

## Intra-face

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'Twas three weeks before Christmas  
And pretty damn dark  
Up north here in Sweden  
As I walked through the park.  
I was thinking of how  
To theoretically base  
A medical simulator  
And its intra-face;  
A tool to teach students  
The pelvic exam  
With organs and diodes  
But no diaphragm.  
When doing a study  
On how I could teach  
I realized the box came  
With inserts for each  
Type of womb and some ovaries  
But even more odd  
With a fat pad to mimic  
A large woman's bod [y].  
Place the thin fat pad  
Which came in one piece  
Below the abdominal  
Skin and – voilà!  
You're obese!  
It looked like a mouse pad,  
Insertable foam  
But centimetre thin  
And shaped like a dome.

I thought of the women,  
Those termed as 'obese'  
And thought, it'd take dozens  
Of inserts, at least  
To model their middles  
And properly hide  
Their wombs and their ovaries  
Deep there inside.  
So I asked the designer  
At a factory in Kent  
How one little fat pad  
Such bulk could represent.  
And her answer surprised me.  
Quite matter-of-fact,  
She explained how the body  
Is not so compact.  
When fat is kept warm  
And enclosed in a space  
The cells are real fluid  
In movable ways.  
And most fat in a woman  
Who's been asked to lie  
On her back on the table  
Slides out of the way.  
So the fat pad's a model  
Of fat, as it were  
When known in the practice  
Of examining her.  
The pad doesn't simulate

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Fat on command.  
It simulates  
Fat as it's felt by the hands.  
And nor is the simulator  
A model of bones  
Of bodies or organs  
It simulates 'known'.  
To think all this through  
I returned to my books  
And to feminist science studies  
And its various hooks  
I applied the term taken  
From Karen Barad  
'intra-action' – how objects  
are not to be had  
But rather are compotes  
Both the *hows* and the *whats*  
Of the tools used to know them  
And discursive cuts.  
So the body as modelled  
Is not its own 'thing',  
Ontologically separate  
From medicine's zing  
Instead, that same body  
Can only be known  
Through techniques and instruments.  
It can't stand alone.  
And when it is modelled  
What's placed in that wax  
Is the practice of knowing it.  
Practices, not facts.  
So my point with this fat pad  
Is merely to say  
When talking of simulators  
We have to give way  
And think of a body  
As a knowledge phenomenon  
A product of practice  
And what it's been done on.  
It isn't the fat that  
We're trying to model.  
It's how the fat's felt.

How it wiggles and wobbles  
And how it behaves  
During a specific ordeal.  
Not what it might be  
But how it might feel.  
The body, the doctor  
Anatomist, wax  
Are entangled and 'Intra'.  
Distinctions are hacks.  
To think of the model  
As representational  
Ignores that its agency  
Is really relational.  
So instead of an interface  
Which connotes units,  
With representation  
Objectified bits  
I posit an 'intra-face'  
With contours of doing,  
Of knowing the body  
And contexts ensuing.  
And one implication  
This insight might give  
Is that medical models  
Model the body we live  
And the way that our doctors  
Or anatomy Profs  
Can know what our body is  
Requires Philosofs.  
The term of validity  
Ought to be tossed.  
And models, realistic  
That dream is losted.  
At least till we grapple  
With accepting the thought  
That both of these terms  
Without practice are fraught.  
A simulator mimics  
The way that we know  
It's an intra-face for us.  
Now let's hope for some snow ...