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Connective Tissue: The Bridge and the Body in Contemporary Global Television

Abstract

This essay theorizes television through the concept of the body as a response to contemporary modes of television spectatorship and narrative. With the transnational series *The Bridge* as my focal point, I present a body-linked concept, connective tissue, to television analysis. Televisual connective tissue works to re-consider Raymond Williams' flow in light of contemporary television by gesturing away from the capitalist nature of Williams' term and moving inwards, mirroring the intimate move television spectatorship is taking today. The concept of connective tissue involves a phenomenological approach to television analysis and works to reveal the ways which contemporary global television acts as a system of both narrative as well as experiential connectivity.

Invoking the Body, Contemporizing Flow

In his essay from 1935, "A Forecast of Television," film theorist Rudolf Arnheim invokes the body in his critical analysis of television's possibilities. He considers the respective roles that certain sensory bodily organs—specifically, eyes and ears—play in interpreting televisual information, a process further complicated, he suggests, by the very broadcast capabilities indicative of television. All the while, Arnheim draws into his analysis the organic and virtual natures of the viewing body, pointing to our inherently "slow bodies" made mobile by television's conceptual transit abilities.¹ As Arnheim's early and prophetic account of television's influence suggests, the body plays a crucial role in the experience of television as a system of information and as a phenomenon of connectivity. By invoking the body's sensory organs—eyes and ears—Arnheim engages with the ways television works: as a means to both disrupt yet also transform our experiences of space and time.

In this essay, I examine the ways contemporary

television relates to the body as a concept through the Swedish-Danish co-produced series *The Bridge*.² Television's changing landscape, from national broadcast to international streaming for example, has allowed it to seep more seamlessly beyond the confines of national boundaries. We are in an age of global television spectatorship as the television spectator not only has unprecedented access to international television through the proliferation of online streaming and the fetishization of the box set, but also through the very transnational nature of television narrative itself today. As such, the text through which I will make my argument about televisuality and the body is a prime example of contemporary transnational—or global—television. *The Bridge* takes place on the border between Sweden and Denmark and characters speak both Swedish and Danish in the series, thus necessitating subtitles in any iteration. Elisabeth Bronfen, in *Over Her Dead Body*, provides an analysis of translation useful for thinking about the relationship between text and body, as this essay seeks to do: "The end of the death process means an effacement of the

split between body and soul, and a translation into both the immaterial eternal realm of the spiritual and the material realm of textuality.”³ Through the concept of translation—which for Bronfen is a spatial practice—Bronfen cultivates a theoretical framework in which the body and the text share epistemic ground. Indeed, the series takes place in a murky geographical and cultural middle ground. It has also spurred two remakes to date: *The Bridge* between the U.S. and Mexico and *The Tunnel* between the U.K. and France, further propagating its transnational life, its global nature. These factors—its transnational production, its translational necessities, and its iterations as both original work and remade copies—make it ripe for contemporary television analysis as the series is thusly indicative, in many ways, of the prevalent changes and developments in television narrative production as well as programming over the past decade.

My aim here, then, is to theorize the phenomenon of television through the concept of the body by dissecting and re-conceptualizing the foundational theory of television analysis: *flow*. Raymond Williams defines television in terms of its flow: the combined sequencing of program segments and interruptions of these program segments, which cause “the grabbing of attention in the early moments; the reiterated promise of exciting things to come, if we stay.”⁴ The flow, or the structure of television, hooks us because of a promise it can never fulfill. In 2003, Mimi White examined the historiography of flow, charting its many iterations and slight variations. White ultimately takes issue with television theorists’ reliance on the concept, stating “the enterprise of television studies as a whole has been stymied because the implications of flow for understanding the medium have been taken for granted, rather than interrogated.”⁵ Scholars have since heeded—or perhaps anticipated—White’s call and have indeed made attempts to interrogate the concept. William Uricchio provides a particularly novel interrogation in “Television’s Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow” where he examines the changing viewer interface of television and in so doing reassesses flow, citing the influential impact of the socio-cultural landscape of the time of the term’s inception: “The choice of

the term may have been linked with the period’s dominant (capitalist) cultural insistence on ‘the free flow of goods’ or ‘the flow of ideas’ associated with Western democracies.”⁶ Here, I attempt to break away from the “dominant (capitalist)” structures associated with the term and, in a way, return to Arnheim’s original conceptual territory, the body, as a way to investigate the medium. In so doing, I engage with the phenomenologist’s task: to rationalize logical things of the world and abstract ideas of the mind by invoking the body. Working from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept that “the world is made of the same stuff as the body,” I examine, with *The Bridge* as my exemplary text, the ways that *television* might very well be made of the same stuff of the body through the concept of *connective tissue*.⁷

Connective tissue—fibrous material structured by cellular and extracellular matrices—provide the structural framework to the body, acting as vital interstitial material which connects the otherwise fragmented body making it whole. The body, of course, is itself a structure of ebbs and flows, as it were, as it endures the cycles of life, making it, ultimately, an imperfect or incomplete whole. Even throughout the day, the body endures crucial oscillations as it awakens, eats, exerts energy, and then sleeps. Drawing on Williams’ assertion that televisual flow is constituted by the sequencing—or stitching together—of narrative segments, we might consider the ways television is an incomplete whole structured by textual connective tissue. John Ellis argues that the crux of televisuality lies in its simultaneous wholeness and fragmentation, its very continuity and incompleteness: “Within its stable formats and developing narrative structures, television [...] shows a marked degree of discontinuity [...] Television is therefore at once both continuous and incomplete.”⁸ The stable formats and developing narrative structures to which Ellis refers tend to exist most notably in instances of broadcast, where uncertainty not only drives the television narrative itself, but also its scheduling. As Ellis argues, television is “defined by a process of scheduling,” which sheds light on the significance of relationality, of connection, inherent in television.⁹ Interruptions or breaks in narrative, such as commercials or self-referential advertisements, constitute disruptions of

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television's stable formats and developing narrative structures. In terms of contemporary television, however, we might look to interactive menus or platforms as sites of discontinuity. The concept of connective tissue proves evident when accounting for these disruptions, these discontinuities, in that televisual connective tissues define the moments of collision between the stable and the unstable, the continuous and the discontinuous. Televisual connective tissue points to the very connectivity indicative of television spectatorship, to which Williams' *flow* gestures, but does not—linguistically or conceptually—fully grasp at this moment in television's history. By engaging with the body as a concept, I seek here to present a framework that enriches *flow* in order to fit it to the nuances and changes in contemporary television.

Working from the concept that television is an interconnective web of narrative, stitched together by diegetic and non-diegetic moving image resulting in fragmented narrative sequences which contribute, broadly, to its production of meaning, Sandy Flitterman's "The *Real Soap Operas*: TV Commercials" examines the ways that commercials inform programmed narrative in crucial ways: "The ruptured, episodic, impeded and deferred movement of the soap opera is thus continued across the commercial break [and] the result becomes a plural dispersion, a veritable explosion of narrated meanings."¹⁰ In a traditional analysis of television, Flitterman's commercials incite the very flow of Williams' conception: they interrupt the diegetic narrative sequence but nevertheless continue narrative meaning across non-diegetic segments. In the process, these interruptions deny the spectator ultimate satisfaction, thus keeping her hooked. In this instance, the spectator's pleasure comes from her lack of control and her position as receptor of uncertainty and these very interruptions, commercials, become part of the larger production of meaning incited by the narrative programming.

The task of contemporary television analysis, however, is to examine television from the perspective of traditional broadcast as well as from new landscapes of television: the box set, streaming, and on demand to name a few. These new modes often exclude traditional commercial interruptions, thus focusing my critical eye to the

moments of narrative and extra-narrative—such as credits and interactive menus—interruptions. As televisual technologies develop, our narratives move closer in to our bodies and are increasingly at the mercy of our bodily control and desires. With streaming, for example, we can view television at our leisure on our laptops: in most instances, this allows for the very screen of spectatorship to move in closer to our physical bodies as we position the devices on our laps, beside us as we lay in bed, or at least at arms length as we enact control from the attached keypad or multi-touch screen. Indeed, television spectatorship has acquired a new—or at least different—kind of intimacy. Heidi Rae Cooley's analysis of mobile screenic devices (MSD) and their relationship to the televisual provides an apt illustration of the insurgence of tactility that comes with such technological development: in Cooley's terms, the mobile phone's LED screen "repositions the handheld as a seeing device, a move that brings the hand and the eye into direct contact at the site of the MSD."¹¹ In her analysis of connectivity across public and private domains—a concept central to television theory—Cooley, like Arnheim, invokes the body's sensory organs: in her instance, the eye and the skin. In so doing, she expresses concern for *how* we receive visual—or in her iteration, *screenic*—narrative, a consideration television analysis inherently demands.

With these new realms of spectatorship and engagement, *flow*—as a term and as an analytic concept—requires some re-shaping, as contemporary television is not defined solely by its commercial interruptions or a "dominant (capitalist)" structure. What all these modes of television share, however, is an adherence to the interstitial, which ultimately manifests itself in the process of the shifting between narrative segments made meaningful with the variable of time. The conceptual framework of the body allows us to analyze television in its multiplicity of forms and re-constitutes, accordingly, television studies' foundational concept while maintaining its theoretical essence. The body as a conceptual roadmap allows us to navigate the vast and ever-changing landscape of television, especially as devices move in close to our bodies and narratives engage in complex, connective, and global storylines.

Transporting the Self, Dissecting Fragments

The Bridge begins inside a car as gloved hands caress a steering wheel illuminated by the vibrant artificiality of dashboard lights. The hands are one of the few images in focus throughout the opening segment as the world beyond the interior of the car begins to blur in an almost hallucinatory haze. Through the windshield we can just make out the road in front, and through the driver's window, the road beside. The shot jumps from graffiti on the side of the road, to streetlights puncturing what would otherwise be utter darkness, to the very border between the interior of the car and the exterior of the road with the rearview mirror and the pixilated highway simultaneously sharing the frame. The gloved hands now tightly gripping the steering wheel, the lights of the dashboard draw our attention to the driver's intensity and focus. Our view as spectators is a privileged one, as the crime that comes to ignite the entire investigation and the entire series is underway. We enter the diegetic world of *The Bridge* on the brink between inside and outside and between knowing and not-knowing as we approach the very bridge where the story, the investigation, both begins and ends.

With Arnheim's essay in mind, we might note the significance of the car, of movement, in this opening scene. In addition to invoking the body when analyzing television, Arnheim likens television to the "motorcar and airplane," suggesting television works as a means of "cultural transportation."¹² Television, he argues, transports spectators' minds while their physical bodies remain static. Drawing on Arnheim's work, Margaret Morse's insightful essay, "The Ontology of Everyday Distraction," works from this theorization, arguing that television is an analog of the freeway and the shopping mall in that television incites a space of *distraction*, which she defines as an "attenuated fiction effect, a partial loss of touch with the here and now."¹³ In both instances, the spectator is in two places at once: her *self* is halved as her physical body remains grounded and her mind, the portal of her virtual body, moves to other spaces and other times. *Self* is an inherently complex term, and I use it here to connect the physical and the virtual, or as Susan

Stuart suggests, "mind and world": the self is a

complex set of relations between sensings, thinkings, actions, and objects [...] [w]hat we think of as our selves turn out to be nothing more than artefacts of these integrated experiences; they are, after all, very simply creations of the interplay between mind and the world; they are prostheses.¹⁴

Stuart suggests that the self is a product of a phenomenon: it is thusly intangible and ultimately a rationalization between the physical body of the world and the virtual realm of the mind. With the theorization of television as a transport device, matters of the nature of the body—the physical and the virtual—consequently come into question. The self is realized in this instance when it is halved—like the body on the Bridge, which will serve to command the entire series—when the mind is transported, by television. *The Bridge* thus fittingly begins in a "motorcar" focused on the fragmented body: all we see are gloved hands, not even flesh. Incidentally, this fragmented body, made fragmented by the frame of the shot, is only a precursor to the fragmented body that will dictate the investigation to come.

The investigation begins when a corpse is found on the Öresund/Øresund Bridge that connects Sweden and Denmark, a historically significant infrastructure, which opened up more fully the European Continent to Sweden in 2000. Both Swedish and Danish authorities arrive at the scene, given the borderland nature of the Öresund/Øresund Bridge, and find what they deem as the corpse of Swedish politician Kerstin Ekwall. After deliberation, they conclude that the perpetrator placed the body on the exact border between Sweden and Denmark and the investigation would thus require a bi-national detective team, which consists of Swedish investigator Saga Norén and Danish investigator Martin Rohde. At the scene of the crime, the teams discover that the body is cut in half, separating the torso from the legs. We learn later, from an autopsy, that the top half belongs to Swedish politician Kerstin Ekwall and the bottom half belongs to Danish prostitute Monique Brammer. Like television narrative, the

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body on the Bridge appeared whole, but actually consisted of differing fragments connected by an invisible stitch. The invisible stitch, the discovered space between the two bodily fragments, is what ultimately incites the connectivity between the two nations, Sweden and Denmark, in this instance. Like the invisible stitches in television narrative—the transient moments between segments—the space between the fragmented body parts ultimately connects the disconnected to incite meaning. Indeed, the perpetrator manufactured his own (we learn later that the criminal is a man, and he calls himself the Truth Terrorist) invisible connective tissue; he constructed his own metaphor for the relations between Sweden and Denmark, and he moved his spectators—diegetically, the police, and non-diegetically, the viewers—into new conceptual territories.

After the body is discovered on the Bridge, Saga, the Swedish investigator who proves to be an emotionally distant yet highly productive officer, drives up in her antique green sports car to an obscure building in the center of Malmö and enters through the exit, where she learns the truth about the fragmented female corpse. Once inside, we move to a shot of photographs on the illuminated examination board: one is an image of the upper half of the body with a view of the intestines and the other is a magnified photograph of the intestines themselves. Saga enters and walks past the photographs wherein the examiner encourages her to “take a look” at the bodily fragments, knowing she will discover what he already has. Saga then grabs a pair of latex gloves from the examiner’s waist pocket, crossing conventional bodily boundaries. With an inexplicable smile on her face, Saga lifts the sheet covering the upper half of the corpse and begins to dissect the body with her eyes, her gaze. She then touches and probes the skin, the flesh of the corpse, her latex gloves the only thing between her skin and the skin of the deceased. In much the same way, television encourages its viewer to “take a look” at the *narrative* fragments it presents, and the viewer, like Saga, then engages in a kind of dissection and examination of information, constructing a narrative in her imagination alongside the narrative playing out before her. Bodily fragments fill the screen like a sea of flesh

our eyes attempt to navigate, attempt to identify. Saga moves on to the face: “No livor mortis on the ears. That’s consistent with the bleeding.” Saga’s comments are all clinical and direct: “She was strangled and cut in half after death.” She moves on to the lower half and discovers stark differences in the bodily make up such as darker skin, which is evidence of frostbite, suggesting that the bottom-half belongs to someone else. The shot focuses on Saga’s hands in the sea of flesh, reminiscent of the opening scene, which focuses on the culprit’s hands in a sea of electronic devices and spots of fluorescent lights. This scene both highlights the significance of bodies as well as the structure of television as a system made seemingly whole by the body-linked concept connective tissue. When Saga examines the corpse our gaze follows the trajectory of her hands—her method of investigation in this instance. We see only fragments of the body, which are ultimately stitched together across multiple shots from different angles. And from this sequence, made up of segmented shots, we are invited to infer meaning about the corpse; with the movement between these fragments, we abstractly stitch together the severed body. This particular moment of dissection and investigation is indicative of the connective tissue that I argue structures contemporary television narrative. The connective tissue is the moment between, the moment of transition—when we, in this scene, move from one indistinguishable fleshy shot to the next. Connective tissue, more broadly, works to connect fragments of disconnected narrative, and ultimately works to bridge the mind and the world, the virtual and the organic—both in the narrative itself, and in the viewer’s very experience of the narrative.

Suspending Between, Mediating Critical Distraction

Again *The Bridge* brings us to a significant moment in the series from inside a car: a capsule and a device of both containment and movement. Åke, the awkward yet refreshingly sincere colleague of Daniel, the journalist responsible for publishing the Truth Terrorist’s messages, picks up Daniel at the hospital where he was recovering overnight from an overdose of drugs he consumed at a nightclub. Our gaze, and Åke’s gaze, focuses on Daniel’s

face which is distraught, tired, and contemplative. Sitting in Åke's SUV in the hospital parking lot, Daniel's face is framed by the blurry glass of the car's window, the world outside is but a murky sea of taillights and windshields—a trope consistent in *The Bridge's* filming techniques, as we see in the opening scene and reflected in the autopsy scene with Saga, not to mention the many interstitial shots of open ocean peppered throughout the entire series. Åke delivers bad news: a colleague wrapped up in the investigation was shot in Copenhagen that morning. Daniel, seemingly unresponsive, continues to direct his gaze to the parking lot, to the world beyond him, but his expression suggests he is, perhaps, looking more inward than outward. The shot draws our attention to both men's faces—wrinkled, tired, unkempt, which is unusual for the typically dapper and well-groomed Daniel. Daniel finally says: "I died in the night." He pauses. "I was lifeless for two minutes and thirty-three seconds." He pauses again. "I didn't see a tunnel or a light." Åke responds, "I'll drive you home." And as the car drives away—the only movement in the still, lifeless parking lot which is reminiscent of a graveyard, the parked cars are but placeholders for tombs—we hear Daniel's disembodied voice, like a specter haunting the scene: "There was only darkness, Åke. Complete darkness."

From this tense interaction regarding life and lifelessness we move to Sonja, a homeless woman wrapped up in the investigation, who is in a coma in the hospital. Her face fills the screen, oxygen tube protruding from her pale, fleshy face. As we linger on her face, we see her eyelashes begin to flicker and her mouth begin to quiver: indeed, subtle movements suggesting life. The shot then refocuses to the window beyond Sonja, through which a nurse looks, clearly checking to see if Sonja's status has changed. Pausing, her face framed by the window, the nurse extends an elongated glance before moving on. As we hover above Sonja's hospital bed, we hear the beeps of the life-support machines keeping her alive. We linger above her—a privileged view, where her soul, in an imaginative sense, might linger if disembodied—as Sonja's status begins to change. We move to a shot of the same nurse walking down the hall then entering Sonja's room to find her standing and inspecting her tubes, the very connections that

had been keeping her alive. Sonja stands and stares at the nurse—having just risen from the cusp of death—with a pointed yet lost look in her eyes.

As this reading intends to highlight, the moment of connective tissue is a moment of fleeting suspension, being betwixt and between. Similarly to Daniel's and Sonja's comatose states, the television viewer herself dwells in a distracted state, as Morse argues, partially out of touch with the here and now: while her self, to gesture back to Stuart, is halved as her organic body remains static and her virtual body, her mind, is elsewhere. The collision of these two segments—yielding the televisual connective tissue—creates a larger narrative concerning life and lifelessness in the series. In this sense, connective tissue is a kind of *non-space*, to use Morse's term, which she defines as "ground within which communication as flow of values among and between two and three dimensions and between virtuality and actuality—indeed an uncanny oscillation between life and death—can 'take place.'"¹⁵ For Morse, television's role as a medium of distraction constitutes this very oscillation.

I am most interested, specifically, in the televisuality of this particular sequence with regards to the body. Certainly, the story itself dwells on important questions the body, and of living and dying—with Daniel's momentary death and Sonja's potentially imminent one—but there is something particularly televisual that occurs here that deserves attention. Not only does this linking connect Daniel and Sonja narratively, but the viewer herself engages in connection and abstraction with the stitching of these two televisual moments. Indeed, the phenomenological bridge, the connective tissue, between Daniel and Sonja is what makes this sequence meaningful. It is the void, the ether between them—much like the significant space between the fragmented corpse on the Bridge—where the viewer engages with the story as a televisual text, a system of fragments. The invisible stitch, the connective tissue, between leaving the graveyard parking lot of the hospital and entering into the hospital to gaze upon Sonja's comatose face situates the viewer in a mode of critical distraction. In moving us between these two narrative segments, between Daniel's revelation and Sonja's resurrection, *The*

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Bridge incites in the viewer the possibility of connection, of engaging with the narrative as a participant-spectator. As Amelie Hastie examines in her writing “Imminence,” television’s rhythms, in her terminology, invite the viewer into a state of emotive engagement:

such rhythms constitute a sensation that provides a possibility of connection. These connections occur within and across series in a narrative and structural framework, but they also exist in a mode of feeling.¹⁶

As such, the connective tissue in this instance not only connects characters in the story, but also works to engage the viewer in a mode of feeling, to connect the viewer to the televisuality of the narrative.¹⁷ Meaning, as it were, resides in this interstice, in this zone between modes of existence, narrative segments, and bodies: Daniel’s and Sonja’s, but also perhaps the viewer’s and those on screen. Ultimately, as Hastie suggests, the viewer conjures connections not only narratively but also epistemically and emotively across these very interstices of connective tissue, inviting the viewer to engage with television as a phenomenon.

While this sequence invites a critical engagement with the theoretical framework of connective tissue, we might enact a close reading of one character, one body, in particular in order to investigate this theory further. In considering Sonja’s body, positioned in the zone between the living and the dead, we might turn again to Elisabeth Bronfen’s analysis of the cinematic female corpse and mediation:

The ephemeral body, and with it the destabilizing process of change, disappears completely. Instead what is secured and eternally preserved are the immaterial soul and the skeletal remains, perfectly severed from each other. The corpse mediates between the survivor’s animate body, the skulls as stabilised traces of death and the text as a product of reanimation, which will substitute and re-present this dead woman, once her natural body has been dissected and

decomposed into absence.¹⁸

Bronfen’s dissection, as it were, of the phenomenon of dying and the absence death, incites illustrates the ways television spectatorship engages with a fragmenting and breaking down of meaning. Sonja’s body is betwixt and between states of existence. Her physical body signifies her life; her incognizance signifies her breaching of death. During the hospital scene, she is not perfectly severed—she dwells in the very severing between life and death. Sonja has yet to be decomposed into absence, as we see when she finally springs again to life. Similarly, the television viewer engages with television as a system of imperfect severing as she is made mobile by the invisible and inaudible collision of segments I classify as connective tissue, necessitating her agile dwelling betwixt and between, her situation in Morse’s conception of critical distraction. Sonja’s body brings us back to the body on the *Bridge*, the severed female form, the body void of a soul: time and space have distanced it from its soul, it has been mediated to exist as an entity on its own, as signifier of political and social unrest produced by the Truth Terrorist.

Narratively, Sonja is a significant character because she appears in fragments throughout the series as we attend to her fragmented body and her fragmented being. She is partially naked when we meet her as well as only partially cognizant of her situation and actions in the world. On the surface, she is an imperfect melding of fragments, a discontinuous being in the world. Her body—and her character—appear at moments of disruption and uncertainty. She is woven throughout the larger fabric of the story, stitching together plotlines and characters, developments and investigative information. Ultimately, Sonja reflects the poetics of the fragment.

When we first meet Sonja, the camera starts at her feet as they march forward, then the camera moves up her body past her bare breasts to her determined yet lost face. She wears only an open coat over her naked torso. She picks up a cigarette from the ground and puts it in her mouth, stopping to linger near a car, which has just parked in front of a convenience store. When the driver goes into the store, Sonja shakes his car so the alarm sounds, and then hides under the stairs to the store. After

the driver comes out to check on his car, she rushes in and begins to grab anything she can. While moving from the cash register, she notices a cream, pauses momentarily, and puts it in her pocket. The storekeeper and the driver return and they attack her. She gets away with some oranges and a few other goods, at which point the scene cuts to the opening credits sequence. Later in the episode, we see Stefan—who is just a social worker to us at this point, but later becomes a suspect in the case—as he comes out of the shower. He grabs some cream from his medicine cabinet, which happens to be the same type of cream Sonja grabbed from the store. Naked, Stefan walks from his bathroom into his bedroom where he applies the cream generously and sensuously over his body. The camera follows his hands as he smothers every inch of his skin with the luscious cream. The camera then focuses on a scar on his left arm: a serpent-like mark that begins at his wrist. Our viewing of his body is interrupted by a break to Sonja's arm, which bears the same mark. Her fingers follow the contours of the scar and she begins to pick at it. In this way, *The Bridge* tells us that Stefan and Sonja are connected.

Not only does the mark connect them, but the segmentation itself connects Sonja and Stefan. The bridge between these fragments of narrative stitches these two characters together. They are pieces of a larger system—the system that gave them their marks, and the system of television itself. Visually and narratively, the television viewer stitches Stefan and Sonja together. We later learn that Sonja and Stefan are in fact siblings, connected by the blood that flows through their veins. Indeed, they are individual fragments that make a whole: a sibling relationship.

Connecting Bodies of Experience, Globalizing Cultural Transportation

As my textual examples have intended to demonstrate, the moments of collision and disruption within television work as moments of connection, much like Williams' *flow* suggests. My invoking of connective tissue, however, requires the theorist to not only look closely at the narrative and extra-narrative moments which Williams' *flow* considers, but also—most importantly—summons her to acknowledge and interrogate that which is ultimately invisible, the very space of simultaneous

severing and connecting, the critical void between, indeed, that which holds the larger fragments of television narrative together. Considering television as an analog for the contemporary body—which is, as theorists N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway have respectively noted, a mixture of the virtual, the technological, and the organic—allows for a critical engagement with television's structure of intimacy.¹⁹ By engaging with the concept of connective tissue, the analyst of television's narrative structure moves away from a purely systematic frame—like Williams'—and begins to engage with the fleeting yet significant aspects crucial to and inherent in televisual experience. We don't always acknowledge its presence, but televisual connective tissue is ubiquitous and ever-present in television narrative—indeed, it is the very essence of televisuality.

The concept of televisual connective tissue allows us to critically examine that which is ubiquitous but seemingly secondary, it draws our critical eye to that which supports and structures. Indeed, much like bodily connective tissue which are not classified as organs but nevertheless connect organs yielding the imperfectly whole body, televisual connective tissue significantly lacks narrative content but nevertheless connects narrative segments allowing for narrative movement and spectatorial engagement. With these concepts in mind, perhaps we might begin to consider the ways that television itself—as a phenomenon—works similarly to the connective tissue which structure its narratives and the connective tissues which structure our bodies. Indeed, I will conclude my essay by posing a further line of questioning: might television itself, as a phenomenon and as an institution, act as connective tissue in the larger body of contemporary experience? Ultimately, television itself is ubiquitous and ever-present, and it works to bridge gaps between the socio-political structures—nations—we put in place to demarcate difference. *The Bridge* is a prime example of television's ability to connect disparate fragments of contemporary life: its remakes suggest a transnational ontology and its very popularity in many different countries highlights its fluidity.

In a world growing more connected at such rapid rates with the constant expansion of social media, for example, we might step

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back and consider the ways connectivity occurs less explicitly. Television is all around us and is ultimately unavoidable, all while following the very trajectories of contemporary life.²⁰ To return to Merleau-Ponty, if the world is indeed made of the same stuff as the body, we might see the

categorizations we put in place, such as nations, as organs and television as a connective tissue which incites connection between them, acting as a channel of “cultural transportation” which Arnheim pointed to in the early days of television’s influence, a concept as relevant as ever today.

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Notes

- 1 Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 194.
- 2 I explore only the first (2011) of currently two seasons of *The Bridge* in this essay, hopefully complementing the fragmented nature of television itself. I viewed the series on my laptop with a box set distributed by the British company Nordic Noir, which distributes Scandinavian crime thrillers including *Borgen* and *The Killing*.
- 3 Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.
- 4 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2003), 95.
- 5 Mimi White, “Flows and Other Close Encounters with Television,” *Planet TV: A Global Television Reader*, Ed. Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 108.
- 6 William Uricchio, “Television’s Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow,” *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, Ed. Lynn Spigel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 178.
- 7 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” *The Primacy of Perception*, Ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 163.
- 8 John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the age of uncertainty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 82.
- 9 Ellis, 69.
- 10 Sandy Flitterman, “The *Real* Soap Operas: TV Commercials,” *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches—an Anthology* (Los Angeles: The American Film Institute Press, 1983), 95.
- 11 Heidi Rae Cooley, “It’s All About the Fit: The Hand, the Mobile Screenic Device and Tactile Vision,” *Journal of Visual Culture* vol. 3 no. 2 (2004), 135.
- 12 Arnheim, 160.
- 13 Margaret Morse, “An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television,” *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), 193.
- 14 Susan Stuart, “Extended Body, Extended Mind: The Self as Prosthesis,” *Screen Consciousness: Cinema, Mind, and World* (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2006), 176.
- 15 Morse, 196.
- 16 Amelie Hastie, “Imminence,” *Flow*, 30 October 2011, <<http://flowtv.org/2011/10/imminence-amelie-hastie-amherst-college/>> (accessed 28 May 2013).
- 17 While suture theory, for example, stitches over wounds, as it were, and pulls the spectator into the narrative fabric of the film, connective tissue theory is derived from the very wound, the very opening in the segmenting of moving image, and it is in this opening or severing where connectivity occurs and meaning resides.
- 18 Bronfen, 7-8.
- 19 See N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago P, 1999) and Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
- 20 See Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham: Duke UP, 2001).