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Students of culture have been increasingly concerned with the ways in which cultural values are 'inscribed' on the body. These essays go beyond this passive construal of the body to a position in which embodiment is understood as the existential condition of cultural life. From this standpoint embodiment is reducible neither to representations of the body, to the body as an objectification of power, to the body as a physical entity or biological organism, nor to the body as an inalienable centre of individual consciousness. This more sensate and dynamic view is applied by the contributors to a variety of topics, including the expression of emotion, the experience of pain, ritual healing, dietary customs, and political violence. Their purpose is to contribute to a phenomenological theory of culture and self - an anthropology that is not merely about the body, but from the body.

Contents

Introduction: the body as representation and being-in-the-world Thomas J. Csordas; Part I. Paradigms and Polemics: 1. Bodies and anti-bodies: flesh and fetish in contemporary social theory Terence Turner; 2. Society's body: emotion and the 'somatization' of social theory M. L. Lyon and J. M. Barbalet; Part II. Form, Appearance and Movement: 3. The political economy of injury and compassion: amputees on the Thai-Cambodia border Lindsay French; 4. Nurturing and negligence: working on others' bodies in Fiji Anne E. Becker; 5. The silenced body - the expressive Leib: on the dialectic of mind and life in Chinese cathartic healing Thomas Ots; Part III. Self, Sensibility, and Emotion: 6. Embodied metaphors: nerves as lived experience Setha M. Low; 7. Bodily transactions of the passions: El Calor among Salvadoran women refugees Janis H. Jenkins and Martha Valiente; 8. The embodiment of symbols and the acculturation of the anthropologist Carol Laderman; Part IV. Pain and Meaning: 9. Chronic pain and the tension between the body as subject and object Jean Jackson; 10. The individual in terror E. Valentine Daniel; 11. Rape trauma: contexts of meaning Cathy Winkler; 12. Words from the Holy People: a case study in cultural phenomenology Thomas J. Csordas.