within European American Studies, located as they customarily are within English departments. The order within each category roughly reflects the degree of theorizing of individual contributions. Textual studies contributions are typically concerned with questions of structure, or with relations of form, theme, and meaning, including verbal play or the defamiliarization of ordinary language. They are concerned with individual works as well as with relations of these to other works or texts. Furthermore, textual studies contributions are concerned with aspects of authorship, genres, media, social and/or cultural movements, even of nationality. Cultural studies contributions are more interested in the ‘larger issues,’ for instance in the themes or discourses circulating within a culture. They are thus interested in the particular ways of saying and seeing, or else in the values, meanings and assumptions that are projected onto, incorporated into, and (re-)negotiated in cultural manifestations. Cultural studies contributions also typically emphasize ‘differences’ (cultural, social, etc.), and thus also the question of power, of those who have power and those who do not. This question entails issues of class, race, ethnicity, and gender, and it involves a challenge to the traditional division of high and low (or popular) culture.

In contributions which fall under the category of cultural studies the body is frequently treated as cultural behavior and/or practice. For instance, in Jessica Johnston’s “Normalizing Disciplines: Overweight Subjectivities and Resistance,” which has been introduced, the body is looked at as a site of social struggle, a vehicle of social control. Other contributions, such as the ones by Anna Schober and Klaus D. Heissenberger, are more interested in how social and cultural values are represented in bodily or material form. In view of what has already been said about the status of the body in contemporary American culture, we may boldly think of the body as “America’s last frontier.” To do so would invoke, inter alia, the revival of various body arts, such as piercing, tattooing, scarification, branding, and body hair removal (the subject of Sarah Hildebrandt’s contribution), all of which turn the
human skin into a canvas of aesthetic expression. Other manifestations of physicality range from the culture of fitness (addressed by Jan Jagodzinski), the interest in dressing up, down, and cross, and the subject of blue jeans in Anna Schober’s article), the concern over weight (with corollaries such as plastic surgery, cosmetic surgery, and body sculpturing - all subjects dealt with in this volume by Jessica Johnston, Greta Olson, and Louis J. Kern).

Specifically, Louis J. Kern examines the phenomena of genital cosmetic surgery and aesthetic reconstruction in the form of foreskin restoration and laser vaginal rejuvenation. Both phenomena, he argues, are a “response to body-image discontent and self-perceived genital deficit which, in its pathological form, has been identified by psychiatry as Body Dysmorphic Disorder.” Practices such as foreskin restoration and laser vaginal rejuvenation have become popular insofar as they “hold out to the alienated and the discontent the promise of bodily perfection.” Paradoxically, however, that perfection “resides in a rejection of the natural body, in an increasingly mechanized, technologized, and standardized paradigm of beauty.” Ultimately, therefore, genital aesthetic modification “tends finally to the transubstantiation of the organic body to a seamless plastic body […] the iconic body of Barbie.”

Sarah Hildebrandt discusses the growing imperative that (white) Americans be virtually hairless. To be sure, the removal of leg and underarm hair has been a relatively established norm in the United States since the middle of the twentieth century. But contemporary practices go well beyond them and, also of significance, body hair removal is “increasingly the domain of men as well as [of] women. While women remove the hair from legs, underarms, and pubic area, growing numbers of men are removing the hair from their chests and backs.” Thus Sarah Hildebrandt’s paper emphasizes the implications of hairlessness for our cultural constructions of “public” and “private.” What is being “mapped on the body” is twofold, firstly a significant relationship between body hair removal and the public display of the body and, secondly, an increased surveillance and self-surveillance of the body. Jan Jagodzinski has divided his contribution into two parts. In the first part he argues that the female bodybuilder, through her performativity which deconstructs the binary masculine/feminine by their body “drag,” poses a “threat to both heterosexuality and patriarchy”. In response to this threat there have emerged certain
“containment” strategies, which attempt to “police this body back into dominant accepted norms of femininity.” In the second part of his contribution, jagodzinski attempts to show the “radicality of the female bodybuilder in relation to other bodies that circulate in postmodernity; namely the model-mannequin, the anorexic and the bulimic.” The relation may be radical but, with the help of a “Greimasian square”, jagodzinski shows how all these bodies relate to one another “through a discursive semiotic logic.”

For Anna Schober, blue jeans are by no means an unalterable material object world, but are rather inseparable from the question about what they do and what is done with them. In other words, Schober sees blue jeans as something which is graspable “only as alteration — an alteration which involves ideology, mythos and/or utopia.” Accordingly Schober devotes her intellectual labor to showing the involvement of blue jeans in processes which transform the ways of perception “into something that also involves phantasmagorical processes of fetish-becoming.” Schober’s explanation of the production of meanings in different social contexts illustrates how meaning depends on changes in contexts and appreciations of a particular object. Ultimately, therefore, the issues of “taste” and “quality”, i.e., the question of where to draw the line between good and bad, high and low, the ugly and the beautiful, the superficial and the substantial — emerge in this way as a “quite explicitly political problem.”

The argument that the body is a site on which cultural meanings are inscribed is a crucial one for Klaus D. Heissenberger’s reading of the various identities rock singer Bruce Springsteen has assumed in the course of his career. These identities reach from an alienated angry young man in the early 1970s to a mature folk poet of the American underclass in the mid-1990s. But it was in the visual representations of the persona Springsteen put on display in the shows of the Born in the U.S.A. tour and in videos that were circulated in MTV that the singer’s body was most powerfully present. What Heissenberger looks closely at is the politics that made Springsteen’s “sweating, tanned, and muscular body” a major force in the production of the singer as a genuinely “American” pop icon. Heissenberger concludes that these politics of the body “were highly ambiguous.” In attempts to capitalize on Springsteen’s popularity, both critics of the Reagan administration and conservatives sought to determine the political meanings of
Springsteen’s working-class masculinity and, through it, his Americanness.

Greta Olson examines literary texts about eating disorders in which appetite, the body, and food are depicted as demonic. “Food appears to devour the speaker or force her to eat in a form of reversed cannibalism; the body appears as a demonic and aggressive pursuer.” Using the example of Heather Stephanson’s poem “Howl” on food abuse, self-cutting, and beauty rituals, Olson demonstrates how eating disorders reveal class, race, and gender problems in the United States. It is not only that weight is a class marker but that “class is also in no small part synonymous with race in the United States”. Additionally, we learn that “standards for what constitutes attractiveness affects women particularly, as women are discriminated against more than men for being ‘fat.’” Thus problems eating-disordered women have represent “exaggerated versions of anxieties” that many American women suffer from. Thus also the recurrent images in texts on eating disorders are, Olson claims, images of a “culture that through endless reinforcement makes many women sick.”

The editors have considered Greta Olson’s contribution as transitional, insofar as the topic is explored both from a literary and from a cultural studies perspective. The same could perhaps be said about Monika Seidl’s study of the portrait as a strategy to stabilize the body of a woman in terms of “solidity.” However, the method she employs — relating one work to another work — has made us see her contribution rather in terms of textual studies. Astrid Fellner’s approach is similar, seeing as she does Djuna Barnes’s literary texts together with the self-stylized representation of Barnes’s body. Other contributions apply to the body questions of structure, or of form, theme, and meaning. One example is Pjotr Zazula’s contribution, which is about the female body as a theme in selected modernist poems. Another one is Martina Antretter’s study of ecopoetry, which shows the human body as problematic or even contested. Finally under the category of textual studies there are contributions (by Dieter Gross and Bernd Herzogenrath) in which the body is treated as a presence on images such as film, photography, and performance art. In all these instances, however, the body is at the center of identity formation, its function being that of a sign that agents use as if they write with and read it and, in doing so, hold it under control.
Specifically, Monika Seidl’s analysis focuses “on the various ways in which the body of a woman is mediated in terms of ‘solidity’ around 1900.” One such strategy is to stabilize the body as a portrait. For instance, in Henry James’s novel Portrait of a Lady, frames and other spatial positions point towards the heroine’s, Isabel Archer’s, unstable identity which can be only temporarily fixed and stabilized in terms of a “portrait of a lady.” Boldly establishing a transatlantic perspective, Seidl relates Portrait of a Lady to framing strategies found in fin-de-siècle portraits of women, such as in portraits by Gustav Klimt. By seeing together novel and art work, Seidl substantiates her argument that these various framing strategies function as a “last resort to centre a woman in the modern world where centres no longer hold.”

Astrid Fellner’s contribution is about Djuna Barnes’s attempts to escape the claims her body made on her, to gain control of it and to free it from patriarchal constraints. Additionally, Fellner’s contribution may be seen as a bold attempt towards revisioning the traditional category of authorship. In the case of Djuna Barnes, “author” becomes a complex configuration of the writer’s own body and of other bodies. In order to untangle this complexity, Fellner offers several foci: one is the frequently contradictory views of the female body in Barnes’s literary texts; another one is on Barnes’s literary texts in connection with the sexually explicit drawings that accompany The Book of Repulsive Women and Ladies Almanack; a third focus is on the persona of Djuna Barnes, “the lady of fashion,” who “penned the Ladies Almanack and assumed the reputation of a bohemian cult figure in the American expatriate culture in Paris.” Fellner argues that Barnes’s literary texts together with her self-stylized representation of her body as a site of signifying practices and a scene of cultural inscription form just one “body.” This “body” serves as a locus where the “cultural construction of various, conflicting identities are subverted and transgressed.”

Piotr Zazula’s contribution deals with the female body as a theme in selected modernist poems, specifically in poems which deal with “interpersonal encounters in the modern city.” Such encounters are ordinarily premised on the “social necessity of ignoring the omnipresence of alien individuals,” at the same time as it becomes a “source of perpetual psychological tension: though conscious of the often alluring presence of the Other, most urbanites feel obliged to act as if they did not notice other city dwellers.” T.S. Eliot’s “Rhapsody On a Windy Night”, William Carlos Williams’s “The Young Housewife”,
and Oscar Williams's "The Leg in the Subway" each in its own way "constitutes interpersonal encounters both as a menace and as a promise." Significantly, Zazula demonstrates that these poems may offer "radically different visions of the city's social interactions," yet in all the three poems, the "male speakers view the accidentally encountered female bodies as indicative of a feminine presence," a presence that "invariably stands for the instinctual and the carnal, permanently allotted to the realm of half-articulated desires."

Martina Antretter in her study of ecopoetry shows the human body as problematic or even contested. The article outlines two directions that nature poetry has recently taken. The first direction is exemplified by Mary Oliver's ecopoetry: shot through as it is with a conscious implementation of metaphors that evoke feminized nature, Oliver's poetry is nevertheless "not a regression so much as it is a potentially liberating act" — as witness the poetic rendering of the mother in nature (which Antretter places within the framework of Hélène Cixous' concept of the mother as the "equivoice") and the underlying eroticism of descriptions of physical immersion in nature. The second direction is exemplified by the ecopoetics of Amy Clampitt, which rather than celebrate nature as a backdrop to physical surrender addresses it as a "fundamentally de-romanticized concept" — a "locus or meeting point between the human and the non-human that possesses new dimensions; ones which, as of yet, defy classification."

Dieter Gross discusses the role of physical or bodily violence during a crucial period in American opera, i.e., during the transition from its first attempts, in the 1930s, at becoming a national art form to the decade in which this end was finally achieved in the music dramas of the 1950s. Violence, Gross argues, is a major factor of American life. It is no surprise, then, that violence already played a major role in the first budding of American opera during the 1930s (Gruenberg, Gershwin), and even more during its maturation in the 1940s (Weill, Blitzstein, Still). This development, based as it is on the conviction that violent conditions or settings could carry operatic potential, peaked in the multi-facetted uses of suffering in the music dramas of the 1950s (Menotti, Robinson, Floyd, Moore, Bernstein, Ward). Additionally, Gross traces a larger pattern in the development from "exemplary acts of violence," which are frequently organized around an individual, towards "structural violence," which is crucial to the story line — as origin, as a turning point, or as result.
Bernd Herzogenrath once again offers a wider panorama, showing as he does that from its beginnings onwards, the “Project America” has been closely connected to the body as a stabilizing concept. Specifically, questions of identity have been “posed in corporeal terms,” insofar as both Emersonian “self-reliance” and individualism “heavily rely on the strong, whole, autonomous body.” It is with and against this ideal body that Herzogenrath attempts a Lacanian reading of the “dismembered body” — both in its physical reality and as a metaphor — the corps morcelé in the movie *Freaks*, directed by Tod Browning, one of the early filmmakers notoriously obsessed with bodily dismemberment.

Seen together, the contributions we finally selected are representative of many theoretical positions — hermeneutic, historical, structuralist, feminist, postmodernist — and they are representative of many different fields — literary criticism, cultural studies, media and film studies, and gender studies. Significantly, none of the contributions sees the body as a neutral, or indeed, natural point of reference in critical discussion. Instead, the body is invariably invoked as a contestable signifier in the articulation of identities, which are themselves enacted, negotiated, or subverted through bodily practices. If anything, the body is discussed at one and the same time as a biological entity and as a symbolic artifact, at once created in the world of nature and physically reconstructed by a culture. From this it follows that the body is both an internal, subjective environment as well as an object for others to observe and evaluate. Phrased differently, the body is a biological entity over which we labor insofar as our everyday life of eating, drinking, and sleeping immerses us in a perpetual labor of bodily maintenance. At the same time, these very same bodily practices weave us within a dense web of social relationships.

Even though an impressive range of different papers and lectures was presented at the conference, not everything can be covered in the framework of what is really the annual meeting of a quite small scholarly association. Therefore the editors have decided to include a bibliography, at the end of the volume, collated from contributions and from organizers’ work. A final word: The papers collected in the present volume are ample proof that in the United States the return of the body is by no means restricted to an affair of state but is rather a phenomenon of American culture at large. At the same time, the papers we collected are indicative of a truly international American Studies project. Such a
project may now be more important than ever. As we are putting together this Introduction, news and commentaries overflow with texts about the relations between the U.S. and its European allies. These relations can be described in terms of conflict and misunderstanding, and they are the result, it seems, of a failure to understand the complex dynamics of binational or multi-national relations. Additionally, as war against Iraq becomes a stark reality, the bodily dimension of these relations becomes ever more tangible. With this — potentially quite disturbing — dimension of the conference theme we shall take our leave as your editors. Enjoy the book.

Notes

1 George Lakoff (lakoff@cogsci.berkeley.edu)"Thoughts about the events of September 11," (cogling@ucsd.edu) September 20, 2001.
3 See Arlene Plevin (University of Washington, English Department), with a panel titled "The Body in Place: Literature and the Environment," for PAMLA (Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association) Conference 2000, Nov. 10-12 at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.
6 In his book, Playing Indian (1998), Philip J. Deloria looks at white people using their bodies as text which allows them to become „Indian“ both in clothing and in imagery, thus "making metaphors for themselves" (60). From members of the Boston Tea Party to members of Hippie communes, from the concerts of the Grateful Dead to the “spiritual quests” of New Agers, then, “[t]he donning of Indian clothes moved ideas from brains to bodies, from the realm of abstraction to the physical world of concrete experience. There, identity was not so much imagined as it was performed, materialized through one’s body and through the witness and recognition of others” (184).