

# Social Identity, the Body and Power

*Per Cornell*

to be dead - isn't this what Sartrean philosophy taught us? -  
is to be in the hands of the living  
Rosi Braidotti (1991:6)

## **Dead bodies in action**

CASE A. Let us start with a story about a dead body, a mummy, as point of departure. This is a quotation from Pachacuti, a chronicler writing, in 1600, about the ancient Inka state (1995:107, 36 v.).

As I say, the body of Huaina cápac came with great pompa, as if he was alive, and the people made their reverences. After putting it in the grave with his ancestors, they declare general crying for his death /.../ And more I say: that inti Topa Cusihualpa made his mother Rahua Occllo marry with the dead body to legitimate himself and [this was carried out] by the ministers of the temple They marry him out of fear and so Topa Cusihualpa calls himself legitimate son of Huaina capac.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by the author and María Clara Medina. Original, according to Carlos Aranibar: como digo que el cuerpo de guayna capac entra con gran aparato como si estuuiera bibo y Por la gente al Cuerpo muerto de guayna capac hazia Reuea y despues de aber metido en la sepultura de sus passados pregona el llanto general por su muerte /.../ [y mas digo que el] inti topa cusi vallpa haze cassar a su madre raua ocllo con el cuerpo difuo pa q los ligítimase y por los

This seems indeed strange and confusing. Somebody is getting married to a dead body! What's really going on here? For our purpose, it is not so very important if Pachacuti is historically accurate. The important thing is that this has been written. Similar stories occur in other chronicles, but they are not common. Still, the idea itself, so strange to us, has been vivid to some people, and among them to Pachacuti. The chroniclers telling stories about the old Inka often discuss a particular utilisation of dead bodies. Dead bodies of individuals with the typical Cuzco dress were also placed by the Inkas on high mountain tops in different parts of the Andes, probably in order to mark a symbolic command over these mountains. More important still, the mummies of the dead Inka were kept in particular temples and were taken out each year in connection with certain festivities. It has even been claimed that the dead bodies represented certain corporate groups within the upper classes, claiming rights to particular resources in the name of the deceased (Conrad & Demarest 1984, Patterson 1985, 1986a, 1986b). Before the Spaniards took Cuzco, these mummies were brought away. Finally, however, the Spaniards succeeded in locating the bodies, but after this they disappeared and have never since been identified.

### **Inalienable resources**

The dead body, the corpse, evidently constitutes a very particular value, and the use of these bodies certainly merits much more consideration, particularly as a social phenomenon. We are here dealing with items that could hardly circulate in a generalised exchange system. There was, if we can believe Pachacuti, some possibility of transferring their value, but this must have been a very special case. In general, we talk about values that belong to closed groups, values not intended for circulation, in the imagery of particular social groups. Indeed, we may treat this as a case of inalienable resources, discussed quite a lot in recent anthropology

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menistros del templo Los cassa de temor y assi topa cuci gualpa les intitula por hijo ligit° de guayna capac /.../.

(cf. Godelier 1999, Weiner 1994, Bloch 1989). Godelier makes an important point of the concept of inalienable resources. He departs from an extended criticism of Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. Mauss did mention the existence of objects that were not to be exchanged in a famous footnote, which Weiner has brought to the general attention of anthropologists. This point was entirely left behind by Lévi-Strauss, who simply made exchange (and only exchange) the basis of his model of human society. Godelier, on the other hand, prefers to focus on the “forgotten” aspect, the inalienable resource.

In an ethnographic case study on the Baruya in New Guinea, he points to the existence of a sacred object, a small basket with secret content, called a *kwaimatnie*, kept by ritual masters on behalf of the male population of certain clans. This small basket cannot be exchanged, but it gives particular values to its keeper. It turns out that some of the objects in the basket are considered to be typically female things and that they are thought to have been stolen from the women in a remote, ancient time. The rest are things said to have been received directly from the gods. By keeping these objects, the males believe that they guarantee their dominance not only over women, but also over clans not having this sacred basket.

While there are many spheres of exchange among the Baruya, and between the Baruya and other groups and individuals, these particular sacred objects cannot be exchanged. The basket is only used in male initiation rituals, to which women are not admitted. Godelier particularly stresses the materialised character of this social phenomenon: the sacred is truly present only in its material form (1999:137). The particular value of these objects in part resides, according to Godelier, in that they are said to have a non-human origin, that they have been produced by other beings.

Bloch (1989), discussing Madagascar, has made a similar case. Among the Merina, most things are open to exchange by value equivalents. But some things are not. What is not included in exchange are certain kinship obligations, and these are materialised in the megalithic tomb of the family group. The tomb is believed to guarantee new generations, to stand for new life.

Bloch argues that this is a kind of fetishism, similar to the belief in much industrial society that capital in itself can produce more capital (cf. Jameson 1998:136-189).

But back to the inalienable resource. It is about making things sacred, holy, and placing them, as a phenomenon, in a position of non-alienability. The tombs among the Merina are sacred, and in this case a palpable inalienable resource for the extended kin group; the *kwaimatnie* is similarly inalienable to the men of certain Baruya clans. Truly, these possessions play a major role as a basis for establishing social power. Weiner summarised this point excellently, departing from her renewed analysis of the Trobriand case:

Because the ownership of inalienable possessions establishes difference, ownership attracts other kinds of wealth. When a Trobriander keeps a famous kula shell, other players seek him out, bestowing upon him other bounty in an attempt to make him into partner, just as feudal lords through the authority vested in their estates attracted merchants, peasants, and monks. It is not accidental that inalienable possessions represent the oldest economic classification in the world (Weiner 1992:43).

Most certainly there are different kinds of inalienable resources, and not all of them play a major role in representing and amassing power. But Weiner still has a major point here. Taking certain valuable items or bodies into possession is really a major issue when identities are polarised.

This question is very palpable when it comes to cultural-heritage issues. The museum collections in the Europe of the 19th century amassed cultural valuables from other parts, in particular from the colonies (Clifford 1988; Greenblatt 1991). When these objects came from “sacred” contexts they were particularly valued in Europe. Plundering the colonies or the ex-colonies of their sacred cultural heritage has been - and to some extent continues to be - big business, under the pretext of making science or just frankly as an economic enterprise. But when these objects are put on the world market and sold as antiquities, this is not only a

profitable activity: it also demonstrates victory, the destruction of the sacred. Now, this argument needs some adjustment. In general terms, the sacred, inalienable objects are to be kept within a limited social group. But there are also many ceremonies or rituals incorporating the destruction or riddance of sacrificial objects. Kùchler discussed an intriguing example from Oceania, in which certain sacred objects were destroyed in ritual or made to disappear by giving them away to “foreign” systems of exchange. Particular *malanggan* figures from the New Ireland Island were systematically given away to European collectors and museums. Thus, in this and similar cases, our museums are a depository of “not-wanted” goods from other places (Kùchler 1997).

But which objects are “most” inalienable? The social imagery varies and posits different kinds of exchange-ability and non-exchange-ability. What is almost always inalienable is the human body, or at least, its exchange implies a transgression of rules (Bourdieu 1994a).

### **The dead body as sacred icon**

Let us return to the body as sacred icon. We could take examples from many parts of our world, from Europe, Asia or elsewhere, but let us choose some examples from South America, from the Republic of Argentina.

The way to approach mummies differs. In Egypt, the mummies themselves are only to a limited extent available to the general public at the museums. In Argentina, on the other hand, they are central objects, of particular interest to most visitors. The recent debate on the ownership of mummies from high altitudes in the province of Salta, in which *National Geographic*, the Province of Salta, and the Indian Council of South America all claimed the primary rights to the dead bodies, demonstrates how important these bodies are in the social imagery, not least in Argentina. The complex reburial issue is a hot issue all around the globe, and there is a growing bibliography on the subject (Simpson 1996:228-242)

To understand this current situation, some historical examples from Argentina pertaining to the use of human bodies will be illustrative. During the hard and bloody civil wars of the 19th century, following the liberation of the former Spanish colony, bodies played a major symbolic role. Different family groups of the élite fought a bitter and harsh battle against each other. Capturing the body, particularly the head, was considered a major victory. The head of Marco Avellaneda, to quote just one example, was placed to rot in the central plaza of Tucuman, to demonstrate the complete victory won by his enemies. It became important not to expose the dead body to an enemy. When the opponents of the Governor of Buenos Aires, the Unitarians, saw their leader Juan Lavalle die, his followers, led by the Gorriti family, took his body and ran to Bolivia, travelling many hundreds of miles with the dead body (Cornell & Medina 2001).

Another more recent story is that of an extraordinary icon: the dead body of Eva Peron, created, stolen, disputed and recovered (Medina 2000; Cornell & Medina 2001). It has been said that the dead usually do not rest in peace in Argentina:<sup>2</sup> actually, death is never definitive. It was in Argentina that the figure of disappeared, *desaparecido*, was defined for the first time as a juridical term. A particularly difficult case is the identity of those that were born in prison and taken away from their parents. In general, the parents were eventually killed in prison, and the children adopted by families with no relation to the kin of the parents. Now, these children are torn between, on one hand, their interest in their biological parents and their kin (whose identity until recently was unknown or even remains unknown to them) and, on the other hand, their new adoptive parents.

In the light of this type of event, the collection of hundreds and hundreds of Indian skulls in Argentinian museums around 1900 becomes symbolically significant. These skulls came from old pre-Hispanic cemeteries, in part, but were also, as has been demonstrated by Peralta (1997) and others, collected directly from

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<sup>2</sup> Los muertos argentinos no suelen descansar en paz, 1998. Reuters News Agency, Buenos Aires, *CNN*, Sunday, 24th of May.

individuals recently killed during the military campaigns against the Indians of Patagonia. The anthropological collector participated in the military campaign, prepared to collect the bodies of dead Indians. Most certainly, the formal argument for the collection was purely “scientific”, but in a very direct sense these skulls at the museum demonstrated the complete control by the new nation-state over the Indian enemy.

### **Identity and the (manipulated) body**

It is not necessary, I think, to recur to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in order to understand the importance of our bodies for social identity. While the traditional philosophy of the Cartesian vein stipulated a strong division between mind and matter, recent discussion tends to avoid this particular type of dualism. Laing followed this line of discussion in *The Divided Self*, in which the embodied person sees her or his mind and body as a working unit, while the unembodied construes a mental split between body and self, which at the extreme point leads to schizophrenia (1965: 66-93). He reports a patient who had been attacked and hit violently by robbers in a dark alley during the night, and in the description the same patient said that the assailants “could only beat me up but they could do me no real harm” (1965:68). According to Laing, the body is felt as an external object by an “unembodied” individual (1965: 69). Laing points out that some people refer to the embodied self as desirable, and that there are also a lot of philosophies positing the unembodiment as a desirable condition. He refers particularly to Socrates (1965:66-68) who is said to have stated that, even if the body decayed or was attacked, this produced no anxiety, since the body was not connected with his self. While the body-self split may seem a way to avoid anxiety, it may actually produce a set of problems that may eventually cause a disconnection from the social environment. This disconnection is indeed, in some religions, the ultimate goal of a body-self split. If, however, we consider social life as desirable, the embodied self posits integral, body-mind individuals as subjects. Much post-structuralist

discussion departs from the body: the material body is the basic referent in parts of Foucault's philosophy, for example. Similarly, feminism usually departs from basic notions of mind-matter bodies. Braidotti, for example, stresses corporeality, and points at the similarity between post-structuralism and feminism on this point (Braidotti 1991:76-97 and 209-273; cf. Butler 1993).

In a new form of “corporeal materialism”, the body is seen as an inter-face, a threshold, a field of intersection of material and symbolic forces; it is a construction that transforms and capitalises on energies of a heterogeneous and discontinuous nature. The body is not an essence and therefore not an anatomical destiny: it is one's primary location in the world, one's primary situation in reality. As a consequence, in the radical feminist philosophies of sexual difference, the strategy of repossessing the body aims at elaborating alternative forms of knowledge and representation of the subject. The embodied nature of subjectivity is posited so as to allow for the radical subversion of culture (Braidotti 1991: 219).

Bodies are differentiated according to their characteristics. The unusual form, the “monster-like” figure has often attracted particular attention. They have often been exposed publicly as general attractions, at circus or in similar connections (cf. Bogdan 1994). Bodies are always marked by their social and physical existence. In Britain, for example, there is a direct relation between body stature and social class (Coole 1996). This is probably a general tendency: in most cases, the body tells a lot about the social origin of an individual, whether we like it or not. Frantz Fanon put great stress on this point in his famous *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which the body of the colonised is a special type of body, in which even muscular activity is different and tenser (Fanon 1961). From Latin America we know that this is a very immediate reality. It is considered “bad” in segments of the Argentinian middle class to have a body similar to peasants from Bolivia. People having such bodies are often, with disrespect, called “bolitas”, a word referring to ball or serotum.

Bodies are also manipulated in different ways. In most cases, the manipulation is relatively gentle, but it means that the body seldom corresponds directly to a “pure” natural state. People transform their bodies in many different, small ways, and may even expose themselves to body surgery, in order to correspond a little more to some ideal body image, a practice much “à la mode” in certain social groups in our time. And, finally, the body is decorated in different ways. At present, body tattooing and piercing is very popular in many parts of the world. Finally, but not least important, we dress up in different ways. Our dress says a great deal about what we do and who we can be identified with. In general terms, it is common for the body to play an important part as a metaphor in cosmological systems (Tilley 1999: 37-40). According to Catherine Hugh-Jones, at the Milk River in Amazonia, the House is conceived both as an androgynous human body (with head, anus etc.), and at the same time in its entirety as a womb (1979:235-274). Stephen Hugh-Jones develops this metaphorical discussion, linking the Milk River House to the human body in complex patterns (1993 and 1995).

In archaeology, there has been much discussion on the concept of the body, but generally oriented at the body metaphor in general terms (Yates 1993; Tilley 1999:37-40), and less at the imagery of the body itself. Yates tended to stress the discursive level and even referred to the incorporeal body (1993:61), and actually avoided the mind-matter connection. Another archaeologist, Julian Thomas, however, does stress the body as such, discussing its importance in burials. In the grave “/.../ the key to understanding the metonymic aspect of the symbolic system is that it only functions as a system by virtue of the presence of the body” (Thomas 1991:38). However, it is important to remember that there are kenotafs and other places of remembering in the *absence* of the body.

Still, our body is something that very much belong to us as individuals in our lifetime. Even if our social identity changes, or is manifold, as is often the case, our body remains largely the same. Though it may be exposed to a high degree of manipulation (including, at the extreme point, lobotomy or forced sterilisation),

a human body is particularly important to us. Generally, not just anything can be done with bodies.

There are extreme cases. In Nazi-Germany, the dead body had complex and varied symbolic uses. The foremost Nazi cultural-heritage organisation, the *Ahnenerbe*, organised within the SS led by Himmler, had a lot of different activities, including large-scale, archaeological excavations, direct work in propaganda etc. Traditional scientific approaches were combined with belief in “black magic” and astrology. Several internationally acclaimed archaeologists participated actively in the work of the *Ahnenerbe*, in one way or another, for example Herbert Jahnkun. Many of them even did research on conquered territories during the war (Kater 1971). One particularly strange project, of relevance for our discussion, was the collection of Jewish-Bolshevik Commissar skulls (Taylor 1993:514-516).

These Jews were selected directly from among all the captured Jews, studied by specialised personnel, and finally death was “induced”. The heads were preserved intact in a liquid in tin containers. Both the internal documentation of the project and parts of the collection were preserved at the end of the war. Thus, the idea was to preserve the head, not only the skull. Still, this head collection resembles to some extent the collection of Indian skulls by museums in Argentina in 1900 (Peralta 1997). There was both a symbolic value, the trophy of the annihilated enemy, and an alleged scientific value. It seems that the idea of the project originated from the researchers, a fact that should make us reflect on our role in society. Scientists may be particularly well equipped to transmit certain basic values of a society (and, in this referred case, perverted values).

This example is, I repeat, extreme, and the fact that we understand it as such is important. The body is still sacred and the treatment of it is surrounded by a great deal of ritual, discussed profusely in the anthropological and archaeological literature. It is this particular character, this special type of inalienability, that makes the body so interesting to a potential enemy, or to a competitor in general. The dead body seldom enters into generalised exchange. It may, in certain situations, be inter-

changed, referring to medicine or other scientific purposes, or in relation to particular rituals or collections, or, in relation to skeletal material, in some cases in terms of “rubbish”, problematic to handle. Skulls have not only maintained a value among people working in medicine, among anthropologists and archaeologists, but also among many religious groups (a well-known example is the Franciscan order), in which skulls have been used for meditation. Hamlet (in the popular image of him) is not the only one meditating over a skull.

Still, all these examples refer to special networks of exchange surrounded by special rules. In general, it is not possible to participate in the exchange of dead bodies. Thus, an enemy or a competitor must steal the body. When the Spaniards took possession of the mummies of the dead Inkas, this was a hard blow to the entire Inka organisation. Our social identity can never be disconnected from our body. The ultimate way to attack or to take possession of an identity is to take the body.

These examples of necrophilia may suffice. Let us now turn to some more general questions, to see if this “embodied” discussion has helped us to understand how to address questions of social identity.

## **Kinship**

It is necessary to discuss briefly some anthropological discussions on kinship and ethnicity, in order to be able to continue the general argument. In relation to kinship, it was through the pioneering studies of Morgan on the Iroquois in the 1860's that it became generally accepted that the ways in which we reckon kinship vary considerably. The corresponding terminology became the main pre-occupation of anthropologists for several decades. But there has been quite a harsh debate on the general relevance of kinship in anthropology during the last 30 years. While Murdock (1949) more or less equated social structure with kinship analysis, recent anthropological discussion points to the inadequacy of this approach, and at the importance of other factors (e.g. Schneider 1989). In recent discussion, it has been

insisted that kinship terminology may still be of relevance (Godelier 1998), but alternative approaches have been sketched, in which the structural relations are flexible (Hornborg 1998).

While the patriarchal line has often been stressed in relation to descent at the expense of other lines in traditional discussion, recent debate stresses female genealogy (Rivera 1997) and, in more general terms, variable descent lines contemporaneously at work (Bloch 1987). In general terms, it is often rewarding to analyse domestic units and their relation to other social activities. Kinship may play a role in such cases, but it cannot be taken a priori for granted. In some cases, kinship plays a relatively limited role in the domestic frame, urging us to seek alternative terms, such as co-residential group (cf. Wilk & Ashmore 1988; Wilk & Netting 1984; Cornell 1993:83-92; cf. for a more sociological approach Saradamoni 1992).

Relations of kin, however, regardless of whether they truly correspond to genetic relations or not, do play a large role in human imagery. In creating identity, these bonds often predominate. In the case of the Inka mummy, questions of descent were of major importance. Many other examples could be mentioned. Bourdieu (e.g., 1994b) stresses the importance of family bonds and often points at the role of family strategy in his analysis of power. In some cases, discussed by anthropologists, kin or clan identity crosses ethnic lines and seems to have greater strength than ethnic identity (Schlee 1989). Zuñiga (1999) to some extent uses a similar argument, discussing the way the mestizo was understood in early colonial America. While blood was used as a main concept in relation to descent, the social origin of the parents was far more important than the genetic origin in defining the status of the individual. Mestizo only became an important category when groups of people came to constitute social groups transferring a “mestizo” identity.

Embodied approaches to kinship are common in recent anthropology: how to become a person is in focus, and performative action is analysed (cf. Battaglia 1995). In general terms, the embodied approach to kinship is interesting in the way in which it puts the corporeal aspect into focus. In this way, the

body plays a role in creating social bonds and bears marks of particular ways of understanding sexuality, purity, kinship, and descent, including rituals like circumcision, initiation rite cuts, etc. The case of the Inca mummy referred to above is a lifeless body, which still, through particular marks and clothes, represents a social subject. This body is in the hands of the living and is made to fulfil certain social functions. In this particular case, kinship bonds were searched for and attained by taking possession of the body of a deceased Inca.

### **Ethnicity as identity**

The term “Ethnicity” has many meanings. At the end of the 19th century, ethnic in general had to do with non-European (or non-industrial) phenomena. Still, this use of the word can be found, for example, when certain commercial, decorative styles, for sale in Europe, are referred to as “ethnic”. The general use of the term today is wider, and a Swede, as well as a Sami or a Chiriguano is ethnic. Here, I will, for convenience, adhere to this frequent use of the term. In Spanish Latin-America, the term *etnia* is frequently used in the archaeological and historical literature, often referring to Indian polities, but it is important not to confuse that term with ethnicity.

In traditional archaeology, there was a tendency to understand all differences in the material cultures of different groups as permanent ethnicity markers. New Archeology, and particularly Binford (e.g., 1965), working in the tradition of Wissler (1914) and other pioneers of the systematic study of material culture in the United States, helped to point to the inadequacy of these postulates. Hodder (1982b) developed this point further, discussing the specific meaning of different parts of material culture. In relation to the question of ethnicity, the anthropologist Barth's classic definition of ethnicity (1956, 1969a, 2000), and the archaeologist Ian Hodder's discussion on symbolism, communication and social agency (1982a, 1982b), have been particularly rewarding and have helped the debate to find new ways, but we are only starting to understand the problems related

to ethnicity. Barth largely defined ethnicity in terms of social organisation and social efficiency:

A categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorise themselves and others for purposes of interaction, they form ethnic groups in this organisational sense (Barth 1969:13-14).

It is of some importance to note that Barth believes that the social boundary must be in focus when discussing ethnicity, not what he calls “the cultural stuff that it encloses” (1969a:15). This means that “culture” in general is not the same as ethnicity. Ethnicity is just a marker of the social border. The history of a border is not simultaneously to be seen as the history of a culture in general (1969a:38). Discussing the Pathans, living on the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, Barth lists three social institutions, representing central value orientations, namely conventions on hospitality, the council and the principle of seclusion, which should be ethnic markers. These markers must, according to Barth, relate to “central institutions” of this particular ethnic group (Barth 1969b: 120).

Turning to Hodder, the definition of ethnicity is vague, though it plays a central role in much of his argument about symbols in action. In his famous example from the Baringo district of Kenya, he spoke about a more marked difference in material culture between different ethnic groups at moments of great tension or “stress situations” as he termed it (Hodder 1982b). In this case, the difference in material culture is particularly marked along the physical, territorial border between two “tribes”. Hodder argues that a set of specific differences in material culture can be explained neither by economic adaptation nor by overall degrees of interaction, and interprets them as markers of ethnic identity (Hodder 1977, 1979, 1982b). What is of particular interest in Hodder’s discussion is that he links the appearance of ethnic markers to intra-tribal, social organisation, namely the internal differentiation of age-sets, and the dominance of old men among

the Baringo. Unlike Barth, Hodder carries on little discussion on the content of the ethnic markers as such. He even includes elements that are of low, general visibility. The specific ethnic markers are principally defined by not having another, more plausible interpretation. Another difference, in relation to Barth, is that Hodder talks about border in a territorial sense, while Barth (1969a:15) mainly referred to social borders and considered the territorial border as a secondary phenomenon. It is of interest to note that other anthropologists working on ethnicity in Kenya have identified some empirical instances where ethnic identity is particularly weak along the territorial border (Osaga 1995). We must also bear in mind the old discussion of Wissler (1914), in which he found no direct fit between the tribal territories of North America, as known in the literature, and the general patterning of material culture.

Barth's discussion certainly fits a large series of cases and will continue to help in discussing ethnicity, but there are some problems involved. Traditional ethnic terms may correspond to many different types of phenomena. Ethnicity may be about the legitimisation of claims for a particular group, and there are often conflicting constructions (Jones 1997:140). In some instances, ethnicity is used by the élite to *legitimate* claims on land and labour, as discussed by Brumfiel (1994a and 1994b) in the Aztec case. There are also many examples of non-élite groups using ethnicity as a *defence* or a weapon against oppressors (Stern 1984), or as a means by a minority group to attain a more secure position in general terms (Tilly 1998). Stern has given an illustrative example in demonstrating the use of the Indian community as a weapon against Spanish dominance in Huamanga (Ayacucho) during several centuries (Stern 1984, cf. Schramm 1993 and Wachtel 1990 for other types of "resistance", including collective "escape" into geographical areas inhospitable to the Spaniards). McGuire & Saitta (1996) have also addressed, in similar ways, the relation between local groups and petty "captains" in the Pueblo context. Tilly (1998), on the other hand, discusses how the development or reinforcement of particularity may in certain cases be a strategy by

minority groups to distance themselves from other “oppressed” groups.

Ethnicity may also be a largely *imposed* category. This seems to have been the case with the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Uro of Bolivia and Peru, a term developed largely in relation to the terminology of taxation (Cornell 1997, 1998b, Wachtel 1990). Ethnic identity is intricate, and individuals have often limited true choice or lack sufficient contextual information to “choose” their ethnicity. There is always a set of options, but hardly a question of a “free” choice.

Ethnic ascription follows various lines. Discussing early Spanish America, Zuñiga discusses body character, profession, language, skills, residence and the network groups in which the individual operates like some variables used for ethnic identity (Zuñiga 1999:443). Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1969:230-242) discussed ranked ethnic groups in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Mexico, and their relation to social class. In this scheme, the ethnic group resembles the French word *État* (as in the *tiers état* of the French Revolution of 1789), the German *Stände* or the Swedish *Stånd* (cf. Raum 1996; Mörner 1988; Buckley 1967). The social difference creates visible differences in bodily appearance: and these differences in body stature, colour of skin etc. help to facilitate the identification of these groups. Some of these traits may also be imposed, through strict marriage regulations, for example.

Certain elements are selected and used in order to facilitate the identification of different groups. In many cases, identity forms part of such general patterns and is related to greater processes. Thus, terms like *transculturation* (inclusion of new elements in an existing culture) and *acculturation* (large groups moving and provoking effects on local populations) used by Rouse (1986:11-12, 13), for example, or *hybridisation* (the “mix” of two cultures), a term proposed by García Canclini (1990), are not sufficient. There are structural relations, general patterns, which cannot be left aside or forgotten. These general processes in part relate to greater events and patterns, the so-called global level, but they cannot be explained only by reference to a specific “world-centre” or global patterning in general. It is not possible to understand contemporary South America only by reference to Europe and the

United States; it is not possible to explain all Andean social organisations in the 15th century only by reference to Cusco. Another important point is that ethnic groups often co-habit. Though some scholars wish to deny this fact, there is ample evidence of it. For the Andean area, there are several interesting examples (cf., e.g., Murra 1975). Evans-Pritchard, similarly, attested to multiethnic communities in discussing the Azande of Africa. In the study in question, he gives the political unit, the kingdom, a basic function as integrative force (1971:266). He wrote:

Hundreds of thousands of people of different ethnic origins all jumbled up - the ethnologist in Africa may sometimes sigh for some neat little Polynesian or Melanesian island community! (1971:67).

Perhaps the problem resides in our pre-conceptions. The anthropologist traditionally tended to have the intention of identifying “pure” ethnic groups. It is quite possible that the pure ethnic group is rather the exception than the rule.

### **Inalienability, social identity and genealogy**

CASE B. Anthropologists and archaeologists often like to tell stories about the forms of eating the dead. Endocannibalism, the custom of eating parts of the body of deceased kin, has been reported extensively from South America. Rydén, for example, reported that the Moré mixed, pulverised bone of their deceased relatives in beer on ceremonial occasions (Rydén 1942; cf. Linné 1929:225ff). But there are also other stories on what people do when they wish to become strong. Lévi-Strauss (1955) likes to talk about a practice reported from Amazonia of people eating their “good enemies”, or what has been called anthropophagia. Metraux (1967) and Viveiros de Castro (1992: 273-305) have extended the argument on this alleged practice of the Tupinamba, and Godelier (1998: 403-404) calls this a practice of “pure affinity”. Ego becomes strong, establishes his identity and gets a lot

of prestige from eating the good enemy. Molinié (1995) calls this type of practice the interiorisation of difference.

What is this argumentation about? Boccara (1999) develops a similar argument in discussing the Reche-Mapuche or the Reche-Araucans of pre-Hispanic times and early colonial Chile as an example. Boccara explicitly discusses Reche society as characterised by war as a “fait social total” in the terminology of Mauss. It was a “society for war”, according to Boccara (1999: 104). And in these wars, what was of greatest importance was the “interiorisation of difference” in the sense of “eating the enemy”. Boccara further stresses the male character of the war; the warriors were men. According to Boccara, the written sources state that the Indians even considered that the great soldiers were “extremely male” (1999:100). In this society, the Other was a necessity, Boccara argues, a necessity for ethnogenesis, for the creation of the identity of the ethnic group. What attracts our attention is that, if we accept Boccara’s argument, by simple logic the ethnogenesis was a product of exclusively male activity. It is interesting to note that Viveiros de Castro has a similar, though somewhat subtler argument. According to him, among the Tupinamba, men killed people, while women fulfilled a similar (!?) function in menstruation and giving birth. “Both women and killers spilled a blood vital for the reproduction of society” (1992: 274).

But some things remain to be sorted out. Even if Boccara is right and there were bands of warriors taking captives and eating them, these men obviously represented themselves in these actions. If their activity corresponds to the term Reche, then Reche is a male corporation. There cannot be a generalised ethnogenesis based on half the population. Furthermore, we know from several studies (e.g. Metraux 1967) that there were many female “shamans” (*machi*) among the Mapuche, actually there still are. Today most *machi* are women; they are generally homosexuals, and in some cases transvestites. It is not clear if women always dominated as *machi*; some authors explain this phenomenon as a late occurrence resulting from the wars of the post-colonial period. The wars of this period were certainly

substantially different from those of earlier periods, but still, if Boccara is correct and wars made up the essence of “original” Reche ethnicity, which was the function of female *machi* during earlier periods? Well, be that as it may. There must be other types of Reche identity, made up by women, and probably a lot of men not making war. Forgetting this aspect is to forget a large part of life. The feminism of difference often insists on establishing the female genealogy (Irigaray 1989; Braidotti 1991; Medina 1998a and 1998b; Rivera 1997); in the case of the Reche-Mapuche, this seems to be a particularly urgent issue (for a similar discussion on the Iroquois, cf. Prezzano 1997).

### **Identity beyond the ethnic**

So, then, this question of identities is indeed complex. And as far as the contemporary situation is concerned, there are interesting patterns seldom discussed by archaeologists. In Argentina, there is a sort of official history of the creation of the nation, functioning as a foundation myth, in which the wars against the Indians are a central element. But there are also a lot of other identity-creating phenomena, not immediately resulting from state initiatives. The church does not formally accept the cult of the Deceased Correa (Difunta Correa). But the history of this woman, who is supposed to have continued to give milk to her baby through her breast after death, extends over wide areas in the republic of Argentina. Particularly chauffeurs venerate these local sanctuaries. Along the big highways and roads crossing the country there are small shrines made up largely of tyres and flowers. It is a tradition older than one hundred years. A more recent tradition is the shrines to Gilda, a schoolteacher who became a famous *cumbia* singer but died in a terrible road accident. Her popularity is high, and her cult has played an important role in contemporary Argentina, even at a political level.

These examples may help to develop a more refined methodology for addressing pre-Hispanic and early, post-conquest social identity. In order to understand the patterning of identity, different, particular, local histories must be traced, and their

varying articulations and transformations when confronted with wider patterns must be analysed in detail. The material culture of north-western Argentina from the period of “regional development” (800-1500), through the Inka period (1470-1532) to the Hispano-American period offers a particularly interesting field for studying transformations in material culture in situations of changing identity (cf Cornell & Johansson 1993, Cornell 2004, Stenborg 2003 & 2004). The presence of Inka artefacts, and Inka-inspired artefacts, during the Inka period, in different parts of the Andes, is illuminating. Articles in daily use from Cusco occur generally in graves in north-western Argentina, attesting to a transformed function or value of these articles when entering a new social setting. The form of some Inka-type utility vessels came to be commonplace in north-western Argentina, however, and these types predominated during the following Hispano-American period. Some elements of Inka-type vessels spread far from the area of Inka presence. Rydén (1937) even reported the use of “Inka” type aryballoid vessels east of the Andes even during the 20th century. In general terms, the complex and localised ceramic decoration of the regional development period contrasts sharply with what seems to be the more generalised and less decorated ceramics of the Hispano-American period. The pre-Hispanic Santa María grave vessel has been understood as metaphorically representing dressed human bodies, and there seems to be a clear gender division. Posterior ceramic material does not display gender in the same way, which may be related to major social transformations. Renewed studies of these transformations will certainly help to illuminate some of the problems related to identity, social action and process.

### **Multiple identity and the concept of “the other”**

Evidently, the discussion above referred to many different types of social identity. In Godelier's discussion on the New Guinea Baruya, identity referred to adult males in certain particular clans. In the discussion on the Inka mummies, I referred to mummies of upper-class individuals. In the general discussion, I referred to

many other types of identities, such as Bolivian Indian peasants, or contemporaneous European tattooed body-identity. Identity seems to be about a lot of different things, but it has often to do, in one way or another, with social power.

Identities have always been, and will always be, fairly complex. To Sartre, identity often lives only for short moments. According to him, identity is the “non-justifiable” separation of two individuals having in the immediate future a common destiny (though just for some seconds, waiting for the bus to come). The plurality of the people having the same identity is of little consequence in these particular moments. Identity in this sense means neglecting parts of oneself (Sartre 1960:400). This Sartrean definition may prove quite useful (cf. Cornell & Fahlander 2002).

The human body is the basic point of reference. But this body may attain multiple social identities. In a general social analysis, social identities overlap. Many anthropologists have stressed this multiplicity of identity. Lowie, for example, discussed the multiple organisations into which an individual entered among the Crow Indians.

Thus our Crow comes to be a member of some half-a-dozen well-defined groups. By birth he belongs to a sib, a family and a band. Later, a life-long friendship couples him with Albino-bull; he joins the Fox and subsequently the Lumpwood organisation; and is finally admitted to the religious Tobacco order (1921:416).

Linton similarly discussed “alternative cultures” within a culture (1936), and many sociologists (e.g. Ziehe 1990; cf. also Spivak 1996b for a different example) have discussed contemporary “subcultures”. Post-modern sociology is particularly prone to refer to this multitude of identities and opposes this to the ideal of “modern rationality” (Bauman 1993). The “globalised” world is supposed to be characterised by fragmented identity. Still, anthropologists today often in general terms refer to the existence of parallel “cultures” or “patterning” operating in one and the same social setting, both at operational and iconic levels (cf. Aijmer 2001), far beyond the “postmodern globalised” world.

Some types of identity groups may have little stability and duration, such as the identity with a particular political party, or a particular youth movement. But other identity groups are fairly stable and change slowly. Often, questions of Otherness are discussed in relation to this latter type of identity, and terms like kinship or ethnicity are used, as discussed above.

Particularly in traditional German philosophy, the Other has often been defined in relation to the One, the identity of self, which does not necessarily correspond to an individual (cf. Medina 1996). The Other is often seen as something scary and dangerous, as discussed by Duby (1995) concerning the European middle age. In the historical meeting with the Other, something unknown, our capacity to transcend the differences is put to the test. Todorov and Pastor have discussed interestingly the power of understanding partially l'Autre, the Other, referring to the Spanish conquest of Mexico. As they show in their studies on the early European conquerors of America, this process is complex and intricate. Involved in this process are questions of power and politics, destruction and genocide. Hernán Cortés, the conquistador of the Aztec, edited texts that construct an image of his own activities that has little correspondence to the actual actions. At the same time, he was eager to understand the reality that he met with among the Aztecs. According to Pastor (1983:228-229), Cortés had, compared with many of his contemporaries, a high degree of objectivity and analytical clarity in describing the Aztec. As Todorov stresses, the ability to grasp at least partially other traditions and to incorporate them into one's particular system of thought, is a powerful tool (Todorov 1982:133-135, 256-258; Todorov 1985:2-5). As Fabian stresses, the Aztec and the Spaniards met at the same moment: they did not belong to "different" instances (1983:155). Latour (1987) has expanded on this theme in his network analysis. In his analysis, there are centres of calculation, creating networks, "maps" incorporating far-away places, allowing for action at a distance, the exercise of power. Discussing the French discoverer Lapérouse, he concludes:

who includes and who is included, who localises and who is localised is not a cognitive or a cultural difference: Lap erousse was able to put Sakhalin on a map, but the South Pacific cannibals that stopped his travel put him on their map (Latour 1987:229).

So, even for Latour, the body is a basic referent. Spivak (1985) also argues on the individual and her or his right to the body, addressing cases of Sati from India. I do not think I agree entirely with Spivak, but she does put forward a question of great relevance. Interestingly, the vocabulary of Lacan or Sartre is rather different in relation to the term *Autre* (Other). In this context, the term refers to “the common way to do things”, “how people do things”. Ego is created as a mirror effect in relation to the Other in Lacan:<sup>3</sup>

The Other is the place where the chain of signifiers is situated which rule everything that may be made present in the subject, it is the field in the living where the subject may appear (Lacan 1973: 185).

This way of understanding the Other contrasts, evidently, to the use of the term in Todorov. Both ways are equally valid and useful. But what seems to be of particular interest here is that identity is a social creation and that identity refers to an external, social world. This Other world may be the world in which you were born, but it may also be another Other hitherto unknown to the individual, and the individual may be at least partially transformed through this encounter (cf. Cornell 2000). Derrida (1967b:117-228) has touched on this problem, discussing the ethic of Levinas. While Levinas stresses “total” otherness, Derrida stresses the impossibility of the (completely) Other. We live, according to Derrida, in a difference, in a play of differences, the *differance*. The identities are only passing figures, moving in the play of differences (1967a).

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<sup>3</sup> My translation. Original: L'Autre est le lieu o  se situe la cha ne du signifiant qui commande tout ce qui va pouvoir se pr sentifier du sujet, c'est le champ de vivant o  le sujet a   appara tre.

If we accept the body as a general referent, we may find a way to address this situation. As several feminist theoreticians argue, the world is not just “raw-material”, it is “an active material-semiotic actor” (Braidotti 1991: 271). Turning to Sartre, we might argue that the human body might be locked up in the Other, in convention and a given identity. Then we could perhaps say that, by extending the (known) Other we make the opportunities to escape convention better. Then, the (unknown) Other is not an immediate danger as such, but a field of possibilities. But, in order to operate in this way, the social border of the (known) Other must be torn down and redefined according to new parameters, i.e. a new social identity must be established. By using Other elements of materiality “hidden” in a particular identity (following Sartre's definition of the term), new social totalities (“positive” entities) may be created.

### **Social subjects and the power of possession**

Foucault introduced a structural way of looking at power, in which power is the ability to make things happen and the exercise of power is in focus (cf. Tilley & Miller 1984); but, in this frame, there is no way to possess power. Still, Foucault tended to be somewhat elastic on this point, and in his book *Discipline and Punish* he wrote:

This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body (Foucault 1977:25-26; cf. original in Foucault 1975).

In this quotation, we see that Foucault discusses questions of economic exploitation and applies, in part, a Marxist terminology. But still, this is rather an exception, in relation to most of his

discussion on power, in which he refers to the need for microstudies of power in structural relations and generally criticises Marx. JanMohamed (1995) and Spivak (1996a) try to put Marx back into the picture and demonstrate how Marx fits quite well into Foucault's general discussion and may actually help to develop microstudies of power.

In order to control people, they must be ordered and classified in one way or another. This type of classification has to do with the creation of social subjects and their specific identity. The identity of a wage-earning worker is a case in point, in which the social subject in part is defined as a commodity among other commodities, a sort of product that can be allocated and transported like other products. As Marx amply discussed, the entanglement of the capitalist mode of production includes minute analysis of particular elements of the social formation, in particular the character of the commodity. Thus, Marx works both at a micro- and a macro-level; actually, we can say that Marx demonstrated that these concepts are far from satisfactory for social analysis.

The subject of a feudal landlord is another type of social subject created in a network of social relations of power. Many other examples could be quoted, at different levels. Bonfil-Batalla (1990) has discussed the concept of the Indian as a social category created by the European conquest. Unifying all Indians in the 16th and 17th centuries was the fact that they had been conquered by the Europeans and that they must define their identity in relation to their European masters. Thus, being an Indian more or less corresponds to a category like being a slave. Behind or beyond these categories, there are varied and complex origins, but, by their common, historical experience, they are forged together as social subjects. Thus, the creation of social subjects, or “disciplinary” structure, is a major element both to Foucault and to Marx. These “social subjects” are, in a sense, products of given, specific, historical “rationalities” (i.e. patterns of social organisation, including social exploitation), i.e. they make possible given types of exercise of power. Perhaps some of Alain Badiou's ideas on historically specific distributions, “topos”,

“ensembles of multiples” (Badiou 1988, 1998; cf. Ramond ed. 1999, Hallward ed. 2004) correspond to such rationality. This might be a fruitful area for future research.

The major difference between Foucault and Marx resides in the question of power of possession. While there is, at least in theory, no such thing in Foucault, it is the major element in Marx’ analysis. As JanMohamed (1995:54-57) argues, there is a problem in Foucault’s argument. If power is exercised, it may be that it is entirely expended while exercised, but if this is so, there will be no structural continuity, which is a necessity in Foucault’s model. If we, on the other hand, believe that some part of power remains while power is exercised, this means that power can to some extent be accumulated, or in other words, possessed.

In Marx analyses of capitalism, labour-value help explain how workers are exploited and capital accumulated. But the condition for the working of this system is that there is a disciplined workforce: thus, Foucault’s discussion on this topic is highly interesting to a Marxian approach. Conditions of class become particularly important for the analysis (Crompton 1998), and in this analysis, the articulation to varied cultural factors is of great relevance (Ortner 1998). Fromm made some efforts to develop such an approach in the term “social character”, defined as the function that “/.../ internalizes external necessities and thus harnesses human energy for the task of a given economic and social system” (Fromm 1960:243). Bourdieu has given interesting empirical illustrations of how class defines questions of taste, for example (Bourdieu 1979 and 1980), but his methodology is not, in my opinion, sufficiently strict. In this type of usage, class tends to become too much of a catch-all term. Class is defined as just every aspect characterising people belonging to the group in question. This approach makes a strict analysis of the particular correlation of different factors difficult. It cannot be supposed a priori that all factors always correlate perfectly, and the variability of correlation is of the greatest importance for a more detailed analysis.

But we must, at the same time, identify the points on which value is created and accumulated in different social forms. I believe that we can postulate that there are, in each type of social

form, fields of accumulation of values, fields of exchange of values, and fields of inalienability. These particular social fields are, in a very direct sense, social creations. Amassing gold in hidden treasures, venerating the land as a basic resource or accumulating capital, are different ways of treating value in society. Inalienability, or the extremely restricted field of exchange, is a multifaceted feature, which we have only begun to understand, and on which we must work much more. There is always a limit to given social rationalities, also in industrial society. Many arch-capitalists, amassing their fortunes by harsh and fierce means and disrespecting cultural traditions, occasionally, when they grow old, tend to stop believing in their own abstract capital. They start to invest their money in land or they try to create inalienable institutions. In Sweden, the Hallwyll family, who created a gigantic fortune in the latter part of the 19th century, finally invested large parts of their money in a luxurious palace, which eventually, through stipulations in a will, was turned into a museum with strict rules and regulations, based on the idea that nothing should ever be changed (Cassel-Pihl 1979). Keeping the inalienable resource is the way to secure your power and position. It gives you and your name a way to history, to the collective memory, in creating (an imaginary) value not subject in or to history, a value never fading, a permanent being.

Control of the social subject is a condition of power and controlling the body is the ultimate form of control. Thus, exposing the body to the will of the competitor or the enemy is a danger. To go back to the mummy, where we started, marrying the mummy opened the way into the inalienable resources of another social group. Within the frame of this given social rationality, marrying was the only way to get at these powers. Here, questions of gender, class and inalienability work together and illustrate interestingly central fields of social experience.

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