

ESSAY ONE

The Embodied Pedagogy of War

In a darkened room in the Minneapolis convention center in March 2003, the two of us stood facing each other. The floor was covered, littered, with newspapers; their 64-point headlines reporting about the “progress” of the war. A single harsh light shone diagonally through the space, illuminating us while casting a pall of long oblique shadows. In droning voices we began by repeatedly spelling out the words “planned obsolescence” in unison. We alternated the remaining parts of the narrative to represent the fragmentation of our bodies by the technology of war. Like the reporting of the news, which describes the colonization of the body by war, “imbedded” within the text of the narrative are excerpts from Wired magazine (Harper, 2002, pp. 54–55), describing the colonization of the body by the most recent developments in medical technology.

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A-N-N-E-D-O-B-S-O-L-E-S-C-E-N-C-E-P-L-A-

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 -E-D-O- B-S-O-L-E-S-C-

It is 6:30 A.M. and your body is startled by a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq.

Your body reaches over, extending its right arm and hand.

It reaches over to turn off the alarm clock on the bed stand.

The right index finger of your body pushes the stop button on the *Emerson SmartSet* radio.

With its index finger and thumb your body turns on the bedside lamp.

Your body turns on the lamp in this way.

As the right leg of your body pushes out from under the covers, the left leg of your body follows as it sits up on the side of the bed.

Your body's two feet are flat on the cold floor now.

From a sitting position your body stands and turns to the left.

With one foot in front of the other, it walks around the bed.

On its way out of the bedroom, your body switches on the *Sony Trinitron* to *CNN*...

...listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, it enters the bathroom.

Voice box (Vocom): Prefabricated implants are pushed against paralyzed vocal cords in the thyroid cartilage, which force them to tighten, restoring speech. (Harper, 2002, p. 54)

After doing so, your body switches on a bank of 6 incandescent lights.

Having illuminated itself your body stares into the large mirror examining itself.

Maneuvering a shiny metallic swivel handle, your body turns on the water faucet.

It fills the basin with warm water and with cupped hands it splashes itself.

While pressing on a pump, your body's right hand dispenses soap into its palm.

Bending its arm at the elbow, it raises the foamy substance to its face.

In an upward and downward motion its hands lather its facial parts.

It fills the basin with warm water and with cupped hands it splashes itself.

Next, with its electric toothbrush filled with *Colgate*, your body then cleans its teeth.

As the right hand of your body returns the toothbrush to its holder, its left hand reaches over and turns on the showerhead.

After the left leg of your body steps into the shower, your right leg follows.

As your body receives the gentle massage of the adjustable *WaterPik* showerhead, Wolf Blitzer's report of collateral damage, . . .

. . .report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage emanates from the bedroom television set.

Ear (Clarion II Bionic Ear): an external processor (worn behind the ear like a hearing aid) converts sounds into digital code, then transmits it to a cochlear implant. The acoustic nerve in the ear canal then interprets the signal as sound. (Harper, 2002, p. 54)

After drying itself, your body reaches for the *Kathie Lee 1600* to blow-dry its hair.

Your body can no longer hear the report from the high-pitched sound of the dryer.

Upon leaving the bathroom, your body turns off the lights and returns to the bedroom.

After dressing itself your body straps a *Timex* onto its wrist.

Using the tips of its index finger and thumb it adjusts the dial to the correct time.

Next, using its left hand your body picks up a pair of eyeglasses.

As the left hand holds them steady, your body's right hand wipes its lenses with *Kleenex*.

As one foot precedes the other, your body walks down the staircase to the kitchen.

It turns on the kitchen *Sony* to *CNN* only to catch suicide bombings in Baghdad,...

...suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad.

Eyes (smart eye band): A device (worn behind the ear) generates a magnetic field that activates the implanted muscle. The band, designed primarily for reading, can be switched on and off. (Harper, 2002, p. 54)

Opening the *Amana* refrigerator, your body pulls out a carton of processed orange juice with pulp.

After filling a glass, it downs a 1,000 ml. of vitamin C and a multiple vitamin pill.

It then fills the *Krups* coffee grinder with Sumatra Mendheling and presses on the switch.

As your body grinds the beans to a fine consistency the water comes to a boil.

The teapot whistling on the stove heard throughout the house penetrates its ears.

Your body's olfactory organ smells the freshly brewed coffee dripping into an insulated stainless steel *Thermos* mug.

It then places a small pitcher of cream into the *Kenmore* and microwaves its contents to lukewarm.

After pouring the cream into the coffee, your body gets a whiff from the electric bread maker.

Having filled it with ingredients the night before, it kneads and bakes automatically.

Its buzzer goes off telling your body it is time to take out the fresh loaf for breakfast.

The *Sunbeam* toaster requires your body to push down a lever after it places the slices in its slots.

Popping up after it is ready, the toasted bread is buttered for your body to eat.

As it is walking out the door to the *Plymouth Voyager*, your body hears Christiane Amanpour.

Her televised body tells your body about the day's body count, . . .

. . . about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count.

Eyes (Artificial silicon retinas): A microchip is inserted into the retina through a small incision. The chip converts light into electricity, restoring sight. (Harper, 2002, p. 54)

16 dead, 587 wounded, 34 missing, 12 POWs.

With the right index finger and thumb, your body inserts a key into the door lock.

Turning the key to the left enables your body to unlock the door and enter the vehicle.

It straps on a seat belt, inserts the key into the electronic ignition, and starts the 6-cylinder engine.

Its foot pressing on the throttle, your body revs up the engine to 4,000 RPMs.

After adjusting the rear and side mirrors, your body shifts the automatic transmission into reverse.

With its left hand on the steering wheel, it backs the *Voyager* out of the garage.

While doing so it turns on *NPR* to hear more on toppling the regime and nation building, . . .

. . .toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime.

Heart (AbioCor heart): this titanium and plastic blood pump replaces the human heart. A battery belt worn around the

patient's midriff feeds electricity to the heart. To recharge, the patient plugs into an AC outlet. (Harper, 2002, p. 54)

Having arrived at the traffic light, your body pushes on the brakes with its right foot.

As the *Voyager* comes to a halt, your body turns on the windshield wipers.

Your body's eyes can now see the street more clearly as it drives ahead.

The light turns green and your body shifts its foot from the brakes to the throttle.

At 3,500 RPMs it can hear the smooth shifting of gears in the transmission.

Another red light and its foot presses on the brakes only to change to throttle.

The light changes immediately upon approach and your body has to quickly adjust.

Its eyes keep shifting between one side mirror to the next, and the rear mirror.

Traffic is heavy so your body feels anxious as it maneuvers the *Voyager*.

Enroute to its destination, your body witnesses a large construction crane lifting heavy machinery.

As the load is gently lowered onto a curvilinear building, your body senses relief.

As if in response to this stimulus, it turns the knob of the car radio with its index finger and thumb.

It's Bob Edwards on *NPR's Morning Edition* reporting refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, . . .

. . . refugees caught in crossfire in Basra,
refugees caught in crossfire in Basra,
refugees caught in crossfire in Basra,
refugees caught in crossfire in Basra,
refugees caught in crossfire in Basra.

Nervous system (VNS therapy model 102 pulse generator):
An electrode embedded in a nerve in the neck activates a generator every few seconds, preventing epileptic seizures and alleviating depression. (Harper, 2002, p. 54)

As your body steers the *Voyager* into the lot, its eyes search for parking.

Finding a spot, it pulls in, applies the brakes, and turns off the ignition.

With its left hand it opens the door and slides its legs out onto the pavement.

After it stands up, it turns around, grabs its briefcase, and shuts the door.

Inserting the key into the slot, it locks the door and begins to move away.

As it places one foot in front of the other, it walks toward its workplace.

A number of obstacles have to be negotiated to prevent collisions.

A tree, brick wall, several other bodies, a trashcan, and a fire hydrant are encountered.

Upon arriving at its destination, the right hand of your body pushes on a lever.

Opening the door, it enters the building and walks to a stairway.

There, it lifts one foot after the other to ascend to the second floor.

The hand of your body presses another lever to open yet another door.

Having entered the space of its office, it walks immediately to the *Macintosh G4*.

Its right hand grasps an electronic mouse and pushes a button to reboot.

Electronic e-mail is the first to appear on the screen reporting that Allies intensify air assault, . . .

. . .Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault.

Neurons (neurochips): Tiny microchips mimic the way neurons fire in the central nervous system. Intended to repair damage to the brain or spinal cord. (Harper, 2002, p. 54)

While reading the daily barrage of e-mail, your body hears the telephone ring.

After picking up, your body opens its mouth and speaks into the receiver.

Bla-laul-tualt-toulst-sowout-toud-toudk-tout-ruog-pout-pa, it speaks, speaks, and speaks.

Then suddenly it drops the receiver on its cradle and returns back to the screen in silence.

Another's body walks into your body's office and bends itself at the waist.

Lowering its buttocks, it sits in a chair, opens its mouth, shouting, demanding.

The other body's arms flail, its fingers point at yours, its face reddens.

Your body casually leans back in its high tech *Herman Miller* designer chair, and tilts its neck.

Looking upward it sees the four florescent light fixtures suspended from the ceiling.

One in particular captures your body's attention with the sounds of its buzzing ballast.

The eyes of your body focus on the greenish tint of the lights to escape the confrontation.

After 45 minutes have passed the other thrusts its body upward and stands upright.

It turns to its right and places one foot in front of the other and walks out the office.

As it does, your body's mind wanders, recalling the daily news reports while listening to the buzzing ballast,...

...listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast.

Arm (neural bypass robotic arm): Electrodes implanted in the cerebral cortex send neuron signals to a microprocessor in a wearable computer. It matches impulses to different arm movements. Once trained this system can drive a robotic arm. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...your body is startled by a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq, a voice reporting the war in Iraq.

Left ventricle (Novacor): An electromechanical pump inserted into the abdominal wall pushes blood into the arteries. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...your body switches on the *Sony Trinitron* to *CNN*...Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties...

Liver (Bioreactor): An external bioreactor—essentially a portable dialysis machine made of plastic foam—removes toxins from the patient's blood. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage...

Hand (Dextra): Sensors in the artificial hand respond to electrical signals from the arm muscles and tendons. The

signals are transmitted to a belt-mounted computer that controls fingers individually. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...only to catch suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad...

Joints (Giolite knee): A friction-controlled polycentric device is inserted into the joint socket. Its plastic cup works with a metal ball and stem to flex up to 20 degrees. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...her body tells your body about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count, about the day's body count...

Nerves and muscles (Bion): Radio-powered implant stimulates nerves and muscles, restoring movement to paralyzed limbs. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...to hear more on toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime.

Muscle (artificial muscles): These muscles expand and contract as the stuff they're made of, polypyrrole, generates and conducts electricity. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in

Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in
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 Basra.

Leg (C-Leg): Sensors in the knee and the shin react to movement and weight distribution up to 50 times per second, adjusting the leg's position accordingly. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...that Allies intensify air assault,
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 air assault.

Bone (Vitoss): Synthetic materials, such as calcium phosphate, replace the marrow, stimulating new bone growth. Helpful in bone-grafting operations. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

...your body's mind wanders to the daily news reports while listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast.

Cells (Bionic chip): A microchip regulates the activity of healthy human cells to more effectively administer gene therapy. An external wireless device sends the body's electrical impulses to the chip, which triggers the cells' membrane pores to open. (Harper, 2002, p. 55)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *planned obsolescence* as the "obsolescence of manufactured goods due to

deliberate changes in design, cessation of the supply of spare parts, use of poor-quality materials, etc.”

In a chilling article in a recent issue of *Wired* magazine (March 2003) science reporter Jennifer Kahn writes about human bodies being used to store human organs. The body is technology is the body. Kahn describes a:

...dead man's room, [where] a different calculus is unfolding. Here the organ is the patient, and the patient is a mere container, the safest place to store body parts until surgeons are ready to use them. It can be more than a day from the time a donor dies until his organs are harvested—the surgery alone takes hours, not to mention the time needed to do blood tests, match tissue, and fly in special surgical teams for the evisceration. And yet, a heart lasts at most six hours outside the body, even after it has been kneaded, flushed with preservatives, and packed in a cooler. Organs left on ice too long tend to perform poorly in their new environment, and doctors are picky about which viscera they're willing to work with. Even an ailing cadaver is a better container than a cooler. (Kahn, 2003, pp. 132-137)

The body is technology is the body is technology is the body is technology is the body...

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 Iraq...listening to the latest casual-
 ties...reports of collateral
 damage...suicide bombings in Bagh-
 dad...about the day's body
 count...the toppling of the regime and
 nation building...refugees caught in
 crossfire in Basra...Allies intensify
 air assault, ...

...*bla-laul-tualt-toulst-sowout-toud-
 toudk-tout-ruog-pout-pa*, it speaks,
 speaks, and speaks...