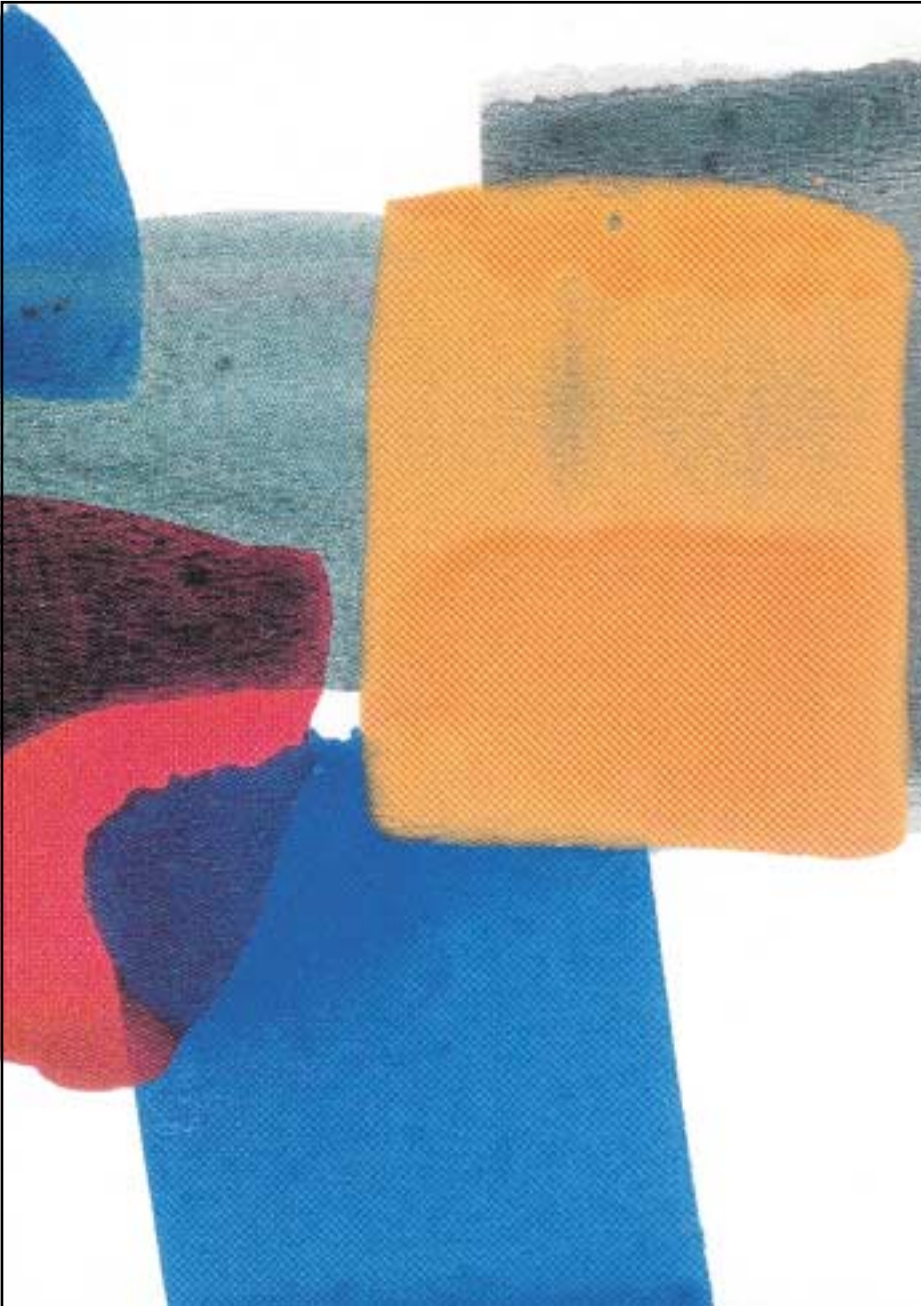


John O'Neill



Five Bodies

Re-figuring Relationships



Five Bodies

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Marius and Joan

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Preface

In the 1980s I put forward a framework for a sociology of the body – a field which did not have a name when I started lectures on it after my first book, *Sociology as a Skin Trade* (1972). The exponential growth of body studies meantime obliged one to take a stand. I did so by making a forthright statement on the body as an *institution of anthropomorphosis*. In *Five Bodies* those cultural practices through which we map our macro–micro worlds, articulating a cosmology, a body politic, a commensal society, a productive/consumptive economy and a bio-technological frontier of human design and transplantation are focused upon.

My argument proceeds in terms of a civilizing thesis drawn from Vico's humanist *The New Science* ([1774] 1970) and Freud's melancholic reflections on the figure of prosthetic 'man' in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1962). The immediate context of my own body studies was the body politics of the 1960s experienced from the Canadian border of North America. Here events appeared both to challenge and to celebrate the social sciences that we were revisioning through continental phenomenology, hermeneutics and critical theory (O'Neill, 1974; 1989). At the same time I thought it necessary to preserve the grand perspectives of the classical order problem – moving from cosmological societies to Judeo-Christian society, into the industrialized orders of work, consumption, life and death that characterize modernity and its aftermath (Turner, 1984; Shilling, 1993).

Five Bodies avoids any essentialist position on the logic of the body in favor of the open body-logics that are captured in the history of 'anthropomorphism' or of becoming-human. It never loses sight of the interaction between our ways of thinking bodies through society and thinking/doing society through bodies (O'Neill, 2002a). It therefore never privileges patriarchal, feminist or racialized body-logics that have been the focus of later research. Rather, I show how corporeal practices, such as the ritual meal, can be thought of in terms of contested theories of functionalism and materialism obliging one to locate oneself as theorist. Or I show how archaic cosmology is in fact an elaborate cognitive mapping practice which remains a civilizing source as we explore futuristic inner and outer worlds. *Five Bodies* is also concerned with issues of sovereignty and kinship, emancipation and alienation. Between the 1960s and the 1970s we moved from idealizing our bodies to being horrified by them as our sense of the sources of empowerment shifted. I have therefore argued for the institution of a civic ratio between public and private life, work, health and education which demand our collective and familial intelligence. Here, especially, I