

Remain

By Ioana B. Jucan, Jussi Parikka, and Rebecca Schneider. 2019. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 128 pp. Paperback. \$25.00. ISBN-13: 978-1517906481. doi:10.1017/S0149767719000378

Much like Derrida's assertion in *Archive Fever* that "the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of archivable content even in its very coming into existence and its relation to the future" (1998, 17), Fredrich Kittler, in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, wrote that "media determine our situation" (1999, xxxix). How it does so, and the methodologies by which we pursue the question, is the quest posed by the series of short books, *In Search of Media*. Every book in the series investigates "the terms—the limits, the conditions, the periods, the relations the phrases—of media" (vii).

Because of Kittler's prescience (we can hardly think ourselves out of the darkness of the present without the imaginative technologies through which we produce and reflect our reality), and Derrida's attention to how the technological infrastructure determines what can be known and done with information, the stakes of engaging with media by activating particular methodologies of (inter and trans) disciplinary fields is critical at this present moment. While the keyword titles of earlier series publications (*Pattern Discrimination, Markets, Communication, and Machine*) mark out more obvious connections to video and digital technologies and their circulation in the economy of late stage capital, the term "remain" remains more mysterious, more stubborn, and certainly more multivalent. In the introduction to *Remain*, the fifth text of the series, Ioana B. Jucan posits that methods and lenses of media archeology and performance studies scholarship may productively theorize how media remains engender situations or events, past and future. These are the fields of study that look at the vitality and vibrancy of remains as temporality, matter, and performance.

More often media remains are engaged as leftovers—knowable detritus of past imaginative ventures that have endeavored to contribute to social progress. There is little argument over their material composition. Media remains are technological commodities and discrete works

forged by obsolete technologies. Like pornography, the assumption is that we know them when we see them. But how they become classified as outmoded is a comparative process. We deem an expressive technology outmoded when another surpasses it. It is then that the old new media is understood as obsolete. What happens next? Where surpassed, outmoded, or antiquated technology goes is also important. Is it relegated to junkyards, forgotten storage spaces, museums, and teaching collections? In this text, the reasons they end up in such spaces matter less than reactivating the situations of those spaces. The preservation or neglect of media remains affords us the insight and means for comparing the then and now of our mediatic situation, but in this small but important volume, the investigations generated from media archeology and performance studies disrupt these conventional assumptions of temporality and prioritize situatedness by considering remains of outmoded new media as events precipitated by the localities in which we find them.

Co-contributor and media archeologist Jussi Parikka's essay suggests that the singular term remain(!) is a performative as well as a noun. Media remains remain, not as obsolete glimpses to a past that has passed. Rather they can serve as a "primary entry to a different temporal regime" (9). Co-contributor and performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider's essay metaphorically links media remains to theater because both share a peculiar ontological status; both are pronounced dead and obsolete, and yet both still persist and broker new experiences. Schneider observes that performances of media remains function as "intermediaries" because remains are taken up iteratively over historical and contemporary presents (51). The material presence of remains allows us to look back at the habitual reconstitution of media and the medium of media over space and time. Most importantly, remains prompt us to question why and how their continued presence catalyzes dynamic social interactions that belie normative classifications, and material limits of the media remain.

If the beginning of the book teases the reader that the concept "media remains" permits an interlocutor to think that technoculture itself could produce a remainder that exists beyond or outside of the encompassing social condition of media and mediation, both authors

quickly dismiss that hope as naïve. Instead, the term “remains” can be harnessed as a lens and technology to access many past, present, and future dynamic; brokered exchanges (Schneider) and the matter, infrastructure, and technology of media remains can be reactivated as the means to broaden speculative knowledges and undermine the very epistemological structures that delimit our current reality. For Parikka, it is imperative to widen the scope of media remains to include the broken systems, the organization of human labor, and the discarded materials that have housed and contain past technologies. Parikka also suggests that we must create laboratories that are allowed to engage with remains as unfolding in time and across multiple geographies. By doing so, Parikka explains that we can upend the taxonomies that keep us locked into an overdetermined presentism, and instead speculate on new futures that are not predicated on the most harmful binary—obsolescence and newness—that forecloses thought of alternative futures.

Schneider’s essay begins with her consideration of a bone disk upon which had been carved the visage of a human (an actor) wearing a mask; she uses this as a prompt for speculation. Knowledge of theater history allows Schneider to speculate that the disk was created as a token or theater ticket or game coin (even over the museum curator’s protests that her hypothesis was unlikely). Schneider observed that the disk was carved by a flesh hand and possibly used for both gambling and an entrance to the ancient Greek theater, which was not only a performance venue, but it doubled as a mercantile space—a space for exchange. Schneider reminds us that the carved human bone, a historical relic, wrought by *techne* that involved a hand that manipulated the carving tool, was likely the new media of its day. Centuries later, that ancient *techne* became the catalyst to her meeting with a Rhode Island School of Design Museum curator in the early twenty-first century. Whether each person’s guess on the disk’s past use was right or wrong matters less than the imaginative way in which Schneider’s informed speculative musings revised the temporal life of the disk (deemed obsolete), pointing to ways in which deep history is always already embedded in technology if one views it from a new, materialist perspective.

For Schneider, media remains become an ongoing situation of exchange, continually reconstitution and becoming. The movement is also not just past to present, as in the story of the disk. Instead, as in the situation of contemporary media like the iPhone, if one looks at the way in which the technology itself is a composite of elements (such as the rare earth elements necessary to the operation of one’s iPhone), one begins to see the situation of the phone as embedded in deep history, in an oceanic time, and the time of industrial capital. The minerals are ancient, belonging to geological time; specific hands and sinews extracted those geological materials, and the hands that engineered and assembled them into the form of device that first delivered the image of the bone disc all are, in fact, components or elements of the extended mediatic event. In this manner, Schneider engages with “obsolete’s” obscure, troubling persistence, following how a disk of human bone has an extended performance life through iterative brokered exchanges over a long *durée* and how these touches and contacts shed something from the impact of one gesture impressed on the other material, which changes the composition of both elements. Schneider calls this “sloughing.” One key observation is how the materiality gained and lost via those exchanges tells a story of intra-inanimation (after Karen Barad) where matter is always becoming and never stable due to numerous iterative intra-activities. Schneider enacts an event of sloughing as an opening salvo; she focuses the reader’s attention to how her hand, the hand’s motion, Schneider’s phone, Schneider’s eye (all biomatter, each mediatic) become an event of her first mediatic encounter and, in the essay, become the matter of the media remains.

For Schneider, these microscopic exchanges—the cells and sweat of her fingers that pass to the phone in executing the swiping gesture—“open the door for difference” (76). Broad exchanges can do so too. Both dismantle the presumption that media remains remain a stable entity. The media remains’ instability then becomes the means to speculate upon a deep history of the performance of both ancient and contemporary scenes mediated by this one highly theatrical token. Schneider shows how one can relocate the media remains accessed through a hand’s gesture and a pixelated

image and think of its transformations as trans-historical and intrainimated scenes. Careful to differentiate from the iterative repertoire as defined by Diana Taylor, where embodied gestures are transmitted through generations, Schneider argues for speculation on materiality of media remains through the reiterative passes of their intrainimation—the way in which parts of biobodies animate them and are animated by gestural activation. Schneider asks the reader to attend to how, with each new reiteration and exchange, the medium of media decomposes and recomposes. This is slough media.

There is an ethical imperative here. What Schneider restores to media remains is the scene of exchange and the theatrical event where the fleshly parts also are considered an active component of the technology necessary to keep the media in play. In this model, biobodies topple from the top of the hierarchy. They are partial, not distinct or outside of the scene of media. For Schneider, media remains expose the complicated interdependencies between nature and culture where we can look to design and usage as sedimenting the scene of the “now” as well as anticipating its supplementary future functions. Schneider’s revision of the remains’ temporality also reveals the political investments of neoliberal capital in the fictions of “net zero” or “instantaneity.”

Parikka’s “Remain(s) Scattered” and Schneider’s “Slough Media” are presented as back-to-back essays that imaginatively speculate on the deployment of media remains in order to productively dissolve many of the binaries that the term media remains imply—new and obsolete, past and present, then and now, frozen and dynamic, human and machine, collection and laboratory. The authors are similar in their hypothetical approach but work in contradistinction to one another, especially in the manner in which they view the position of human intervention. What Schneider restores to the scene are the fleshly parts that first make the technology operational and keep the medium in a dynamic relation. Parikka urges us to put media remains in humanities laboratories for use as mines of the future, inverting the material conditions of labor that were indifferent to the environmental impact of the production of new technologies and as “actioned situations” that can rework the past (7). The hope of the

book is that we may be better served by those technologies that are no longer the “network and condition of existence of activities that make anything work in the first place” (35). Instead, what is considered outmoded remains can become the transport to “a different location not so easily discoverable at first sight in organized official sites of memory and (re)collection” (35). The presence of obsolete hardware or software that can become operational again does not exist merely as a research conduit to reveal the tale of contribution to a history of technoculture. Instead, Parikka argues that the remains of media and the way in which historical and contemporary forms of mediations have philosophies of time embedded in their very hearts or motherboards might be the grounds for new theories and new speculative practices, techniques, and discoveries.

This excellent volume offers methodologies in performance studies and media archeology to work with remains and relics as speculative objects and vestigial technologies. The text convincingly argues that their ongoing presence is not merely indexical to a foreclosed moment in the past, but instead, as Schneider writes, “a decay that just won’t quit” (73, quoted from Schneider 2012, 159). Their stubborn presence—the fact that remains are “scriptive things” (a term coined by Robin Bernstein to indicate their passage to and from biobodies; Bernstein 69), as well as interfaces—allows performance studies to play with media archeology and ecology as a performance of exchanges which revise the temporality and the materiality of the remain, and as Parikka notes, can be afforded a “liveliness of multiple afterlives” (43).

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Dancing Odissi: Paratopic Performances of Gender and State

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Dancing Odissi: Paratopic Performances of Gender and State by Anurima Banerji is the first critical book-length inquiry of the eastern Indian classical dance form called Odissi. It is an ambitious genealogical project tracing the plurality of stories and histories of the development of Odissi in ancient, medieval, colonial, and postcolonial periods. Showing Odissi's extraordinary scope in transcending quotidian norms in gender and sexuality, Banerji argues that the state functions as a choreographic agent "that generates and prescribes idealized movements of the body and social relations" (3). While describing the performativity of Odissi, the author coins the term "paratopic performance," which she defines as a practice that creates a space of alterity that reimagines social norms and orthodoxies of gender and sexuality. Using historical, ethnographic, discursive, and choreographic analysis, Banerji recreates a somatic history of the past critically re-membering class, religion, caste, region, sexuality, and gender. She presents a genealogy of history while attending to the possibility of the performative—a kinetic and social manufacturing of space. She focuses on the subversive potential of the dancing body to prescribe and exceed the systemic choreographies of the state. Attending to ballet's universalist pretense of classicism, Banerji shows the ritual, devotional, and sastric (Hindu) sanction of Odissi and untethers the form from its exclusive link with the sacred, contesting the prestige-drive mystique sanctioned by Hindu religiosity. Banerji's impressive theoretical and historical

exegesis revolves around two scholarly constellations associated with Odissi—one that precludes the possibility of deconstructing the religious sanction and another that views it as a political project deploying heritage politics to legitimize the form's emblematic status.

Dancing Odissi presents a rigorous methodological approach that is culturally situated in the praxis of Odissi while presenting an alternative to existing dance-history models. Positioning herself as an insider, Banerji challenges the dominant narratives of Odissi via insights drawn from fieldwork, material culture, and dance repertoire. Banerji's approach reveals Odissi's deployment of a hermeneutic strategy; her own practice is supplemented by literary, online, screen-based, photographic, musical, sculptural, material, and ritualistic mediations of the form. The maneuver of asserting the agency of the dancing body as opposed to an individuated dancer is particularly compelling. Odissi unfurls through a collective, social process across history. Banerji theorizes the distributed historical body of dance across embodied performance, ritual, philosophy, aesthetics, architecture, and material objects. Reading historical evidence anew shows the indelible connections between dance and the political, wherein the state deploys and depends on dance. Rightfully recognizing a gap in the field, Banerji dedicates a chapter-length inquiry to a rigorous analysis of ancient inscriptions and sculptures belonging to the Jain era. This problematizes the perceived exclusivity of Hindu religiosity as weaponized by right-wing Hindu fundamentalists for toxic, sociocultural engineering. By demonstrating Odissi's undifferentiated reverence for inscription, embodied motion, and material remains, Banerji provides an alternative to the Eurocentric dance history model.

As indicated above, Banerji locates a paratopic potential within Odissi: some practitioners, for example, are known to have transgressed gender norms. Historically, Odissi has been practiced by *Maharis*, ritual specialists appointed in the temple as brides of the male Hindu deity, and *Gotipuas*, young male dancers dressed as females. *Maharis* enjoyed divine status by virtue of her association with *Jagannath*, the Odishan male deity presiding over Odissi. The *Gotipua* act was also replete with divinity, since the performance took place as an integral manifestation of the *Bhakti* cult in which the devotee seeks the