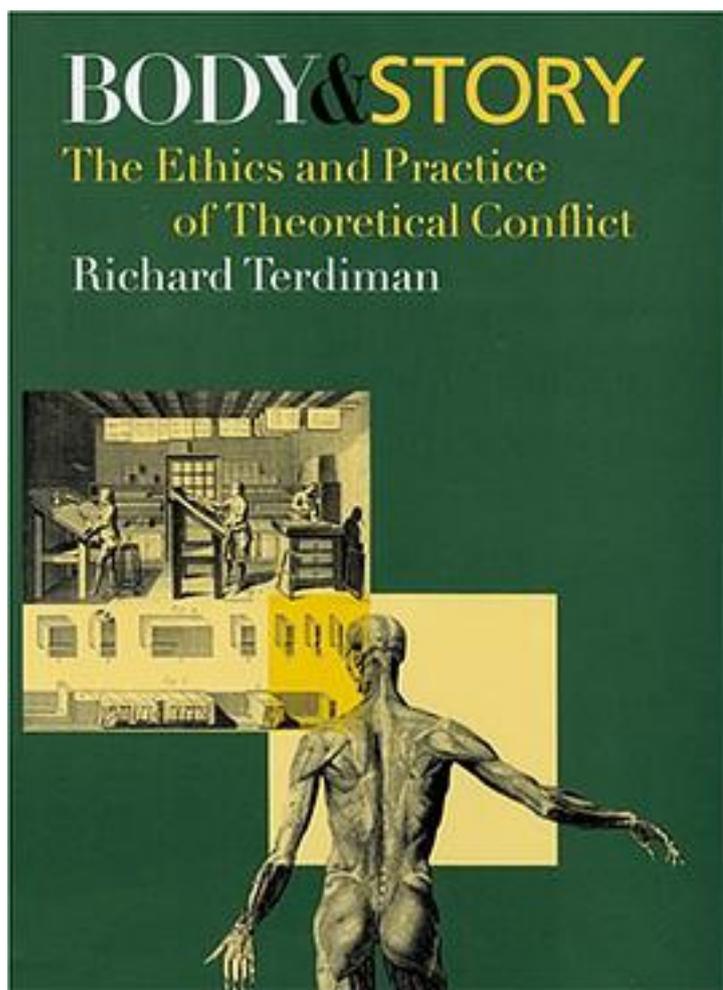


Body and Story



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In *Body and Story*, Richard Terdiman explores the tension between what might seem to be two fundamentally different ways of understanding the world: as physical reality

and as representation in language. In demonstrating the complicated relationship between these two modes of being, he also presents a new bold approach to the problem of conflicts between irreconcilable but equally compelling theoretical ideas. Enlightenment rationalism is most often understood as maintaining that words can meaningfully refer to and grasp things in the material world, while Postmodernism famously argues that nothing exists outside of language. Terdiman challenges this clean distinction, finding the early seeds of Postmodern doubt in the Enlightenment, and demonstrating the stubborn resistance of material reality -- particularly that of the body -- to language even today. Building on readings of works by 18th-century encyclopedist Denis Diderot and contemporary philosopher-icon Jacques Derrida, Terdiman argues that despite their genuine and profound opposition, a constant negotiation or mutual interrogation has always been taking place between these two world-views, even as the balance at times shifts to one side or the other. In analyzing these shifts he proposes a new model for understanding how seemingly unbridgeable theories legitimately coexist in our intellectual conception of the world, and he suggests a new ethics for managing this coexistence.

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