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Monica J. Casper, Lisa Jean Moore  
**Missing Bodies: The Politics of**

**Visibility**

New York University Press, Los Angeles and London 2008, pp. 212, \$21.00 (ISBN 978-1-4129-0219-9)

Sociologists of the body are above all interested in bodies in existence, either as they are carnally present in everyday life or symbolically represented and mediated by language in society. Like any other scientists, sociologists of the body need the material existence of their subject to study it and to construct theories about the sociality of the body in a positive matter. When, for any particular reason, the body is absent from the picture, sociologists of the body are normally confused and begin the quest for their 'holy grail'. Of course, there are many ways the body can be absent (and once more found again), yet Monica J. Casper and Lisa Jean Moore, the authors of this book, are interested in a very particular absence of the body. They are interested in missing bodies. To be missing means that something that once was visibly present is now invisible or not present any more. The bodies that were once here are now, for some reason, gone, and therefore they are, for us, in a state of non-existence. However, they are not necessarily lost, misplaced or devastated; most likely, they are merely 'miss-placed' beyond social acceptance or tolerance. So, to speak about missing bod-

ies is actually to speak about the politics of in/visibility (though the other senses are important as well).

The book is divided into three parts: *Innocents*, *Exposed* and *Heroes*. The first part of the book (*Innocents*) speaks about missing children's bodies. Especially the chapter on protection of children's body is very instructive. Although we can all agree that children are sensitive and vulnerable creatures, it seems that intentions to protect them at all costs from any lurking peril that impacts on them from others, above all adults, sometimes has opposite and in some cases even nonsensical effects. Such as, for example, when Lisa Jean Moore wished to conduct a research about children's sex education through books for children, the Institutional Review Board at her academic institution found her research proposal too risky to the research 'subject'. And as a consequence also 'unethical', so that at the end she gave up considering children as the subject of her research. Ironically, her research findings were more a result of how adults (i.e., parents and teachers) imagine how children's sexual education actually takes place. Yet, on the other hand, only rarely does anyone in our society question the obvious fact that children are the subject of a heavy consumerist assault on a daily basis during the period of formation of their sexual identity. The authors rightly state that barriers to researching children's bodies may lead merely to the proliferation of other forms (such as for instance the phenom-

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enon of 'pedophile entertainment' on TV), driven by market forces and multiple sexual desires, of accessing information about children's sexuality.

In order to become fully embodied, an individual has to find a way to become visible to a critical mass of people with power or/and institutions of power. Visibility, say Casper and Moore, can be as useful as harmful. The second part of the book (*Exposed*) is thus about drawing the thin line between different states of possible exposure of an individual's body to the public gaze. The first chapter deals with the question how one of the most devastating illnesses on Earth (HIV/AIDS) shapes the perception of national security in America and global security widely. While in the developed world people who suffer from HIV/AIDS are somehow concealed in their own pockets of private life by pharmaceutical companies, a deep 'abyss' separates this world from developing countries. In the Western world, HIV/AIDS is no longer a fatal illness as long as it is properly treated. On the contrary, the level of medical care in developing countries is so low that in some areas in Africa we can hardly speak about any medical measures being applied, whether to prevent or cure, against this plague of modern civilisation at all. The pictures of dying mothers surrounded with children who are soon to become orphans may evoke empathy that might eventually lead to an improvement of the situation, but unfortunately they may at the same

time evoke deep feelings of endangerment, too. Victims of HIV/AIDS are, in the eyes of many members of Western societies, often framed as stealth weapons of mass destruction or at least cause for possible biodisaster. Hence the hypervisibility of some bodies infected with HIV/AIDS, as for instance when the USA decided that no one who is HIV/AIDS positive can enter the country in the name of biosecurity. On the other hand, those bodies that stay at 'home' become even more invisible due to their 'unpleasant', though remote, conditions. The authors find that this is evidently an indicator of the shrinking of space for democratic practices, a finding with which I can only and sadly agree.

In the next chapter, Casper and Moore point to the bodies, which once produced bodily liquids, semen and breast milk in particular, and that are now absent due to the erasure of their identity. Both the above-mentioned bodily liquids have been highly and rigorously biomonitoring for the last few decades. Yet there are some basic differences between the methods of semen and breast milk surveillance. The data collected by analysing the quality of semen provides us with certain information about the individuals that contribute it. Only rarely is the quality of semen taken into consideration in terms of male fertility, while occasionally its racial, ethnic or social origin is taken under suspicion. On the other hand, breast milk can tell us less about the health condition of an individual do-

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nor, while the data collected from women's bodies is used to predict infant and species risk and prospects. Once again we are witnesses of gender segregation and the invisibility of women, who are subjugated and sacrificed for the health of the collective.

The last part of the book (*Heroes*) is dedicated to the 'triumph' of American masculinity. The first chapter is about war bodies missing in action. In contradiction to the male bodies, many times the female bodies are not accepted as being fit enough to confront the conditions of combat due to having less physical and, allegedly, psychic strength. Their role during the war is mostly reduced to offering support to the male combatants behind the front lines or to help the wounded or perhaps as a 'reward' for war heroes. Even worse, woman's rights are frequently and systematically sexually and in many other ways violated during war times by the same war heroes. Sexual abuse is common in modern, yet still highly gendered segregated, militaries even in times of peace. The story of Jessica Lynch described in the book, her capture and rescue during the second Gulf War by her male comrades, was 'written' by authority to be read as a proof of the failure of feminism. Needless to say, it turns out she was not treated as badly by the enemy as was initially presented and that the whole story was media constructed to stress antifeminism, anti-intellectualism, patriotism and the victory of Christianity over Islam, presenting a cultural model of a blond-white-fe-

male over one of a dark-brown-savage. Militarisation is thus revealed as a complex, stratified, consequential system of discourses, practices and relationships that is firmly based on gender and sexual differences.

In the last chapter, the authors analyse the pop culture phenomenon of Lance Armstrong. One particular part of the man's body is very rarely publically exposed, and if it is pulled from the state of absence, it is usually considered as an inappropriate gesture. In the case of Lance Armstrong, the content of his scrotum became very important and significant. In any case, missing testicles can be a severe challenge to masculinity, signifying reproductive incapacity. Armstrong, who suffered from testicular cancer, went through a deeply transforming personal experience, not only psychologically, but also physically. He was removed temporarily from competition and subjugated to medical treatment, which chemically resculpted his own body in such a way that after he returned to the sporting arena, he won the Tour de France several times. Whether his victorious return was a result of medical treatment or a pure embodiment of his own will is still a challenge to our imagination, yet for people with cancer, he will probably remain a champion as a cancer survivor. His example evoked a dream of positive outcome and the reestablishment of normal life after a serious illness. Nevertheless, the question that bothers the authors is whether such a heroic story could ever be constructed if the hero

were female? Unfortunately, presumably not.

I find Casper and Moore's book to be a very useful reading of the phenomenon of missing bodies also due to its applicability to a certain Slovenian case, i.e., the erasure of 18,305 people from the Central Register of Population at the beginning of the 1990s when the Slovenian nation gained political independence. All those people who had permanent residence in Slovenia, yet it was believed at that time that they are citizens of any other Yugoslav republic, unjustifiably lost all rights as citizens of Slovenia. As a consequence, the erased people were forcibly reduced merely to the state of their bodies and thus became invisible missing bodies.

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Heinrich Best, Agnieszka  
Wenninger (eds.)  
**Landmark 1989: Central and Eastern  
European Societies Twenty Years  
after the System Change**  
LIT Verlag, Berlin, Münster, Dunaj,  
Zürich and London 2010, pp. 297,  
\$ 45.00  
(ISBN 978-3-643-10449-6)

Systemic change in Central and Eastern European countries, after the *Annus Mirabilis* 1989, logically remains as one of the most important

social science research themes. Already the end of the first decennium of democratic development in the »zone of big transformation«, a name given by Hungarian political scientist, Attila Ágh, to the group of post-Communist countries, provoked an enormous conference and publication boom, between 1998–2000, which resulted in the basic motto: »Ten Years After«.

In addition to all the analyses and reflections on social, institutional, economic and other changes, another important theoretical approach was born during this period, namely the consolidology growing up from the transitology, and its application in the 1990s. This concept, developing the »third wave concept« into the debate about the possible »fourth wave«, and trying to offer scientific explanation for the success or failure of democratic reforms, and generally systemic change in the post-Communist countries, arose especially from the German social sciences. Wolfgang Merkel is one of the most important authors of the concept of consolidology and it is not an accident that the volume open *Landmark 1989: Central and Eastern European Societies Twenty Years after the System Change*, edited by Heinrich Best and Agnieszka Wenninger, opens with a contribution from Merkel. The volume includes contributions from a conference, organised in Berlin, in early April 2009, which provided a venue for scientific debate among social scientists – mainly in sociology, social and cultural anthropology