

pivot

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About *Pivot*

Pivot is a hybrid academic and creative journal, published annually by members of York University's Graduate Program in English.

“Pivot,” according to the OED:

verb,

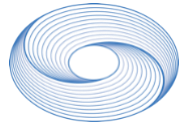
- 1. intransitive. To turn on, or as if on, a pivot; figurative: to depend on, to hinge on.**
- 2. transitive. To provide with a pivot; to mount on, or attach by means of, a pivot or pivots; to hinge**

noun,

- 3. a short shaft or pin forming the centre on which a mechanism turns or oscillates,**
- 4. figurative: the crucial or central point of something; that on which everything depends**

Pivot aims to embody all of these meanings. On the one hand, pivoting and shifting with the times, changing according to academic ebbs and flows in theory and fashion; on the other, providing a centre around which other discourses, ideas, people, and works can revolve. *Pivot* is dedicated to lifting diverse voices and displaying a range of subjects prioritizing no period, genre or experience above another. Our goal is to promote innovative, creative and interdisciplinary thinking and to offer unique and exciting perspectives to our readership.

Letter from the Editors
Olivia De Sanctis, J Lundquist, Sana Mohsin & Yasmina Jaksic



How we conceive, construct, and experience the body—its limits, its borders, its actions, its significance, its legibility—is an integral part of egoic formation, and as such, the body has remained a site of immense political philosophical examination. As Julia Coffrey describes, “the body is seen as both the consuming entity and the product. The body is the mode by which the individual and the social collide,” it is a “social biological organism” (2-3). Discussions of the body have brought into light the numerous governing discourses that have shaped and stunted the body’s possibilities. From Foucault, we see the body as structured by heteronormative discourse; corporeality becomes a site of discipline and surveillance, “the body of the child, under surveillance, surrounded in his cradle, his bed, or his room by an entire watch-crew of parents, nurses, servants, educators, and doctors, all attentive to the least manifestations of his sex, has constituted” (98), and control through the “hysterization of women 's bodies, pedagogization of children 's sex, socialization of procreative behavior, psychiatrization of perverse pleasure” (104). Butler accentuates the relationship between the body and gender and the narrative of “biology” applied to our bodies, differentiating between the performativity of gender and the function of sex.

Body-theorists continue to break down the scripting and repression of bodies. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the “body without organs”—a body unorganized by biological discourse, a body operating freely, a body reaching its full potential. Elizabeth Grosz calls for a movement beyond a mind/body dualism that regards the mind as a social, cultural, and historical object while the body, in contrast, is understood as nothing more than raw material. Grosz advocated for the development of “altogether new conceptions of corporeality . . . which see animate materiality and the materiality of language in interaction [and] which make possible a materialism beyond physicalism.”

In the call for papers for our 2022 issue, *Pivot* invited critical and creative work which addresses these ideas about the body. The call provoked questions such as: How do practices of defining geographic space, assigning meaning to elements of nature, or creating nationalities contribute to the way that we understand the human body? How do stories shape our bodies as sites of cultural inscription, and how do bodies act as sites of both cultural representation and cultural inscription? And how do bodies perform as liminal sites on the border of binary pairs such as private/public, self/other, psychical/social, and natural/cultural. Topics which deal with “Somatic Cartography & Stories” could range from addressing the changing relationship between the human body and technology to addressing folklore related to the body. The work which is represented in this issue gives a wide range of approaches to the subject, including addressing racial and gendered ways of shaping meaning about bodily features and how the body is defined through its physical surroundings.

Remarks on the Subject and Conference Under the Same Title

The subject of this issue, "Somatic Cartography & Stories: Mapping Meaning onto the body" follows a conference which was held by York University's English Graduate Student Association (EGSA) on March 5th, 2022 under the same title. The title of the conference and this journal originally stemmed from a poem written by a member of EGSA's Colloquium Committee who is also *Pivot's* current Layout Editor and Website Administrator, Olivia De Sanctis. The original poem can be found within this issue of *Pivot*.

According to De Sanctis,

The inspiration for the poem stemmed from working through ideas concerning how meaning is created in association with the human body. While experimenting with automatic writing, I tried to combine language about the body with language pertaining to stories and written text. I brought this poem to be workshopped in a creative writing course and had fully intended to make edits to the original.

However, after having one reader whose opinion I really value ask me not to make any changes to the poem, I decided to leave it in its original form. (2022)

In addition to De Sanctis, the conference was organized by Saman Azad Moustafa, Darren Paterson and Anjalee Nadarjan. Some of the peer-reviewed critical papers and creative non-fiction which is featured in this issue come from papers presented in EGSA's conference. Just as in this issue, the array of interdisciplinary approaches to the subject of the body made for a fascinating and thought provoking day of presentations. The day was followed by a social event which allowed for graduate students from several separate disciplines and institutions to come together. In addition to the papers which come out of this conference, the addition of other critical articles and a variety of creative work display a broad range of thought pertaining to the body and how meaning is transcribed onto the body.

Transition to include creative work:

Keeping in mind how our issue will essentially relaunch *Pivot*, we made the decision to include creative submissions alongside academic papers. The word pivot itself implies a shift, and as we bring in a new image we wanted to lean into the idea of community, and all the facets that it represents. So, in this issue you'll find not only carefully constructed research essays surrounding the theme of Somatic Cartography, but also poems, literary non-fiction, visual art, and everything in between that allow us to take the theme even further, to look at it from different angles. *Pivot* hopes to continue to be a domain for creative writing, possibly dedicating entire issues to the work, with their own themes.

Remarks on papers & theme:

The works in this volume variously confront the exigencies of both "Somatic Cartographies" and *Pivot* itself—the spectrum of reparative to paranoid (to simplify the words of words of Eve Sedgwick) presents through a multiplicity of embodied experiences of the world through space, identity, and affect. Present pieces tackle the disorientating nature of existing as a person, having and consisting of and being a body, being perceived and understood by others. They confront and work through the frightening valences of trauma and violence dictated by structures of oppression—classism, racism, ableism, sexism, and more—in their suppression of both the individual self-relation and the body politic writ large. Though absent of more strictly materialist theories, this volume nevertheless produces a central question: Why the body?

Some authors approached the topic directly, others obliquely. Some works are highly personal, others analytical. Some start from personal anecdotes and work their way to theoretical grounds, others perform opposite or reverse moves. Regardless of the particulars of form, though, they all find beauty in confronting forms of bodily hatred, manufactured by external pressures and structures. Finding power in self-love, reconciling the fact of one's own embodied presence, and encountering the world in strange and exciting new ways through altered perceptions, these works engage with new forms of world-making that push us to see the world anew, in every moment.

Works Cited:

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- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. U of Minnesota Press, 1977.