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Locked In

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> I am afraid to own a Body—
> I am afraid to own a Soul—
> Profound—precarious Property—
> Possession, not optional—
>
> Double Estate, entailed at pleasure
> Upon an unsuspecting Heir—
> Duke in a moment of Deathlessness
> And God, for a Frontier.
>
> —Emily Dickinson

1. A Cage

One of the most dominant images of the body in the history of Western philosophy involves imprisonment. We inherit this image from Plato, who calls the body "that living tomb which we carry about." He continues, "We are imprisoned in the body, like an oyster in its shell."[1] The body is a burden, a heavy, awkward cage in which the soul is helplessly confined. In the Allegory of the Cave we might read the cave itself as a body one must escape. Inside the prisoners are tied and bound, unable to move. It is dark and hot. When one is released, she gropes her way upward toward a bright light—first to the fire at the wall (as if climbing up the throat) and then to the mouth of the cave, to be spit out in the dazzling light of day. Of course she needs her legs—her own locomotion—to leave the cave, as if one needs a body to surmount a body, as if one body calls for another.

There are times when this picture—the body as a tomb, a prison, or a shell—is more or less convincing. When? Not when we feel light and agile but, rather, in cases of sickness, disability, pain, or discomfort. Then the body might feel like a cage inside of which the real, essential "I" is trapped.

It is true that we have come a long way since Plato's relegation of the body to the transient, insubstantial realm of sensation. Philosophers have recently, and increasingly, granted new prestige and centrality to the body. As Mark Johnson

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puts it in his paper, "Judging from mainstream Anglo-American Philosophy, thirty years ago people did not have bodies. But today, almost everybody has a body."[2] Philosophy has shown itself capable of thinking about bodies. But has it shown itself open to bodies that defy categorization or exist on the margins of holistic accounts of embodiment? In what follows I consider some challenges raised by one particularly complicated body. My example comes from *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, a 2007 movie by the painter and filmmaker Julian Schnabel. It is a movie based on a real-life story—a fiction derived from a reality, or a reality projected through fiction.[3] One subplot of these considerations is that fictional and metaphorical bodies (*bodies* of work, for example, but also *bodies* of water, animal *bodies*, and political *bodies*) are important for expanding and complicating the implications and meanings of embodiment. What it means to be embodied cannot be separated from living among and together with many kinds of bodies. Schnabel's film invites us to inhabit a body. In issuing this invitation, he also asks us to appreciate the degree to which every body is itself a plurality inhabited by multiple bodies.

2. *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*

Sometimes bodies impinge with more urgency than others. In terms of one's own body, such urgency might indicate a rupture or change in the fluidity of thought, locomotion, sensation, or motor control. Things that once seemed unproblematic suddenly require effort. The coherence of a *whole* body falls out of joint, confounding the idea that any body is seamlessly whole or entirely pulled together.

This is a situation described by Jean-Dominique Bauby in his memoir, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (*Le scaphandre et le papillon*). Bauby, a journalist and the editor of French *Elle*, suffered a massive stroke and emerged from a coma with "locked-in syndrome." This is a rare condition in which a patient has lost (nearly) all ability to move and yet remains entirely conscious. From the outside the condition appears indistinguishable from a persistent vegetative state. The difference is that the locked-in patient suffers no loss of cognitive function. In French this condition is called *maladie de l'emmuré vivant*, "walled-in alive disease." At a basic level, locked-in syndrome forces us to reevaluate the attribution of consciousness or degrees of consciousness via visible clues (i.e., he *looks* conscious) or linguistic ability (i.e., he *tells* us he is conscious). Living may continue in mysterious, hidden ways, in the margins of life as we know it. Bauby lived several months with this syndrome in a hospital where he learned to communicate by blinking his left eye in response to specific letters of the alphabet. Using this laborious system and proceeding letter by letter, word by word, he was able (in roughly 200,000 blinks) to "compose these bedridden travel notes"—the book that is the basis for Schnabel's film.[4]

The film opens with Bauby's reemergence from a coma into waking life and follows his efforts to reconnect with the world from which he has been severed. Internally he is alert, fully conscious, and agile. Externally, he is confined to his hospital bed, unable to feel his own limbs, to speak, to swallow, to eat, or to perform any basic bodily functions. Bauby describes this dichotomy between what he can think or imagine and what he can do or feel as the difference between a "diving bell"—a heavy, awkward, container out of which he can gaze but cannot escape—and a butterfly. The body is the diving bell housing his mind—a butterfly desperately knocking against the glass.

And yet, the diving bell is also the vehicle for any underwater exploration, the source of air and life for the one who dives. To break free would be to drown. And so, Bauby's new body, his paralyzed body, suddenly comes into focus for him as it never had before. Most of his memories and fantasies revolve around his body: sex, eating, skiing. He watches his own body being bathed in the hospital or strapped erect against a board for physical therapy. All of this entails a shift (or crisis) of identity. To be *this* body is to live *this* life. This means inhabiting a particular possibility or range of possibilities, not to inhabit a space, to dwell in a container like a snail in its shell. It is to *be* a space from and toward which other spaces and other bodies impinge or retreat, are more or less contiguous, separate, hot, cold, tangible, foreign, or intimate.

3. The Eye

Bauby undergoes a reconfiguration of his bodily space that radically reconfigures the space of his world. His inert body becomes a tomb he inhabits. Inanimate objects—his bed, his wheelchair, his glasses—attach to the ambiguous zone of his body like awkward prosthetic appendages. His body is not an orienting point of contact with the world but, rather, a leaden weight capable of burying anything it touches. Left with only a vague visual sense of where his own body begins and ends, he is everywhere and nowhere. This means that Bauby's physical space becomes profoundly co-extensive with his body, even as other living bodies (their touch, their warmth) remain profoundly separated from him. He exists in the margins of the animate and the inanimate. Schnabel helps the audience into this margin through the animate/inanimate medium of film, a space where everything is moving despite the fact that we sit motionless in our seats.

The dichotomy between Bauby's animate and inanimate aspects is exacerbated when, early in the film, a doctor enters Bauby's room to sew up his infected right eye, radically reducing Bauby's already limited contact with the world and eradicating a whole dimension—that of depth—from his visual field. We watch the procedure from Bauby's perspective: Schnabel stretches a lid around the camera, allowing the stitches to close methodically around the lens. This is the central scene of identification through which Schnabel plants his audience firmly

in the position of his protagonist. But we inhabit more than Bauby's body as the thread winds through the lid. We also inhabit the position of the camera—which includes Schnabel himself *and* the machinery of his filmmaking. Schnabel thereby stitches us all together into a hybrid animal–machine collective (director-camera-protagonist-audience). He takes Bauby's condition as the occasion for exploiting the material possibilities of film: the monocular camera, the film in its flickering reel, the projector's single beam of light, the dark theater, and perhaps above all the event of being held captive, of being audience to one and the same scene. Bauby has no means of protesting or moving out of the way, and we, like him, sit mute and motionless in our seats as the screen goes black. Bauby's return to waking life begins with the closing off of one point of access, as if shutting a window or drawing a shade. From this point on, everything plays to his single eye, an organ the audience collectively inhabits.

The asymmetry of Bauby's eye forces everything toward the left. Schnabel films off center, letting faces who near Bauby drift in and out of the frame as they move through blind spots and try to find the right distance and locus relative to him. This proves difficult for most, impossible for others. Some lean in toward his eye—trying to meet him eye to eye. Others stand several paces back, centering their full frame on his eye—trying to meet him body to eye. Often the distances seem too far, and the proximity seems too close. The lone eye becomes *the* point of focus, highlighting the degree to which having two eyes diffuses intensity and provides some measure of physical distance. This distance collapses when Bauby's left eye becomes the sole vanishing point. His eye seems to dismantle the depth perception of anyone approaching him.

4. Symmetry

What happens when a body loses its symmetry? Merleau-Ponty worried about this and wondered what would happen "if, like certain animals, we had lateral eyes with no cross-blending of visual fields." He continued, "Such a body would not reflect itself; it would be an almost adamantine body, not really flesh, not really the body of a human being. There would be no humanity."[5] This is a striking and disturbing passage in relation to Bauby. One of the lessons of inhabiting Bauby's body through Schnabel's film is that inhabiting a body that has lost so many points of coincidence with what we take a human body to be or include is nonetheless to inhabit a vibrant human life. Merleau-Ponty gives the body a central place in phenomenology, and yet, not every body enjoys equal prestige. Bodies without a capacity for "cross-blending of visual fields" are severed from the realm of "flesh" so crucial to Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment. Bauby helps us ask whether symmetry and reflection are crucial to (or adequate for) identifying a human body. Bauby's paralyzed body, and particularly his lone eye, poses a serious challenge to Merleau-Ponty's assessment. His is a human body, even though his

body is unreceptive to touch and his face has lost its symmetry. This should help us recognize that the "body of a human being" is not always a body organized along a symmetrical axis. And perhaps this means that distinguishing "humanity" from other forms of life is neither a matter of visual discrimination, sized up in a glance, nor a matter of visual capacity linked to having two eyes configured on the front of the head.[6]

Liberated from symmetry, Bauby's remaining eye becomes a new character in the film, a wildly animated, moving piece—a body in his body.[7] We are reminded that the eye, a "window to the soul," is also an organ with definite range of motion. We are also reminded, as Merleau-Ponty insisted, that "vision is attached to movement."[8] Without its counterpart, the single eye rolls around, fixates, bulges, blinks, and cries with exaggerated urgency.[9] In his fully paralyzed body, this flickering, darting organ becomes an acrobat—a butterfly.

We see much of the rest of the film through Bauby's single eye in shallow depth, with limited periphery and limited range. This makes his vision much like the vision of a camera, with a single lens. When he cries, the screen dissolves. When he is lying in an ambulance near the end of the film, the city through the window passes upside down and off center, in a blur of brick and stone.

It is not surprising then that a lighthouse, another single-eyed structure, plays such a critical role in Bauby's life at the hospital. He describes it: "I came upon the lighthouse, on one of my first expeditions in my wheelchair, shortly after swimming up from the mists of coma. As we emerged from the elevator on the wrong floor, I saw it: tall, robust, and reassuring, in red and white stripes that reminded me of a rugby shirt. I placed myself at once under the protection of this brotherly symbol, guardian not just of sailors but of the sick—those castaways on the shores of loneliness."[10] Schnabel makes the lighthouse a central part of the visual landscape of the movie. It appears "tall, robust, and reassuring, in red and white stripes" as Bauby describes it, but it is also humorous, slightly overscaled (like a cartoon figure or fragment of a Raoul Dufy painting). Several shots show Bauby alone, miniaturized, with the lighthouse looming behind him—both of them motionless. In the film, Schnabel identifies Bauby with the lone pillar, illuminated from the inside, equipped with a single, scanning beam of light. The lighthouse is a body lit from within, providing a point of anchorage or navigation to ships in the dark. Over time Bauby learns to communicate as the lighthouse communicates, with a single source of blinking light—long and short, single and double blinks, spelling out a Morse code. Interlocutors sail past him, some able to decipher his signal, others left adrift.

5. Expression

The eye can roll wildly, haphazardly, darting around, but it can also be reined in or choreographed. In Bauby's case, this choreography becomes expressive. It is at

first slow and begins, like the acquisition of any new language, with small steps and simple words: yes or no.

Blinking his eye becomes a means of communication, a way of emerging into the public realm. In large part, it is through his ability to communicate that those closest to him recognize him as the brilliant, witty, irreverent person they know and love, despite his radical physical transformation. In many cases this only takes a word or a short phrase that indicates a sense of irony, an ability to play with language. This is critical since it emphasizes that Bauby is not, like a baby, learning to babble. It indicates that having language or speech in a narrowly conceived way is far less important than having some means of expression—and that these means can be exceptionally minimal. His "voice" is his own, even though the means for transmitting his voice have altered entirely.

For Bauby, "speaking" entails a constant, careful accumulation of letters. He is forced toward an economy of expression. This kind of language requires more careful attention by those involved—an extreme patience and participation that several of his interlocutors lack. As a result, this new language also relies on good luck and constant leaps of faith. It is a game where a missed blink can alter everything. We hear Bauby negotiate these obstacles, sometimes with anxiety and urgency, sometimes with humor (Ok then, "a." What could I say that begins with "a"?). In his memoir Bauby describes unearthing the essential character of a person based on his or her ability to play his language game. Some are too rigid and miss the chance to complete his words or phrases with their inevitable conclusion. "Speaking" with them is exhausting and takes forever. Others are too elastic, finishing whole thoughts too quickly with their own. In the end he writes, "I understood the poetry of such mind games one day when, attempting to ask for my glasses (*lunettes*), I was asked what I wanted to do with the moon (*lune*)."[11]

Bauby's first utterance in the film captures the complexity of his reemergence into the world and the complicated expectations attending speech. His therapist explains the rules. She will read off the letters, and he is to blink once when she says the letter he is thinking. He agrees to try. They get as far as "Je veux . . ." [I want . . .]. Pleased, she coyly asks him, "What is it you want Jean-Do?" One can sense her eager anticipation: Perhaps he wants to thank her? Does he want a glass of water? He gives her the last word: *mourir* (to die). She is unprepared for this. She cannot anticipate that he will use the first steps in his new language to say something meaningful—not to play at speaking. She forgets for a moment that he is fully grown up with his language. He is forced by these circumstances to build a sentence like Wittgenstein's builders with their primitive language: "Block. Pillar. Slab. Beam."[12] But he is nonetheless capable of building an expression greater than the sum of its parts: namely, a complicated expression of a wish—one that she cannot fulfill. Eager to draw him out, she stands with open arms in the bright light of speech, ready to welcome him and hear his happy cry.

We learn from Freud to associate speaking with health. If one can talk about it, one can recover. Bauby's therapist has great hopes for the "talking cure." It is

not a misplaced hope, but it is not clear what a "cure" means in this case or, for that matter, in any case. Bauby's ability to communicate does help him give voice to his life. But having language is not, by itself, enough. One can talk without speaking. One can utter the words without saying any of them. In his first words, Bauby reminds us that speech emerges from a body that may be wounded beyond expression. His therapist gives him an alphabet as if giving him the tools to emerge from his buried space. In turn, he shows her that words are not ready-made tools for digging oneself out of silence.

6. Identity

How does one emerge, resurface, or return? It will not be as simple as rising seamlessly from a depth. Even Plato noticed that the prisoners emerging from the cave would be painfully blinded in the light. It would take time to acclimate. Much later, Freud noticed that soldiers returning from World War I were not able to reintegrate into their lives without being helplessly pulled back in dreams and anxiety attacks into the heart of their own darkness. This forced Freud to reevaluate the effects of trauma on the psyche and to supplement the pleasure principle with an account of "the mysterious masochistic trends of the ego."[13] In many ways, it is one person who leaves the cave (who leaves for war, who suffers the stroke) and another person who returns. As Odysseus discovered, the trip home is only half the battle.

For Bauby, the first glimmer of this problem—a problem of *return, identification*, and *recognition*—arises the first time he glimpses his reflection in a window as he is wheeled down the corridor of the hospital. In the film we hear his thought: "Mon Dieu. Qui est-ce qui?" [Oh God. Who is that?]. (Later, as he imagines himself skiing in the Alps, he will answer: "Ca! C'est Moi!"). In the window Bauby sees himself from the outside, reflected, as others see him. The realization of the difference between his living reality and his surface reality strikes him as horrifically decisive. In his memoir, Bauby recounts his reaction to this first glimpse of himself in his wheelchair: "In one flash I saw the frightening truth. It was as blinding as an atomic explosion and keener than a guillotine blade."[14] The "frightening truth" is the revelation that his identity is equally and at the same time the alien reflection staring back at him and the familiar voice speaking in him. He is a hybrid of incommensurate parts: beasts, angels. Unrecognizable even to himself, Bauby realizes he is doubly unknowable to anyone else. Whatever else "locked-in syndrome" means, it takes on its full significance in the moment Bauby faces this compounding isolation. His reflection makes manifest the chasm at the heart of identity. He is a subject cast between two shores, split between reality as it appears and reality as it feels. They are equally real and entirely irresolvable.

Schnabel emphasizes the chasm between how life feels and looks from Bauby's own perspective and how Bauby looks to the people surrounding him.

When we see through Bauby's eye (as we do most of the film), the world is composed of close-ups of faces, women, his children's hands, light pouring through windows, a vase of roses, photographs on the wall. Everything from this vantage point is vivid, intimate, and full of warmth.[15] When we are looking *at* him, Schnabel takes long shots from a distance. The color is neutral and subdued. We see Bauby in his bed or his wheelchair, isolated.

Schnabel alternates between perspectives, long shots followed by close-ups. The cinematic possibility mirrors a human capacity to be near or far, present or absent, regardless of physical distance. Like the camera rolling back, one can opt out of being-there.

7. Exposure

The movie's jarring visual shifts underscore a difference between looking *at* and being *with*. It is a difference Cora Diamond attributes to a lack of imagination, an inability to cross from the facts of a situation to the implications and the meaning.[16] In recent work, Diamond differentiates between "facts" and "presences" to talk about the difference between *information* that might help one orient in a situation and *exposure* that might "shoulder one from one's familiar sense of moral life."[17] She goes on to argue that philosophy has a tendency to trade in "facts." When it does this, it risks missing the "difficulty of reality." Diamond invokes Cavell's notion of "deflection" to describe what happens when facts blunt and disperse the immediacy and shock of exposure. Facts may contribute to honing moral sensibility, but they also may insulate us from difficult realities—shielding us from exposure. We can, for example, shield ourselves from Bauby's difficult reality by focusing on the medical facts of locked-in syndrome, a set of statistics or vital signs. Diamond asks us to be present to realities that resist comprehension and formulation. This means letting them affect us personally, letting them, in her language, "unhinge" us.

The accumulation of facts is not the same as immersion in a situation. Immersion entails exposure to significance that might confound one's ability to know anything certain or definite. Schnabel is particularly sensitive to the difference between facts and exposure. He limits the audience's access to facts of Bauby's case that might deflect our immersion in his life. This means that we only know as much as Bauby himself knows—the doctor's diagnosis comes too early and too rapidly to fully digest. Of course, there are times when more information is precisely what we need or when additional facts are helpful and important. The point is that additional information is not *all* we need to be present and responsive. We also need to feel moved by a situation in an inarticulate or prearticulate way—to feel alive to something that may not fit into any category, concept, or model one has at one's disposal. Opening oneself to this kind of exposure means risking having to renegotiate or relinquish some or all of the facts

that should have added up. It may be painful. It may in fact trigger a landslide of facts that once seemed stable. Exposure to one reality might expose blindness to other realities, a cascading exposure to ever more exposing realities.

Like Diamond, William James helps formulate the ethical significance of moving from facts to presences. He attributes an inability to be present to alternative realities to "a certain blindness in human beings"—a stubborn embeddedness in one's life, culture, and glancing judgments. James describes traveling in rural North Carolina, where he sees the cleared trees and stumps as an indication of "unmitigated squalor." After talking with a local mountaineer, James realizes that the same stumps that look to him like the signs of poverty and destruction appear to the people inhabiting the land as signs of "personal victory." He confesses, "The chips, the girdled trees, and the vile split rails spoke of honest sweat, persistent toil and final reward. The cabin was a warrant of safety for self and wife and babes. In short, the clearing, which to me was a mere ugly picture on the retina, was to them a symbol redolent with moral memories and sang a very paean of duty, struggle, and success." One can see everything distinctly and still miss the entire significance of the scene. James reminds us that we are routinely blind to what makes life significant for someone else, and he extends our blindness to other animals in this diagnosis: "Take our dogs and ourselves, connected as we are by a tie more intimate than most ties in this world; and yet . . . how insensible, each of us, to all that makes life significant for the other!" Even in the intimacy of our relationships with those closest to us we can fail to absorb the significance of things. James takes the experience of blindness as a practical imperative for increasing sensitivity to the "vital secrets" others hold dear and for increasing understanding when others fail to grasp or appreciate one's own "vital secrets."[18]

Some secrets are deeper than others, buried further down, or more difficult to discern. Yet James and Diamond both ask us whether we can expose ourselves to the secret life of things—the life that is not mirrored in one's individual eager living but that lives in its own strange rhythms and with its own centers of gravity. Perhaps such lives—the life of the mountaineer James witnessed, the lives of animals Diamond witnesses, the life of Jean-Dominique Bauby Schnabel witnesses—call us to reconfigure our sense of life. *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* is Schnabel's effort to expose us to a life we might otherwise avoid. He helps us, as the mountaineer helps James, witness that there is life here too—deeply, fiercely alive in a hospital bed and an inert body.

In our blindness to other lives we are all helplessly "locked in." We have trouble seeing things from multiple points of view, and this can cause us to miss or misread entire chapters of our world.[19] For James and Diamond, this "blindness" has serious ethical implications. Overcoming the limited focus of our own lives will entail finding ways of being increasingly intimate with and open to the particularities of other lives. Part of this entails forestalling identification—staving off the rush toward subsuming particulars under universals—for as long as

possible. This active refusal of identification is also a cornerstone of Levinas's ethics, which entails a perpetual close-up with another person whose face remains sensibly expressive without becoming definitely recognizable.

8. Close-Ups

Schnabel uses the cinematic close-up to differentiate between those who are able to be with Bauby and those who are not. This is an illustration of something that routinely occurs in vision and memory—those who are emotionally closest to us are also the most vivid to us, the most present or near. Schnabel puts this into play in the form of faces that inhabit Bauby's eye, his memory, and his imagination—faces that occupy the whole screen. These include those of his children and particularly their mother, Céline, his nurses, his father, and certain friends. Others (the telephone repairmen who enter his room, his publisher, certain doctors) appear but remain at a distance. Still others do not appear at all or appear only in memory—most notably his girlfriend, Inés, who cannot bear the thought of seeing him so drastically changed. There are also those who come physically near without getting any closer to him: as with the doctor who stitches his eye closed. This all indicates that being close is not a matter of crossing a physical space. It includes the crossing of another gap. Different people in the film have different ways of crossing and arrive in different proximity.

There are two instances in the film where others succeed in coming very close to Bauby. The first is a visit from a distant friend—someone he has not seen for years. Bauby remembers this man in a flash, remembering he had been held hostage in Beirut for five years. Bauby had not contacted him upon his release, fearing that his old friend would be changed beyond recognition, that it would be too difficult to talk to him and impossible to relate. Seeing the man's face loom in near his own, he immediately feels embarrassed by the visit, ashamed that he has come here now, when Bauby never went to him. He also feels anxious and suspicious that the man has come to preach to him or worse, to pity him. But something else takes place, defying Bauby's (and our) expectations. The man draws very close and tells Bauby he knows what it is like to be locked in. He tells him he survived his own imprisonment by reciting the top Bordeaux's of 1955; he survived by "clinging to what makes me human." Before leaving he adds, "Hold fast to the human inside of you."[20] Later, in a telephone call, Bauby's father compares his own situation (he is unwell and too old to exit his apartment) to his son's—they are both locked in—one in an apartment and his failing body, the other in a hospital and his paralyzed body.[21]

The film is punctuated by these two moments when an unlikely convergence occurs between one person and another, an ability to be together in a common fate, a shared suffering. Rather than feigned identification—empathy that might feel forced or insulting—in both moments people succeed in expressing something

genuine about Bauby's experience relative to their own experience that helps them both feel less isolated. They are moments when the improbable situation of suffering locked-in syndrome merges with a more universal human condition.

It is not easy to get all the way to each other. People rarely cross the distance. Bauby must find new ways of crossing and letting others cross to him, but for each of us there is a degree of being held hostage, confined, and isolated. For each of us there are times when we are more or less embodied, more or less at ease in our skin, or more or less closed off and foreign to the world and ourselves. We live through differing degrees of insulation and exposure. The odds of suffering locked-in syndrome or being literally held hostage are slim, but to grow old, to feel one's own body and mind change, atrophy, and perhaps fail, is part of the natural, inevitable, course of human life. To make a link between these extremes of the extraordinary and the mundane is not to belittle the severity of true ruptures. It is instead to underscore the possibilities for being with others across and through ruptures of multiple kinds—to help each other surface or emerge.

9. Heat

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly is largely about the experience of captivity, isolation, and being held hostage. But it is equally, or perhaps more, about the experience of freedom and finding a range of motion (emotion) in limited space. So much space in a margin. It is about a withdrawal from one world and the slow acclimation into another. This separation and reentry is something Merleau-Ponty described in different terms, explaining, "I can close my eyes, lie down, listen to the blood pulsing in my own ears, lose myself in some pleasure or pain, and shut myself up in this anonymous life which subtends my personal one. But precisely because my body can shut itself off from the world, it is also what opens me out upon the world and places me in a situation there. The momentum of existence toward others, toward the future, toward the world, can be restored as a river unfreezes."[22] Momentum can be restored as a river unfreezes. Schnabel uses footage of a crumbling Arctic ice shelf to illustrate the dramatic thaw Bauby undergoes as he finds his own range of motion and begins to reenter the world. The ice falls in giant pieces, crashing, as Bauby uses his new language, reconnects with his children, and even finds a limited range for his head (side to side) and his tongue (up and down). He begins to move. He heats up, as if life consists in some (minimal) degree of heat at an elemental level.

The world can be restored as a river unfreezes. We can warm up to one another. We can return from the margins and from the cold. This is not without effort, for just as easily, things can also go the other way. The last imagery in *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* shows the reversed film of the Arctic shelf, the ice leaping back from the sea and re-fusing itself into cliffs. These images accompany Bauby's last moments, the film ending with his blurry vision of a

few visitors before his death. Céline, a few friends, and finally—too late—Inés dissolve into abstract patches of color. Schnabel orchestrates the entire film itself, *materially*, as the flickering light and awakening of consciousness that will inevitably fade with the film's last frame. What is surprising is that Bauby's death is nonetheless so sudden. He is making progress. He is in the midst of demonstrating his new ability to "sing": several grunts and moans. He has finished his book. The situation and the story are extraordinary, and yet the end is pedestrian, almost ridiculous—an unexpected illness (pneumonia), a rapid deterioration.

Bauby's sudden death underscores the minimal amount of movement, heat, and resistance keeping one in the margin of life. A body is a fragile zone of heat and cold, sense and thought, that holds together miraculously by interactions at multiple levels and is capable of rising and falling apart in myriad ways. To be embodied is to be inherently vulnerable but also to be remarkably resistant to any stable, permanent definition or identity. Bodies heat up, cool off, leap, sink, wake, sleep. Sometimes, as with Bauby, a body changes suddenly, beyond recognition. Sometimes a body is a cage, a weight, an anchor, a pivot, a shell; sometimes a rhythm, a pulse, a face, a touch, a breath. Sometimes bodies elude us, melding into a space that seems continuous. Sometimes a body, one's own body or somebody else, impinges with an urgency that absorbs space—looming larger than life.[23] Schnabel uses his camera to inhabit Bauby's paralyzed body and his darting eye, helping us to see how bodies fall in and out of focus, showing us a body composed of many bodies and a life made up of multiple lives. In the end, this might help us see the essential incoherence and ambiguity of bodies. There will not be one definitive description or a single image that can capture a body in its living, elastic range. Schnabel leaves us with an ethical task to question our tendency to focus on or away from particular bodies—both those bodies we identify with or recognize and those bodies that strike us as foreign, alien, monstrous, or strange. When we find ways to be present with more bodies in their living realities, the world will show itself more full of life than we can imagine.

Notes

Special thanks go to John Stuhr for the invitation to formulate these thoughts and to all the participants in the 2008 American Philosophies Forum for their helpful comments and discussion.

1. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250c.
2. Mark Johnson, "What Makes a Body?," this issue.
3. Harvey Cormier, "Bringing Omar Back to Life," this issue.
4. Jean-Dominique Bauby, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 5.
5. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 125.
6. If the body itself is composed of multiple bodies, then perhaps every body is a zone of ambiguous animality and humanity. Perhaps animal and human are not separable or hierarchical categories of life or value. This is something that Kelly Oliver raised in this issue in her article, "Shared Embodiment and the Power to Suffer"—opening with a question about whether Merleau-Ponty includes the

bodies of animals in his notion of embodiment. In the passage I cited, it seems clear that animals with lateral eyes (frogs, fish, etc.) are excluded from the reversibility of "flesh." This exclusion may have additional consequences for what human bodies Merleau-Ponty includes or excludes.

7. Giles Deleuze, quoting Jean Cocteau, writes, "Our body is a type of world full of an infinity of creatures that are also worthy of life" (*The Fold: Liebniz and the Baroque* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], 109).

8. Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 124.

9. The eye looks increasingly urgent but also increasingly ambiguous. This is in part because it is the *only* moving part of Bauby's face. Ludwig Wittgenstein notes: "Get a human being to give angry, proud, ironical looks; and now veil the face so that only the eyes remain uncovered—in which the whole expression seemed concentrated: their expression is now surprisingly *ambiguous*" (*Zettel*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967], 41e).

10. Bauby, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, 29.

11. Ibid., 22.

12. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1958), 3e, 2.

13. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 12.

14. Bauby, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, 9.

15. Schnabel makes this distinction both visual and audible, alternating between the vibrant, dynamic world Bauby experiences and the subdued, drab world looking back at him by changing between a soundtrack dominated by U2, Tom Waits, and Lou Reed (Bauby's interior world) and a soundtrack of ambient hospital sounds, Bauby's own labored breath, and the crash of waves (the external world).

16. Diamond uses the example from Jack London's story "To Build a Fire" to demonstrate that there are multiple ways of knowing what "fifty degrees below zero" means—and only some of them will have practical value or make any difference. One can know all the facts of a situation and still miss the significance: one can know all about how to build a fire and still freeze to death in the woods. See Cora Diamond, "How Many Legs?" in *Value and Understanding: Essays for Peter Winch* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 149–78.

17. Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy," in *Philosophy and Animal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 64.

18. William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," in *The Writings of William James, a Comprehensive Edition*, ed. J. J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 629–31.

19. This is related to Wittgenstein's point that "to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life" (*Philosophical Investigations*, 19).

20. This is similar to something Levinas wrote about. Reflecting on his own experiences during World War II (when he was held captive in a French labor camp), he attempts to articulate lessons one might draw from the experience of captivity in order to say something to future generations. Foremost is the lesson of finding the strength to be alone—being able to remain human, even when there is no one there to see you. This is, in part, why Levinas insists that ethics takes place in the dark. See his essay "Nameless," included in Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 119–23.

21. Bauby describes one such conversation in his memoir, writing: "Every now and then he calls, and I listen to his affectionate voice, which quivers a little in the receiver they hold to my ear. It cannot be easy for him to speak to a son who, he knows well, will never reply" (*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, 45).

22. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 1962), 191.

23. For instance, a body thrown off balance can emerge jarringly in its gait or posture, as if we suddenly see the effort of movement (something James calls "the phenomenon of effort"). We see this with the laborious work of Bauby's single eye. This has to do with the defeat of certain expectations about movement, symmetry, and rhythm we unreflectively attribute to specific kinds of bodies. An unexpected rhythm is also how Gerty MacDowell suddenly emerges for Bloom: "Slowly, without looking back she went down the uneven strand and slippy seaweed. She walked with a certain quiet dignity characteristic of her but with care and very slowly because—because Gerty MacDowell was . . . Tight boots? No. She's lame! O!" (James Jocye, *Ulysses* [New York: Vintage Books, 1986], 301).