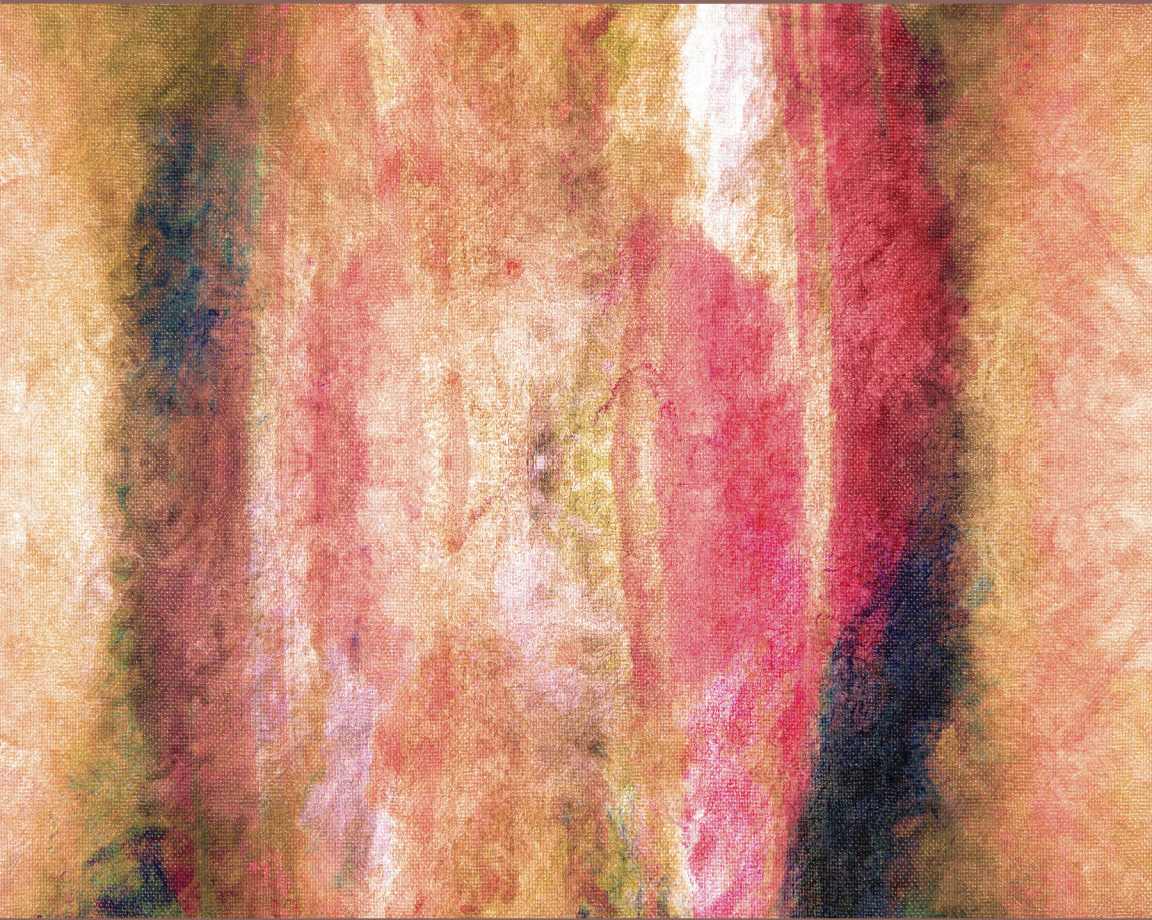


NEOLIBERAL RHETORICS AND BODY POLITICS



PLASTINATE EXHIBITS AS INFILTRATION
TARA PAULINY

Neoliberal Rhetorics and Body Politics

Cultural Studies/Pedagogy/Activism

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Neoliberal Rhetorics and Body Politics

Plastinate Exhibits as Infiltration

Tara Pauliny

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Preface

This book did not begin with an academic investigation, but with a chance encounter at a New York City tourist center: South Street Seaport in lower Manhattan. It was there that I attended Premier Exhibition's show, *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* in October of 2007. I went to see the exhibit with friends who were visiting from out of town; it wasn't something I was particularly interested in or knew much about. I realized, however, almost from the moment I stepped into the show, that it would be more than an entertaining distraction for me. As I wove through the displays of posed and plastinated corpses, the cabinets of excised organs, and the artful disarticulation of the circulatory and nervous systems, I was bewildered and fascinated. As I moved from one space to the next, I was haunted by the fact that the array before me had come from—had *been*—people. These were not models or representations; I was not simply *viewing* images of human remains. I was walking among a sanitized and stylized field of actual cadavers and body parts. These shiny, plasticized displays of tissue and bone, livers and lungs, and veins and arteries had once been human beings.

As it turns out, the experiences of that day, and the questions and concerns that arose from them, have stayed with me. They have been the driving force behind this project and they are some of the questions I address in this book. Additionally, these experiences have raised ethical questions for me (as they have for many of the exhibits' viewers); they have led me to question my own representation of the bodies in these shows and to consider whether that representation implicitly condones the questionable procurement and manipulation that has been done by Premier Exhibitions and Gunther von Hagens. Ultimately, I have decided that one way I can communicate my disavowal of these actions is to omit any photos or illustrations of the exhibits. I do describe numerous aspects of these shows—including the specific displays

I analyze in the chapters—but I have excluded visual images in deference to the people who once inhabited these bodies. My intention is to call attention to the rhetorical force of these exhibits while simultaneously illustrating their literal and symbolic traumatic aspects. I do not condone or support the use of human remains for profit or ideological indoctrination, and I hope that the work I present in this book makes that clear. I see these exhibits as deeply embedded in the ideology of neoliberalism and it has been my intention not only to highlight that condition, but to explore the material and figurative effects of it.

With these goals in mind, I offer a brief description of my experiences at that first exhibit I attended and I dedicate both this narrative and the book itself to the people who have been the most negatively affected by these shows: those unnamed and unknown victims of for-profit plastination.

*BODIES...The Exhibition*¹
South Street Seaport, New York City
October 2007

As I entered the exhibit hall I was surrounded by bodies. Posed individually, they were each lit and labeled, their muscles marked by pins, and their skin removed for ease of viewing. Moving around them, I watched as one stood atop a pedestal—basketball in hand—stretched and poised to make a shot, while another was frozen midstride as he ran toward an invisible finish line, and a third was balanced on one leg with the opposite arm raised behind him, his hand gripping the round, hard ball of another country’s pastime. These bodies—of people I had never known, who had lived their lives in another nation across the globe—were, however, oddly familiar to me. They made shapes I had seen hundreds of times before; they were serving invisible tennis balls, catching imaginary footballs, leisurely reclining, and standing at attention.

Moving further into the exhibit, text now accompanied the bodies; physiological facts were highlighted on the walls: “The body requires a constant supply of oxygen, and the respiratory system provides it,” and “The brain requires twenty percent of the body’s total blood supply,” while a collage of words provided a backdrop to fetuses encased in plastic blocks and set upon white pedestals: “Birth. Zygote. Uterus. Cells. Egg. Beginning. Embryo. Life. Sperm.” Overseeing the entire quiet, spacious, and dimly lit exhibits, these phrases appeared again and again: “Life Uncovered,” “Real Human Bodies,” and “The Body Never Lies.”

Weaving my way through the individual displays of isolated organs—intestines unfurled, hearts dissected, brains hinged open—I came upon a

peculiar subject, one whose musculature and skeletal system were separated and placed opposite one another; the two parts of the individual balancing in a V and holding hands. Then, my attention was caught by a torso—made only of blood vessels, and suspended in a backlit clear box. As I turned a corner, these spectacular sites were replaced by demanding pleas: “Take control of your health”; “Quit smoking today!”; and, “Pledge right now to end your addiction.” Beside this text stood a clear box, filled partially with cigarette packs, and a sign that read: “Place your cigarettes here!” Surrounding this scene were disembodied lungs—the “blackened lungs of a cigarette smoker”—and placards explaining that “Smoking can cause harm to almost every organ,” and that I should “Take smoking seriously: Do it for your health.”

As compelled as I was by this literalized impact of my occasional choice to light up, I was not prepared for what I saw next: a female body (the first female body presented intact) standing in front of me, her arms and legs positioned in a macabre star position, whose form had been repeatedly sliced from head to foot, her body now a strange kind of card deck. The accompanying signage told me she had been an obese woman whose excess adipose tissue “likely caused her numerous health problems,” and who stood as a reminder that I should care for myself and monitor my weight, caloric intake, and exercise regime. As I stared at her, and began to picture my own body cut up and reconfigured—all its soft spots evidence of my sloth and neglect—I wondered who she had been, and if, like me, she worried about controlling her weight, or if it was even a pressing concern for her. I knew nothing, I realized, of her life circumstances, of the challenges she faced, or of the desires and disappointments she may have felt about her own body. At that moment, the exhibit’s artifice fell away. The pedestals, the lights, the signs and slogans, they all seemed one-dimensional and false. The “facts” and “truths” these bodies communicated fell flat and the absent presence of the people who once inhabited them became palpable. I asked myself: How did these people come to be plastinates, and who were they in life?; What did they know and feel about their own bodies?; and perhaps most importantly, Why did my body—its health and regulation, its wonder and mysteries—seem to be the real focus of this exhibit rather than the ones displayed before me?

My work on this project has been propelled by these questions and, as such, I see these exhibits as deeply embedded in our neoliberal age. Furthermore, I argue that these shows—which have been touring the globe for almost two decades—have become more than entertainment and popular learning tools. They have, rather, become a pedagogical force for neoliberal sentiments: a force that claims that the well-being of humans is best ensured by individual actions and personal responsibility.

NOTE

1. The titles of these exhibits are alternatively italicized, capitalized, or both. For the sake of consistency, I use the simplest official version each; throughout the book I switch between these full titles and their abbreviations: *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* (*BTE*) and *BODY WORLDS* (*BW*). As well, I use the title *Bodies* when referring to both exhibitions simultaneously.

Introduction

Revealing Bodies

Material [. . .] practices and realities [. . .] the body, flesh, blood, and bones, and how all the material trappings of the physical are fashioned by literate practices—should come under rhetorical scrutiny [and they . . .] ought to be understood in the serious light of the material circumstances that sustain or sustained them. (10)

—Jack Selzer “Habeus Corpus”

In 2011 the Tulsa, Oklahoma chapter of the Boys Scouts of America joined with Premier Exhibitions, creators of *BODIES...The Exhibition*, to offer area scouts an opportunity to attend the show at a discounted rate along with the chance to “earn a free BODIES Scout Patch at the same time!” Concordantly, the promotion identified the exhibition as “educational and inspiring [and one that . . .] promotes a healthier lifestyle by showing [. . .] Boy Scouts the negative effects of smoking, the importance of maintaining a healthy diet through proper nutrition, and the benefits of exercise.”¹ Rhetorically, this statement reflects a marketing strategy used by Premier at the time, and one that I address in the third chapter of this book. It makes the pedagogical claim that *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* is exceptional because it offers unprecedented access to anatomical information previously reserved for medical students and healthcare professionals. It bills itself as revolutionary for its use of real, plastinated bodies—bodies that, it claims, are more precise, and therefore more informative, than any model could ever be. And, it identifies itself as an exhibit well suited for adults and children alike. In support of these instructive aspects, the exhibit’s website offers a teaching guide, which K-12 instructors can request, and, for a number of years,² it dedicated

an entire section to the acquisition of Cub Scout, Boy Scout, and Girl Scout badges.

These badge opportunities were varied, and related mainly to issues of health and wellness. For boys, the badges addressed the following areas: “Physical skills” (with athlete and fitness sections where boys learned about “healthy lungs” and “smokers’ lungs,” and where the image of excess adipose tissue taught them “What it means to be and stay physically healthy”); “Community” (where, under the “Readyman” section, a cub scout could see what happens to the body during a heart attack, how CPR simulates the natural abilities of the heart and lungs, or how best to stop bleeding); “Cooking and Energy” (where boys learned to use the adipose tissue specimen as a guide for their meal plans); and “Family Life, Public Health and Personal Fitness” (where boys were encouraged to take the information they learned about “dangerous behaviors” such as smoking and overeating back to their families and communities).

Like the Cub and Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts were also urged to use the information in the exhibit to earn badges related to physical fitness, nutrition, and communication. Identified by such names as “Healthy Habits,” “A Healthier You,” “Highway to Health,” and “All in the Family,” the girls’ badges, however, did more than simply mirror those offered to boys; in fact, they omitted many of the physical activity-focused opportunities and replaced them with ones that fostered a sense of responsibility to themselves and others. For example, there was no “Physical Skills” badge or its equivalent for girls, but there was a “Math, Maps and More” badge where girls could chart their height, weight, blood pressure, and respiration—and then compared it to those of other girls. And, in addition to measuring themselves again others, girls were also encouraged to take responsibility for others. Whereas the boys, “communication” badges typically asked them to bring information from the exhibit back to their den meetings or to speak one-on-one with an adult, the girls were charged with carrying this information further. They were expected to tell other girls about proper healthy behavior, to disseminate the information offered by the exhibit into their communities, and to pay special attention to their own reproductive abilities. In “The Choice is Yours,” girls were asked to role-play what they would do if “offered a cigarette by a classmate,” while in the “High on Life (Get the Message Out)” and “Environmental Health” badges, girls were required to either create a radio commercial that discouraged other kids from using drugs or to bring smokers with them to the exhibit so they could drop their cigarettes into the “quit” container set up by the lung cancer exhibit. Similarly, in “Globe-Trotting,” girls were charged with creating a “brochure, poster or presentation for *BODIES...The Exhibition*” to present to their community; in “Women’s Health: Skill Builders 2” they were asked to prepare a project on the negative “consequences of using tobacco”; and in “Women’s Health: Skill Builders 4” they were told to

create a breast-cancer focused “education and prevention program” for their peers. Finally, in “Becoming a Teen” girls had to construct ten questions in response to the Reproductive Gallery of the show and to discuss the answers with their “troop leader or local health educator.” By promoting the exhibit as a fun and interactive way to learn about the bodies, and to thus make responsible, healthy, and preventative personal choices, the show functions not only as a for-profit entertainment spectacle, but also as a pop-cultural conduit for neoliberal ideals. With its dazzling display of plastinated corpses that traveled across the globe from Dalian, China to Tulsa, Oklahoma, it offers a provocative example of the power of a transnational marketplace where US consumers—including badge-hungry scouts—are implicated not only in the commodification of human remains, but also in their own self-regulation.

As specific incarnations of this phenomenon, the merit badge opportunities highlighted above crystalize the exhibit’s relationship to neoliberal ideals through a pedagogy of gender normativity. When placed in dialogue with one another they illustrate the two-sex model and gendered nature of these exhibits as they highlight the connections being made between gender and responsibility. Rhetorics of self-reliance, civic responsibility, and social accolades are combined to teach children that their health, the health of others, and even the health of the community, is in their hands—and they are taught to see these responsibilities within strict gendered parameters. Boys are encouraged to be physically active and to make connections between behavior and disease, but are not shouldered with the same social responsibility as the girls. For the boys, the emphasis is placed more firmly on the personal, while for the girls, responsibility exceeds these boundaries. Their concerns must radiate beyond their own lives and into the lives of other girls, specifically, and the wider community, generally.

Together, these examples evince not only the exhibit’s reliance on and furthering of gender and cultural norms, but they also uncover the ideological underpinnings of the shows. Through their commonsense narratives of health prevention and civic duty, they elucidate the cultural and material power of neoliberalism and its attendant valorization of individual choice, personal responsibility, and self-control. In effect, these examples, and the exhibits as a whole, reveal neoliberal ideology’s transnational circulation—both through the implementation of austerity politics and free-market principles, and with the migration of plastinated corpses from factories in China and Eastern Europe, through major ports in the West, and into the daily lives of paying citizens. With these realities as a catalyst, *Neoliberal Rhetorics and Body Politics* unveils the insidious and ubiquitous infiltration of neoliberalism into US culture and identifies how neoliberal ideology has expanded beyond the realm of politics and policy and seeped into the realities of the everyday.

Feminist scholars, both within and outside rhetorical studies, have already begun to analyze the cultural movement of neoliberal tenets such as these,³ and *BODY WORLDS* and *BODIES...The Exhibition* demonstrate how these ideals are rhetorically translated to a general US audience. Extending this work, my book shows how a specific artifact, in this case plastinate bodies, can both reach individual viewers and reflect the transnational and neoliberal relationship between nation-states. By articulating how the plastinate exhibits offer unexpected, yet tangible and rich sites within which to understand neoliberalism's impact beyond the purview of public policy, this book correspondingly identifies the rhetorical mechanisms and methodologies that propel neoliberalism's insidious reach. Furthermore, by identifying how neoliberal discourses are embedded in these shows, and by delineating the ideological and material consequences of that inculcation, this book ultimately illustrates neoliberalism's strong rhetorical force and its deep cultural infiltration into everyday life.

In the four chapters that follow, I illustrate how the plastinate exhibits of von Hagens and Premier forward neoliberalism's guiding principles of self-reliance, individual choice, and freedom through market participation. In doing so I answer the challenges posed by feminist transnational rhetorical studies: that we extend our analyses to how information circulates (be that through networks, digital media, or traveling plastinate shows), that we pay more attention to the affective aspects of transnational rhetorics, and that we recognize how pedagogy functions outside the classroom. Feminist rhetorician Wendy Hesford argues that we attend to the "contradictory effects of globalization, its polarizing as well as democratizing functions," and that we respond to "the need for a critical localism and research methods that recognize the ongoing cultural work of 'local' spaces" (*Spectacular Rhetorics* 790). By studying the collections offered by Gunter von Hagens and Premier Exhibition and by examining multiple aspects of these exhibits—from their websites, souvenirs, and educational materials to the posing and labeling of the plastinates themselves—*Neoliberal Rhetorics and Body Politics* answers her call by analyzing the rhetorical methods used by the exhibits to shape and sustain neoliberalism's invasive discourses.⁴

NEOLIBERALISM: A BRIEF HISTORICIZING REVIEW

While the term neoliberalism has been taken up by scholars and economists, "neoliberal" or "neoliberalism" is not just economic but cultural (see Duggan). Despite this seeming invisibility, *BODIES...The Exhibition* and *BODY WORLDS* is a reflection of the fact that, within the last thirty years, neoliberalism has become a pervasive force in everyday life. Its vocabulary

of “self-control,” “personal responsibility,” and “individual freedom” has infiltrated cultures across the globe and can be seen in such varied places as economic policy discussions where politicians call for market deregulation,⁵ commercials for prescription drugs where consumers are told it is their “right” to be treated for any number of ailments,⁶ and World Bank films that link the potential improvement in the lives of people with disabilities to their “personal tenacity” rather than external forces.⁷ As well, scholars have shown that neoliberal discourse has penetrated the 2004 US presidential campaign (Angelique Haugerud), contemporary discussions about GLBT and immigrant bodies (Jennifer Wingard), understandings of Harlem’s recent transformation into a middle class neighborhood (Sandhya Shukla), public policy writing (Rebecca Dingo), and even within the performance of wealth in religious television programs (Marla Frederick).⁸ While this work varies in its approach, argument, and application, it all echoes Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton’s claim that neoliberalism is a “political force with which most people in the world must reckon,” (“Competing Philosophies” 3)⁹ and Henry Giroux’ claim that neoliberalism is a “political project of governing and persuasion intent on producing new forms of subjectivity and particular modes of conduct” (*Against Terror* 1).

Based on this scholarship, it is clear that, while neoliberalism in its most formal sense is defined as a set of economic theories and practices that seek to free the market from governmental constraints, it has greatly exceeded these boundaries.¹⁰ Neoliberalism is now understood simultaneously as an economic policy, a system of governmentality, and an ideological force. It influences and is influenced by cultural practices, gender ideology, public policy, and—as I argue later in the book—the relationship between nation-states, pedagogical consumerism, and the formation of contemporary subjectivity. To situate and contextualize the reading of neoliberalism that I offer in the subsequent chapters, and to clarify my own use of the term and its shifting influences, I offer here a brief overview of the definition and development of neoliberalism.

The turn toward neoliberalism globally began in the 1970s as a set of “political-economic practices and thinking” (Harvey 2). Since then, it has proliferated into a “hegemonic mode of discourse” that has so invaded our consciousness that it has become part of the “common-sense” way many people “interpret, live in, and understand the world” (3). Prior to this late twentieth-century shift, embedded liberalism was the driving economic approach in the West. This approach gained hold in the early to middle of the twentieth century, when it came in reaction to the aftermath of the first and second World Wars. Amid this chaos and reconstruction, there was a general desire to construct a system of governmentality that would be both democratic and able to “guarantee peace, inclusion, well-being, and stability” (Harvey quoting Dahl and Lindblom 10). Internationally, liberalism took

hold through the Bretton Woods agreements (which fixed exchange rates that were backed by gold reserves), and the creation of institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, the IMF, and the Bank of International Settlements. In the West this resulted in the market and other private activities being regulated by social and political restraints and the creation of a system of public welfare.¹¹

Neoliberalism is often defined as a response to liberalism's failures—namely high inflation and stagnation—and its goal to uncouple the market from constraints has engendered a move away from a system of protections by the nation-state and toward a system of individual reliance and personal responsibility. So, whereas liberal governmentality was marked by an ethic of care for its citizens through publically funded social welfare programs and public institutions, neoliberal governmentality expects the private sector to fill these needs. Historically, the rise of neoliberalism is often traced back to the Mont Perelin Society (MPS). This group emerged as a global force in the early 1970s and was named for the Swiss spa where historians, academic economists, and philosophers gathered around the Austrian political philosopher Friedrich von Hayek. It opposed embedded liberalism (also known as Keynesian theory) and was backed by a variety of wealthy and corporate leaders, many of them US citizens. The MPS fostered a number of related organizations, including the Heritage Foundation in Washington and the Institute of Economic Affairs in London. Another important proponent of neoliberalism was Milton Friedman, an economist who taught at the University of Chicago for over thirty years, and who served as an advisor to President Nixon. Under the control of Sweden's banking leaders, Hayek won the Nobel Prize for economics in 1974 followed by Friedman who was then bestowed with the honor in 1976. These events, among others, confirmed that neoliberalism was a driving force within economic circles whose power coalesced in 1979 with the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party in the United Kingdom.¹²

During this time, both the United States and the United Kingdom moved away from Keynesian fiscal principles in favor of neoliberal-influenced policies. In the United States, Paul Volker, the chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank, initiated a system of deregulation, interest rate increases, and tax cuts to manage inflation; these policies were further ingrained into US policy, and Volker was reappointed to the Federal Reserve. Ultimately, in the 1990s, the Washington Consensus signaled the near achievement of neoliberalism's goal of free markets, privatization, and fiscal austerity and set neoliberalism on its course to becoming the ubiquitous force it is today. And this influence can be measured both fiscally and culturally. Wealth inequality, for example, increased exponentially: in 1978, the top 0.01 percent of income earners in the US held two percent of the country's wealth, but by 1999 that

number climbed to over six percent. Likewise, the ratio of the median compensation of workers to the salaries of CEOs increased from just over 30–1 in 1970 to 500–1 by 2000 (Harvey 15–16).

Neoliberalism's influence did not stop at the economic level, however. From the 1970s through today, this ideology has radiated into almost all facets of life. Cultural manifestations have normalized this fiscal phenomena and neoliberalism's lexicon has become a mainstay of public discourse as it has been transfigured from economic philosophy to a common place. As Aihwa Ong maintains, neoliberal policies are "accompanied by a proliferation of techniques to remake the social and citizen-subjects," and it is through these subjects that neoliberalism is enacted (*Neoliberalism as Exception* 14). Reflecting the other side of the political spectrum, Margaret Thatcher also claimed that, according to neoliberal philosophy, there is "no society," only "individual men and women"—and it is through these individuals, these citizen-subjects—that neoliberalism's cultural campaign has been waged.

CONTINUING FEMINIST RHETORIC'S TRANSNATIONAL INTERVENTION

While neoliberalism's impact has clearly been well documented by political, economic, and cultural scholars, this is not the end of the story. Numerous forces have aligned themselves against this ideology and its deployment—the "Occupy" movement is just one salient example.¹³ Institutionally, resistance has also come from various places in the academy and transnational feminisms have been one of the most multivocal. Rebecca Dingo reminds us that transnational feminist scholars, within their political engagements with globalization, identify the interplay of neoliberalism, neocolonialism, and neo-imperialism across nation-states. Specifically, they demarcate the impact neoliberalism has had on the economic, social, and political conditions of these nations, and they analyze how such conditions shape, connect, and distance these nations and their inhabitants. Feminist transnationalism, she notes "examine[s] the roles that state and supranational power, history, class relations, and sexual, gendered, raced, and ethnic expectations play in the making and unmaking of nations and nation-states, and the movement of goods, ideas, and people across and within borders" (10–11). Dingo's summary rightly highlights not only the field's varying approaches and critical perspectives, but also the consistent attention its pays to the interaction of cultural, economic, and political forces.

Accordingly, transnational feminisms engages with neoliberalism and its attendant effects in a variety of ways. These include neoliberalism's impact on public policy (Kate Bedford, Paula Pinto, Ong, Mark Thomas,

Dingo, Kate Benzanson, Wingard); how neoliberal discourse reinscribes and reinvigorates norms surrounding identity categories (Luxton, Goldberg, Schell, Karine Cote-Boucher, Braedley); the deconstruction of neoliberal terminology (Harvey, Giroux); the transmission of neoliberal ideology into public values (Pat Armstrong, Kim Lane Scheppelle); the connection between neoliberal economics and neoliberal governmentality (Ong, Brown); and neoliberalism's connection to imperialism (Grewal, Abdel-Malek, Duggan, Raewyn Connell, Mohanty). As well, Carol Greenhouse's collection, *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*, attends to the micro effects of neoliberalism by offering ethnographic case studies that illustrate the impact neoliberal reforms have had on cultural structures across the world. Likewise, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff's collection, *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism, and Subjectivity*, asks how neoliberalism and postfeminism are forging new identities, specifically in relation to gender, sexuality, race, class, and location. Other scholars (Ong, Brown, Duggan) theorize neoliberalism's macro effects: they investigate neoliberalism as a technology of governmentality, they articulate the convergence of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, and they document the rise of neoliberalism in concordance with gender and racial inequalities.

Aptly named *transnational* feminist rhetorics, this is a subfield that, among other pursuits, studies the global by addressing the interconnected nature of texts, cultures, resources, and arguments across nation-state borders. As evidenced by the work cited above, it has most often located its analyses within public policy or government action (see for example, J. Blake Scott's analysis of the lawsuit forwarded by the pharmaceutical company Novartis, or Wendy Hesford's examination of human rights law and visual rhetoric) and its focus has rarely shifted into the realm of popular culture.

Diverging from this trajectory, my project locates itself squarely within popular culture and details the rhetorical moves, arguments, and patterns that contribute to neoliberalism's cultural infiltration. While my work addresses public policy issues (such as the trade statutes that make it possible to import plastinated human remains into the United States as plastic objects), it also looks elsewhere. It tracks the movement of neoliberal ideology from public policy, into the marketplace, and finally into the consciousness of individual viewers. In this way, I extend the work of transnational feminist rhetoricians and document how the movement of neoliberal discourse from economics to culture showcases what might be called the intertextuality of ideology. That is how various discourses, aims, relationships, and histories coalesce in these exhibits, and how this collision reflects this rhetorical nexus. Much like Roland Barthes' definition of textuality, the plastinate exhibits are themselves a "multidimensional space" in which a "variety of writings [here I would add discourses, aims, relationships, and histories], none of them original, blend

and clash” (Barthes 1977, 146). Thus, like the author whose only choice is to “mix” and “counter” these writings—rather than produce an “original” text of her own—I work to recognize, intermingle, and challenge the multiple ideological aspects of these exhibits. Ultimately, I am invested in, on one hand, understanding how these exhibits make rhetorical arguments about bodies, their labor, and their value, and, on the other, demonstrating how these rhetorical arguments reveal the material consequences of twenty-first-century neoliberalism.

To employ a classic rhetorical aphorism, the book ultimately describes how neoliberal ideology accesses the “available means of persuasion” and it identifies the effects that are created as a result. Premised on a definition of rhetoric that assumes rhetoric’s ideological aspect—rather than defining rhetoric as only “strategic, agent-centered discourse in the public realm,” for example—this project understands rhetoric as a persuasive activity that communicates and encourages particular ways of thinking and behaving to its audiences (Gross and Keith 2). It sees the presentation of any argument as a simultaneous deployment of ideology. This conception of rhetoric is not, however, necessarily tied to the intentionality of a rhetor (whether that rhetor be an individual such as Gunther von Hagens or a corporate entity such as Premier Exhibitions). Rather, it assumes that arguments¹⁴ emanate both from planned persuasive activities and from the persuasive effects that exceed intentionality. It recognizes that, through the process of argumentation, an audience is persuaded ideologically and, as such, is simultaneously exposed to ideas about normalcy, behavior, belief systems, and values. Thus, platinated exhibits often make arguments inferentially; by presenting audiences with images and textual expressions that compel a particular way of thinking, this rhetorical form is often less overt in its persuasion than traditional rhetoric.

I have chosen to locate my work within *BODIES...The Exhibition and BODY WORLDS* because these exhibits offer a particularly effective way to understand neoliberalism and trace its consequences and because their very conceptualization, stated purpose, and design is overtly neoliberal (Braedley and Luxton 20). These shows take neoliberalism’s guiding principles of self-reliance, individual choice, and freedom through market participation as foundational concepts; their own marketing literature is clear about this approach when it claims that it allows viewers “access to sights and knowledge normally reserved only for medical professionals,” and encourages them to “*Take the opportunity to peer inside yourself, to better understand how your elaborate and fascinating body works, and how you can become a more informed participant in your own health care*” (my emphasis, *BODIES...The Exhibition* 2008 webpage). Even more to the point, the exhibit’s current website claims that “by understanding how the body works, *you can better*

care for it and keep it healthy” (my emphasis, *BODIES...The Exhibition 2015* webpage). Yet, this claim of course, is misleading. As transnational feminist scholars have reminded us, such rhetorical claims about the individual are always intimately tied to the local and global economy; as I show throughout this book these rhetorical claims reflect, support, and further the project of neoliberalism at both economic and cultural levels. These for-profit exhibits then, not only highlight how neoliberal ideas have moved beyond economic policy to infiltrate the very ways US citizens (and citizens of the 1/3’s world in general) understand or disavow their bodies, the bodies of others, and the relationship between the two, but also how the rhetoric of neoliberalism has become wholly normalized.

REVEALING NEOLIBERAL RHETORICS

Neoliberal Rhetorics and Body Politics filters transnational feminist rhetorical analyses through the lenses of necropolitical, biopolitical, and affect theories to understand how the global force of neoliberalism infiltrates all parts of life from nation-state relationships to individual subject formation. Through rhetorical analyses of plastinate exhibits’ political and cultural contexts, their marketing literature and showcased artifacts, and their connection to historical displays of bodies, the project articulates how neoliberalism creates a grand narrative while simultaneously permeating daily living. Focusing on the hugely popular and profitable exhibits of preserved, dissected, and posed human bodies and body parts offered by the German anatomist Gunther von Hagens and Premier Exhibitions, the book sees these exhibits as both examples of neoliberalism’s ideological reach and as a critical lens through which to understand the scope of that reach. In *The Megarhetorics of Global Development*, Dingo and Scott call for the mobilization of rhetoric’s “interpretive and productive toolbox [. . .] to highlight, critique, and intervene in the hegemonic functions of neoliberal global development” (“Introduction” 16). This book follows their logic and, as such, is guided by the following questions: How do these exhibits illustrate neoliberalism’s rhetorical force and cultural infiltration?; Within these contexts, how does neoliberalism contribute to the historical, public, profitable, and pedagogical display of human cadavers?; How do these exhibits showcase neoliberalism’s impact on the transnational relationships of states—especially the United States and China?; How do the ideas forwarded in these exhibits showcase neoliberalism’s emphasis on health and well-being both within and outside the United States; How do the exhibits showcase the corporatization and privatization of health and the connections being made here among health, national interest, personal responsibility, and profit?; and

finally, How do these exhibits illustrate neoliberalism's impact on subjectivity and how might subjects intervene in this process?

The first chapter, "Plastination and a History of Bodily Display," begins to investigate the world of plastinated corpses by looking back toward its conception. Illustrating how the very process of plastination serves as a metaphor for neoliberalism's rhetorical infiltration and explaining why these exhibits serve as particularly fruitful analytical sites, I review the history, purpose, and relevant particulars of *BODY WORLDS* and *BODIES...The Exhibition*. The chapter then reveals the exhibits' connection to historical bodily displays such as freak shows, public autopsies, and human museum curiosities, and closes by posing why these exhibits might best be understood as a postmodern expansion of colonialist eugenics.

The next chapter, "Neoliberal Necropolitics: Rhetorics of the Living Dead," evidences neoliberalism's turn toward the "commodification of everything," while also revealing its hidden costs. It documents a transnational system that discriminately values life: one that recognizes some humans (the exhibits' customers) as inherently worthwhile, while measuring others (the population it exploits) by the labor that can be extracted from their corpses. And, by identifying and connecting the international trade agreements, policies, and commodity classifications that work in support of these exhibits, it demonstrates how the regime of neoliberalism subjugates human rights, political ideology, and even nationalism to the pursuit of economic gains. Ultimately, the chapter examines the necropolitical force of these exhibits and their place within the wider transnational arena where organ harvesting, surrogacy, and blood procurement is constructed as a neoliberal right.

Chapter three, "For-Profit Pedagogies: Neoliberalism and the Plastinate Marketplace," examines how *BODIES...The Exhibition* and *BODY WORLDS* offer particular examples of how neoliberal discourses of self-reliance and self-control get translated and bought—both literally and figuratively—by Western consumers. It analyzes what I call the exhibits' "rhetorics of validity and value," their "rhetorics of self-reliance and control," and finally, their "rhetorics of souvenirs." By illustrating how the exhibits' discourse and objects for purchase allow neoliberalism to be materialized, the chapter elucidates how the design and marketing of the exhibits, and their related paraphernalia, moves the discourse of neoliberalism from the public view and into private spaces. It extrapolates from these aspects and maps their rhetorical functions—that is, it delineates and analyzes the arguments about neoliberalism that are being advanced by these exhibits.

In the final chapter, "Rhetorics of Affect and Intimacy: Plastinate Exhibits and the Construction of the Neoliberal Citizen-Subject," I argue that the plastinate exhibits' persuasive effects are predicated, in part, on the rhetorical deployment of intimacy and affect. The chapter posits that the exhibits foster

a relationship among audience, text, and author that is built on the possibility of personal transformation and material effect, where viewers are constructed as recipients of authorial (albeit anonymous and disembodied) knowledge and benevolence. Drawing on the Foucauldian concepts of biopower and governmentality, the chapter focuses on this intimate and affective rhetorical relationship and asks how such appeals construct a particular version of the neoliberal citizen-subject. In doing so, the chapter also remains attuned to the exhibits' continued employment of the neoliberal rhetorics of freedom, personal responsibility, self-reliance, and choice as it illustrates how these discourses have come to penetrate the very notion of the self.

Ultimately, *Neoliberal Rhetorics and Body Politics* locates the necropolitical, biopolitical, and affective aspects of discourse as it investigates the rhetorical palimpsest created when neoliberal ideology is filtered through public pseudo-pedagogical exhibits. It demonstrates how persuasive, insidious, and pervasive a seemingly innocuous exhibit can be—especially when it engages and exploits such mainstream and commonplace associations as the Boy and Girls Scout of America and heavily weighted markers of individualism.

NOTES

1. This promotion was advertised in 2001 on the website of the Indian Nation Council chapter of the Boys Scouts of America in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

2. The website does not indicate how long this section remained on the site, but I saw it posted there the many times I visited the site during 2011–2014.

3. Carol Greenhouse's collection, *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*, attends to the micro by offering ethnographic case studies that illustrate the impact neoliberal reforms have had on cultural structures across the world. Likewise, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff's collection, *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism, and Subjectivity*, asks how neoliberalism and postfeminism are forging new identities, specifically in relation to gender, sexuality, race, class, and location. Other scholars (Aihwa Ong, Wendy Brown, Lisa Duggan) theorize neoliberalism's macro effects: they investigate neoliberalism as a technology of governmentality, articulate the convergence of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, and document the rise of neoliberalism in concordance with gender and racial inequalities.

4. See the essay by Susan Bradley and Meg Luxton, "Competing Philosophies: Neoliberalism and Challenges of Everyday Life," published in their edited collection *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life* (4–21).

5. See the Republican Party Platform of 2012.

6. For an extended discussion of this phenomenon, see Kristen A. Swenson's book, *Lifestyle Drugs and the Neoliberal Family* (2013).

7. See Dingo, *Networking Arguments*, chapter three specifically.

8. A variety of other examples might be referenced here as well, including the rise of the Girl Power movement in the US, neoliberal ideology as it is represented

in Hollywood movies and popular television shows (Betty Kaklamanidou's book, *Genre, Gender and the Effects of Neoliberalism: The New Millennium Hollywood RomCom*, offers a salient example), and the use of neoliberal terminology such as "freedom" and "choice" to sell numerous products.

9. Theorists from a wide range of disciplines speak to neoliberalism's multiple effects. Anthropologists analyze neoliberalism's connection to individual social participation (Carol J. Greenhouse) and new modes of citizenship (Aihwa Ong), while also acknowledging that it has become "hegemonic as a mode of discourse" that has had "pervasive effects [. . .] to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of use interpret, live in, and understand the world" (David Harvey "Introduction" 3). Likewise, similar discussions of neoliberalism's cultural effects come from sociology (Susan Braedley, Meg Luxton, Nikolas Rose), cultural studies (Henry A. Giroux), English studies (Lauren Berlant), Government and Public Management (Colin Crouch), American studies (Lisa Duggan), women's studies (M. Jaqui Alexander, Chandra Talpade Mohanty), rhetorical studies (Rebecca Dingo, Wendy Hesford, Jennifer Wingard, Rachel Riedner), political science (Wendy Brown), and comparative literature and criminology (David Theo Goldberg).

10. In *The Twilight of Inequality*, for example, Lisa Duggan writes that "the construction of neoliberal politics and policy in the US has relied on identity and cultural politics. The politics of race, both overt and covert," she argues, "have been particularly central to the entire project." She does not, however, end her analysis there; rather, she furthers her point by noting that "the politics of gender and sexuality have intersected with race and class politics at each stage as well" (XII). Likewise, David Harvey claims that "it has been part of the genius of neoliberal theory to provide a benevolent mask full of wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice, and rights, to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power, locally as well as internationally, but most particularly in the main financial centres of global capitalism" (*Introduction* 119).

11. To construct this brief overview of neoliberalism's rise, I draw from a number of sources including David Harvey's *A Brief Introduction to Neoliberalism*, Lisa Duggan's *The Twilight of Inequality*, Inderpal Grewal's *Transnational America*, Aihwa Ong's *Neoliberalism as Exception*, Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism*, Henry Giroux's *The Terror of Neoliberalism*, and essays by Peter Gibbon, Wendy Brown, Miguel A. Centeno, and Joseph N. Cohen.

12. For a more detailed discussion of neoliberalism's rise and the 1980 election of Ronald Regan in the United States, see David Harvey and Steger and Roy.

13. See the movement's website for a discussion of this connection: <http://www.occupy.com/article/occupy-neoliberalism-mad-hell-and-not-going-take-it-anymore>

14. I invoke the term "argument" with the knowledge that this is not its traditional rhetorical definition whereby the notion of intent would be tied closely to the claims being offered by these exhibits. I choose to employ it nevertheless, because I do not think it is necessary to arrange claims in clear patterns with discernable intentions for such claims to function on the level of argument. Arguments can also be constructed through the strategic use of metaphors, language, behaviors, the body, and images. As numerous scholars have forwarded (Barry Brummet, Lawrence Prelli, Mary Lay, and Marguerite Helmers), through the deployment and revision of social

codes, markers of power, and dominant discourses, audiences can be moved toward a particular point of view. When the plastinate exhibits I cite here make arguments, then, they often do so on the level of ideology and they present material in a way that encourages their audiences to inhabit certain subject positions. Likewise, I draw from a more recent definition of persuasion—one offered by Rachel Riedner and Kevin Mahoney in 2008—that persuasion need not solely be understood in the “classical sense of rhetoric” but that persuasion might also be seen “as a mode of authoritative discourse [. . .] enacted materially, on bodies, practices, subjectivities, cultures, and communities” (10).

Chapter 1

Plastination and a History of Bodily Display

For a century and a half, the visual rhetorics Garland-Thompson delineates, have generally (and efficiently) consolidated able-body subject positions. [Concordantly, the] power relations that [they have secured] have been incredibly unequal and have had disastrous material effects.

—Robert McRuer

Before the cadavers of Premier Exhibitions and Gunther von Hagens are presented to the paying public, they are procured from their place of origin, shipped to a factory, and transformed through the process of plastination. As explained by the *BODY WORLDS* website, plastination is a preservation process—invented by Gunther von Hagens himself—whereby bodily fluids are replaced by a liquid polymer solution. First, the cadaver is embalmed and its skin and fatty and connective tissues removed; what remains is placed in an acetone bath where its soluble fats and body water are extracted. This is followed by the most essential part of the process: the “forced impregnation,” where a reactive polymer (such as silicone rubber) is pulled, via a vacuum chamber, into “each and every cell.” Once this process is complete, the cadaver cum plastinate can now be positioned as desired: its anatomical structure aligned and fixed by wires, clamps, foam blocks, and other supportive technologies. Finally, it is left to cure and transform into a “tough,” “durable,” and “lifelike” plastinate.¹

While this process is striking for its ability to transform a human corpse from organic flesh and blood into a sanitized and stable exhibit artifact, it is especially compelling when understood as a metaphor for neoliberalism’s

rhetorical infiltration into Western culture. By overlaying the plastination process that a single body endures onto the body politic, neoliberalism's infiltration via plastination is made visible. We see, for instance, how both processes inject into the innermost spaces of the literal and social body, how they both attempt to create an image of "reality" or "truth," and how they both are dependent upon external structures for support. To illustrate these points, I offer an extended analysis of this metaphor below.

PLASTINATION: A MATERIAL AND RHETORICAL PROCESS

In the key, "impregnation" step of plastination, the acetone that replaced the naturally occurring water in the body is forcibly exchanged with the polymer solution when it is "suctioned out of the tissue the moment it vaporizes," thus allowing the polymer to permeate—to "completely saturate"—the cadaver's tissues. This exchange is repeated, over a course of days or weeks, until the process is complete and the body has been transformed into a plastinate.² In much the same way that the polymer solution physically engorges the tissues, neoliberal ideology theoretically permeates the plastinate exhibits. However, whereas the plastinate keeps this solution contained, the exhibits allow neoliberal ideas to spill over—to exceed the boundaries of the displays and to enter the consciousness of the viewers. As I discuss in chapter four, for instance, by affectively hailing the shows' attendees, the exhibits reach rhetorically into some of their most intimate spaces and fill them with normative and Western notions of gender that are supported and reproduced by discourses of self-control and personal responsibility. Male viewers, for example, witness their most private parts, (their genitals), on excessive and valorized display, while female viewers see their genitals labeled by cultural (rather than scientific) markers, and their wombs removed and reified only for the potential life they can produce.

In the next step of the plastination process, a lasting version of the body is revealed: once the polymer has cured, a "lifelike" and "visually arresting" plastinate emerges. And because this plastinate is not a model or a copy—like those traditionally used to teach anatomy—it is able to communicate *more* than a model since the plastinates are actual bodies. As von Hagens notes, plastinates have "come into being via the natural, individual growth of human bodies" and, as such, can illustrate the intricacies of those bodies in more precise ways. Unlike traditional methods of dissection, the plastination process preserves all aspects of the original form, from "microscopic bundles of cells" to entire physiological systems, and thus offers access to the interiority of the body in a completed new and revolutionary way.³ Reflecting this plastinate procedure, the exhibits themselves could also be seen as presenting

valid or “true” versions of the human body—versions that have been specifically manipulated to transmit essential health information to its audiences. I explore this aspect of the metaphor in chapter three, when I identify how the exhibits’ rhetorical connection to scientific research, cultural institutions, and educational intentions establishes the plastinates as exceptional conduits of neoliberal ideology.

Finally, the metaphor is complete when we turn to the structures used to hold and position the plastinates. Without their invisible scaffolding of wire and foam, the plastinates would lie inert and lifeless, their seemingly active and virile forms rendered passive and deceased. Similarly, the exhibits might fall flat without the assistive discourses of neoliberalism and cooperative policies of open trade—as I discuss in chapter two. Neoliberalism’s seductive and common sense vocabulary provides ideological support for the exhibits; as conduits of self-reliance, personal responsibility, and informed individuality, the plastinates become more than curiosities or disposable moments of entertainment.

These exhibits function so well—are so effective in communicating ideas of self-reliance and bodily regulation—not only because their medium (plastinates) is persuasive, but also because their arguments are as well. They present claims that are deeply embedded in the colonial and eugenic history of bodily display and they trade on a history of exploitation that deems certain bodies useful only when they are being employed in the name of scientific and medical progress. It is this history, this connection to a past filled with racist, sexist, and ableist productions that this chapter details. Before reaching back, however, it is necessary to properly situate the exhibits and to understand their local histories—as I do in the next section.

SETTING THE STAGE: CONTEXT, ORIGINS, AND CONTROVERSIES

All the plastinate exhibits I reference throughout this book originated with Gunther von Hagens’ invention of the process of plastination in 1977 and his first exhibit of plastinates two years before in Japan.⁴ Von Hagens created this technique while at the University of Heidelberg’s Institute of Anatomy, and has continually improved upon and patented it; it is now widely recognized as a valid method of cadaver preservation. Born in Poland in 1945, von Hagens began studying medicine at the University of Jena in 1965, was soon after arrested for distributing pamphlets against Warsaw Pact troops of Czechoslovakia, spent time in an East German jail, and was released in 1970 when West Germany purchased his freedom along with that of a number of political prisoners. Upon his release, he continued his studies and was granted a medical

license in 1974. In 1975 he completed his doctorate in Anesthetics and Emergency Medicine at the University of Heidelberg, after which he worked at the University's Institutes of Anatomy and Pathology, where he invented the basic plastination techniques used today. In 1980 he founded BIODUR, a company that markets the polymers and plastination equipment related to his plastination invention, and ultimately, he founded the Institute for Plastination in 1993—where one of his *BW* exhibits is permanently housed.⁵

Von Hagens is often described as a “character” for his ever-present black fedora, his personal eccentricities (he has vowed to leave none of his sizeable fortune to his children, arguing that they should make their own way in the world, and he is quick to be hyperbolic when talking to the press), and his seeming obsession with plastinates (he has been refining the process continually since he first invented it while serving as a research assistance at the Institute for Anatomy and Cellular Biology at the University of Heidelberg). As I see it, his story is one of neoliberal determination; his long-time business partner Wilhelm Kriz articulates this well when he writes that von Hagens’ “persistence and tenacity could not be shaken” (5). No matter how many setbacks or failures he experienced, his quest for the perfect plastination procedures endured and that determination resulted in the exceptional specimens on display today (5).⁶

These specimens were first exhibited by von Hagens in Tokyo in 1995 as a collection of plastinates under the moniker *BODY WORLDS*. Then, from September 1995 through June 2004, the exhibit was shown in twenty-one locations in Japan, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. It was displayed, for example, in Osaka in 1996,⁷ at the Museum for Technology and Labor in Mannheim, Germany for over four months in 1997–1998, and in London in 2002. It made its first US appearance in Los Angeles in July 2004. A second incarnation of the exhibit, *BODY WORLDS 2*, began in 2002 and toured Seoul and Pusan in Korea, as well as Singapore, and Taiwan. According to the organization's own estimates, over 15.5 million people viewed these exhibits.⁸ Since then, *BW* has traveled globally and, as of 2014, is in its sixth incarnation. It has also branched out to offer shows of plastinated animals and smaller, boutique exhibitions under names such as *BODY WORLDS: VITAL* and *BODY WORLDS: PULSE*. As of August 2015, there are touring exhibits in the United States and Europe, a permanent exhibit at the Plastinarium in Guben, Germany, and new exhibition in Saarbrücken, Germany. While the majority of these exhibitions took place in Europe and the United States, Turkey, Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and South Africa also hosted exhibits. According to *BW* estimates, all in all, these exhibits have garnered over 38 million visitors.⁹

BODY WORLDS proudly presents itself as the “original” plastinates’ show, and devotes an entire page of its website to detailing this history. All other

plastinate exhibits, including *BODIES . . . The Exhibition*, which I discuss at length in this book, are considered by von Hagens to be derivative copies of his original work and he has sued some of these companies for copyright infringement. Additionally, he has attempted to distance his exhibits from the controversies surrounding them. For instance, *BW* euphemizes the procurement process and makes no note of any of the controversies surrounding it—which I describe later. The website notes that all of the plastinates on display under the *BW*'s name have come from a “unique Body Donation Program established in Heidelberg, Germany in 1981” and that all “documents relating to donated bodies have been scrutinized and approved by two ethics committees formed by the California Science Center in Los Angeles and the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago,”—two of the cities where *BW* was exhibited between 2004 and 2008. *BW* also advertises itself as the “industry leader” for providing educational specimens and claims that over “400 universities in 40 countries” utilize von Hagens’ plastination techniques.¹⁰ In addition to producing the touring exhibitions, von Hagens’ Institute for Plastination studies and works to improve plastination techniques, produces plastinate sheets, organs, tissues, and whole body samples for sale to medical and educational institutions, and of course, for use in the exhibits themselves.¹¹

Using a similar preservation process, *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* (*BODIES*), produced by Premier Exhibition, a for-profit Atlanta, Georgia, based company, opened its first show in Tampa, Florida, in 2005. Premier is a publically traded company that specializes in “museum quality exhibitions” and that also owns the subsidiary RMS Titanic, Inc. Although *BODIES* is its most lucrative exhibit, it is also well known for its Titanic-themed exhibits; in addition, it produces shows focused on dinosaurs, pirates, Pompeii, and King Tut. Along with *BODIES . . . The Exhibition*, Premier also produces another, similar, plastinate show called *BODIES REVEALED: Fascinating and Real* (BRFR).¹²

As of November 2014, *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* is being exhibited only in the United States (it has shows in Las Vegas, California’s Buena Park, and Premier’s home, Atlanta, Georgia). Previously, it toured in numerous US cities, Canada, the United Kingdom, Eastern and Western Europe, and parts of South and Central America. It’s counterpart, *BODIES REVEALED* is currently being shown in Niagara Falls, New York, and the Czech Republic. According to Premier’s estimates, over 15 million people around the world have attended the exhibits.¹³

All of these exhibits—be they from von Hagens or Premier—have strikingly similar aspects. Most obviously, they focus their attention on revealing the internal structures of human anatomy and physiology, and they do this through the display of plastinated human cadavers—some intact and others whose parts have been dissected and are displayed separately. As well, they

all claim a pedagogical purpose, which I discuss in chapter three, and they market themselves as learning tools for the general public. Both exhibitions have extensive websites and Facebook pages, and Premier Exhibitions' shows each have their own blogs that discuss a variety of health related issues—one entry discusses the history of Ebola, while another catalogues nutritionally dense foods—along with advertisements of upcoming Premier-sponsored shows.

The exhibits are also similar in their organization, presentation, and mission to that of museum displays. The bodies are often organized according to systems (respiratory, digestive, neural), particular structures (major muscle groups, circulatory pathways), or functions (reproduction, motor capabilities); they are labeled (some with medical or scientific names and some without), deliberately posed (to highlight the interplay of tendons and bones, for instance), and presented for visual effect (the bodies are often spot lit, individual systems encased in plexiglass and lit dramatically, and whole plastinates organized to allow viewers to walk around the figures and observe them closely). Additionally, they repeatedly utilize the expertise of scientists, medical doctors, and even celebrities to advertise their cultural value. Premier Exhibitions, for example, employs Dr. Roy Glover as the exhibits' Medical Director and the *BODY WORLDS* catalogue includes articles by Charleen M. Moore and C. Mackenzie Brown, a professor of Cellular and Structural Biology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, and a professor and chairman of Religion at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, respectively.

Although equally as concerned with their public perception, the exhibits do differ in some ways. Von Hagens' shows, for example, tend to be more theatrical than those of Premier. Von Hagens often presents animal plastinates alongside human ones (in one infamous example a plastinate rider sits atop a rearing plastinate horse), critics have argued that his plastinates are constructed to be overtly sexual, and von Hagens himself seems to court controversy and invite attention.¹⁴ In addition to the plastinate shows, for instance, he has also performed a public autopsy (in London in 2002, to a crowd of 500), starred in a number of television programs (*Autopsy: Life and Death*, *Anatomy for Beginners: A Live Autopsy*, *Autopsy: Emergency Room*), and was featured in a 2009 History Channel series, *Strange Rituals*. Von Hagens appeared in the first episode where he discussed his method of plastination preservation. In perhaps his most hyperbolic television appearance to date, he also used donated bodies to interpret the crucifixion of Jesus on Easter Sunday, 2012.¹⁵

Diverging from such spectacular advertising methods, Premier represents its exhibits in more sedate and overtly educational ways. They use no animal plastinates, have no related television programs, and have no

charismatic figurehead. Perhaps this is due to the fact that they developed their shows ten years after von Hagens and that their shows are part of a larger exhibition company with a variety of different shows—rather than the singular focus held by von Hagens. Regardless of the motivation and despite their attempts to appear quietly devoted to bringing anatomy to the masses, Premier has garnered quite a bit of media attention, albeit undesirable. In 2006, National Public Radio (among other news groups) reported that the cadavers used by Premier were obtained from China and listed as “unclassified.” According to the Laogai Research Foundation, who documents human rights abuses in China, such a category includes executed political prisoners. When the first exhibit was being shown in Tampa, Florida, the state’s anatomical board asked Premier to document the bodies’ procurement and prove that they were ethically obtained. In lieu of any official paperwork, the exhibit produced a letter from the person in China who performed the plastination procedure. “He stated that none of the material came from criminal institutions or homes from the mentally insane. But [we have] just his word on that, no documents.”¹⁶ Although the exhibits continued, so did the controversy. In 2008, in response to numerous complaints by ethicists, human rights groups, and the general public, the New York attorney general’s office investigated the issue. Ultimately, no charges were filed and a settlement was reached. As part of the settlement, Premier was required to refund the ticket price to any audience member who attended the exhibit at New York’s South Street Seaport if requested to do so. They also agreed to obtain documentation “demonstrating the cause of death and origins of the cadavers and body parts it displays as well as proof that the decedent consented to the use of his or her remains in such a manner.” They were not, however, required to remove any of the questionable remains or dismantle the exhibit. Instead, they agreed to post the following disclaimer:

This exhibit displays human remains of Chinese citizens or residents which were originally received by the Chinese Bureau of Police. The Chinese Bureau of Police may receive bodies from Chinese prisons. Premier cannot independently verify that the human remains you are viewing are not those of persons who were incarcerated in Chinese prisons. (Attorney General)

Although Premier no longer has an exhibit in New York (the long-running show at South Street Seaport in Manhattan never reopened after the Sandy disaster) the disclaimer can still be found on Premier’s website. And, while von Hagens’ organization was never formally investigated in the United States, it did not escape controversy. For example, a 2004 exposé by the German publication *Der Spiegel*, alleged that von Hagens’ company returned

seven plastinated corpses to China because of dubious causes of death and it also reported that at least two of the 647 cadavers stored in one of von Hagens' warehouses had what appeared to be bullet holes in the back of their skulls. The magazine obtained a letter marked December 2001 in which one of von Hagens' Chinese plastinators, Dr. Hongjin, boasted that he had just obtained the bodies of a "young man and young woman" who had "died" that same morning. The pair were, in his words, "fresh examples" of the "highest quality," and had been "killed by a shot to the head." Similarly, von Hagens had also been accused of purchasing cadavers of homeless people, prisoners, and mentally ill persons—"sold as unclaimed remains"—from sources in Russia and the China. Von Hagens was also under investigation in the United Kingdom for using undocumented bodies from former Soviet prisons and for procuring unclaimed bodies from Novosibirsk hospitals.¹⁷ Currently, bodies processed for exhibition by von Hagens and Premier are prepared at either von Hagens Institute for Plastination in Germany or at a processing site in Dalain, China.¹⁸ For these suspicions, the former practice of selling jewelry on his website made from plastinated animals, and the continual sale of plastinated body parts, von Hagens has been nicknamed "Dr. Death" by the media.¹⁹

I offer this brief rehearsal of the history of these shows not only to provide an overview of their scope and to situate them culturally, but also to connect them to a tradition of public shows featuring human bodies—both living and dead. This questionable work of Premier and von Hagens is not, of course, a completely new phenomenon, but a recent incarnation of the well documented and historical use of cadavers in the name of scientific understanding, public pedagogy, and bodily regulation. And while these contemporary exhibits could be connected to a wide variety of historical pseudo-scientific work, in the rest of this chapter I focus on three particular rhetorical connections. Specifically, I examine how the exhibits link themselves with historical dissections, anatomical rituals, and artistic renderings, and how both participate in the procurement of the bodies of "others" (alive and dead) for the purpose of public display. Then, I compare the exhibits to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century freak shows, examining how the exhibits exploit their provocative rhetorical marketing strategies while simultaneously working to distance themselves from their low-brow reputations. Finally, I connect the current exhibits' regulation of bodily norms to Victorian attempts to do the same through the racial and gendered categorization and incessant pathologization of the physical form. Throughout this section, my focus rests on the exhibits' connections to a history of exploitation in the name of scientific and medical progress and public health that has allowed such uses of cadavers to be seen as not only acceptable, but also as a neoliberal right.

A HISTORY OF ART, ANATOMY, AND OTHERING

In the text meant to supplement his exhibits, von Hagens contributes an essay that explicitly links the history of anatomy in the West to his own process of plastination. Beginning with hunters from “man’s early history” whose knowledge of animal anatomy allowed them to efficiently remove meat for consumption and preservation, he cites the ritual anatomical practices of pre-Columbian South American peoples, highlights those of ancient Greece and Egypt, and cites the anatomical drawing of da Vinci in the fourteenth century along with the scientific work of the Russian anatomist Nikolas Pirogov in the seventeenth century (von Hagens “Anatomy” 9, 12, 15). He also makes a point to link his work to that of Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564), the founder of the science of anatomy, who advocated public dissections and autopsies, and Bernhard Albinus (1697–1747) whose work created standard anatomical representations. Rather than sketching details of the organs of individuals, Albinus drew organs so they were associated with the essential functional features of the body, and von Hagens sees his plastinate exhibits as a descendant of this focus on functionality (11).

Following this discussion, von Hagens highlights the interplay of art and anatomy, noting that without the early dissections of cadavers, Renaissance artists would never have been able to produce such lifelike and realistic works of art, and that it was only with the advent of preservation that dissected bodies could be displayed in “aesthetically pleasing, life-like poses that are expressive in a way that brings out the individual character of the anatomy” (13). His exhibitions, he argues, are born of this tradition and continue its work. His plastinates not only communicate the anatomical truth of the human body, but they also reveal the inherent beauty of that form. Von Hagens routinely calls the body’s internal structure its “face within” and claims that his preservation and presentation techniques offer an “aesthetics of the human body [that . . .] visibly lives on in the body’s interior” (von Hagens “Anatomy” 34). He even goes so far as to suggest that through plastination one might gain access to the soul.²⁰ And while he stops short of claiming access to such an ephemeral state of being, he does elevate plastination from a skilled technique to an art form. *BODY WORLDS 1*, for instance, posted large signs throughout the exhibit that reproduced Renaissance imagery—often next to a similarly posed plastinate—and, another essay in the exhibit’s catalogue (“The Dignity of Man,” written by Franz Josef Wetz) reinforces plastination’s contribution to aesthetics arguing that “what is truly special about the humanistic revaluation of man [and thus, the similar work of plastination] lies not merely in the emphasis of his worth, but above all in recognition of his beauty” (241). As well, von Hagens himself writes that “the aesthetic value of specimens is enhanced by the design of the respective plastinate and its ambiance” (“Gruesome Corpses” 273).

Von Hagens ends his essay by reviewing a history of cadaver procurement and preservation—including Egyptian, African, and Asian mummification practices—and connecting them to his own plastination technology. “Whole-body plastinations” he writes, “join the ranks of skeletons and mummies as a new means of determining our post-mortem existence for ourselves. [They] . . . represent a shift in value from a useless corpse to a plastinated specimen, which is useful, aesthetically instructive, and produced by nature” (“Anatomy” 34).

When von Hagens writes that the corpses he plastinates are transformed from a state of uselessness into one of “aesthetic and instructive” value, his words hint at another connection between his plastinates and the historical cadavers that found themselves dissembled and dissected: that both involve corpses harvested from the most disenfranchised and disadvantaged members of their societies. It is well documented that, aside from revered mummified bodies, the corpses most often used for instructive and artistic purposes from fourteenth-century Bologna through nineteenth-century America, belonged to people whose bodies were unclaimed after death. Most often, the bodies came from society’s cast-offs: the homeless, destitute, mentally ill, or executed prisoners.²¹ This history of dissection, then, is also a history of the other: a history marked by scientific hubris where human dignity is sacrificed in the name of knowledge acquisition.

Harriett Washington speaks to this point within her discussion of American medical science’s use of disenfranchised black bodies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *Medical Apartheid*, she focuses on the public and medical display of and experimentation on black bodies and writes that that “boundary separating popular display from medical display was a porous one” and that “alert entrepreneurs” exploited these bodies for profit and fame (79). “Whether one was gawking at a ‘white negro,’ a 161-year old black wet nurse, an African giantess, or a Hottentot ‘missing link,’ [. . .] the subject was usually forced to display his body” (81). In “Gender, Race, and Nation: the Comparative Anatomy of ‘Hottentot’ Women in Europe, 1815–1817,” Anne Fausto-Sterling focuses on one of these cases: that of the so-called “Hottentot,” also known as Saartjie “Sarah” Baartman, an African woman who was voluntarily²² brought to Europe as a research subject where her body parts were measured. Situated as object rather than subject, Baartman was put on view for the English public, and displayed barely clothed, as an attraction in the French museum. Chosen as a specimen not simply for her race, but more importantly because of her seemingly large buttocks, breasts, and genitalia, Baartman was used as an example of what was “savage,” “grossly natural,” and “abnormal” about women’s bodies. As such, Cuvier and de Blainville—the two scientists in question—ultimately used Baartman’s difference to school European women in appropriate behavior while also confirming (in their minds at least) the general evolutionary superiority of Europeans (35).

By positioning Baartman as the raced other, whose difference was marked by her visibly excessive “femaleness,” the scientists depicted her not only as an anomaly—a spectacle worthy of fascination—but also as a condition from which “civilized” white, French, and English women should distance themselves. Through their use of a rhetoric of abnormality, the scientists forwarded their colonial and eugenic project. Importantly, Cuvier and de Blainville did not allow Baartman’s difference to widen their knowledge of female anatomy; instead, they shaped their study of her body to suit their preexisting hypotheses. As Fausto-Sterling tells us, for example, “The colonial expansions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shaped European science [and] Cuvier’s dissection of Bartmann [sic] was a natural extension of that shaping [. . . His writings] show how the French scientific elite of the early nineteenth century tried to lay their own fears [about the possible decline of European cultural and military superiority] to rest” (20). Rooted in their desire to study and classify, then, was their concern with controlling the savage and the uncivilized that is found both outside the boundaries of Europe and potentially within its female subjects. In order to maintain cultural superiority, European science had to expand its locus of control from the colonial other to the other within their own society. One way it did just that was to inscribe parameters of appropriateness and acceptability for European women via contrast with the pathologized body of the “savage” woman.

BODY WORLDS and *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* are indebted to and complicit in continuing this history. Although somewhat less obvious in their racist and sexist displays, they also use bodies of the other to instruct a Western audience. This time, rather than marketing the bodies as foreign “curiosities,” the shows present them as highly stylized and sanitized tools of self-discovery. Rather than encouraging the audience to disidentify with the subject—as was done in Baartman’s case—viewers are now compelled to see themselves in the flesh of others. This unveiled viewing, however, obscures even as it ostensibly reveals. As I discuss later in the book, while the exhibits may uncover the muscles, veins, and organs that lie underneath the skin, their presentation simultaneously erases the cultural, economic, and personal histories of the bodies themselves. The plastinates on display are reduced to nothing more than bodily matter. Much like the display of Baartman, this implicitly teaches Western consumers that these bodies are products—that they are useful only for what they can teach us about ourselves and not for the information they hold about their own lives. The knowledge they contain about their own cultural history is irrelevant. Such a perspective not only encourages blind nationalism and cultural elitism, but it also promotes uncritical consumerism—a stance that effaces the linkage between global trade, economic gain, and ideology (and one that I am attempting to reconstruct in this book).

In drawing this connection I am not arguing that using the bodies of deceased prisoners is the same as procuring a living human being and displaying him or her to a paying audience, but rather that similar ideologies are at play in both these situations. Certainly one is economic: slave traders and explorers who captured and sold humans (mainly Africans), who eventually made their way to a museum dais, a carnival act, or behind the bars of a zoo, were motivated by the money these transactions produced. As well, Premier and von Hagens must have some economic motivation of their own since even the most modest estimates place their plastinate exhibits as highly lucrative, and given the fact that they have chosen to continue to produce for-profit shows rather than turning the plastinates over to a not-for-profit institution dedicated solely to pedagogical aims. As well, while past traders of human beings were influenced by the raced, gendered, and Eurocentric views of their time, so too are Premier and von Hagens complicit in the continuation of these perspectives. For example, when Baartman was exhibited for her supposedly excessive and unusual genitals or, in another example, Ota Benga was displayed along with a gorilla and an orangutan in the New York Zoological Gardens (now known as the Bronx Zoo) in the early twentieth century, both were made to act as representatives of their “savage” race. Baartman was used to delineate between “civilized” (and socially controlled) European women and their unruly and “sub-human” African counterparts, while Benga was offered as a kind of missing link—a middle step between apes and humans.²³ Much like the *Bodies* exhibitions, these historical displays were made possible by the ideological beliefs of their time; without the view that certain people were “less than” or “other than,” such a display would not only have been seen as deplorable but also as irrational.

Von Hagens’ and Premier’s purchase and display of deceased prisoners, indigent mental patients, and homeless people are reminiscent of these earlier transactions. For example, although the bodies of potentially executed Chinese prisoners have been plastinated and posed ostensibly for “educational purposes,” their use reflects a racist and classist view where such bodies are deemed useful only when they are supportive of a larger, more culturally and economically valuable enterprise. As von Hagens himself says in the essay I quoted earlier, the plastination process turns a “valueless corpse” into something that matters. And, if these corpses are without value until they are transformed by plastination and displayed for a paying audience, then the people who once inhabited those corpses were equally as devalued. As I discuss in later chapters, such usage highlights not only that these bodies are privileged for the economic labor that can be extracted from them, but also that the work they are being conscripted to perform is both material (as in the production of capital) and metaphoric (as in the transmission of ideology).

THE FREAK SHOW AND ITS RHETORICAL PUSH/PULL

Critics of the plastinate exhibits have variably argued that the shows are both reminiscent of freak shows (DuComb) and purposely distance themselves from it (Ponce). As I discuss at length in chapter three, both von Hagens and Premier distance their exhibits from this history by advertising their shows primarily as pedagogical sites—places where everyday people are given access to information typically reserved for medical professionals. To support this presentation, they connect their shows to culturally sanctioned institutions such as the university and the museum, and they highlight their exhibits' educational function. They strive for respectability by associating their shows with qualified medical professionals, by linking their work with that of anatomists of the past, and by building the exhibits into a culture of information via blogs, teaching guides, and sponsorship of disease prevention fairs. In contrast to the freak show, which encouraged audiences to exclaim at the spectacle before them, the plastinate exhibits are designed to elicit a more constrained response: attendees are encouraged to quietly observe the plastinates, to document their experiences in writing at the end of the exhibits, and to incorporate the exhibits' healthy-lifestyle advice into their daily lives. Ultimately, the purpose of the exhibits, (the exhibits themselves tells us), is to help viewers understand the functionality of their bodies so they can better care for them. However, despite this veneer of respectability and pedagogy, the exhibits are constructed by a rhetoric of functionality and an assumption of utility: for bodies to be normal, acceptable, and healthy they must also be *useful*—devoid of disease, physically capable, and unfettered by the weaknesses and liabilities that come from improper care.

So, while some of the exhibits' rhetorical strategies overtly point the viewer away from the history of the freak show, others do just the opposite. The shows' marketing literature, for instance, highlights the most spectacular aspects of the show: it offers images of dynamic corpses riding the subway, playing sports, and seated on animated horses. Its ads appear on buses, billboards, and telephone booths and feature plastinated corpses in a state of dissection: one holds a football and has a square of chest muscle cut away; another stares ahead, his eyes bulging from his smiling, skeletal head and his torso a pastiche of sliced muscle and tendon over a visible skeleton.²⁴ Once inside the exhibits, the audiences are faced with even more monstrous scenes of human bodies split open, their systems separated, and their most intimate aspects revealed. Effectively, the sedate/educational is juxtaposed with the spectacular/macabre in what I see as a kind of disorienting wonderment: an experience in which viewers are faced with contradictory and bewildering information and, as a result, are both compelled and repulsed. And this push/pull effect is one of the ways these shows participate in the sideshow

or freak show tradition. Like their predecessors, these modern exhibits both flaunt and maintain the boundary between high and low culture; they are “equal parts pedagogy and pandering”; they attract and repulse; and, they educate and entertain (Ponce 86). Here you both *are* (see inside yourself!) and *are not* (see what you could become); the plastinate body is both individual (all bodies display a “natural anatomical individuality”) and universal (these bodies represent all bodies). The plastination process itself is at once a technical and scientific skill (so much so that it has numerous patents) and an artistic endeavor (reminiscent of Da Vinci’s sketches); as well, while plastinates are made from bodies of deceased persons, they are bodies imbued with a “life-like ambiance.”²⁵ They are freak shows wrapped in a package of respectability.

Such a placement of opposing discourses reflects what Christian DuComb calls the “representational economy of the freak show,” where the exhibits play on the sideshow’s voyeuristic gaze while firmly placing the viewer in the category of the “proper” being (177, 179). Under this system, viewers at once identify and disidentify with the plastinates: they share the same bodily parts, but are separated by the way they treat those parts. The plastinate is what the viewer might become without proper regulation; the plastinate is, in effect, the undisciplined neoliberal subject. And within this space of deregulation lies the potential for monstrosity—as I discuss in chapter four; to be like the plastinate is to be within a liminal space of excitement and danger. However, much like the sideshow, the plastinate exhibit allows the viewer to experience this tantalizing horror without actually being hurt. The human plastinate—like the sword swallower, the Siamese twin, and the bearded lady—entertains and entralls but does so without causing any actual harm to the viewer. The only harm that can be caused is the harm done by the viewer herself.

Rosemarie Garland Thompson writes that by “1940, freaks had become inappropriate for the public eye, cast as private ‘cases,’ surrounded and defined by professional apparatuses of doctors, counselors, and rehabilitations specialists” (79). What the plastinate exhibits offers then, is a sanctioned view into these forbidden cases: a place where the public can once again pay the entrance fee and stare and gawk to their heart’s content. But, by shrouding their shows in the neoliberal discourses of self-improvement, self-knowledge, and the free access of information, von Hagens and Premier have taken freaks out of the hands of physicians and returned them to their anxious public. Thompson also argues that the demise of the freak show can, at least in part, be attributed to the medicalization of the freak; that, rather than belonging to the carnival, by the mid-twentieth century the freak belonged firmly to scientists and doctors. The exhibits presented by von Hagens and Premier do not simply reproduce this tradition; instead, they link these two parts: they return

the freak to the viewing public, but they do so under the guise of medical science and not in spite of it.

If the sideshow renders the body as a functional tool while also revealing its penchant for disintegration from normal society, so too do the plastinate exhibits. In both these cases the body is always already at risk. It is wondrous and malleable, but it is also fragile and in need of constant care. It needs to be tended to and controlled so its functionality and efficiency—its normalcy—is maintained. As such, both these exhibits offer cautionary tales of bodies gone awry. They show us that when its insides, structures, systems, and parts are made visible, so too are its inherent flaws and weaknesses. And if we are to stay off the stage ourselves—to remain firmly in the position of viewer/audience member/normal body—we must recognize the potential freak in all of us and work to control it.

A LEGACY OF CLASSIFICATION

In “The Persistence of Tradition in Anatomical Museum,” Stephen Johnson writes that like von Hagens’ *BODY WORLDS*, “Victorian museums displayed the effects of the environment and personal choice on the body, exposing the terrible results of ‘the tight lacing of corsets’ and ‘onanism.’ Time has changed the social evils to smoking and obesity,” he argues, “but the function of the exhibition is the same” (75). And the Victorians’ concerns with social evils also fostered their interest in the causes of them; as a result, the Victorians have endowed Western culture not simply with a focus on bodily regulation (although they certainly have done that), but they have also bequeathed to us a legacy of pathology whereby science is routinely called upon to regulate, explain, and classify humans and their behavior. So, while the plastinate exhibits of the last two decades do not exactly replicate nineteenth-century displays of human “anomalies” or measure cranial size and shape for the purposes of racial classification, they are indebted to these activities. Unwittingly or not, *BODY WORLDS* and *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* are descendants of nineteenth-century science’s turn toward the body; they are a cultural continuation of popular science’s search for social answers within the physical form.

To trace this legacy, I look to one of the earliest examples of this social/scientific schema. During the eighteenth century, Carl von Linnaeus (1707–1778), created a taxonomic system based on skin color that outlined four families of man and imbued them with various moral and intellectual differences. His classification included the following labels and concordant characteristics: *Homo Americanus*: “reddish, choleric, obstinate, contented, and regulated by customs”; *Homo Europaeus*: “white, fickle, sanguine, blue-eyed,

gentle, and governed by laws”; Homo Asiaticus: “sallow, grave, dignified, avaricious, and ruled by opinions”; and, Homo Afer: “black, phlegmatic, cunning, lazy, lustful, careless, and governed by caprice” (Haller 4). Often cited as the father of the discipline of anthropology, Linnaeus’ *Systema naturae* (1735), which laid out these differences, became the basis of a wide variety of work that began in the late eighteenth century, blossomed in the nineteenth century, and continued through to the early to mid-twentieth century.

Following Linnaeus, other scientists worked to categorize humans according to their physical markers. John Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) for example, a professor and author of *On the Natural Variation of Mankind* (1781) divided humanity into five races using Linnaean descriptors (Caucasian, Mongolian, American, Ethiopian, Malayan); Franz Pruner-Bey cited hair as a basis for racial categorization (“On Human Hair as a Race Character” Anthropological Institute, London, Journal, VI 1876, 71–92); Petrus Camper (1772–1789) used the facial angle as a marker of racial hierarchy; and Paul Broca (1824–1880) argued that through the process of phrenology it was possible to “detect the primitive type in the deformed cranium” (Haller 9, 11, 14–15). In fact, his methods become so well regarded that “by 1860 the facial angle had become the most frequent means of explaining the gradation of the species” (Haller 11). One of the consequences of these (and the many other studies of their kind) was that rather than using religion or social custom to validate political and cultural norms (as had been done previously), science became the support for such claims. Similar to how the shriveled and blackened lung of today’s plastinate exhibits has come to stand as scientific proof of lung cancer, the cranial ridge once “proved” racial inferiority. While these two cases have vastly different implications—one suggesting a mistreatment of a subjects’ own body through tobacco and the other offers a potential justification of racial enslavement²⁶—they both illustrate ways the medicalized body has been connected to a social problem.

And a similar case can be made for the nineteenth-century focus on a biological basis for “deviant” sexuality. When Karl Heinrich Ulrich (1825–1895) formulated a scientific theory of homosexuality (in which there was a third sex that accounted for male homosexuality), his work was not received as the informative and emancipatory project he had hoped (Ulrich himself identified as a homosexual and was motivated by a desire to find a natural cause of homosexuality). Rather, his work may have had the opposite effect of calling attention to—and ultimately causing the pathologization of—homosexual behavior. His writings, for example, are often cited as the catalyst for a host of other sexological studies. He is said to have influenced the scientific interest in hermaphrodites and to have spurred Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s groundbreaking text *Psychopathia sexualis*, which, when first published in 1886 named and classified non-procreative sexual behaviors.²⁷

And, as a result of this work, some argue, sexual “perversion” became highly medicalized and the science of sexuality was born.²⁸

As part of this medicalization of sexuality, in the first part of the twentieth century, marriage—as it had evolved to represent the sexual and romantic love between a husband and wife—became a marker for the triumph of evolution.²⁹ It signaled humanity’s move away from primitive forms of sexual coupling and situated sex as way “races evolved, devolved, or committed suicide” (155). Consequently, sexology came to function eugenically and focused much of its attention on delineating “normal and civilized” sexual behavior from that which was “primitive and savage,” thus defining sexuality along racial lines. Among other influences (like deeply seeded racism) Carter and others cite social anxiety as one of the reasons this juxtaposing came about. With the advent of modern society, Western culture was experiencing tumultuous changes: social mores were being challenged, the borders of the “civilized” world were being infringed upon, and everyday life was being reshaped by technological innovations. Jennifer Terry explicitly links such anxiety over the changing social order to anxiety around sexuality; she writes, for example, that there was a general belief that “perversion was becoming more prevalent as a result of modern conditions” and that “social reform policies [. . .] brought sexuality, primarily by way of marking its aberrations, to the center of public debates about managing the extraordinary changes wrought by modernity” (*American Obsession* 73).

While the plastinate exhibits stop short of classifying nonnormative sexual behavior as socially corrupting or of associating racial otherness with devolution, they do echo the Victorians’ focus on medicalization and classification as a means of maintaining social order and, as such, I believe they are descendants of this early work. However, with the advent of neoliberalism (and the changing cultural and political landscape), audiences are no longer asked to measure themselves against the sexual or raced deviant; instead, they are compelled to see this potential deviant within themselves. As informed and responsible citizens, it is their duty to manage this dangerous potential and to use scientific data to moderate their behaviors.

So whereas Krafft-Ebing’s readers were encouraged to regard the extreme aspects of human sexuality such as sexual inversion, masochism, sadism, and fetishism as diseases in need of treatment,³⁰ plastinate audiences are repeatedly subject to the naturalized connection between heteronormativity and health. For example, under Premier and von Hagens’ direction, the healthy female body is one that fits easily into a gendered social order; it is a body shaped by feminine exercise practices, acutely aware of its reproductive capabilities, and always an appropriate image of (hetero)sexual attractiveness. Both exhibits highlight yoga and ballet as examples of physical exercise

for women; and both show only male bodies lifting weights, running, or playing organized sports. The message here is that women can (and should) create bodies that are physiologically healthy, but that these bodies should also be ready to meet the heterosexual and sexist demands of contemporary Western society. Furthermore, when women are not being shown how to maintain these gendered expectations, they are reminded of their bodies' most important function: its ability to procreate. Not only are entire sections of the exhibits devoted solely to the reproductive capacity of a woman's uterus—specially cordoned off areas focus almost entirely on the development of the fetus rather than to the ways a woman's body supports and creates that fetus—but whenever a woman's genitals are available for viewing, they are conspicuously marked by reproductive terms. Accordingly, sexual pleasure is constructed as invisible and unimportant to a woman's health; the pleasure derived from such a body should not be the woman's own, but that of her potential procreative mate. This is made clear when all female plastinates are posed and constructed in ways that reflect an unrelenting attention to normative notions of sexual desirability. Even in their state as preserved corpses, their nipples are intact and they are posed in passive or sexually reminiscent ways. One of von Hagens' pregnant plastinates, for example, is shown lying on her side, her stomach cut open to reveal her fetus, and her breasts full and lifted.³¹ As a kind of plastinated pregnant pin-up she is both culturally and medically instructive.

A CASE FOR HISTORICIZING

In an essay he includes in the *BODY WORLDS* catalogue, von Hagens writes that “the cultural signification of Plastination [comes from] showing attractive bodily interiors [that have] made it possible to emancipate the body” (“On Gruesome Corpses” 269); and, on the exhibit's corresponding website, he claims that “BODY WORLDS is [. . .] the most successful traveling exhibition of all time.”³² Together, these statements reveal von Hagens' investment in his work's connection to exhibits of the past. By affirming this tradition, however, and boasting that his shows have surpassed their prestige, he is also laying claim (albeit unwillingly) to their nefarious and insidious aspects.

It is imperative, therefore, that when we recognize the plastinate exhibits as contemporary cousins of the freak show and Victorian pseudo-science, we also understand that these historical events provide the foundation upon which the plastinate shows rest. Their rhetorical reliance on medical science, common sense data, and culturally normative ideologies contribute to the exhibits' economic and popular success and provide recognizable discourses

that reinforce neoliberal norms. Without the recognition of these historical underpinnings, both the exhibits and the plastinates themselves might be viewed as nothing more than an imaginative plan or an easily dismissed pop-culture phenomenon. By articulating this connection, however, it becomes clear that Premier and von Hagens are doing more than entertaining. They are, in fact, furthering a highly problematic tradition of othering that transmits conservative ideologies for the sake of economic gain.

NOTES

1. A detailed description of the plastination process can be found on the *BODY WORLDS*' website under the "Plastination" section, within subsections "The Plastination Process" and "A Method of Plastination." Originally, this site was accessed during October and November of 2014 and was still available as of August 2015.

2. Ibid.

3. These descriptions can be found on the *BODY WORLDS* site under the subsection "A New Approach to Teaching Anatomy" in the "Plastination" section.

4. See "The Idea Behind Plastination" subsection of the *BW* site.

5. This information was gathered from the *BW*'s website and the author information listed in the *BW*'s catalogue: Gunther von Hagens' *Body Worlds: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies*.

6. This is not to say that von Hagens (or Premier, for that matter) intentionally designed these exhibits with neoliberal ideologies in mind, but it does highlight the level to which neoliberal values are circulating around the exhibits.

7. Whalley, p. 299.

8. For a chart that details cities toured by *BW* and *BWII*, see Whalley 301.

9. For a full list of these exhibits, including tour dates and specific locations, see the "Previous Exhibits" section of the *BODY WORLDS*' website.

10. See "The Original" page on the *BW*'s website.

11. I am not arguing here or elsewhere in this book that von Hagens' work has no merit or that he intentionally participated in the illegal purchase of bodies or body parts. There have been many charges against him of this nature, but none have been definitively proven. As well, the plastination technique he invented is clearly effective and there are a number of doctors, scientists, and researchers who support both his version of plastination in general and his exhibits in specific. My argument, rather, is that in his representation of the exhibits, the procurement of the bodies he uses, and the plastination process itself, von Hagens elides or completely denies these controversies and makes no attempt to address any of the potential harms these actions have caused.

12. This information was taken from Premier Exhibitions website, under the "About Premier Exhibitions" section.

13. See the "*Bodies . . . The Exhibition*" and "*Bodies Revealed*" sections of the Premier Exhibitions web site.

14. For sexualization discussions, see Linke, Ruchti, and Johnson; see Jeffries and PR Newswire for discussions of von Hagen's welcoming attitude toward controversy.
15. See Cowell and Channel Four.
16. See Attorney General, NPR, and Laogai.
17. See Luke Harding's article in *The Guardian* and Lucia Tanassi's essay in *The Anatomy of Body Worlds*.
18. See Bohannon, O'Keefe, and Paterson.
19. See James White's article in *Daily Mail*.
20. In his essay "Anatomy and Plastination," von Hagens quotes Wittgenstein's claim that "The human body is the best picture of the human soul" and then remarks that he has felt closest to the soul when plastinating a human brain because the brain contains memories and thus awareness of the self (34).
21. For information about the procurement of bodies for these purposes, see Ross, Park, Terry, and Carney.
22. I use the term "voluntary" to distinguish Baartmann from those Africans who were brought to Europe as slaves, but I do so with the knowledge that her choice to leave Africa was most certainly a highly circumscribed one. While her precise motives are unknown, I hope my description of her honors the various kinds of agency she exercised throughout her life.
23. See Washington, chapter three, "Circus Africanus."
24. These specific example are taken from an advertising company (343 Creative) that was hired to market Premier's show.
25. I take these points from the exhibits' websites, their marketing literature, and from von Hagens himself: see his essay "Anatomy" (34) and "On Gruesome Corpses" (266) for specific quotes.
26. Haller notes that anthropometric measurement of soldiers' by American Civil War scientists had been used in some cases, to support the proslavery position (19–21).
27. See Dreger.
28. See Rosario.
29. See Carter, "Normality, Whiteness, Authorship: Evolutionary Sexology and the Primitive Pervert."
30. See Ooserhuis, p. 72–73.
31. I discuss these issues in more detail in chapter four.
32. See the home page of the *BW*'s website.

Chapter 2

Neoliberal Necropolitics *Rhetorics of the Living Dead*

For those who will not appear to count as dead there will be no accountability toward their lives. [. . .] Beings without death cannot, after all, require physical security, healthcare, retirement support, sustainable resource management, or jobs, let alone obituary recognition. Indeed, such beings cannot exist. But do.

—Rebecca Schneider

I invoke the term “living dead” in my title not to locate the *Bodies* exhibits within the zombie-laden horror genre, but to call upon the looming and seemingly indestructible figure of the zombie. Within film and television, the zombie is a supernatural being who inhabits the body of a once-live person; zombies are threats to the “world as we know it,” and to “everyday” people and their desire to live their lives. They exist in the liminal space between the living and the dead and have an ominous, macabre, and insidious aspect to them—especially since they seem bent on destroying the human race. But underlying this threat is a loss: a loss of personhood, of agency, and of community. The zombie is a fraught figure: caught betwixt and between, with no home, no identity beyond a death drive, and no future.¹

Whole body plastinates might be classified as a kind of neoliberal zombie: figures sprung from the once-living bodies of those whose identity has been lost—replaced by a replica meant to evoke life but without the messy trappings of actual personhood. In this case, the reanimated body has been stripped of his original identity: we do not know his name, country of origin, ethnic heritage, or even simple personal preferences.² In his transformation from human to plastinate, he has been divested of his individuality and irrevocably linked to his creator. As the zombies of fiction are often under the spell of their conjurer, so are the plastinates of these exhibits: their movements are

in service of their master. And the master here is not only the exhibits' actual creators (von Hagens and Premier), but also the neoliberal practices and ideologies that fuel their work. They reflect the rhetorics of personal responsibility and individual freedom (as I discuss in detail in chapter three), and how the exhibits in specific (and neoliberalism in general) relies upon the literal and symbolic labor of the dead—or in Achille Mbembe's term: "necropolitical labor." As such, I offer here an analysis of what I call the "rhetoric of the living dead": how the bodies of certain groups are used not only to populate these exhibits, but also to fuel the recursive loop of consumption and death that they engender.

In 2008, the New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo investigated Premier Exhibitions for their inability to appropriately document the procurement and consent of the bodies they displayed in their show *BODIES . . . The Exhibition*. As I detail in the previous chapter, the case was ultimately settled out of court and Premier was required to post a disclaimer on their website and refund the ticket price to any viewer who attended the show prior to this period. One of the questions that arises from this circumstance is not only how the bodies of potentially executed prisoners became part of a show that traveled across the globe, but also how so many cadavers came to be used this way at all. Typically, it is difficult to move human remains across international lines, but Premier and von Hagens seemed to have little trouble doing just that. In fact, according to their own estimates, they have each procured and transported hundreds of bodies in this way.³

This ease of procurement and movement was predicated on a number of factors, one of which is the creation of a neoliberal global environment that relies upon and is dedicated to open markets, commodification, and economic growth. Numerous critics have noted the global rise of neoliberalism, and my Introduction provides an overview of this phenomenon. The point, however, is imperative to restate: along with neoliberalism's development as a set of economic policies, came its ideological underpinnings and the sociopolitical context born of those philosophies. As a result, the neoliberally constructed "free market" became paramount and all other concerns and interests were subsumed by it. In *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*, Colin Crouch highlights this practice when he writes that along with neoliberalism's prominence, "free markets" became "preferred over states and politics" (vii). Likewise, Aihwa Ong claims that "neoliberalism has become the number one force of reckoning for different aspects of contemporary living" (11), while David Harvey argues that because "neoliberalism leads to the commodification of everything" the market is now "presumed to work as a guide—an ethic—for all human action" (165). Within this framework, market demands and economic gains become prioritized over all other possible concerns and as such, the value of certain human lives also come to be

measured in economic terms.⁴ Here, the lives of the disenfranchised—those most devalued on a monetary scale—became lucrative and productive when transformed from the living into the living-dead. Reborn as plastinates, these bodies regain economic value, albeit through the erasure of their human value.

As such, the plastinate exhibits of Premier and von Hagens not only showcase neoliberalism's turn toward the "commodification of everything" but also reveal its hidden costs. They shed light on a system that discriminately values life: that recognizes some humans as inherently worthwhile, while measuring others by the labor that can be extracted from their corpses. The exhibits illustrate how economic value has become the driving force behind transnational relationships, and they reveal how the regime of neoliberalism subjugates human rights, political ideology, and even nationalism to the pursuit of economic gains. Ultimately, the exhibits uncover the nefarious necropolitical underpinnings of neoliberalism where zombie plastinates erase people, their lives, and their histories in the service of free market capitalism.

THE CREATION OF THE LIVING-DEAD, PART 1: OPEN MARKETS AND ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

One of the most illustrative examples of the subjugation of human rights for the sake of economic growth can be found on China's black market where bodies and body parts are wholly commodified, stripped of their humanity and human rights, and often sold to highly successful Western companies for plastination and display. Metonymically, this transaction represents a neoliberal new world order where an adherence to free market principles overrides all other concerns. The linkage of disenfranchised person to black market broker to purchasing agent to transnational corporation underscores how neoliberal practice is not only capable of leading to dehumanization, but also how it might, in some ways, also be dependent upon the process. In the section that follows, I trace how neoliberalism's singular focus on economics leads to a global environment where state relationships (specifically between the United States and China) supersede individual liberty and human rights.

Before I discuss China's black market in human remains in more detail, I want to be explicit that while I am turning to this location because this is the actual place from which many of the bodies are coming, I am not arguing that China is singular in its commodification of human remains.⁵ This practice has certainly, in recent decades, been supported by neoliberal ideals and economies, but as I discuss in the previous chapter, it is also tied to a long-standing tradition where the bodies of the disenfranchised are used by

dominant groups both for economic and cultural advantage. As one brief example, I offer the story of “Ishi,” a member of the Yahi tribe who was often referred to as the “last wild Indian,” and who was displayed as a museum curiosity in the early twentieth century.⁶ While at the museum, over 23,000 people observed him and his arrow making and fire building skills, and he became a popular museum draw. He was, in the words of Alfred Kroeber, the anthropologist who opened the museum, “a live wild Indian [who] would bring many more curious San Franciscans to the new museum” (Starn 143). And, according to newspaper account of the time, he was both “the greatest anthropological treasure ever captured” and a lucrative addition to the museum’s coffers (as quoted in Starn 142).

The example of Ishi reflects a tradition of human collection and trafficking in the United States—sometimes with live humans and sometimes with deceased ones. Regardless of the state of the bodies, these actions are tied to both an expansionist and imperial imperative.⁷ The exhibition of Egyptian mummies in US museums is another ongoing example, as is the procurement and sale of the bodies and body parts of Native peoples. It was, after all, only in 1990 with the passing of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) that federal agencies or institutions who were granted federal funding were required to return Native American “cultural items”—including human remains—to their affiliated tribes. However, even after NAGPRA, the remains of hundreds of thousands of Indigenous people are still held in museums and universities across the United States. Thus, China’s traffic in bodies is simply the latest iteration of a long tradition of the commodification and exploitation of human remains that might be termed “the creation of the living dead.”

Rather than perpetuate a false dichotomy where the West is constructed as “progressive” and China “regressive” in relation to human rights, it is more appropriate to understand human rights as one of many factors in the political-economic relationship between the two. Rey Chow speaks directly to this in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, where she argues that rather than seeing the United States as “the holder of some absolute, uncompromisable value”—both the West and China should be viewed as “collaborative *partners* in an ongoing series of biopolitical transactions whereby human rights, or more precisely, human as such, are the commodity par excellence” (*emphasis added* Chow 20). This analytic underscores the transnational relationship between these two superpowers and recognizes the movement of people—both alive and deceased—as political power plays. Under this regime, individuals are heralded less for their inherent value (as human rights discourse would have it), and more for their strategic value as political pawns.

A contemporary example of these neoliberal collaborations can be seen in the calculated deployment of pro-human rights rhetoric and actions by

the United States and China. Historically, both countries have drawn on the persuasive appeal of human rights to bolster their political and economic positions: the United States has often relied on pro-human rights discourse to assert itself as a global defender of human rights, while China has engaged in specific pro-human rights actions to foster global goodwill and prove their willingness to compromise with the West. During Bill Clinton's presidency, for instance, the United States routinely used China's human rights record as a reason to deny them Most-Favored Nation Status and to oppose their inclusion in the WTO (Sutter 117–118). Then, when China was admitted to the WTO, the United States referenced human rights to declare their inclusion a victory for democracy: "By joining the WTO," President Clinton professed, "China is not simply agreeing to import more of our products; it is agreeing to import one of democracy's most cherished values—economic freedom." He continued, adding that "the more China liberalizes its economy, the more fully it will liberate the potential of its people—their initiative, their imagination, their remarkable spirit of enterprise" (Hesford 125). Such a statement overtly links the United States, democracy, free markets, and individual freedom while positioning China as a country with both a developing economy and a developing conscience.

Chow continues this line of argumentation when she highlights China's deployment of human rights and their strategic release of political prisoners. The lives of prisoners in China, she argues, are often traded as human rights commodities since their imprisonment or emancipation is more likely to be connected to the political goodwill they might engender than any adherence to an appeal to justice. "The mainland Chinese government" she writes, is "setting itself up as a business enterprise that deals in politicized human persons as precious commodities, the release of which [. . .] is systematically regulated—by the rules of demand and supply and by the continued presence of an interested buyer" (Chow 21). Prisoners are often released when China needs to gain international favor—for a trade agreement or other economic boon. A 2005 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* echoes this view, noting that "China has long engaged in what experts call a 'game' of political prisoner releases ahead of visits by Western leaders as a show of good face" (Marquand). As one piece of evidence, the article points to the release of Rabiya Kadir, a leading member of the indigenous ethnic Uigher population often at odds with Chinese authorities, who was set free before Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit in the spring on 2006. Given this history, it seems plausible then, that prisoners might also be executed and sold for organ trafficking or, as is the case here, plastination by international companies.

In *The Megarhetorics of Global Development*, Wendy Hesford similarly analyzes the relationship between human rights rhetoric and China's bid to become a global economic power; she cites, for example, Ching Kwan Lee's

point that “the imperatives of the market economy have coalesced with specific rights reform in China” (141). And, she and others (Rofel, Sutter, Rey), argue that the Chinese government has worked to link their country’s economic growth to its advances in human rights. A salient example is its bid to host to 2008 Olympics. As China lobbied for this contract, government officials often connected China’s hosting of the Olympic games to the broadening of relationships between China and West—both economically and socially. In 2001, for example, the then vice mayor of Beijing and vice president of the Beijing Organizing Committee, Liu Jingmin, claimed China’s hosting of the Olympic games would not only “promote social and economic development of China and the world,” but that it would simultaneously “promote the development of human rights of China and the world” (124–125).

In light of the West’s seemingly passionate investment in China’s human rights records, the question arises, then, how are Western companies so easily participating in China’s robust black market in bodies?⁸ Rather than simply laying the blame for the creation of this trade in the living dead on China’s supposed lack of interest in human rights or in the country’s political corruption, another answer emerges: the continually expanding and collaborative economic relationship between the United States and China. As Robert Sutter notes in *U.S.-Chinese Relations*, since the death of Mao in 1976, there has been an increasing interdependency between the United States and China due to rapid growth of Chinese economy (191–3). This shift emerged even earlier, however, and can be traced to the early 1970s with President Richard Nixon. In 1971, Nixon famously called for a place for the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations in his “State of the World” message. This political outreach was followed by the lifting of a number of US trade restrictions on Chinese markets. In the following year, Nixon famously visited China, thus visually signaling a new day for the two countries. Overall, these interactions signaled a serious US commitment to developing political and economic relations with China (Cohen 217–219).

The Nixon administration’s new approach to China encompasses more than an economic relationship, however. It is, rather, an early example of how neoliberal politics is born of neoliberal policy. For example, when Nixon was negotiating this new partnership, one of the main stumbling blocks was the “one China” question. Beijing was adamant that they would incorporate Taiwan into the state once the lease expired, but the United States was bound to defend Taiwan by the treaty of 1954. As a compromise, Nixon’s administration offered a so-called “one China—but not now” approach. This policy enabled the United States to continue negotiations with China by pushing questions of Taiwan to the uncertain future. They were not breaking the treaty per se, but downgrading its priority. Such a move exemplifies neoliberalism’s

expansive reach and highlights its propensity to spread beyond strictly defined economic policy; what starts as a commitment to the development of free markets become an ideological investment in economic collaboration that supersedes all other concerns.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, the relationship of the United States and China continued to deepen along neoliberal lines—that is, primarily economic ones. In fact, Sutter calls economics “the key” to the entire relationship between the two countries (191). As China’s GDP grew over 9.8% from 1979 to 2007, so did the US economic entanglement with China. This growth, and ultimate transition, might be best marked by China’s admission to the WTO in 2001 (December 11) and the conferment of Most Favored Nation Status by the United States in 2000. These inclusions fostered China’s global influence and, I argue, laid the foundation for exhibits such as those discussed here. And while these relationships did not cause the United States criticism of China’s human rights record to completely dissipate, they were tempered; the scolding rhetoric continued, but so too did the concomitant push toward economic partnership. For example, although the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989 led to harsh criticism from the United States, it had little effect on the George H. W. Bush administration’s push for a US-China partnership. A reaction from then Secretary of State James Baker communicates this well: “Human rights” he maintains, “has got to be a fundamental keystone for American foreign policy, but there are also other considerations that must be taken into account. The geopolitical economical relationship between China and the United States is important” (Tenney 60). So, while criticism of the events of that summer in 1989 were pervasive in the US Congress and by other US leaders, ultimately the US economic policy toward China remained intact. Thus we see an ongoing political rhetoric of critique that excoriates China’s human rights record but rarely buttresses it with any real economic policy shifts—a disjunction directly related to the rise of neoliberal policy and practices. And this approach has not changed with the shift in US politics; recently, for example, China’s crackdown on religious and political dissidents in Tibet led President Obama to promise that his administration would continue to press China to respect its citizen’s human rights, however no major trade policies between the two countries were impacted (Sutter 248–249).⁹

This is not to say that China’s deviation from international agreements or its abuse of its citizens has been completely ignored. There have been numerous complaints about China’s poor compliance with WTO policies and the United States and the European Union have imposed restrictions on Chinese imports of textiles and apparel as a result. As well, the US Special Trade Representative issues an annual report assessing China’s WTO compliance that consistently focuses on tariff reductions, protection of intellectual property rights,

and lack of transparency (207). The United States has acknowledged China's "shortcomings":¹⁰ Congress has passed nonbinding resolutions in protest, and UN resolutions criticizing China's human rights records have been sponsored by the United States (250, 261). There is even a Congressional-Executive Commission on China that was created as a provision for granting normal trade relations to the country—while US-China economic partnerships go on unchanged, the committee monitors human rights abuses and the rule of law in China and submits an annual report to Congress (266). As these examples suggest, the US criticism of China is fairly empty. The responses cited above might be viewed as rhetorical in the most platonic sense; political rhetoric disconnected from any true material consequences. And, where actual penalties do exist, they are most often in response to the infractions directly related to trade agreements—not human rights abuses. What we see, then, is that since the opening of trade relations in the early 1970s, Chinese and US administrations have endeavored to manage their human rights differences so that they do not block the progress of neoliberal ideals (Sutter 243; Cohen 234). It is a policy that began with Nixon and Carter, continued with Reagan and Bush Sr., was codified by Clinton, and remains in effect well into Obama's second term. Adherence to neoliberalism's market-above-all mentality continue to shore up the governmental power of both countries: in the United States the growing relationship with China was routinely praised for opening a new market to US investment, and in China these economic exchanges helped maintain the legitimacy of the Communist Party. As Robert Sutter argues, "contemporary US government policies and practices regarding human rights issues in relations with China reflect the general secondary importance of these issues in recent Sin-American relations" (261).

So while current human rights abuse charges against China include "unlawful killings by security forces, torture, unlawful detention, excessive use of state laws to imprison political dissidents, coercive family planning policies and practices, state control of information, religious and ethnic persecution," the United States continues to solidify its political and economic relationship with the country. It is currently the leading importer of Chinese products and investment data, and open relations between the two countries remains a priority for the United States (Sutter 250). A November 12, 2014 Fact Sheet published by the White House, for example, explains that "President Obama and President Xi recognize the importance of economic relations at the core of the US-China bilateral relationship. The two Presidents commit to deepen bilateral economic ties. To this end, the United States and China commit to pursue policies that promote more open and market-driven bilateral and international trade and investment."

Together, these examples indicate the extent to which the political and economic relationship between the United States and China has become paramount and how, according to Chow, “human rights can no longer be understood purely on humanitarian grounds but rather must also be seen as an inherent part—entirely brutal yet also entirely logical—of transnational corporatism, under which anything, including human being or parts of human beings, can become exchangeable for its negotiated equivalent value” (Chow 21). As such, the plastinate exhibits offered by von Hagens and Premier must be read as part of a larger transnational relationship where human remains and body parts are not necessarily afforded a privileged position, but instead, are often subsumed under the neoliberal fetishization of free markets, expanded capital, and intensified commodification. Within this system, human flesh becomes both raw material and by-product: it is used by the regime of neoliberalism to create a market and to fulfill existing market desires.

The *Bodies* exhibits thus highlight how neoliberal economic policies not only enable the procurement of human remains, but also how they create a global market for them. And one of the most compelling aspects of this (beside the meager penalty imposed on Premier that I discuss above and in chapter 2), is that the West’s appetite for these exhibits remained voracious even after the exhibits’ collusion with human rights abuses were revealed. The settlement and subsequent acknowledgement by Premier that they could not definitely document the origin of their human specimens and that those bodies may, in fact, have belonged to executed Chinese prisoners, did not deter a significant number of people from attending the show. In fact, after the agreement was reached, the New York City version of the show remained open and highly successful until damage from Hurricane Sandy forced its closure in the late fall of 2012. Such a response (or lack thereof) elucidates the powerful neoliberal context in which these exhibits are situated as it also reveals neoliberalism’s reliance on necropolitical labor. The pull of these exhibits, beyond their entertainment value, or their supposed ability to “teach” us about ourselves, seems to lie in our own desire for the unknown or the unknowable. We are drawn to them—like zombies to human flesh—because we think they will fulfill our hunger, our need to be whole, to be knowledgeable subjects, and to be in control of our lives. But what we find in them is not the answers we seek, but our own vulnerability reflected back at us. If we look closely, we see that the plastinate zombies are not only symbols of the commodifying force of neoliberalism, but that they are also suggestions of what we, too, might become. In looking at them, we are really looking at ourselves and the roles we inhabit in this necropolitical regime.

THE CREATION OF THE LIVING DEAD, PART II: THE UPCYCLING OF HUMAN WASTE

To more precisely illustrate neoliberalism's reliance on figurative and material necropolitical labor, I examine the controversy surrounding the procurement of bodies from China by both Premier Exhibitions and Gunther von Hagens, and argue that decades of neoliberal policies, practices, and perspectives have coalesced to create an environment in which the remains of the disenfranchised are valued only for the contributions they can make to an international marketplace.

In a 2008 *20/20* investigative interview, "Inside the Bodies Exhibit," Premier Exhibitions' chairman, Arnie Geller, articulates that above all, Premier is a profit-generating entity. "We've invested a lot of money [. . .] in this program [. . .] and if it is a success our shareholders will benefit," he admitted and continued, saying, "We're absolutely making a good profit, of course."¹¹ Geller's comments uncover the exhibit's primary focus—that profit comes before pedagogy. This same *20/20* episode focused on the procurement by Premier Exhibitions of the "1,000 bodies or body parts" used in their show. Through undercover investigations in both the United States and China, one-on-one interviews with Premier's chairman, and a variety of other documents and sources, *20/20* presented a compelling case that the bodies and parts used by Premier were not from simply from "unclaimed" cadavers, but that some had come from executed prisoners. According to the Laogai Research Foundation, whose mission is to document human rights abuses in China, the designation "unclaimed" can mean a variety of things in China, including that the person who once inhabited that body was an executed political prisoner. As proof of this abuse, *20/20* received photographs of executed prisoners who had been dumped into the snow and then sold on the black market by a man who claimed to have brought such bodies directly to plastination labs in China. Their informant says he sold the bodies, for approximately \$200 a piece and admits that some of the bodies appeared as if their hands had been tied behind their backs prior to death.¹² When confronted by such evidence, Arnie Geller admits that Premier cannot trace the origin of all the bodies they use and claims that Premier obtains their bodies from Dalian Medical University. However, when, in the course of the *20/20* investigation, the then president of the university was asked directly about this relationship, he admitted no connection to Premier. *20/20* later revealed that the bodies most likely came from a company named Plastination Laboratories—a company the university once owned a 70% share of and all of which they have since divested themselves. Geller, however, was adamant about the origin of the bodies and continued to claim throughout the interview that all the bodies used in the exhibitions "absolutely" came from people who died of natural causes. Even

when pressed further and asked whether any of the bodies *could* have come from executed prisoners, he replied “Of course not. [. . .] All of the bodies are from Dalian Medical University” (“Inside the Bodies Exhibit”).

Despite Geller’s denials, significant evidence exists that many of the remains purchased by Premier and von Hagens were those of executed political prisoners or, at the very least, unclaimed bodies whose owners never consented to plastination. And the location of one plastination factory in Dalian, China, offers a point of corroboration. A 2006 investigation by David Barboza contends that, at the time, Dalian was plagued by corruption and rife with skilled medical school students who were willing to work for little money. Von Hagens first established a plastination factory there in 2001, and Barboza documented at least 10 other plastination factories that opened there in the years just prior to 2006. “These companies” he writes, “are regularly filling exhibition orders, shipping preserved cadavers to Japan, South Korea, and the United States” (Barboza, 2006). Additionally, a report by New Tang Dynasty Television¹³ further documents the corruption in Dalian, linking it to Bo Xilai, then a Chinese Communist Party secretary, and his wife, Gu Kailai, a former mayor of Dalian who had personal ties with von Hagens. (“Gu Kailai, Bo Xilai, and Plastination”). Ultimately, the investigation alleges that it is highly possible that “both Gunther von Hagens and Sui Hongjin [an assistant at Dalian Medical University from whom Premier has admitted purchasing bodies] would have had to cooperate with Bi Xilai and Gu Kailai to set up companies and obtain bodies,” that they would have obtained those bodies illegally, and that “Gu Kailai would also have probably made money from it” (“Gu Kailai, Bo Xilai, and Plastination”).

Further strengthening the case against Premier and von Hagens, National Public Radio’s show, “All Things Considered,” argued that “there is no clear paper trail” that leads from United States and European donors directly to the exhibited bodies or body parts (Ulaby). As well, von Hagens was also implicated in the New Tang Dynasty investigation discussed above. According to the report, von Hagens visited Dalian and Sui Hongjin in 1993, accepted a visiting professorship at Dalian Medical University in 1996, and later established a plastination company there and hired Sui as its general manager. In a 2003 interview with *Oriental Outlook* magazine, von Hagens reported that 80% of his profits came from his Dalian plant—a plant that processed the undocumented bodies of Chinese citizens. While von Hagens has denied ever using undocumented bodies in his shows, he does admit that he did receive the bodies of executed Chinese prisoners, but claims he cremated them (“Gu Kailai, Bo Xilai, and Plastination”). While not offering definitive proof, together, these investigations certainly raise serious questions about the bodies showcased in these exhibits. Additionally, this system of commodification highlights how the bodies of the disenfranchised become consumer goods

upon their death—how they are collected, sold, and traded in a troubling morass of economic subterfuge.

Taking the above information into account, we can see that throughout the development and expansion of the US relationship with China over the last four decades, the terms open market, free trade, and investment have echoed loudly and persistently while calls for human rights, dignity, and value have been paid only cursory attention. This reality thus begs the question: Under this regime, “what place is given to life, death, and the human body?” (Mbembe 12). Achille Mbembe’s query about necropolitics returns our attention to the material by-products of neoliberal policy: the rows of bodies in the snow, the human remains-turned-plastic objects, and the actual people whose lives and identities have been erased in the process of commodification. And what these images reveal is that the “place” accorded to certain bodies—both psychically and literally, prior to and after death—is a place bounded by capital concerns where the only “freedom” offered is the ability of privileged others to purchase products within an open global trade market. Even more to the point, some of the products available made available for purchase through this neoliberal relationship between the United States and China (mass-produced clothing, Mardi Gras beads, plastinated body parts),¹⁴ are ones directly connected to the exploitation, and perhaps even the cause of, the death of others. Here, human bodies become, in Mbembe’s terms, products through which “death and freedom [have been] irrevocably interwoven” (38) and it is the development of relationship between the United States and China that has worked to help produce and sustain the plastinate exhibits. Thus, neoliberal economics, while forwarding an ongoing rhetoric of human rights, has created a context in which the value of human life is variable and commodifiable, and in which, through a series of labyrinthine neoliberal transformations, the dead will rise again. In this imperial equation, rather than marking an end, death creates the ultimate commodity—a consumable afterlife.

One way to trace the impact of these necropolitical exchanges is to examine the restrictions placed upon goods coming into the United States. US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the agency responsible for overseeing the movements of all goods and persons into the United States, for instance, enforces standards that not only take national security into considerations, but that also attend to the various trade agreements made between the US and other nations. As the agency itself notes, CBP “has direct responsibility for enhancing United States economic competitiveness. By reducing costs for industry and enforcing trade laws against counterfeit, unsafe, and fraudulently entered goods, CBP is working to enable legitimate trade, contribute to American economic prosperity, and protect against risks to public health and safety.”¹⁵ A specific agency contribution to US “economic prosperity” has been the recategorization of the human body—plasticized human remains enter the

United States not as cadavers, but as everyday objects. In the process, these all-to-human subjects are robbed not only of their lives and identities, but also, in the ultimate act of necropolitical commodification, even of their deaths. Thus, when Premier ships plastinated bodies from China through the port of Los Angeles, the dead rise again, but rather than being labeled as human bodies for transport, they will instead enter the US market as “plastic models for medical teaching.” Conveniently, this designation allows Premier to bypass the more rigorous and time-consuming importation process associated with human cadavers: they do not need to include a death certificate with the remains as is required when shipping a body intended for internment or cremation nor must they ensure that the shipping method they use coincides with the regulations set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.¹⁶

In a very literal sense, such a policy divests such bodies of their humanity and reclassifies them as objects. As a result, it can be seen as a form of necropolitics in which this “power over the life of another [that] takes the form of commerce” and leads, according to Mbembe, to the complete dissolution of a person’s humanity. At this point, the person ceases to be a person and instead becomes a thing (22). Under such a framework, human remains are shipped to the United States in the same manner as plastic sunglasses or “hawaiian” leis might be—since they are all just things—and, as such, they are part of the larger economic relationship between the United States and China that is predicated on the exchange of (often inexpensive) goods for capital.¹⁷ As Chow writes, this trade in human remains between the United States and China is thus connected to the trade in “nonhuman commodities [. . .] the clothes, toys, industrial equipment, household accessories, and their like” (20). The lifestyle (and “habits” as Chow calls them) that drive the desire for readably available and affordable items from China also impacts the ability to easily translate human remains into plastic goods. A visitor to one of Premier’s shows sums up this perspective well when s/he writes in response to the exhibit’s use of human remains: “After you’re dead, you’re meat.” Ostensibly, if, upon death, a person is transformed from a human being into meat, that person is then subject to the same treatment a piece of steak or pork might be. The irony here, however, is that the plastinated bodies are not even given that much consideration. They are not imported as “meat”—perhaps since such a classification would require increased oversight by CBP—nor are the consumers who pay to see them told of their origins. Given the growing local and sustainable food movement, for instance, it is not uncommon for food consumers in the United States to know the exact farm on which the lamb they are eating was raised, what feed it ingested, and the manner in which it was slaughtered. The people whose bodies have been used for plastination, however, receive no such consideration. They are treated, as Premier’s chairman defends in his *20/20* interview, like plastic tchotchkes rather than actual

people.¹⁸ The remains of the plastinate exhibits, therefore, work in service of corporate profit and within a transnational economy that allows for their efficient movement across the globe. Valuable only as commodities, their personal histories, cultural contexts, and, most significantly, their intrinsic value as human beings are obscured and unrecognized. Although I discuss this objectification in more detail in chapter four, it bears reiterating here: the system of consumer capitalism¹⁹ that drives these exhibits and their procurement, processing, and movement of human remains subsequently disappears from the equation. In the end, it seems, as Curlin writes, “as though nothing happened”²⁰—as if the transmutation of human from person to object is inconsequential or, perhaps even worse, a productive use of an otherwise valueless commodity.

This transformation returns us to the zombie metaphor that began this chapter, but marks the point at which the bodies of the plastinate living-dead diverge from their supernatural counterparts. Traditionally, zombies are figures to be feared and ultimately destroyed because they serve no productive purpose; their *raison d’être* is to end human life, not enhance it. With few exceptions,²¹ the essential nature of zombies cannot be altered, and so they must be terminated. Plastinate zombies, however, are saved from this fate precisely because they do serve a specific purpose. Not only do they transmit neoliberal values and encourage neoliberal behavior, but they also create actual capital. In *The Performance in the Blockades of Neoliberalism*, Maurya Wickstrom speaks to this metamorphosis writing that when audiences experience the *Bodies* exhibits they are participating in an “act of tutelage” during which they are taught to distance themselves from “these most superfluous human beings.” This psychic removal is accomplished she argues, because the audience regards the plastinates as “so deeply and far across the divide as to not even have the status of sufferers or victims.” As such, the entire exhibit, she believes “is a performance of the recycling human waste back into the heart of neoliberalism as a plastic workforce of whom it is not even required that they be alive” (Wickstrom, “Exhibited Bodies” 177).

It is just this plastic workforce, I argue, that showcases the exhibits’ reliance on necropolitical labor; by repurposing these otherwise “disposable” bodies, the exhibits turn them from “human waste” to economically and pedagogically productive commodities. Building on Wickstrom’s argument, then, it might be even more precise to understand this process not as “recycling” but as “upcycling,” since the process of recycling tends to keep the essential aspects of the item intact; consider, for instance, the recycling of glass bottles into other glass containers or even glass countertops. The act of being recycled does not alter the understanding of the item as glass. When an item is upcycled, however, an otherwise disposable object is crafted into something new entirely. A cheap metal shoe rack, for example, might

be refashioned into an industrial light fixture, or piles of cat hair might be molded into tiny feline sculptures.²² Through this process, although the new item retains the essential elements of the original—the chandelier is still comprised of metal and the medium of the sculpture is still cat hair—the perception of the items have changed. They are not seen as something simply being reused, but as something that has become something entirely new and better—the upcycled item, as a result, often has more literal or perceived value than the original.

Similarly, when a human body is plastinated and displayed as part of these exhibits, that body is fundamentally altered. A person who, while alive, may have been considered useless, unwanted, or even, in the eyes of the state, dangerous, becomes, through the process of plastination, palatable and even productive. Such a horrendous view of human beings is not of course, universally accepted, but it is, nevertheless, the one implied here. Belling explains the way this works when he writes that “Plastination elides the cultural signs we attach to human remains [and although] we move among them [in the exhibits, ultimately, . . .] we move on.” Once people become plastinates “they take on [. . .] something of the character of other inanimate objects that decorate the spaces of the living. If we are not offended by their display, it is because we have taught ourselves to think of them as things” (Belling 18). Likewise, Maurya Wickstrom echoes this point when she notes that the bodies used in plastination are the ones “whom few people could find, or knew, or were able to care for in the end [. . . they are] the bodies of those who had little choice in the matter of their display here, or in their movement across the world, the strangest of all forced migrations.” These plastinate zombies are then, figures constructed of the “untidy, leftover tidbits of a life” (“Exhibited Bodies” 176).

This conceptualization is predicated on two main points: the erasure of identity (and thus humanity) from the plastinates, and the understanding of the people who become plastinates as always already disposable. A number of critics have highlighted these features (Nevarez, Pierson, Onion, Johnson) and they all argue that when the plastinates are divested of identity markers such as skin, eye color, names, place of origin, culture, ethnicity, and cause of death, etc., their transition from person to object is made easier. Bodies can be transformed from “human remains” to “curious objects” when the material realities of their lives are erased and their necropolitical labor is all that remains. This process is streamlined even further when the bodies being altered come from people who were rarely valued when they were alive. To illustrate this point, I turn to the work done by Hsuan L. Hsu and Martha Lincoln in their article “Biopower, *Bodies . . . the Exhibition*, and the Spectacle of Public Health.” Within their analysis of identification and biopower as it relates to Premier’s exhibition, they argue that neoliberal reforms are part

of the reason there are so many unclaimed bodies to be had in China. “Prior to the 1983 reforms,” they write, “the government strictly segregated residents and official migrants [. . .] from the rural population.” However, after that date, although the state sanctioned the movement of peasants into the cities, the infrastructure to track and document such a large group was not in place. As a result, between 40 and 100 million people existed within a murky legal status and thus come to be known as the “floating people” (27–28). Michael Dutton writes that these people are the “Chinese subaltern [. . .] the floating outcasts of a society that is organized to ensure that everyone has a place [. . . But] economic reform has left the people of *liu*—the internal migrants, the poor, the destitute, the criminal, the undesirable—more vulnerable than at any time since the 1949 revolution” (Hsu and Lincoln quoting Dutton 28).

The successful completion of this grotesque upcycling is possible, therefore, because the exhibits are exploiting (and bolstering) the neoliberal ideologies and practices that are already deeply entrenched not only in the economic agreements between the China and the United States (as well as other countries), but also because this ideology has infiltrated the minds of the audiences who pay to see these transformations. Viewers can adequately distance themselves from the potential horror elicited by the plastinate zombies because this particular group of the living dead has been neutralized. Their reconfiguration into commodities has rendered them impotent; rather than threatening the lives of the living audience, they have been conscripted into the service of saving those lives.

THE CONSUMPTION OF THE LIVING DEAD: BUYING PARTS, BUYING LIFE

The process of commodification that renders the plastinate zombies “harmless” is also the process that constructs them as consumable. They now belong to a group of bodies—in whole or in part—that can literally and figuratively be purchased. For the right price, kidneys, hair, and blood can be bought, wombs can be rented, and medical knowledge can be transmitted. Such transactions mark plastinate bodies as part of a global marketplace where economically disadvantaged persons are encouraged (and often compelled) to offer their own bio-matter for sale. In *Body Shopping: Converting Body Parts to Profit*, Donna Dickenson documents various examples of this system. She illustrates how women’s eggs are bought from “donors” for IVF treatment,²³ she uncovers the underground market in human remains that supply US medical schools,²⁴ and she argues that there is a fast-developing market in human genes.²⁵ Likewise, Scott Carney’s *The Red Market: On the Trail of the World’s Organ Brokers, Bone Thieves, Blood Farmers, and*

Child Traffickers traces the lucrative and underground international trade in human hair, plasma, and kidneys, and even children. One chapter documents the international adoption trade where children are often kidnapped and sold to orphanages, which then charge hefty adoption fees to Western parents (91–108). Specifically discussed is the case of a child who was stolen from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and adopted to a US couple. Taken from the Pulianthope slum he called home, a young boy named Subash was dragged into a rickshaw and sold to a local orphanage. His parents spent years searching for him, an effort that cost them financially and emotionally; the ordeal, writes Carney, caused them to pull their daughter from school and “plunged the family [. . .] into solid poverty” (92–93). Another chapter examines the origin of much of the human hair that feeds the \$900 million global market. Offering the story of Hindu pilgrims who have their heads shaved in prayer at the Sri Tirumula Temple in Andhra Pradesh, India, the chapter highlights a specific example of upcycling: converting a form of human waste (hair) into a lucrative commodity—a commodity, however, that does not financially benefit the donors (221–229). Finally, a third chapter chronicles the existence of Indian “blood brokers” who profit off the shortage of stored or donated blood.²⁶ These brokers, often financially unstable themselves, sell blood bought from some of India’s poorest citizens and resell it to hospitals and clinics at much higher prices (153–175). Many more examples of this kind of exchange could be cited—and even connected to historical cases such as the transatlantic slave trade or the sale of human curiosities discussed in the previous chapter—but importantly what binds these discrete instances is that they all reflect a movement of goods “upward” toward economically advantaged groups. These commodities, often made of the most intimate aspects of life (blood, DNA, etc.) rarely trickle down to the most vulnerable of the world’s populations.

Scott Carney argues that it is the need (and, I would add, the *desire*) for “great volumes of human material” that fuels the bio-matter marketplace. However, this system of exchange is not one built solely on the simplistic relationship of supply and demand, but on a philosophy that constructs such transactions as a “neoliberal right” (2). When open market and personal responsibility are prioritized over a larger social pact or set of guiding principles, it can easily become a “right” of one person to sell their bodily matter and the “right” of another to purchase it. In *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*, Colin Crouch echoes this sentiment, noting that “when neoliberal ideas dominate, *market principles* are erected as the *principle standard of judgment* for virtually all institutions”; furthermore, he notes that “every time it is authoritatively argued that the market should be used to resolve a question, that question is pushed *beyond the reach of ethical judgment*” (*emphasis added* 25–26). So, while neoliberalism often touts the idea that free markets

allow individual actors to “maximize their material interests,” the opposite might also be claimed (26). When the notion of “choice” is available only through the market and also defined by the market, that “choice” becomes severely limited; rather than expanding opportunities it shrinks them. Under neoliberalism, “choice” becomes another word for economically capable: one is one free to “choose” only that which he or she can purchase.

In their utilization of human remains, the *Bodies* exhibits exemplify this process: they offer a health-care commodity²⁷ that is accessible only to those who can choose (read: afford) to spend their money on it, and, many of the people whose bodies comprise the exhibit were used precisely because they were unable to exercise any choice at all. Neoliberal choice, in the context of the *Bodies* exhibits, therefore, is economically bounded and ethically compromised. And, while these shows are participating in a well-established international trading process of body parts, their participation exceeds the more traditional limits of its counterparts. By extracting the labor of deceased humans, rather than those whose nonessential parts can be harvested, the exhibits extend the system beyond the commodification of bio-matter and into the commodification of death-matter. Such commodification is totalizing; an individual, after all, cannot offer part of his or her necropolitical labor. To donate, in this context, is to die. As such, the *Bodies* exhibits both participate in and extend this system of what Nadia Seremakis calls “anatomical cannibalism.”²⁸ Furthermore, they build on the already circulating rhetorics of “individual rights,” “individual autonomy,” and “free markets” to produce a monstrous figure: the neoliberal zombie plastinate.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes notes in her discussion of George Soros’ analysis of the deficiencies of the global capitalism economy, that “amidst the neoliberal readjustments to the global economy [. . .]new relations between capital and work, bodies and the state, citizenship and social and medical inclusion (and exclusion) are emerging” (43). And even more pointedly, she writes that “a triumphant global neo-liberal capitalism has released a voracious appetite for foreign bodies to do the show work/dirty work of low-level production and to supply the ‘needs’ of domestic and international medical consumption” (43). It is this “appetite,” I argue, that is, at least in part, created by neoliberal ideals. The international trade in black-market kidneys, for example, illustrates this well. This exchange system has been assiduously documented,²⁹ as has its rhetoric of “individual liberty.”³⁰ For example, in his essay “Gifts of the Heart . . . and Other Tissues: Legalizing the Sale of Human Tissues,” J. Randall Boyers argues that the donors, as “the most rightful owners of the value of their organs and tissues, have a right to participate in this industry” (314). He continues, arguing that by “allowing organ sales, donors would have the contractual power to determine where and how their organs are used. Utilizing market forces to police the industry

would reduce government costs and provide a more efficient system” (341). Likewise, Donna Dickenson frames the so-called pro-choice argument in this way: “Yes, we do live in a free-market economy, which will bring us great things if we just let well enough alone [. . .] It’s paternalistic and condescending to interfere with anyone’s free choice to buy or sell body parts” (7). According to this form of neoliberal reasoning, the freedom to choose, the ability to decide for oneself—is paramount. Above all other concerns, choice must be protected. To return to the work of Scheper-Hughes, Hsu and Lincoln write that she traces this kind of choice when she documents the “growth of a black-market commodity chain that connects wealthy ‘transplant tourists,’ local organ procurers, corrupt medical practitioners, and desperately poor ‘donors’ in the global South.” She conceptualizes these transactions, they continue, “in a predatory regime of global capitalism and grave social inequalities” (Hsu and Lincoln 27). Within this economy “organs and tissue donors—both living and dead—are treated not as people, but as suppliers of the organic material needed for research, experimentation, and advanced medical technologies” (Scheper-Hughes “The Ends of the Body” 75). Even more to the point, she also links this exchange to the “rational-choice language” that is often employed to resolve the conflict between the pledge to “do no harm” and the desire to perform good acts. Such discourse supports the supposedly “win-win” option of living kidney (read: paid) donation where donors are free to offer their kidneys for sale, and patients are free to purchase them. In this way, “individual autonomy” or the “patients’ right to choose” becomes the rhetorical veneer that works to hide the messy realities that underlie this “solution.” It also highlights the inequalities embedded in such a system since it is the poorest and most at-risk global citizens (who are also most often black and brown people of the global south) who will play the role of seller (“Commodity Fetishism” 31). The message being transmitted is that some bodies are more valuable when their parts are extracted or when they are no longer alive—especially when those bodies and parts are used to shore-up the health of a wealthier, more valued, global citizen.

Looking back at the evidence of presented in this chapter, it becomes clear that the plastinate exhibits produced by Premier and von Hagens are much more than educational sites of entertainment. They are, in fact, products of a neoliberal relationship between nation-states that prioritizes economic stability and growth over human value. And, while these exhibits reflect the political realities of the present day, they are also, as I argue in the previous chapter, descendants of a sustained and historical commodification of bodies of the other. In the next chapter, I continue to recognize this past as I analyze the relationship among plastinated bodies, the US marketplace, and neoliberalism’s reliance on necropolitical—and biopolitical—labor.

Before we move on to our next discussion, however, let us return for a moment to Mbembe's claim that "Death and freedom," are "irrevocably interwoven," and that this conjunction is clearly articulated in the *Bodies* exhibits (38). For it is here that the death of one group that is linked to, and the partial cause of, the freedoms of another. As such, the exhibits call forth the various nodes of power (in Foucauldian terms) that exist along the exchange chain created by this market in human material; they highlight how economic status, geographic positioning, racial classification, and gender identification determines whether any individual is marked for "death" or "freedom" in this chilling equation. By exploiting a well-established, lucrative, and historical trade in human bio-matter, the exhibits conjure a post-human, monstrous figure—a plastinate zombie who literalizes the effect of such a consumptive system, as it also symbolizes the neoliberal commodification of everything, even death.

NOTES

1. A number of critics have utilized the zombie figure when discussing neoliberalism. Steven Shapiro, for instance, argues that vampire and zombie images are vital to the functioning of capitalism society (281), Henry A. Giroux highlights "zombie politics" as one of the effects of an "emerging authoritarianism" in a current US climate flush with neoliberal policies ("Barack Obama" 424), and Rebecca Schneider uses the term "zombie-capitalists" to analyze the Occupy Wall Street protests (152–153).

2. I use the third-person male pronoun here to highlight the privileging of male bodies within these exhibits. As I detail in chapter four, the bodies displayed by Premier and von Hagens are overwhelmingly male; female bodies are typically reserved for the display of reproduction and the discussion of aesthetic body management.

3. In an interview with *20/20*, (see "Inside the Bodies Exhibit") Premier spokesperson Arnie Geller acknowledged that his company has used hundreds of human bodies and body parts to create their exhibitions. As well, the "Questions and Answers" section of the *BW*'s website notes that von Hagens' Institute for Plastination has over 14,000 donors in their registry, although it does not provide an exact account of how many of those bodies have been plastinated.

4. Many critics from various disciplines argue this point. In addition to those cited here, see Giroux *Against the Terror of Neoliberalism*, Nielsen and Vbarra, and Greenhouse.

5. For an extended discussion of this point, see Rey Chow's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

6. In 1911 Mr. Ishi, as he came to be called, became a museum curiosity when he emerged from the woods of California in August (most, if not all of the members of his tribe had been massacred) and was taken by anthropologist T. T. Waterman to San Francisco where he came to live and be displayed at the Museum of Anthropology at

Parnassus. For a fuller account of this story, see Nancy Rockafellar's account on the UCSF library website.

7. Numerous examples could be called upon here. In addition to the freak shows and other historical bodily displays I cite in chapter one, consider also the collection of body parts as trophies of war (Arbuthnot) and the global trade in sex workers (Beeks and Amir).

8. It is worth noting that, since 2006, China has made it illegal to export human bodies or body parts from that country.

9. For additional support for this perspective, see Rofel and Sutter.

10. See the US Department of States' annual report of human rights conditions. The 2008 report on China, for instance, notes that "During the year security forces reportedly committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. No official statistics on deaths in custody were available" (Department of State 2008).

11. Geller is quoted in the 2008 *20/20* report saying, "we've invested a lot of money [. . .] in this program [. . .] and if it is a success our shareholders will benefit" ("Inside the Bodies Exhibit").

12. In further support of this claim, Professor Todd Olsen, president elect of the Association of Clinical Anatomists, also commented in the *20/20* report that the Premier Exhibition bodies he examined were most likely "healthy, robust individuals when they died" ("Inside the Bodies Exhibit").

13. NTD identifies itself as an "independent, nonprofit television broadcaster established in 2002. Headquartered in New York City, NTD currently has reporters and correspondents in over seventy cities worldwide." See <http://www.dailymotion.com/NTDTV>

14. For discussion of these kinds of consumer-driven exploitations see such documentaries as *Mardi Gras: Made in China* and *The True Cost*.

15. See the US Customs and Border Control website, subsection "Trade."

16. See the US Customs and Border Patrol website, subsection "Requirements for Importing Bodies in Coffins, Ashes in Urns" within the "CBP Info Center Home—Find an Answer."

17. Likewise, the bodies also enter Germany under similar classification; in Germany, however, rather than being regarded plastic models, they are considered "meat unsuitable for human consumption" and thus undergo none of the regulations that are in place for human cadavers (Schulte-Sasse 80).

18. Arnie Geller reiterates this view when he defends the importation status in the *20/20* interview. "Technically," he says, "they are plastic models" ("Inside the Bodies Report").

19. Schulte-Sasse 87.

20. Curlin 61.

21. In the 2013 movie *Warm Bodies*, for example, the zombie protagonist falls in love with a human and, as a result, begins to transition back to humanity (www.warmbodiesmovie.com).

22. These are just two examples that might be cited here. Log onto any DIY website to find other upcycled projects. For the shoe rack-light fixture see: <http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/a-light-fixture-made-from-a-shoe-rack-218828> and for the cat hair sculpture see: <https://blog.etsy.com/en/2012/how-tuesday-crafting-with-cat-hair/>

23. She explicates the problem by explaining that, as of 2003, “approximately one-third of the customers at the US Center for Egg Donation came from abroad, often through the internet” (4).

24. ““Buyers”” she notes, “are found among major teaching hospitals, medical associations, doctors, and researchers” and the demand for these “products” greatly surpass the supply. As such, even some of the most reputable US medical institutions turn to the underground trade in human remains (17).

25. See pages 96–101 of her book, specifically.

26. Blood donation in India is not culturally common, so patients are often required to supply their own donors to stock up in case of emergency or a needed medical procedure (Carney 161).

27. I say this tongue in cheek, of course.

28. Serematakis names this process “anatomical cannibalism”: the “aesthetic system of globalized capitalism [that] offers up the interior of the body as a commodity-object and use-item” (119–120).

29. See Scheper-Hughes, Wilkinson, and Guttmann.

30. Wilkinson 102.

Chapter 3

For-Profit Pedagogies

Neoliberalism and the Plastinate Marketplace

Commodities clearly are not static objects. Rather, they quickly emerge as emblematic of transformative processes.

—Lesley A. Sharp

Amidst the professorial collage of office hours, cat pictures, and political cartoons that cover my office door is a magnet I bought at the first plastinate exhibit I attended: a simple, 1.5" × 3" image of a plastinated corpse overlaid with the words *BODIES . . . The Exhibition*. Since I face this souvenir every time I enter my office, I soon stopped seeing it as a mere trinket and started to recognize it for its rhetorical power. I began to consider how this simple, inexpensive, everyday object represented the rhetorical force of the mundane—the way commonplace articles shape our lives and reflect our choices. Inspired by this magnet, my purchase of it, and the thoughts it engendered, this chapter examines how the plastinate exhibits *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* and *BODY WORLDS* offer particular examples of how neoliberal discourses (specifically of self-reliance and self-control) get translated and bought—both literally and figuratively—by Western and American consumers.

The chapter is predicated, in part, on the discussion of necropolitics found in chapter two, and is theoretically anchored by Foucault's notion of biopower. Following the previous chapter's discussion of the role played by plastinate exhibits in the neoliberal extraction of labor from deceased bodies, my analysis here sees biopower and necropower as inherently connected and understands plastinate exhibits as salient example of this relationship. In "The Birth of Biopolitics" Foucault locates biopower as "the way in which the specific problems of life and population were raised within technology of government" ("Birth" 79); later, Mbembe extends this definition, contending

that, in order to fully understand the relationship between power and life processes, we must also attend to the confluence of power and death processes (16–17). This reciprocity between the power over life and the power over death can clearly be seen within the material and linguistic structures of these exhibitions. Hsu and Lincoln, for example, argue that the advertisement copy for *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* “draws connections between death and social purpose” (23) and George Annas writes that “the interplay of life and death, corpse and ‘real body,’ is never far from the surface in *Body Worlds*” (27). My analysis breaks down this process rhetorically by locating and naming the persuasive appeals, constructs, and positionings that facilitate this transmission of neoliberal ideals.

In *Foucault, Politics, and Violence* Johanna Oksala suggests that “instead of treating neoliberalism as an ideological mask for a hidden truth, we [. . .] respond to it on the level of the *production* of truth” (*emphasis added* 120). I attend to this call and turn to rhetorical appeals and strategies to identify how the “truths” of neoliberalisms are both produced and transmitted through these exhibits. To do so, I offer a close rhetorical reading of the exhibits’ visual and textual presentations (such as its staging, web presence, and the like) and I link such representations to particular rhetorical strategies. Broken into three sections, the chapter first examines what I am calling the exhibits’ “rhetorics of validity and value.” Here, I analyze how the exhibits construct themselves as instructive and culturally worthwhile. I review the exhibits’ settings, arrangement, accompanying literature, and self-fashioned connection to already authorized disciplines and institutions to illustrate how the exhibits bill themselves as producers and disseminators of important bodily (*bio*) knowledge. Ultimately, I contend that the exhibits exert a biopolitical influence through their rhetorical deployment of the concepts of value and validity and that as such, they influence how the health of a population is both self-managed and in line with neoliberal ideals of self-reliance and individual responsibility. In the second section, I review the exhibits’ more explicitly biopolitical arguments and vocabulary and suggest that it is through these rhetorics of “self-reliance and control” that a neoliberal notion of health and wellness is conferred. I analyze not only how these shows teach audiences to discipline their bodies in order to prevent disease, but also how they purposefully separate these personal lessons from cultural, economic, and political exigencies. Finally, in the third section of the chapter, I examine how the exhibits’ souvenirs and related objects available for purchase—everyday objects—allow the discourse of neoliberalism to literally be both portable and purchasable. This section illustrates how the exhibits’ paraphernalia—like a simple magnet—help to move the discourse of neoliberalism from the sphere of economic policy through the bodies of the dead and into the realm of the living where it can be seamlessly incorporated into their daily lives.

PART 1: RHETORICS OF VALIDITY AND VALUE

The official websites for *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* and *BODY WORLDS: PULSE* offer—among many others—these two claims:

Since the earliest efforts of ancient Egyptians to distinguish individual organs, humankind has been fascinated with uncovering the secrets of the human body. The study of human anatomy remains a cornerstone of medical education. *BODIES...The Exhibition* provides millions of visitors around the world with unprecedented access to anatomical detail historically only available to medical professionals. (“Learn More”)

and

Experience the science and splendor of the human body through Plastination, a breakthrough in anatomy invented by trailblazing scientist, Gunther von Hagens. Learn about the human body, its form and function, its vulnerability and potential, and the challenges it faces navigating the twenty-first century. *BODY WORLDS: PULSE* is an inspiring, immersive, multimedia exhibition about health, wellness, and living to the beat of life in a vibrant, fast-paced city. (“Gunther von Hagens’ BODY WORLDS”).

These representative statements illustrate how the exhibits are rhetorically constructed as both culturally and pedagogically valid and valuable. Echoing much of the exhibits’ other advertising copy, the first excerpt links the exhibit to revered historical pursuits (mummification’s use of canopic jars, for instance), locates the exhibit squarely within the discipline of medical science (by utilizing terms such as “anatomy” and “medical education”), and exalts its ability to offer privileged information to its audiences (it offers, after all, “unprecedented access”). The latter quote utilizes effusive language (“inspiring,” “immersive”), exploits its location (New York City, in this case), and again references an authorized discipline (“trailblazing scientist”). Such pronouncements lay bare the rhetorical claims of these exhibits: that they are connected to long and rich scientific and cultural traditions, that they speak directly to the body’s hidden nature, and that they offer useful medical information to millions. And, the shows’ rhetorical construction does not stop at their virtual doorsteps. Both their physical presentations and web presence shore up their validity as scientific marvels as they also showcase their pedagogical value. Their entire design—both physical and virtual—is meant to connect the shows to cultural institutions and histories that are already authorized. They strive to associate themselves with the fields of anatomy, physiology, and preventative medicine, and they forge linkages with the culturally valuable and historical work of museums and the university. As such, the exhibits present themselves as popular and accessible extensions of these institutions and thus their cultural currency.¹

In her examination of public presentations of bodies from 1700 to today, Elizabeth Stephens connects contemporary shows such as these to a history of display. “Public responses to *Body Worlds* and other contemporary exhibitions often treat these as unprecedented forms of popular entertainment,” she writes. “However, from the late eighteenth century until the turn of the twentieth, exhibitions featuring anatomical displays of human bodies [. . .] and marketed variously as teaching facilities for medical professionals, diversionary entertainments for the middle classes, and educational opportunities for the (upper) working classes, were consistently popular” (5). Following Stephens’ logic, I see these exhibits as more than mere entertainment sources (although entertainment is also part of their agenda,² but also as connected to a long-standing tradition of bodily display and cultural knowledge production.³ Von Hagens himself supports this reading when he claims that his work “continues the scientific tradition whose recurring theme is that research should serve the general enlightenment” (Gunther von Hagens: “Under the Skin”).

The tradition being continued and expanded here, however, is not only that of medical science, as a number of critics have noted,⁴ but one that highlights neoliberal governmentality’s relationship to Michel Foucault’s notion of biopower. As Ong and others see it, neoliberalism “reconfigures the relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality” (*Neoliberalism* 3) as it also reconfigures “people’s relationship to each other, their sense of membership in a public, and the conditions of their self-knowledge” (Greenhouse 2). When these exhibits claim to offer audiences the power to transform human life—by allowing them a specialized view into their physical selves—they are offering a particular version of biopower. Here, the viewer is compelled to be responsible for ensuring his or her own health and well-being, but enacts that responsibility within a system of governmentality. Von Hagens’ claim, for example, that *BODY WORLDS* offers “enlightenment” and the *BODIES*’ claim that it offers “unprecedented access” to an “intimate and informative” version of the human form reflect a form of self-governing predicated on an individual’s ability (or willingness) to transform the information presented by these exhibits into daily life. The information being offered here, therefore, comes with a responsibility: to your own health, the health of others, and even to the health of the nation. Through a rhetoric of empowerment and knowledge, the exhibits offer their viewers the choice to be healthy and the freedom to direct their own fate—but they do so within a strict framework that ironically inhibits the kinds of choices viewers can make as it also limits the kinds of freedoms being offered to them.⁵

To further support their role as transmitters of knowledge and to secure their place as members of authorized fields, the exhibits utilize a number of

overt markers; for example, *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* hires medical students in white lab coats to act as exhibit guides, it names itself as a “milestone achievement for anatomy education,” it cites the numerous education awards it has received for its teaching guides and materials, and it highlights testimonials from doctors and teachers on its website. Similarly, *BODY WORLDS: PULSE* posts a glowing *New York Times*’s review on its website, highlights its creator as an anatomist and scientist, specifically names his work as a “plastination *technique*,” and identifies his associated “*Institute for Plastination*” (emphasis added).⁶

To illustrate this rhetorical strategy further, I turn to a specific example: the *BODIES* employment of Dr. Roy Glover as their medical director and spokesperson. On their website an entire section is devoted to recounting Dr. Glover’s professional achievements and qualifications. The site highlights that he is an Associate Professor Emeritus of Anatomy and Cell Biology, that he taught anatomy for over thirty years at the University of Michigan Medical School, that he developed and ran the university’s Polymer Preservation Laboratory until he retired in 2004, and that he earned his Master of Science and Doctorate in Anatomy from the Ohio State University in 1965 and 1968 respectively. Readers are further informed that, in 1989 he “developed the University of Michigan’s Polymer Preservation Laboratory, one of the largest laboratories of its kind in North America, and one of the only labs in the world capable of providing whole dissected polymer preserved bodies for medical study and research.” This lab “has been vital in providing human anatomical specimens to support the educational efforts of medical schools, dental schools, health education agencies, biotechnology companies, museums, colleges, high schools and secondary schools.” And, the “availability of these specimens allows doctors, patients and students around the world to study and understand the human body.”⁷ The website continues, highlighting the research and teaching awards won by Dr. Glover and quoting other doctors on their comments page. I cite these descriptions at length to illustrate that the exhibit not only uses Dr. Glover’s professional status to authorize its existence, but that these facts are also used to align (by extension) the exhibits within a widely accepted institution and culture of scientific higher education. As such, their medical director lends the exhibit academic, scientific, and cultural capital.

In contrast, the *BODY WORLDS*’ site does not rely as heavily on outside medical experts to validate them, perhaps since their own founder is part of the scientific community. Instead, they offer comments from Hollywood and celebrities to reinforce the exhibit’s pedagogical value. We are told, for example, that Tony Hawk, a famous US skate boarder, described the show as “amazing and enlightening” and “a fascinating learning experience,” while Nicole Kidman, an Australian actress, declared the show to be “an important

exhibit” and a “wonderful way to learn,” and Andre Agassi, a US tennis champion, remarked that the seeing show was “an incredible experience.”⁸ While these endorsements might not earn the exhibit academic credentials, they do offer a certain kind of cultural capital—an appeal to ethos where the fame and accomplishments of athletes and actors translate into evidence of the exhibit’s pedagogical value.

While the *BODIES*’ and *BODY WORLDS* websites highlight accolades from famous spokespeople and scientists, they also make repeated use of a variety of authorizing discourses to claim that the exhibits will have a direct impact on the lives of their audience members. The *BODIES* site, for example, promises that their shows will “reveal how your body works by exploring it from the inside-out,”⁹ that it is a kind of “everyday anatomy course,” that it “allows people [. . .] access to sights and knowledge normally reserved only for medical professionals.” “*Take the opportunity to peer inside yourself,*” it offers “*to better understand how your elaborate and fascinating body works, and how you can become a more informed participant in your own health care*” (*my emphasis*).¹⁰ Its value then, lies with its ability to teach the audience—to provide knowledge that, if deployed correctly, will have a direct impact on their everyday lives. In this way, it is connected to institutions of higher education (the anatomy course come alive) and to the discipline of medical science.

Moving from the overt linkages between these exhibits and medical science and institutions, the exhibits also connect themselves to the tradition of the museum, dissection, and anatomical display. For example, the atmosphere of both exhibits is decidedly calm, and the audience interacts with the exhibits in much the same way as they might with museum exhibits: they speak in hushed voices, and they move slowly from one exhibit to the next, reading the placards and signs and even listening to the guided tour through headsets.¹¹

And while this behavior might be tied to Western culture’s reverence for the dead and for the normative silence that surrounds death rituals,¹² it is most certainly connected to the history of the professional museum, where, “with their trustworthy explanatory labels and reliable exhibits, [. . . they] produce passive consumers of information” (Stephens 18). For, in the exhibits, the bodies are displayed less like garish spectacles and more like museum pieces. The plastinated corpses are posed and labeled, they are purposefully lit, and they are staged dramatically. There are backlit displays of blood vessels and suspended organs, bodies sliced and splayed to reveal the skeletal system and musculature, and healthy organs juxtaposed with diseased ones. Likewise, the exhibits offer viewers guided audio tours, specially arranged tours with a docent, and assistance from white-coat clad medical students. The exhibits are meant to reference museums rather than morgues. As von Hagens tells us: “This is not a place for mourning. It is not an illegal cemetery—it is a hall of

enlightenment and when you need to learn you cannot mourn” (Hogg). These exhibits are purveyors of the (I argue, neoliberal) “truth” of the body; corpses are “safe” and “unthreatening” (Stern 88) here because they work in service of a higher goal: health education.¹³ Following this logic, the shows are purposefully distanced from sideshows or other disreputable—and decidedly nonscientific—showcases. The information offered here, the shows contend, is not something to be taken lightly. Rather, these exhibits are an extension of the classroom, the medical office, even the science lab.¹⁴

The exhibits posit themselves as valid and valuable services—places where, for \$22 you can learn your body’s truth and begin to take responsibility for it. By examining these exhibits’ “rhetoric of validity and value” it is clear that they are produced, organized, and presented in an effort to convince the audience of their reliability and knowledgability. Rather than simply marketing them as an artistic representation of the body, or as an informative kind of entertainment, the exhibits are positioned as a revelatory space in which typically unseen information about the body is finally revealed. It is an attempt to present the “truth” about the body—and to thus authorize itself as a producer of knowledge—and to draw a direct causal relationship between behaviors and illness, and choices and disease. The exhibits are, in other words, mechanisms through which a particularly biopolitical form of neoliberal governmentality is filtered.

RHETORICS OF SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-CONTROL

In *Neoliberalism as Exception*, Aihwa Ong connects neoliberalism to an “ethos of self-governing” that “promotes individualism and entrepreneurialism” and that ultimately “engenders debate about the norms of citizenship and the value of human life” (9). Following Ong’s logic, I turn to some of the more overtly rhetorical aspects of these exhibits (their utilization of vocabulary, text, tone, and placement) and articulate how these strategies not only further a neoliberal notion of health and wellness, but also how they connect positive health outcomes to a subject’s deployment of self-control, individual responsibility, and self-reliance. As well, I articulate how the “freedoms” offered here (the freedom to be healthy, and to be free from government intervention, etc.) are highly circumscribed. To enjoy them, citizens must first be part of the eligible and privileged group known as the “audience,” (a group defined by their economic, political, and geographic status), they must then cease to rely on the state for bodily welfare (becoming instead “self-enterprising citizen-subjects”)¹⁵ and finally, they must be incorporated into a system where the freedoms of one group are dependent on the restrictions/limitations of another group. By ignoring the procurement side of this

process (where these bodies come from, the lives lived by them, the circumstances they endured), and focusing only on the content and delivery of the exhibits' messages, the shows imply that the success of these biopolitical lessons comes, in part, from their disembodiment—from their separation from political, economic, and cultural realities. By erasing any markers of the local or individual, the exhibits are forwarding a fiction of universality and eschewing meaningful local differences.

Such functionality is made plain when the tone of the exhibits shifts from the clinical and generally informative to the moralistic and fear inducing. For both versions of these exhibits, this happens most frequently within the topics of smoking and the accumulation of excess body fat. When the audience reaches these parts of the shows they are met not with pithy, philosophical quotes or artistic displays of individualized anatomical structures—as they are in many of the other areas of the exhibit—but with stern admonishments and rhetorics of shame. Previously distanced and clinical tones are replaced with “didactic and exhortative” language that blames individuals’ “lifestyle choices” for their health problems while any of the other factors that might have impacted their health are summarily ignored (Rodriguez and Starr 3). Moving through *BODIES . . . The Exhibition's* space, for instance, viewers are eventually confronted by a display of diseased lungs—lungs that have been removed from their place within a cadaver and displayed to visually illustrate of the ravages of lung cancer. The lungs rest in a case besides which stands a waist-high plexiglass box and the imperative to “pledge today to quit smoking and lead a healthy life.”¹⁶ Here, the tone is not informational, but scolding and imposing: the viewer is compelled to act and is meant to understand that choosing inaction in this case is the same as choosing irresponsibility.

And importantly, even when the tone shifts from that of overt shaming to that of information relaying, the message remains the same: control your behavior and you will control your physical well-being. For instance, in *Fascinating and Real: Bodies Revealed*, a book published by Premier Exhibitions meant to accompany the exhibit, there is an image of a full body plastinate dissected to illustrate the “skeletal and muscular systems with smoker’s lung” (38). Beside the photo is the following text:

This specimen provides an insight into the muscular and skeletal systems [. . . and is] dissected to reveal a blackened left lung. The tars in tobacco permeate lung tissue, including the alveoli [. . . and the] membranes between the alveoli and the bloodstream are only one micrometer thick. Smoking [. . .] causes [the membrane] to breakdown, thus decreasing the surface area in the lung and making breathing more difficult. A healthy pair of lungs contains more than 300 million alveoli whose total surface area would cover half a football field. This smoker most likely had only half of that surface area with which to breathe. (38)

In contrast to the physical exhibit, where the lungs are literally disembodied and shown without the context of the surrounding body, this plastinate is rendered whole and juxtaposed with general medical information. It is not, however, as informative as it purports to be. The text, for example, tells us that it shows the “skeletal and muscular systems,” but it does so only visually. There is no labeling and no discussion of the form or function of these systems or how they might work together. Rather, the bulk of the text is taken up by the description of the effects of tar and smoking debris—but not a description that explains itself well. For instance, we are told that “the membranes between the alveoli and the bloodstream are only one micrometer thick” and that “smoking debris” causes this membrane to breakdown, which ultimately makes it more difficult to breathe, but we are not told if this happens to all smokers, if this process is reversible or treatable, or if this condition can result from any other factors such as air pollution or contact with caustic substances like asbestos or coal dust. What is communicated then, is not medically informed data that can be thoughtfully considered by viewers and weighed with other lifestyle choices and aspects of their lived realities. On the contrary, viewers are instead met with “explicitly moral” messages: ones that suggest the individual bears the ultimate responsibility for his or her health, and that claim a simple and direct relationship between personal action and physical well-being. Smoking, it seems to be suggesting, is (regardless of a person’s genetic make-up, geographic location, age, family history, etc.) “suicide on the installment plan” (Rosell 20).

A similar rhetoric of blame and reform can also be seen when these exhibits focus on the pathology of excess adipose tissue: both shows hold viewers personally accountable for their bodies’ failings, warn them of the dire consequences of their errors, and offer a “bootstrap” solution whereby the flawed viewers might change their ways and save themselves. This is a savior narrative where the villain and hero are one in the same—the individual subject who has the power to destroy or resurrect. Visually, these admonishments work to literalize the epidemic of obesity but, rather than explaining the effects of excess fat cells in the bloodstream, or the impact extra body weight can have on joints, for instance, the exhibits focus on the aesthetic impact of the condition and they dramatize its bodily effects. What is being argued is that the fault here lies within the self; the price of food, food availability, or cultural practices play no part. The individual is responsible and, as *BODY WORLDS* warns its audience, if you don’t make changes “your own blood may stain your hands” (Onion 55).

In another example, this time at New York City’s *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* show, viewers are less compelled by words and more by images. Here, a complete female plastinate is used to illustrate the deleterious effects of excess fat. She has been sliced in three from head to feet, enclosed in two

pieces of glass, her arms and legs extended out to her side, and her skin left mostly intact. Functioning as a kind of embodied “scarlet letter” this figure is not simply offered to show the health effects of fat (and in fact, it doesn’t actually offer any health information); she is displayed prominently (she takes up a significant amount of physical space and she is positioned for easy viewing), and as a warning. Her image elicits shame, ridicule, disgust, and pity—not a scientifically informed discussion of body composition.¹⁷ And in contrast, another *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* show—this one in Kansas City, Kansas—offered no female body to represent the evils of obesity; rather, the single nonreproductively employed female body was positioned as a ballet dancer, standing tall with one arm gracefully extended above her head and one leg stretched onto the barre. This body—the body to be revered, admired, and emulated—stood in contrast to her obese and sliced counterpart in New York City: with proper use and regulation, she seems to whisper, “you too can have a body like mine. You too can be admired and accepted.”

These aspects of the exhibits make it clear that gender is more than simply a lens through which to understand neoliberal discourse; it is, rather, as Lisa Duggan explains, one of the ways that neoliberalism itself is organized and that the “gender regime” is one of its anchoring points (Braedly and Luxton 12). In addition to other categories of identity and belonging, neoliberalism is linked to, traded on, and inculcated in Western regimes of gender norms (3). Beyond examples of fat shaming and self-blame are deeply gendered bodily standards. As I discuss in detail in the next chapter, both exhibits routinely relegate the female body to the realms of sexual desire and reproduction, while also positioning of the male body as hyper-visible, ubiquitous, and representative of the general anatomy and pathologies of all bodies—regardless of their sex.

Megan Stern speaks to this phenomenon when she argues that the exhibitions continue the “longstanding assumption within anatomical tradition that the male represents the anatomical norm” (2). Proving her point, both exhibits feature an overwhelming presence of the male body in general, and the male genitalia, in specific. Even though their appearance often holds no obvious pedagogical purpose, all of the whole body plastinates (and many of the partial body ones) are rendered with intact male genitalia. Von Hagens’ *Winged Man*—who is meant to show the musculature of the legs—also sports “prominently displayed and unaltered” “gonads and penis,” for example (Ruchti 197). As well, even the “deep body specimens” which have been reduced to their muscular or skeletal system often “show an accentuated display of unharmed male genitalia: enlarged, engorged, and oversized” (Linke 154). If—as these exhibits suggest—women learn neoliberal norms best when they are connected to reproduction and aesthetics, men learn best when they are everywhere. And, as a bonus, all viewers learn that men should be everywhere.

Returning to an earlier point, it is important to recognize that the success of these gendered and normative biopolitical pedagogies is, in part, dependent on the separation of the plastinates from any political, economic, and cultural realities. By erasing any markers of the local or individual, the plastinates are depersonalized.¹⁸ As their corpses are being used to educate exhibit viewers, their own histories, stories, and identities are stripped from them. Through this process they cease to retain any personhood and, as a result, any contextual understanding of the people who inhabited these bodies is lost. So, while these exhibits do uncover the muscles, veins, and organic objects that lie underneath the skin, they simultaneously erase the cultural, economic, and personal histories of the original owners of those bodies. The bodies are ultimately deemed useful only for what they teach the viewers about themselves and how they communicate the rhetorical project of neoliberalism; the information these bodies hold about the lives they once contained or even the relationship between the exhibitions' viewers and the individuals who once inhabited these corpses is irrelevant. As Hirschauer notes, the bodies' "anatomical purification [via plastination] did away with all the *other* traces in which the history of a person is documented on the living body: the signs of work, food, worry and joy" (emphasis in original 44). As such, the exhibits become a "detached visual experience" that allows a "safe curiosity about the body" and that effectively "cut ties with the living" (39).

The ties with the living must be cut so viewers only see themselves in the plastinates. Once they see another person—with a family, a history, a memory—the plastinate stops being an object of study and becomes a person to mourn. As a result, this act of "ensuring anonymity removes reverence and emotional attachment" as it opens a space for the neoliberalism's rhetorical message of self-reliance and control (Jespersen 168). Neoliberalism—both in general and in this specific instance—leaves no room for mourning or sentimentality. For neoliberal ideology to effectively flow through these exhibits, its movement needs to be understood as apolitical and nonideological. This way, its message is not derailed by questions of origin, procurement, human rights, transnational trading, or imperialist agendas. This is absolutely imperative, because if these bodies stopped being plastinates and started being humans, the audience would find an "uncanny recognition" with them. And once this recognition occurred, audiences might stop acting as if "nothing happened" and would instead begin to ask questions that would unravel the neoliberal narrative at work here (Spooner 62–63).

So, although the *Bodies* exhibits offer a mechanism by which neoliberal norms and ideals are taught to consumers (i.e., viewers), the pedagogy offered is an incomplete one. While the exhibits' audiences are encouraged to be self-controlled, to take individual responsibility, and to be self-reliant citizens, they are also being sold a fiction of control—a false belief that with

proper diet, exercise, moral behavior, etc., diseases of the mind, body, and perhaps soul can be avoided.¹⁹ A comment left by an attendee at a Las Vegas showing of *BODIES* reflects this point. “This exhibit,” he writes, “made me re-evaluate how I take care of my body. [. . .] An ongoing theme was showing the negative results that alcohol and cigarettes can do to your body. I find it funny that after stepping out of the exhibit, I’m greeted with slot machines, free alcohol, and second hand smoking.”²⁰ Such competing factors beg the questions: Is the exhibit contradicting its own warning?; Is it placing profit above health?; Is it limiting the choices its viewers can make?; and, Is it uncovering the reality that personal choice is not the only factor at play here?

Although there is an attempt to avoid any connection to external realities, the exhibits do implicitly suggest that economic wealth can help an individual avoid some of these risks (Onion 60–61). In part, it is these connections—between choice and health and choice and wealth—that these exhibits turn on. They are successful in the communication of a neoliberal epistemology because they compel their audience to both disidentify with the abject bodies they are viewing as they also identify with the healthy bodies whose present absence pervades the exhibits. The audience, in effect, is encouraged not only to recognize this absence but to step in to fill the space. By coupling self-care with blame, the exhibits link the mostly Western and middle-class viewers of these shows to the very people whose bodies the shows’ messages have been written upon. As Onion tells us, by forwarding the “lifestyle theory of disease,” *BODY WORLDS*’ “places blame on classes of people who are perceived as the opposite of all of the ‘positive’ traits—people who are, presumably, self-indulgent, lazy, and uninformed. In short, the ‘unhealthy,’ under this worldview, embody the traits that are normally used to code the poor or underclass of rich societies” (Onion 59). Such a construction situates any audience members who behave in these unhealthy or unproductive with the most abject citizens of the world. And theoretically, once the viewers have recognized themselves in these unwanted positions, they will work even harder to self-police and discipline their wellness.

RHETORICS OF THE EVERYDAY

At the end of each of the *Bodies* exhibits the audience is funneled into what is an easily recognizable space by any attendee of a museum, tourist venue, or even art show: the gift shop. Here, one can purchase T-shirts, posters, DVDs, expanded exhibit catalogues, books devoted to the process of plastination and the history of the exhibits, postcards, coasters, magnets, keychains, and—if you go to the *BODY WORLDS*’ online shop or the Institute for Plastination—actual plastinate specimens.²¹ While some of these objects reinforce

(or at least gesture toward) the stated pedagogical aims of the exhibits, others belie that supposed motivation and suggest a more economic and ideological agenda. Regardless of their intended purposes, however, all do more than act as simple momentos of one's time at the exhibit; instead, these objects do the cultural and ideological work of moving the discourse of neoliberalism out of the exhibit space and into the private spaces of the audience members' lives. They materialize the rhetoric of neoliberalism and become the literal and figurative ways the audience can buy (and buy into) this doctrine.

When buying a magnet for the fridge (or office door) the viewer-turned-consumer becomes a vector through which these ideas circulate. This practice of consumption is one of the ways, according to Rebecca Dingo, "rhetorics travel": how they "become networked with new and different arguments" (2). This conceptualization also calls to mind Aihwa Ong's characterization of the "restless nature" of a "neoliberal logic and its promiscuous capacity to become entangled with diverse assemblages," ("Mobile Technology" 7) while it also references Goresevli et al.'s argument that the *BODIES* exhibition showcases a "rhetorical plasticity" "linking deceased bodies to discourses of accountability for personal health" (316). The movement intrinsic to the *Bodies*' souvenirs and related items available for purchase is a telling example of how the discourse and ideologies of neoliberalism (specifically around health and death) exceed the space of the exhibit and spill into the everyday comings and goings of the viewers. Understood in this way, these objects and their movements literalize neoliberalism's chain of transmission as they encapsulate the biopolitical and necropolitical underpinnings of the shows. By widening the scope of the exhibits (and moving them out into public on T-shirts, mugs, key chains, etc.) these object further validate and support the use of the dead for instructive and economic purposes. The additional act of commodification figuratively (and literally, in some cases) extends the bodies used in these exhibits from their "instructive" context and ties them to a tradition of consumption, objectification, and detachment.

Patricia Pierson writes that a "collection is always, at its basis, a story about the self, projected onto space and distributed across several objects" and that the objects in a collection both "tell stories and become telling objects" (102). One of the myriad stories being told here is an historical one: a tale about collection and consumption, about a desire to possess an exotic other, and about the use of "scientific" strategies to forward an ideological view. I address this issues at length in chapter one, but I reference it again here to highlight the relationship between collection, display, and consumption. Take the case of Samuel George Morton, for example. By his death in 1851, Morton had collected and categorized over 1,000 skulls from across the globe, examining and classifying each one, and ultimately securing his place

“in the annals of [. . .] ‘scientific racism’” (Fabian 2). Much like the *Bodies* exhibits, Morton’s collection evoked awe and curiosity among his contemporaries as it attempted to reveal a “truth” about the human body that could only be discerned by close examination of its parts. While Morton’s exhibit is said to have “aspired to strip collected skulls [bodies] of symbolic meanings” (Fabian 4), we might also conclude that by omitting the “stories, names, or causes of death of those we observe,” the exhibits are both participating in and highlighting a very specific neoliberal practice: the use of otherwise “disposable” bodies for disciplinary purposes (Pierson 100).

When exhibition attendees not only observe the culled and positioned plastinates, but then also purchase their likenesses for display in their homes, offices, or on their person, they are participating in a long-standing tradition whereby the bodies of others (oftentimes racially and economically marked others) are used in service of a larger (and often Western) pedagogical or cultural project.²² Additionally, they are engaging in an act of symbolic possession in which they not only view the other, but come to possess it. The purchase of a souvenir, is not therefore, simply an act of economic exchange, but a process in which “the beast is taken home” (Stewart 134). So, while the collection of plastinates and their parts that are exhibited within the *Bodies* exhibits certainly differ in overt intent and method of procurement from the naturalist or anthropological collections of the past—neither exhibit purports to measure the hierarchy of the races through cranial measurement, for instance—they are both clear examples of an instance in which power over life and death is being exerted.

Rhetorically, the exhibits’ biopolitical and necropolitical framing not only encourages attendees to participate in the disciplining of their own bodies, but it also encourages a paradoxically passive²³ and detached response. By offering the audience a chance to purchase a T-shirt with the imperative “Dare to Stare” or “Look Inside” emblazoned next to an image of a sitting plastinate and the title of the exhibit, the audience perhaps feels as if they are participating in this educational exercise while they are, in fact, working to transmit and even incorporate the neoliberal ideology of the exhibits. As Linda Schulte-Sasse writes, within these exhibits the audience is “surrounded by imagery and texts that condition [their] response” and that by “surrounding [the plastinate] bodies with language,” audiences are being taught not only that it is acceptable to look at the body in this way, but that they should look in a particular way (83–85). And furthermore, by purchasing one of the abovementioned T-shirts, they are not only complying with the imperatives printed on the shirts, but they are also forwarding that message to other potential audiences every time they wear the shirt. They are acquiescing to the imperative to “look” and to “stare”—as they are participating in a pseudo-scientific and colonial tradition.

These souvenirs also work to create a sense of detachment in the audience. Christine Montross, for example, writes that the *Body Worlds* exhibit encourages a “blasé indifference” and that it asks viewers “not to confront [their] mortality but to engage in a sense of wonder” (50). Here, she is speaking specifically about the way the plastination process and staged posing of the plastinates “animates” the dead and thus distances the audience from a confrontation with the macabre aspects of death, and I would argue that the souvenirs also participate in this distancing. By printing images of the plastinates on a variety of everyday objects, their connection to mortality is even further removed. Take, for example the *BODY WORLDS* postcard set or the signed 6”x4” photograph of Gunther von Hagens holding a plastinated head. In the first instance, the image of four whole body plastinates are placed next to text that reads “Dress code clearly not in effect.” In the second, von Hagens is portrayed as a celebrity; his autographed photo a marker of his popularity and cultural status. With both of these examples, the bodies themselves and the messy reality of their procurement, processing, and display are elided and replaced with glossy and humorous images that move away from reality rather than toward it.²⁴ Geoffrey Rees speaks to this movement when he writes about the exhibits’ place in the future of public anatomy and their departure from the exposure of the process during past public dissections. He notes that, unlike the anatomy theatres of the nineteenth century that “taught not only about anatomy but also about the process of decay of the body” and about the “relative impermanences” of the body, the plastination exhibits “present a false impression of the body as entirely fixed” (40). The exhibits and the products they sell construct a notion of the plastinated body as both hyper real and otherworldly. While the exhibits’ marketing literature continually makes reference to the “actual human bodies”²⁵ on display it simultaneously spectacularizes these bodies and makes the real seem unreal.

Physician Farr A. Curlin also cautions against this kind of distancing, against the audience is invited to “detach from the humanity and particularity of the body as the tangible remains of the individual who died” (60). His concern is that when an experience that has been traditionally reserved for medical students and professionals becomes commercially available to anyone who can pay the price, it loses its special status and becomes a “casual” encounter. “Viewing cadavers” he writes is “not the same as gross anatomy or as dissecting” bodies and as such should be presented alongside conversation about death, dying, compassion, and humanity—as they are with medical students (Curlin 56, 60). The risk, is “not that people will disintegrate after seeing such exhibits” but that they will “get along *just fine*” (emphasis added 62). Such a caution resonates even more when we consider that the movement of souvenirs from the exhibits themselves into a variety of other domains—the home, the office, and the like—extends the process of distancing and

makes such a treatment of human remains seem all the more acceptable and “normal.”

Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton argue that “one of neoliberal philosophy’s major weaknesses” is that it “fails to assess the effects of changing economic and political circumstances in terms of peoples’ lived experiences” (11). It understands choice, freedom, and personal responsibility on a macro level and does not account for conditional variances. For example, if we look again at the exhibits’ claim that viewers should choose to quit smoking, we find a decontextualized and overly simplified perspective of this issue. Audience members are shown the effects of smoking on the lungs of one person’s body and from there are meant to internalize that caution. No attention is paid to the reasons some people might smoke, the challenge of breaking the habit once addicted to nicotine, the uneven distribution of anti-smoking public health campaigns, or the myriad of other social and environmental factors that impact a person’s decision to smoke. And once they reach the gift shop, they are again faced with a representation of this extremely simplified choice—a T-shirt that sarcastically echoes the exhibit’s anti-smoking sentiment: two sets of juxtaposed lungs—one healthy, one diseased—flanked with the question “Mind if I Smoke?” and the response “Care if I die?”

The other choices offered by these exhibits—to eat well, to exercise, to be informed about your body’s processes—are also presented as simple matters of self-governing where sheer rationality is the only issue at play. By relying on the “‘free self-actualized individual’ as the subject of its philosophy” neoliberal philosophy—especially as presented in these exhibits—ignores “the social relations within which individuals are born, raised, and live out their lives” (Braedley and Luxton 11). As such, neoliberal subjects in general, and attendees of these exhibits in specific, are asked to “make choices under conditions that are not of their own making” (11): choices that often involve social and economic forces beyond their control. Within the context of the plastinate exhibits, viewers are offered the opportunity (i.e., choice) to learn from the information presented to them and to thus make their bodies healthier. They are told to “look inside the body,” to “learn how it works,” and to “learn how to better care for it.” This notion of choice breaks down, however, when contextualized and understood as part of a larger social and economic system and when its limited parameters are revealed.

In addition to the objects available at the end of these shows that drive home the point that attendees are free to make highly controlled and purchase-bound choices, another artifact is also present. At the Dallas, Texas version of *BODY WORLDS*, pamphlets advertising discounted health products and services were offered to viewers as they left. There were two pamphlets by the American Cancer Society (ACS), two coupons for a local café that provided supplements and smoothies, and a coupon for a complimentary

class at a yoga/Pilates/dance studio (Onion 58). Attendees were given the choice to make use of these discounts, but they were choices that, once again, were constrained. The ACS pamphlet, for example, offered very limited information by which a choice might be made. It used trite phrases such as “avoid tobacco use,” offered simplistic solutions like “eat right for life!,” and presented choices that could only be exercised through economic exchange: “purchase a smoothie, take yoga classes!” (58) So, when an object is purchased at the end of a visit to one of these exhibits and taken home to rest on a shelf or cling to a fridge, the object does not truly exist alone or appear out of context. As Susan Stewart comments in her discussion of the symbolic and material power of souvenirs, the souvenir “reduces the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into the miniature, that which can be enveloped by the body, or into the two-dimensional representation, that which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual subject. [. . .] The souvenir moves history into private time” (137–138). In this particular context then, the magnets, postcards, and T-shirts associated with the *Bodies* exhibits do not function alone or without implication. Rather, they resurrect the narratives and discourses of the exhibits that create a kind of “everyday” rhetoric—where plastinated corpses, free-floating fetuses, and key chains not only normalize this very odd spectacle, but in so doing, also normalize its attendant neoliberal ideologies.

NOTES

1. A number of scholars address this point as well. Harold Perkins, for example, claims that the exhibits are justified “on the basis of educating the public about the intricacies of the human body and maintaining its health” (1). Hsu and Lincoln, in “Biopower, *Bodies* . . . the Exhibition” argue that Premier is instilling in their audiences “a desire to live what Michel Foucault called a ‘medically informed life’” (19). And Ellen W. Gorevski et al. highlight Premier’s use of “scientific discourse” and its “focuses on personal health” (324). For more discussions of this issue see chapter five in Mauyra Wickstrom’s *Performances in the Blockades of Neoliberalism* and Megan Stren’s essay “Shiny Happy People.” See also: Maienschein and Creath, Moore and Brown, Wassersug, Burns, and Raikos et al.

2. This kind of entertainment/education hybrid has been labeled “edutainment” and numerous scholars discuss it in relation to the plastinate exhibits. For two examples, see Nora Jones’ “A Visual Anthropological Approach to the ‘Edutainment’ of BODY WORLDS” and Ruth Levy Guyer’s “Metamorphosis: Beautiful Education to Smarmy Edutainment.”

3. For a longer discussion of this point, see chapter one of this book.

4. See Ong and Lemm and Vatter, among others.

5. These quotes appeared on the homepages of the exhibits websites as of June 2014.

6. The websites of both these exhibits are extensive and have evolved over time. In addition to simply advertising the shows and providing relevant information such as ticket prices, show locations, and an overview of the shows' content, the websites also include teaching guides, quotes from audience members—many of whom are medical professionals—and claims about the usefulness of the exhibits' information. Going beyond mere description, the websites market the exhibits as pedagogically important and significant to the audience's health. The specific quotes cited here were taken from the 2008 version of *BTE's* website, and the June 2014 version of *BW's* site.

7. This specific review of Dr. Glover's work and relationship to *BTE* was highlighted on the 2008 version of the *BTE* website. As of August 2015, the information has been altered. There is still a discussion of Dr. Glover, but it is scaled down.

8. These quotes are listed under the "Celebrity Comments" section of the *BW's* website.

9. This exact version of this quote appeared on the 2008 version of the exhibit's website; since then it has been replaced with similar language.

10. *Ibid.*

11. A number of studies document audiences' responses to these exhibits. Moore and Brown, for instance, record audiences' reactions to the exhibits' advertisements, note that many audience members regard the reproduction displays as "freakish," and that the tone of audiences sometimes shifts from mostly hushed and reverent to occasionally rude and disrespectful. Dirk von Lehm examines the messages left by viewers of the exhibits and identifies their emotional responses and desire for additional pedagogical interaction, and the work of Raikos et al. documents the various ethical concerns raised by audiences as well as their desire for advanced anatomical instruction.

12. This issue has been extensively addressed by cultural anthropologists (and others). For three examples, see Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death*, Robert Hertz "A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death" in *Death and the Right Hand*, and Robert Kastenbaum's *On Our Way*.

13. For a longer discussion of this point, see Stephens; Maurya Wickstrom's "Exhibited Bodies, Mr Biopower and the Inhuman: A Brief Continuation and a Coda"; Megan Stern's "Shiny Happy People"; and, Stephen T. Asma's "A Healthy Mania for the Macabre."

14. As Lantos writes, the *BODIES* exhibits use "the alibi of education" (122).

15. I am using Nikolas Rose's definition of the term as he defines it in *Powers of Freedom*, 27.

16. This was the quote I saw during my first visit to New York City's *BTE* show in 2007.

17. See Moore and Brown for a lengthy review of viewers' written responses to *BW*.

18. This point has been made in various ways by a number of critics. One explains that the exhibit does not tell the stories of the people turned plastinates (Pierson 100) another tells us that the exhibits act as though "nothing happened" to the people who once inhabited these bodies (Curlin 61), and another writes that these exhibits "removed all markers of selfhood from the bodies: [they do] not explain how the

people died, who they were, where they came from” (Onion 55). As Johnson notes, there is “no reference to cultural origins” (72). For more discussions of this point, see Linke, Belling, Briefel, and Nevarez.

19. See Onion and his argument that these “rhetorical moves [. . .] participate in what environmental justice knows as the *fiction* that humans can control their health if they choose to do so—and that individual rectitude will inevitably lead to health.” As well, he also discusses how *BODY WORLDS*’ “fixation on the individual’s responsibility [. . .] articulates a dominant cultural model of disease causation” (56–58).

20. This quote was taken from a yelp.com review and accessed on May 30, 2014.

21. Visit the “online-shop” the “Store” page on the *BW*’s website suggests, where there is a “unique range of products [including . . .] silicon and sheet plastinations [. . .] anatomy art with colourful art prints of microscopically enlarged anatomical structures [. . .] and decorative lifestyle products. Enjoy, Explore!”

22. For a longer discussion of this point, see chapter one of this book.

23. When I use the term passive here, I do not mean to imply that the audience members are inactive or nonparticipatory. Rather, I am referencing how the exhibit and its souvenirs urge the audience to see themselves as actors while only offering them the kinds of information that supports the ultimate aims of the exhibits. Aviva Briefel, for example, speaks to the audience’s participation when she writes that: “Ideal visitors take on the role of active consumers by purchasing a (rather expensive) ticket and entering the exhibition of their own free will. The exhibit gradually eases us into its depths, beginning with benign skeletons (we have all seen those before) and slowly drawing us toward the full-body plastinates. We are made aware of our volition once again by having to decide whether we want to view truly ‘controversial’ material, such as the exhibition on reproduction concealed behind a curtain, to be entered at the viewer’s discretion” (51).

To further her point, I argue that while the audience is certainly choosing to attend this show and perhaps to buy a momento, the choices that the exhibits offer them about their health and wellness are circumscribed by a neoliberal perspective that places the responsibility for their health squarely on their individual shoulders as it disregards the impact environment and economics (among other factors) play in those choices.

24. The online and onsite shops of both *BW* and *BTE* rotate their merchandise. The items I am referring to here were available for purchase in Spring 2014.

25. This quote is taken from the 2008 homepage of *BTE*, but similar phrases can be found throughout the other pages of the site and the *BW*’s site as well. Also, for a longer discussion of this point, see Annas.

Chapter 4

Rhetorics of Affect and Intimacy

Plastinate Exhibits and the Construction of the Neoliberal Citizen-Subject

Bodies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire: affect leaps from one body to another.

—Anna Gibbs

Repeatedly, the plastinate exhibits of Premier Exhibitions and Gunther von Hagens address their attendees personally: they utilize a conversational and familiar tone on their websites, they employ the singular second-person pronoun in their promotional materials, and they suggest specific ways viewers might internalize the information presented. Consider, for example, the text on the homepage of von Hagens' recent New York City exhibition *BODY WORLDS: PULSE*:

Every now and then, an exhibit comes along that will change the way you see yourself . . . and the way you live your life. Experience the science and splendor of the human body through Plastination [. . .] Learn about the human body, its form and function, its vulnerability and potential, and the challenges it faces navigating the twenty-first century. [. . .] Body donors who willed their bodies, after death, for plastination and the education of future generations, act as guides and teachers on this unforgettable journey of discovery.

Before the viewer has a chance to read about the specifics of the exhibit or fully comprehend the exhibit's offerings, he or she is met by the promise that this event will not only be significant, but that it will be significant to him or her specifically. It will "change the way you see yourself," and even possibly, "the way you live your life." Exhibit attendees will "*experience* [. . .] science and splendor," "*learn* about the human body," and even have their own "guides and teachers" dedicated to ensure that their journey is

“unforgettable.” Much like public health campaigns and pharmaceutical advertisements,¹ these kinds of rhetorical claims, I argue, are predicated on the twin impacts of intimacy and affect. They assume a relationship among audience, text, and author built on the possibility of personal transformation and material effect in which viewers are recipients of authorial (albeit anonymous and disembodied) knowledge and benevolence. This chapter focuses on this rhetorical relationship and asks how such intimate and affective appeals construct a particular version of the neoliberal citizen-subject—a construction enmeshed in neoliberalism’s gender regime and bound not only by discourses of commodity and consumption, but also by race, nationality, and economic class. In doing so, the chapter also remains attuned to the exhibits’ continued employment of the neoliberal rhetorics of freedom, personal responsibility, self-reliance, and choice to illustrate how these strategies interact with those of intimacy and affect and, ultimately, how these discourses of neoliberalism have come to penetrate the very notion of the self.

Before moving to the exhibits’ specifics, it is necessary to define my usage of the terms “affect” and “intimacy.” For both terms, I turn to rhetoric and composition and gender studies scholarship. I follow, for example, Gay Hawkin’s definition of affect that identifies it as a kind of “relation.” For her, affect is not merely a matter of “having feelings,” but a “distinctive way of being in and of the world” (“Documentary”). It is, simply, as Jennifer Edbauer notes, how something “strikes us.” It is the way such feelings shape and color one’s experience of the world and his or her responses to it. In some ways, it is almost extra-rhetorical; that is, it is the thing that happens before persuasion or alongside it. It is not completely separate from claim or argument, but rather it is the sensory experience of persuasion. Consider, for example, one response to the very idea of visiting *BODIES . . . The Exhibition*: When discussing this project with a friend, I asked her if she ever attended the show when it was in New York City at South Street Seaport. “No.” She replied. “I find it disgusting. It’s repulsive to me.” This response—by someone who has not experienced the show or even knew much about it at that moment—is an affective response. For her, the idea of paying money to see posed and preserved corpses elicited an initially visceral response (disgust and repulsion), which was later folded into her critical analysis of the exhibit. Lauren Berlant speaks to this phenomenon when she defines affect as a “metapsychological category” that encompasses “what’s internal and external to subjectivity”; for her, affect not only engages the mind and the body, but also helps them work in concert with one another. Affect is, in effect, a unifying rhetorical force. Affect then, is not only a noun (a category) but a verb: an “activity” that “saturates the corporeal, intimate, and political performances of adjustment that make a shared atmosphere something palpable” and, as a result, produces “a theory-in-practice of how a world works” (*Queer Optimism* 16).

Affect is at once sensory, textured, and tonal; it is nominal and active; and, it is operative across the range of sensory experiences we encounter in daily life. As well, affect is also kairotic; its effects must be understood in relation to the cultural climate and time in which it appears.² With this in mind, I turn for a moment to Rachel Riedner's analysis of affect in the writing by Zapatistas. In her essay on this subject, Riedner notes that their writing began as a means of "creating political community," of "creating new literacy," and of "organizing pockets of resistance against a conjunction of social, cultural and political forces that impoverish and erase them" ("Affective Encounters" 637). Later in the piece—making a kairotic move of her own—she also explains that such writing is "embedded in a particular cultural moment of capital" (640). It is this attention not only to context, but also to *economic* context that I would like to borrow. For, in the examples I cite in this book, capital concerns are a driving force—despite von Hagen's and Premier Exhibition's claims to the contrary.

As for the concept of intimacy, I want to look beyond its common usage that references an intense personal relationship—often sexual in nature—and to consider intimacy in its role as a cultural and regulating force. As articulated by a number of scholars (Berlant, Friedman, Provenelli, Wiegman), intimacy in these terms refers to a context of recognition that incorporates (or doesn't incorporate) individuals and groups into authorized groups and institutions. Often discussed in relation to the lack of state recognition afforded to the intimate relationships of minority groups, intimacy is ultimately a means of public inclusion, authorization, and recognition. Let's return for a moment to my friend's affective response to the very notion of a plastinate exhibit. Her immediate repulsion automatically signaled her membership into a particular cultural group: she belonged to those ethicists and religious scholars who denounced the shows on moral grounds. She shared a story about the exhibits and through that sharing reflected a larger cultural narrative.

For Lauren Berlant, intimacy within the public sphere produces intimate publics, where the very experience of feeling signals, in and of itself, membership within that arena. Here, subjects "communicate with the sparsest of signs and gestures," since, essentially, intimacy is characterized by "eloquence and brevity" (*Intimacy* 281). Furthermore, as Berlant continues, intimacy also involves an "aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way" (281). The plastinate exhibits illustrate these moves as they utilize one of the most intimate aspects of a human—its inner bodily structure—in an effort to speak with audience members about their own bodily health and integrity. As complex as human physiology and anatomy is, the exhibits present them with simplicity and a macabre beauty. The scarcity of text surrounding the bodies allows them to be the singular focus of the exhibits. Part of their rhetorical

power is in their bold simplicity and, to use Jennifer Edbauer's words, in how they illustrate that the "body is the very condition for meaning making" (139).

The question that I investigate in this chapter is how this interplay of intimacy and affect comes to create an image of the neoliberal citizen-subject. Who, for instance is authorized (or not) as these subjects and what, exactly, are they allowed to do and what are they barred from doing? As well, what are the parameters of acceptability for neoliberal citizen subjects? And, what is left out or sacrificed within these parameters? Within this exploration I also explain how this interplay works to both create and forward normative neoliberal ideologies that intersect categories of gender, race, and class.³ I follow Lisa Duggan's claim that "the economy and the interests of business cannot really be abstracted from race and gender relations, from sexuality or other cleavages" and that "neoliberalism has assembled its projects and interests from the field of issues saturated with race, with gender, with sex, with religion, with ethnicity, and nationality." The "economic goals" of neoliberalism, therefore "have been [must be] formulated *in terms of* the range of political and cultural meanings that shape the social body in a particular time and place" (emphasis in original xvi). In the case of these plastinate exhibits, the subjects within their sphere (whether they be live, viewing subjects or the deceased subjects being viewed) are not only defined in relation to their "cleavages" but also in relation to their place within the neoliberal economy. Here, the bodies of the viewer and viewed are confined by identity and commodity: they are either commodified themselves or actors in commodity consumption. In the rest of the chapter, I illustrate this phenomenon by first examining how intimacy and affect support neoliberalism's gender regime; specifically, I examine how the exhibits reiterate Western norms around the privileged and ever-present male body and I discuss how they perpetuate bodily norms for women that restrict their sexuality and reinstate acceptable modes of femininity. Secondly, I examine how these exhibits utilize one of the most intimate aspects of a woman's life (pregnancy) and how in the process, the fetus—and not the mother—becomes the more valuable subject while conversely, the mother's becomes the disenfranchised other.

PART 1: AN INTIMATELY GENDERED REGIME

Upon entering any of the plastinate exhibits, be they Premier Exhibitions' or Gunther von Hagens', the viewer is immediately met with a striking image: the body of a male human, stripped of its skin, and posed provocatively. Often back-lit, elevated on a platform, or playing the rider of a plastinate horse, the first image presented by von Hagens or Premier is always striking, memorable, and engaging. As is often the case with the exhibits' marketing

strategies, the placement of this inaugural figure signals its affective effect. It becomes, as Kristen Stewart writes, an object that creates an effect that is “more directly compelling than ideologies” (3).⁴ It sets the stage for the rest of the exhibit and primes the audience not only to view the exhibit, but in Lisa Nevarez’ words, to have a “sublime experience” (38). And part of this sublime and fractious experience, I argue, comes from the objectification of the male body. Western viewers are familiar with (if not always comfortable with) the objectification of the female body—ask any Gender Studies 101 student—but the male body is typically reserved for the most significant and important cultural work. Images of male bodies, for instance, tend to represent power, stability, and health. Taking New York City as just one case, male bodies are publicly bronzed and sculpted into super-human figures whose presence evokes protection: the statue of Atlas on 5th Avenue bears the brunt of the world on his shoulders while the likeness of male soldiers and statesmen populate city parks and public spaces. And even when male bodies are memorialized for having fallen in defense of the country, it is their bravery and sacrifice that is honored—their broken and lifeless bodies are often intentionally omitted. We honor their actions by listing their names (see the Korean War Memorial in Downtown Brooklyn), by placing the memorial in visible, high-traffic areas (the George Washington statue at Valley Forge monument stands at the approach to the Williamsburg Bridge), by representing their deeds with oversized, exaggerated structures (the Soldiers and Sailors Arch in Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn), and by using robust, active, or threatening objects to stand in for their bodies (such as eagles, angels, and cannons to name a few).⁵

In contrast, the public display of male bodies in these exhibits—that have not only been stripped of their skin, flayed, and exposed, but that have been turned into objects of study revealed for all the audience to see—subverts the dominant treatment of those bodies. It opens up a space for male bodies to become objectified and commodified on par with their female counterparts—and for the most intimate and interior aspects of the male body to be revealed. The plastinate exhibits sidestep this fissure, however; they counteract any potentially disruptive effect by offering a proliferation of the male body, paying close attention to the male genitalia, and positioning the male bodies actively.

To illustrate, let’s examine the body that is typically the first encountered by viewers. This figure is male, and engaged in a purposeful activity. He is not simply offered as an object of study but as an *active* subject. His pose evokes movement and skill (like the abovementioned rider of the horse), physical endurance and health (the runner posed in mid-stride), and participation in an economically and culturally significant organization (the football player). The point is that he is more than an object; in his poses he seems

to resist objectification and to conjure feelings of resilience, strength, and even pride. He becomes more than a plastinated body; he becomes an iconic American figure: the football hero, the everyday sports enthusiast, the moneyed equestrian. While the male body may have been deconstructed, the male identity has not been.

As the exhibits infuse the male bodies with a kind of stock Western subjectivity, they also emphasize the male bodies' ubiquity. Once inside the exhibits, viewers are surrounded by male bodies. They proliferate the space and can be seen from almost all areas of the exhibit. For example, within two exhibits (*Bodies . . . The Exhibition* in New York City and Kansas City), only three fully intact female bodies were displayed outside the areas devoted to reproduction. Male bodies, in contrast, were everywhere. Some were reminiscent of American sports heroes while others were dissected to highlight the circulatory system, to trace the path of digestion, or to pinpoint which leg muscles are used when running. Regardless of their precise posture or dissection, all the male bodies were represented as active and capable. They (unlike their female counterparts) reflect the tension between subject and object; they seem to resist objectification even as they are being pushed toward it.

Significantly, it is a particular type of resistance—one that exceeds an active or engaged pose—that is also in play here. Regardless of the amount of dissection, redaction, or even in some cases, almost complete reshaping, all the male bodies have fully intact genitalia. As Lisa Nevarez writes, these plastinates may have been stripped of skin but not of their sex markers (30). So while the rest of the body may be anxiety producing—with its most intimate aspects laid bare—the male sex organ remains a kind of sexual constant, a defining marker offering moment after moment of comfortable recognition and normalcy. These bodies may be disrupted, the exhibits seem to say, but they are still essentially (and I use this term purposefully) intact: that is, they are still men. They have not been made impotent or feminized, and any anxiety related to their potential castration or emasculation has been tempered by the reverent and purposeful treatment of their genitalia. And even more to the point, these organs are more than merely present. In von Hagens' *BODY WORLDS*, for example, viewers are offered an "accentuated display of unharmed male genitalia: enlarged, engorged, and oversized" (Linke 154). Much more than simple markers of sex, this exaggerated display of male genitals is used to prop up virile masculinity, to affectively soothe potential fears and anxieties, and to reproduce the Western male as the prominent subject and object of study.

This prolific and amplified display of Western male subjectivity via active, iconographic images and ever-present genitals also speaks to the anxiety surrounded the use of Chinese male bodies in Premier Exhibitions versions of the plastinate exhibits. As with the intimate unveiling of the body's interior,

the utilization of Chinese bodies meant to represent American maleness also has the capacity to disrupt normative versions of Western manhood: that is, the construction of manhood as white, authorized, and capable (Han, Eng). Given the historical racism associated with East Asian male bodies—that they are feminine, physically slight, and often less than capable—the exhibit must counter these narratives in order to maintain normative Western masculinity. As David Leiwei Li notes, “To put it simply, an American universal [. . .] is historically embodied in the particulars of a European morphology, whether it is in the form of the national image, its proper genealogy, or institutional and cultural legitimacy. [. . .] the Asian American is that which exists without a proper name and an appropriate contour” (Li 603). And, if the Asian American exists in this nameless, de-authorized space, then the disenfranchised Chinese male body must fare even worse.

In Patricia Pierson’s work, where she explains how specific anatomy narratives create material narratives of human identity, she writes that the museum is a space for “free play of identity,” and argues that this becomes “threatening, perhaps, in the case of *BodyWorlds* because identity is destabilized and restabilized by the objects collected” (Pierson 99–100). For the male bodies of these exhibits, this destabilizing and restabilizing is directly tied to the audience’s felt perception of them. To avoid feelings of vulnerability or weakness on part of the audience members, the bodies are presented as virile, self-possessed, and unencumbered. They may be dissected Chinese bodies cum plastinates, but they are plastinates that appear to be in control of themselves; their positioning and placement conjures feelings of comfort and recognizability that dominant Western culture associates with masculinity and the capable male body. Rather than allowing the bodies’ interior spaces or the feminized bodies of Asian men to destabilize Western manhood, the exhibits take affective measures to avoid such an effect. In other words, the exhibits participate in Sara Ahmed’s concept of “orientation,” or what might be called the “affect of the familiar.” For Ahmed, those spaces, movements, and conceptualization that are familiar, that we recognize—like the virile and active male body—are also the ones that carry a certain amount of affective weight. She writes, for example, that even when we find ourselves in a “strange or unfamiliar environment we might find our way, given our familiarity with social form, with how the social is arranged” (*Queer* 7). So while the audiences of plastinate exhibits might find themselves “turned around” or “off their normal route” when viewing dissected and dismembered human remains, the bodily shapes, gendered discourses, and normative ideologies that undergird the exhibits lend a sense of direction—a sense of affective familiarity—that enables them to find their way back.

This affective treatment is not restricted to male bodies, however; female bodies are also offered as important social and cultural learning tools.

Conversely, the lessons they impart are not connected to strength or self-possession, but to traditionally Western notions of femininity and subjection. According to these displays—and the paucity of female bodies represented there—women need not be equally represented or studied. Their bodily systems can easily be understood through the lens of male physiology. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, and in other parts of this book, while these exhibits are filled with the bodies of male plastinates, female plastinates appear infrequently and are most often used in displays focused on reproduction and weight management. Premier's exhibitions, for example, typically employ only one or two full-body female plastinates per show, choosing instead to feature women's bodies (albeit in dissected and truncated versions) only in its special pregnancy displays. Likewise, von Hagens' exhibits also severely limit their use of whole-body female plastinates, opting to focus the show on male bodies and to relegate female bodies to representations of pregnancy and other highly gendered aspects. Von Hagens has addressed this imbalance by stating that the small number of female plastinates in his exhibits is due to the "unavailability of whole-body [female] plastinates" and because "females' inferior musculature" makes them less desirable specimens (Starr 10). These explanations, however, are rarely found convincing or satisfactory. One London protester, for instance, "stripped down to her underwear and jumped on *The Rearing Horse* to protest that female plastinates were, for the most part, relegated to the displays of the reproductive system" (Loveless 113). So, despite their denials to the contrary, the exhibits implicitly argue that women's importance is situated primarily in their reproductive capabilities. Whereas male bodies are seemingly released from their reproductive requirements (there are no male bodies in either exhibit devoted solely to reproduction), reproduction is clearly marked as one of the most important functions of the female body.

Take, for example, the two main health issues addressed by the female plastinates: reproduction and the control of body fat. Outside the exhibits' discussion of reproduction, female bodies are mainly utilized to warn audience members of the dangers of excess adipose tissue and to recommend ways they can manage their weight. And, unlike the approach taken toward the male bodies, there is no attempt here to mitigate the objectification of the female body. These bodies' are presented as "naturally" vulnerable to the effects of aesthetic mismanagement—aesthetic because the anxieties are more focused on the shape of women's bodies over the health of those bodies—and viewers are offered the familiar dictate of neoliberal "self-control" and "personal responsibility" as a means of correct management. In the previous chapter, I describe the one fully-intact female body plastinate in the Kansas City production of *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* that was not used to showcase reproduction: the figure posed as a ballet dancer whose body

was represented as graceful and lithe. Rather than radiating shame and disavowal—like the female plastinate in New York City whose obese form highlighted excess adipose tissues—the ballerina conjures feelings of comfort, pride, and acceptability; this is the plastinate women should identify with.⁶ And ironically, although dancers—and especially ballet dancers—are typically seen as quintessential models of femininity in dominant Western culture where they are prized for their delicacy, flexibility, and lightness, dancers' bodies are actually quite strong and muscular. If they were instead examined for their well-developed musculature—as the plastinate exhibits claim to be doing—the ballerina would disrupt rather than uphold this gendered norm.

Further illustrating the exhibits' elision of anatomic reality for the sake of reinforcing a normative understanding of gender—and in direct contradiction to the exhibit's claim that viewers would "learn to speak with ease about the body"—is the fact that in both New York City and Kansas City, when female body parts were separated and labeled for instructive purposes, their clinical names were omitted. Genitalia were simply labeled as "external genitalia"; the terms *labia minor*, *majora*, or *clitoris* were not used. Likewise, when the vagina was displayed, it was labeled either as the "birth canal" or the birth canal with "vagina" in parenthesis. As for the show in Kansas, these same labels were used. And this (mis)representation is also reflected in the work of von Hagens.

While the female plastinates were presented without proper labeling of their genitalia, they were also overtly sexualized in situations where such sexualization serves no anatomical or physiological purpose. As Uli Linke argues, the sex of these bodies was rendered "iconographically hyper-visible" (154). For example, in reference to one of von Hagens' plastinate, she writes that the "woman's curved breasts are prominently accentuated: although her body has been stripped of all its skin, her nipples are placed erect on prosthetic tissue-plates" (154). As in life, the female corpses here are not merely objectified, but sexualized: "display of corpses operates with an eroticization of vision, a sexualized optical regime," Linke argues, where "even in death the body is shown to be visually seductive" (154). Unlike the male plastinates, however, this hyper sexuality further positions the female plastinate as an object of sexual consumption. For as much as she is sexualized through her intact nipples and breasts, she is also stripped of the pleasure her body might offer her: the clitoris, for instance, is also left unlabeled here. The sexuality of female plastinates—like that of living women—is focused around the pleasure it offers others; the pleasures and identities it imparts to the woman herself is irrelevant (or only relevant when they encourage reproduction.)

Let us return again to the other whole-body female plastinate I discuss in chapter three—the woman whose excessive mass has been made her most significant feature. This is the body that was sectioned lengthwise and

sandwiched between panes of glass. Her body stretched into the vague shape of a star; it communicated a sense of heft, immobility, and passivity. She was an object of study whose image projected repulsion and shame. She was not nearly as active, fit, or self-possessed as her male colleagues; she was, instead, a locus of disidentification. Her dissection was dehumanizing and meant to exaggerate her body's flaws while also communicating a feeling of distance: surely no one in the audience desired to see themselves in this woman. Rather, her affective impact is one of disgust and disavowal that leads the viewer to search for ways to avoid this state. What viewers learn, therefore, is that the obese female body is a body to be rejected—and that this is a recognizable rejection. Audiences are familiar with this shaming discourse and know what their response should be; they know, in Ahmed's words, that "some spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others" (11). The affective response of revulsion, pity, or disidentification work here because they are already known and, as such, they offer a respite from the grotesque; they provide a sense of order and control to what could be a disturbing emotional experience.

PART 2: PREGNANCY'S FETAL AFFECTS

Continuing this misrepresentation of some of the most intimate areas of a woman's body, both *BODY WORLDS* and *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* devote special sections of their exhibits to pregnancy and gestation. However, it is not the mother's body that is given the most attention here; the fetus, rather, is the privileged subject of this display. As Christian DuComb writes, visitors to *BODY WORLDS* 27 are encouraged "to *identify* with the fetuses on display" rather than their mothers, and as such, pregnancy becomes a kind of freak show where the mother's body must be separated from that of the child so that the oddity of pregnancy (the idea that two people can inhabit one body) is mitigated (emphasis in original 177). By separating the fetus from the mother, the fetus becomes the subject of interest and the mother a supporting vessel. Importantly, however, the vessel that the mother becomes is highly charged. It contains the specter of the monstrous body, the leaky body, and the uncontrollable body. So while pregnancy might be considered one of the "natural" states of a woman's body, it also becomes, within these exhibits, a marker of the unruly aspects of that natural state.

And, as in the sideshows of the past, the audiences of the plastinate exhibits are meant to be both attracted to and repulsed by this figure; they are supposed to feel the pull toward the fetus (and all the potential contained there) and the push away from the mother. In *Extraordinary Bodies*, Rosemarie Garland Thompson articulates how the disabled body works in a similar way.

For her, the freak show was an early incarnation of this kind of circumscription, where “disabled people [were] made to signify what the rest of Americas fear they will become,” where the disabled [were] “cast as society’s ultimate ‘not me’ figures,” and where “the disabled other absorb[ed] disavowed elements of this cultural self” (41). In the case of the plastinate exhibits, the female body becomes another kind of “not me” figure, one whose body is valorized for its ability to become pregnant and bear a child, but feared for its potential instability.⁸ It serves as a source of anxiety and danger because, like the disabled body, the woman’s body is always at risk of changing shape and exceeding boundaries. And this “risk” is not confined to the potentially pregnant body; it is also tied to the female body distorted by excess fat and lack of proper nutritional and fitness regulation. As such, these images work to define all women—all the “others” of the carnival and of the plastinate exhibits—as potentially dangerous. Metaphorically, these “others” represent the “strangers” among us: that which is shadowy, dangerous, and unpredictable and, as such, that which must vigilantly be kept at bay. To stave off this monster, the plastinate exhibits suggest, women must utilize self-discipline and self-control to avoid becoming the woman whose excess allows the dormant other to surface.

References like these—to the importance of the fetal body and the potential danger of the pregnant and excessively fat female body—also highlight the well-established connection between the citizen’s body and the body of the nation. If, as Garland Thompson writes, “each individual is a microcosm of the nation,” then the individual body (and all its potential oddities—especially those contained in women’s bodies) is a threat to national stability. And if the body is metonymic of the country, it is imperative that that body be properly controlled and regulated. Following its predecessor, liberal individualism, and its focus on self-government, neoliberalism is thus equally (or more so) invested in a citizen-subjectry whose daily actions and self-constructions are in line with the goals of the nation. In this way, the exhibits participate in Berlant’s notion of an intimate public sphere since they utilize one of the most intimate aspects of a woman’s life (pregnancy, weight, body shape) in their own quest to be seen as part of authorized public discourse. The price, in other words, of these exhibits becoming part of public culture is women’s autonomy and individual worth. By focusing on the identity and of the fetus to the detriment of the mother’s identity, pregnancy becomes an intimate, yet wholly public, event.

According to Berlant, “fetal motherhood” is the condition in which the fetus replaceds the mother in terms of social value, dignity, and promise. In contemporary discourses of fetal rights (and in contrast to women’s rights), it is the fetus who is the more relevant citizen, or in Sarah Franklin’s terms, it is where the fetus is granted “fetal personhood.” As Berlant argues,

“the pregnant woman becomes the child to the fetus, becoming more minor and less politically represented than the fetus, which in turn is made more national, more central to securing the privileges of law, paternity, and other less institutional family strategies of contemporary American culture” (*Queen of America* 85). Understanding fetal importance in this way explains the exhibits’ treatment of them. Here, fetal plastinates illustrate the healthy development of the fetus throughout a full term pregnancy: rather than remaining situated within the body of the mother, however, these wombs are dislodged from the mothers and displayed as self-contained entities. They are also sectioned off from the rest of the exhibit with heavy red curtains (as in the case of *BODY WORLDS*, where there is a less-than-subtle return to the womb) or makeshift walls (as in *BODIES . . . The Exhibition*). With either treatment, the message is the same: the space of the fetus is a hallowed one; fetuses are sacred, but mothers are not.

Ultimately, viewers of these shows are taught to see Western cultural norms as “truth” and to learn that truth through a gendered and metaphoric display. On one hand, the exhibit defines itself as a pedagogical mechanism, (as I discuss at length in chapter three)—whose purpose is to “reveal how your body works by exploring it from the inside-out”⁹—but through its gendered, raced, and fetal-centered discourse it also forwards a normative and Western concept of acceptable bodies. By ostensibly informing consumers of the “facts” of their bodies and disease, the exhibit is actually participating in a neoliberal discourse of self-reliance and personal responsibility where the individual—and not the state, science, or other institutions—is held accountable for his or her body’s acceptability and functionality. Miller and Rose argue that neoliberalism seeks to “govern not through society but through the regulated choices of individual citizens,” and I would add that the plastinate exhibits are one of the mechanisms by which this version of the citizen is created (25). Here, the intimate public sphere is invoked and audiences are compelled to define themselves accordingly.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Daniel, Stoler, Basil, and Brown.
2. Here I am borrowing from Wendy Hesford’s claim that when employing a transnational feminist rhetorical methodology, we should “read space and time through kairos rather than cosmopolitan or locational rhetoric that rely on fixed identity categories.” For her, kairos is a “multidimensional term that refers to the situational understanding of space and/or time and the material circumstances—namely the cultural climate—of rhetorical situations” and I think its application to the rhetorical impact of affect is a useful one (Hesford “Cosmo and Geopolitics” 56).

3. There is much to be said about the representations of sexuality in these exhibits and it offers a rich site for continued analysis.

4. Stewart is not speaking directly about these exhibits or the bodies that inhabit them, but I think her claim that “ordinary affects [. . .] are an animate circuit that conducts force and maps connections, routes, and disjunctures,” is a useful way to understand the affective impact of the plastinate figures.

5. For more information about New York City’s memorials, see the “War Memorials in Parks” section of the New York City parks website: <http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/veterans>; also, for more information about the use of the male body in public discourse, see Thomas, Motschenbacher, and Geiger. I would also like to note here that I recognize the complex representation of the male body in Western culture. I am not claiming that all male bodies are presented as virile and active, but that dominant models of masculinity often present male bodies as such. I do, however, following Richard Morris’ description of public memorials “as fundamentally rhetorical and cultural in origin and orientation” agree that “when displayed in public space [responses to death] commonly rehearse explicit cultural lessons” (10).

6. *BODY WORLDS* offers a similar instruction with its “Yoga Lady” plastinate: also one of the only full-body female plastinates that appear outside the realm of reproduction.

7. *BODY WORLDS 2* is a variation of the original *BODY WORLDS*. Unlike Premier Exhibitions, whose shows remain fairly consistent, von Hagens continually revises and remarkets his shows. The essence of them, however, appears to be rather uniform.

8. For a longer discussion of the *Bodies*’ exhibits connection to traveling shows of the past, see chapter one of this book.

9. This exact quote appeared on the 2008 version of the exhibit’s website.

A Concluding Comment

My analyses of *BODY WORLDS* and *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* highlight how contemporary citizen-subjects are both encumbered by and embedded in the ideology of neoliberalism. As this book illustrates, these exhibits are indicative of a larger cultural move away from government protections and toward austerity—economic priorities that are carried out on the backs of individual citizens. Crucially, these exhibits imagine an ideal (normative) citizen-subject who does not exist. Both exhibits remove the individual from his/her wider contexts—for example, the poor or sick person living near a waste dump, the single-working mother who does not have time to prepare healthy meals for her child, the father who works three stressful jobs to make ends meet, the child whose smog-induced asthma makes it impossible to exercise, or the malnourished prisoner in a Chinese work camp. Indeed, part of the effectiveness, and therefore the precarity, of these exhibits is that they are compelling; they hold your attention and catch your eye. So, when they deploy high-tech plastination procedures to reduce a person to a glowing map of blood vessels or nerves, or, when they employ advertising campaigns that treat human remains as objects of curiosity, they are forwarding neoliberal ideals of free markets, personal responsibility, and self-reliance, while simultaneously endorsing the commodification of human bodies and body parts. And, because ideology can often be most effective when well-packaged (as is the case with both exhibits), the neoliberal rhetorics of individual agency deployed here conceals these realities as they ostracize those who are unable to attain such normativity.

Clearly, this procurement and use of human bodies raises an ethical issue—as a number of individuals and groups have rightly discussed¹—and reflects the West's long history of body profiteering in service of both economic and cultural superiority. Following in the footsteps of such scientists as Cuvier

and De Blainville (whom I discuss in chapter one) the work of Gunther von Hagens and Premier Exhibitions is doing more than simply offering “healthy” and “instructive” images to those who can afford to attend the show. Underneath the striking visual display and glossy images lurk sexist, racist, and culturally normative assumptions. For, while *BODIES . . . The Exhibition*’s marketing literature tells us that you will “come away [from the show] with a new appreciation for life [. . . and that it will] dispel some preconceived ideas and fears,” I contend that just the opposite happens.² Instead of upsetting any commonplace discourse about health, gender, or disease, the exhibits reinforce an overly simplistic, highly normative, and decidedly Western view of the human form. As viewers walk through rooms of plastinated bodies, racial and gender stereotypes are reiterated, cultural assumptions bolstered, and geopolitical differences elided. And, because the plastinates on display are reduced to nothing more than bodily matter, consumers are taught that these bodies truly are products; they are useful only for what they can teach the privileged about themselves. Such a perspective encourages blind nationalism and cultural elitism, while also promoting uncritical consumerism and forwarding a pedagogical framework that flattens material contexts and renders actual people into a necropolitical state. Given these effects, it is quite clear that the neoliberal ideologies promoted by these exhibits have material, as well as rhetorical, consequences.

As my analysis of *BODY WORLDS* and *BODIES . . . The Exhibition* illustrates, even the most mundane aspects of the everyday need close, skeptical analysis. The analyses I present, therefore, are meant to be more than academic critiques of public texts. Returning to some of the questions that frame this book, we might ask: How does neoliberalism’s emphasis on the health and well-being within and outside the United States impact public policy and daily realities? or, How does the corporatization and privatization of health connect to issues of national interest, personal responsibility, and profit? With such a framework of inquiry in mind, we can begin to resist participating in or furthering the neoliberal cycle of consumption and commodification and challenge institutions that position us as mere consumers or commodities. As well, keeping such questions at the fore might also bring to relief the fusion of personal and political messages about self-reliance and personal responsibility in other invidious contexts, such as the, Republican Party’s guiding principles of 2012:

We believe that taking care of one’s health is an individual responsibility. Chronic diseases, many of them related to lifestyle, drive healthcare costs. [. . .] To reduce demand, and thereby lower costs, we must foster personal responsibility while increasing preventive services to promote healthy lifestyles. [. . .] Our practical, non-intrusive reforms will promote flexibility in state leadership

in healthcare reform, promote a free-market based system, and empower consumer choice—[. . .] all of which will return direction of the nation’s healthcare to the people and away from the federal government.³

While clearly communicating the idea that citizens should be invested in their own health and, as such, take steps to care for themselves, this statement far exceeds this common sense belief. It reflects, rather, the extent to which neoliberal ideals have become insinuated into the US public sphere and how its presence there has been normalized. And, lest we see this inculcation as a partisan view, we need only to look back at the language and ideologies of the Affordable Care Act. As part of that legislation, health insurance plans in the United States are encouraged to offer seemingly progressive “wellness” programs to their members. Designed to lower the cost of health care, insurance companies are starting to offer discounts on insurance rates—or even awarding gift cards and fitness trackers—in exchange for such actions as joining a gym, walking a million miles in a year (tracked via your rewarded fitness tracker that is then recorded by your insurance company), keeping your cholesterol low, or eating clean.⁴ Much like the exhibits I examine throughout this book, rewarding clients for preventative behavior such as quitting smoking or taking up yoga shows just how insidious these ideologies are and how they directly affect each of us. While these behaviors are undeniably healthy, we must be critically aware of the rhetorics used to promote them so we might exercise choice more consciously, and in doing so, advocate both in the marketplace and public policy arena for “choice” to not only be available, but also be a version of choice that is actuated, inclusive, and equitable.

NOTES

1. See Guyer, Tanassi, Curlin, Rosell, Rees, Ward, and Lantos.
2. These phrases appeared on the 2008 version of *BTE*’s webpage.
3. “Republican Platform: We Believe in American.” Renewing American Values section. *Republican National Committee*. 2012. Web. July 2015.
4. See: “Final Rules for Wellness Programs under Obamacare” (Nolo), “Wellness Program Final Rules Increase Maximum Rewards, but Include Significant New Requirements” (Towers Watson), “The Affordable Care Act and Wellness Program Fact Sheet” (US Department of Labor), “Prevention Incentives in Healthcare: Do they Work?” (*Science Daily*), “Just Rewards? Healthy Workers Might Get Bigger Insurance Breaks” (*Kaiser Health News*), and “Workplace Wellness Programs” (*Health Affairs*.)

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