

The Body Postured and Dissolute

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Beyond the communication with one another through signals, abstract entities, in the community allied against the rumble of the world our bodies make contact with the seals, the spider-monkeys, the agoutis, the hawks, the jaguars, the frogs, the leaves in the winds, the marshes, the clouds, the rain, the flames, the earth, the remote stars. Making contact with them is not simply recording signals being randomly emitted by the friction and turbulence of things. We make contact with things by embracing them bodily. Our postures which are oriented upon them, converging our sensory surfaces on them, make contact with the sense—directions and directives—of things by being corporeally directed by them, by capturing their inner lines of position and movement. To make contact with things is to perceive the postures and gaits of things directing us. It is to discover oneself touched by alien hands, seen by alien eyes, heard by alien ears. The sensuality in us that diffuses as our performative mobilization and ego-control slackens makes contact with the materiality of things which induce transubstantiations in us. We communicate with one another in the exchange of information, but we make contact with inhuman things in embracing their forms and their matter. We also make contact with one another by contracting another's form, and by transubstantiating our own material state.

The Posture that Recognizes and is Recognized

The *sensed* is not a momentary, inextended impression or sequence of discrete impressions. The sounds we hear are chords, melodies, calls, cries, rattlings. The term noise is a collective noun; it is rumble, static, clatter, racket we hear, not a single tone. A sound that does not resound is inaudible. A point of red, reduced to its here and now, is not the simplest component element in a visual phenomenon, because it is not visible. To be visible, it has to not be instantaneous or punctual, it has to endure and it has to spread its intensity

across a certain expanse. And it has to contrast with its field, radiate across a constellation of other colors, intensify other reds and stain other colors.

Sensing is not a passive reception of impressions on our sensitive surfaces. Sensing is a behavior, a movement, a prehension, a handling. To feel the tangible, the smooth, the sticky, or the bristly, the touching hand has to move across it with a certain pressure, a certain pacing and periodicity, a certain scope of movement. But the look too, in order to see the red of the dress has to focus, to move across its expanse with a certain pressure and scope and periodicity; we do not see the dull moss-green of the leaves with the same movement of the look that makes the ardent red of the rose visible. It is in swaying with the melody, rocking with the rhythm, or being jarred by the clatter that we hear them.

Sensing captures not simply the fact of the red or the hard being there, but the *sense*, of the red and of the hard. We recognize the sense of the lemon in seeing its opaque and homogeneous color, its dull and rubbery surface, or smelling its homogeneous and acrid odor. The sense or essence of the lemon is the way all that goes together and is sensed together. This sense is not an intelligible meaning, which could be captured in a concept. In fact there is no concept of a lemon; none of us have anything like an intelligible notion of what a lemon is.

Traditional philosophy of mind had distinguished two operations involved in perceiving things: a passive registering of sensory impressions and a collating or coordinating of them done by the central nervous system or by the mind. But the most elementary sensing already actively follows up patterns. Maurice Merleau-Ponty¹ has identified that which perceives things as such, which comprehends the essence or the unity of things, to be what brings together the sensory surfaces and movements: our body's postural schema.

The postural schema is the inner axis of a coordinated body directed on some object or objective. The postural schema of someone standing on a chair to unscrew the globe of a ceiling fixture and replace a burnt-out light bulb is continually being adjusted in response to the task; a movement of the hand induces a corresponding shifting of the trunk and tightening of the one leg, bending of the other. The actual posture then could not be the result of a program in the circuitry of the central nervous system, and the equilibrating and disequilibrating movements are not guided by a mental representation of the body's actual position. The postural schema is a dynamic *Gestalt*, a structure such that any displacement of one part induces an ordered displacement throughout.

The postural schema is not only the unifying organization of the motor parts. For if every seeing of a color is done with a movement of the look, every feeling of a roughness or a resistance done with a movement of the hand, every hearing of a distinct sound done with a movement of the head

that turns to center the ears upon it, then the postural schema is also the unifying organizer of the sensory organs and surfaces. When, collapsed on the bed, we let our posture dissolve and legs and arms settle as the force of gravity determines, then finally we no longer sense things, but an undifferentiated atmosphere or medium in which we are immersed. By converging our sensory surfaces on an objective, sensory properties consolidate and an intersensorial *thing* takes form.

A thing is not a whole assembled by the central nervous system out of separate sensory data, nor is it a conceptual term posited by the mind and used to interpret the data being recorded on the separate senses. The sense organ focused on a pattern is a segment of the whole, interconnected mass of the sensory nervous system. What we pick up with the eyes is already sensed by the whole sensitive substance of our body. When we see the yellow, it already looks homogeneous or pulpy, hard or soft, dense or vaporous, it already registers on our taste and smell; anything that looks like brown sugar will not taste like a lemon. To see it better and to see it as a thing is to position ourselves before it and converge our sensory surfaces upon it. It is the postural schema that comprehends things. To recognize a lemon is not to conceive the idea of a lemon on the occasion of certain sensory impressions; it is to know how to approach such a thing, how to handle it, so that its distinctive way of filling and bulging out space, its distinctive way of concentrating color and density and sourness there becomes clear and distinct.

What makes sensory patterns be perceived as things is not outlines that circumscribe masses of sense-data, but inner lines of force which position, and systematically move, a substance—something like *its* posture. To recognize a lemon in that lump of rubbery yellow there is to see the distinctive way this yellow occupies its space, holds and reflects the light, shades off in depth as its contours recede, to see how this yellow makes the inner substance surface, makes visible the pulpiness and the homogeneous sour condensed there. We do not grasp something like the inner law or program, but we catch on to the way the lemon will evolve before our sensory exploration. As a cloud passes over the sun and the light dims over it, the shift in its color will induce a corresponding shift in its tangible density. The lemon too is a dynamic *Gestalt*; its features are in a dynamic relation with the features of the environment, and shifts in one feature induce corresponding shifts in others.

In the dim light of the end of the day we recognize our aunt coming down the sidewalk from a block or two away, at a distance too far to see the contours of her face or the hue of her complexion: we recognize the walk. Our acquaintances are those we stroll with, work with, look at things with. In perceiving them we do not look at their outlines and scrutinize their colors; our postures pick up their gait, their rhythms. We do not sit erect as the other lounges; our postures and the scope and periodicity of our gestures correspond.

The sense and recognizability of things, too, does not lie in conceptual categories in which we mentally place them, but in their positions and orientations which our postures address. We recognize the pine on the hill by distinguishing, not the distinctive color and shape of the needles, but the upright and rigid stand; we recognize the willow by its loosely spread arms and the languid sweep of its branches. A fallen tree has lost its recognizability as a tree; it takes an act of imagination to visualize a tree in what we see as a log lying in a thicket. An armchair upside down looks like pieces of wood stuck in a mass of stuffing and fabric, as, in a crowded hospital room, when we find ourselves standing behind the head of the bed, the friend we look down upon is unrecognizable, his facial expressions look like muscular shiftings in a carnal mass and the smile, vexation, or query is no longer in them. We perceive the solemn, erect stand of the Court House posted on its pedestal of stairs, the military array of a phalanx of high-rises in a development project that is conquering the hills and the meadows of the bankrupt farmlands, the warm closure of the cottages nestled under the trees like brooding hens. We see the held gunbarrels of the smokestacks of the factory aimed at the heavens, we see the protective arch of the old country bridge under whose cool shade the ducks and the fish gather on hot days. We see the great rhythms with which the mountains and the pyramids of Teotihuacan rise through geological and sacred history to the sun and the moon. We see the sprint in the locust we contemplate on the twig, the plodding of the tortoise through the sprawling marsh, the languid stroll of the moth through the daisies dancing in the summer night.

Seeing Oneself with Alien Eyes

To assume a posture is to contract a "body image"; as we sit at our desk we have a sense of the visible shape with which we fill out a volume in the room; as we stretch our legs under the table we have a sense of how their position looks. The more our attention is absorbed in our task and our feeling in the orientation and rhythm of our forces, the more determinate is this perception of the sides and outer contours of a thing we form. This image is different from the patches of our surfaces we are actually seeing and those we remember. It fills out the outer aspect of our body as it would be seen by someone viewing it from a distance sufficient to see the whole position or movement. When the psychologist projects a videotape of people in silhouette walking across the landscape, we find we can pick ourselves out from among them by the gait. As we talk we cannot look at our gait, even in a mirror, for the observing eye interferes with our natural gait and alters it. Since we can recognize it on the screen, we had while walking an immanent sense of the way our gait looks from the outside. While maintaining our momentum of preoccupied hurry through the streets, we get a sense of the palpable thickness of our limbs as

they would be felt by others who would brush against us or crowd us. As we speak, we have a sense of the sonority of our own voices, as they would be heard by an ear not cupped against the teeth but at the distance from mouths we take to hear sounds spread in whole sentences. Although it is sometimes said that our own bodies have no perceived weight, when we move to be embraced and held by another and walk across the grass and ascend the wood stairs we have a sense of the weight of our bodies as they would be felt by others and by things. What it is like to move in space capsules is what seems hard to imagine.

What psychologists have improperly named "body image" is not something projected by an act of imagination when we detach our perception from things; it emanates from the mobilized posture and extends about it. The body in mobilizing into a posture situates the levels where other viewing positions lie and emanates an "image" of itself as something visible, tangible, audible in that space.

The vector of force I feel extending my leg also gives me a sense of what my leg extended under the table looks like; conversely, when I look at the outer aspect of my limbs and parts, I get a sense of the inner lines of force and feeling in them. When I look at my own hand, I cannot see it as so much pulp molded over a bony framework; my eyes sense the orientation of dexterity extending it. When I look at myself in a mirror I feel my cigarette burning against the mirrored image of my fingers. When I am trying to pronounce phonemes or a foreign language or sing a new song, I listen to the sounds I emit and can thus pronounce them again, as though the audible pattern heard converts of itself into a motor diagram from my organs of vocalization. When the one hand touches the other, the sense of a tangible mass hovers about the agile vector of sensibility of the touching organ, and in the felt mass of the touched hand a mobile vector of feeling stirs.

In the same way, when I look at the visible substance of another's hand, I sense there inner lines of force and feeling. I do not see these nor mentally diagram them but sense them directly with the dexterity of my own hand. My postural orientation directed on others is directed by them. Through just seeing someone seated on a stool, bench, or couch, my body finds spontaneously the posture corresponding to his as I go to join him. The posture of another is a diagram of vectors of vision and sensibility, and his look and gesture outline for me a position for my "body-image" which my kinesthetic-coenesthetic forces settle in place. The visible figure the dance-partner's limbs and parts extend before me is not observed and then interpreted in reversed projection. The infant that, at fifteen days, smiles at the sight of his mother's smile has not yet seen what his own face looks like and will never see the benevolence in the mind of the mother. He then does not set up in his mind an explicit relationship between the arc he sees in visual space, the muscular configuration in the body

scheme of the mother, and the sentiment of benevolence produced in the mother's mind—and then between a sentiment of benevolence he produces in himself, a muscular enervation, and the resultant arc on his face as a visible surface. From the first the corporeal element that takes form doubles into motor schema and outward aspect, and the infant and his mother are superimposed in this reflexive circuit.

Our "body image" is not an image formed in the privacy of our own imagination; its visible, tangible, and audible shape is held in the gaze and touch of others. In sensing, in and with the positions and moves of others, the focusing of their vision and sensibility, the whole range of the visible, tangible, and audible field about me shifts and refocuses. And I see my own visibility with their eyes, feel my own tangibility with their hands, hear my voice with their ears.

Likewise, in perceiving the outer forms of things, we capture in our postural schema the inner lines of their tensions and orientations. And in contracting inner motor diagrams we quasi-perceive the visible, tangible, audible form of ourselves turned to them. When we look at the sequoias we do not focus on them by circumscribing their outlines; the width of their towering trunks and the shapes of their sparse leaves drifting in the fog appear as the surfacing into visibility of an inner channel of upward thrust. We sense its force and measure its rise with the movement of our eyes and the upright axis of our body. We comprehend this uprightness of their life not with a concept-generating faculty of our mind but with the uprighting aspiration in our vertebrate organism they awaken. This postural axis emanates about itself a body image which is shaped, not as the visual form our body would turn to a fellow human standing at normal human viewing distance, but as our body looks to the sequoia. To see the weight of the rocks is to feel the diagram of a grip forming in our postural schema, and the weightless force in our arms now emanates about itself an immanent sense of the weight of our limbs the rock would feel as it struggles with our force. To see the magnesium-flash fires on the wind-caressed lake in the summer is to dance our eyes over it, and the look that cannot turn back to see itself emanates about itself a quasi-visual form of itself as seen by the vast eye of the lake. To listen to another is already to know how to pronounce myself what he or she says; the audible patterns he or she presents before me I capture on motor diagrams for my own speaking, and when I activate them in turn, the shaping and resonating of my breath through vocal chords and mouth emanates about itself an immanent sense of how my vocalizations sound to the other. As we hum while strolling across the fields and shout to the cliffs, we hear how we sound to the murmuring meadows and to the great ear of the canyon.

It is our own ligneous substance that perceives the sequoias, it is the hard and ferric substance of the bodybuilder's musculature that knows the inner

essence of the steel, it is the blood pounding in his veins and the sweat glistening in sheets on his chest and back that know the flow of the rain and the coursing of the winds and the power of the sun. It is the clay of our own body, dust that shall return to dust, that knows the earth and knows itself as terrestrial, it is the liquid crystals of our eyes that are drawn to the stars as to brothers.

For our sentient bodies are not only vectors of force but substances. And transubstantiations are possible.

Lust for the World

How strange that the body's knowing that converges its sensitive surfaces upon things and contracts their postures turns to pursuit, penetration, detachment, dismemberment, dissection, that its knowledge is violent and cruel! The lines of the trees and the planes of the meadows, the levels the beams of sunlight set, and the contours of the moss-covered rocks and grass-covered earth that invite taking our bearings with our bared hands induce adjustment of our own body axis in their midst. We may well enjoy this adjustment and the mobility it gives us and may wish to consolidate it by forceful means; we may wish to establish domination over our environment. But there is also a compulsion to break this adjustment and equilibrium and its contentment. The body that stands with the upward aspiration of the pines and the sequoias reaches out to break their limbs; the body that settles among the rocks with their mass and weight hurls them at one another; the body that bounds with the buoyancy of the wind-waved meadow lashes out at the flowers and butterflies as it strides. There is pleasure in knowledge, cruel pleasure in pursuit, penetration, detachment, dismemberment, dissection.

This pleasure is sensual, libidinal, Freud said.

Libidinal pleasure is not simply the psychic compensation the individual organism receives for obeying the imperative of species reproduction. Freud identified libidinal pleasure virtually at the beginning of life, in the slaving with which the infant drawing in the nourishment from the maternal breast deviates the organ-coupling into the production of a surface of surplus pleasure. By an anacritic deviation of the functional organ-coupling—any organ coupling, mouth with maternal breast but also mouth with finger, mouth playing with the food, mouth playing with sounds, babbling, anus spreading the warmth of the excrement, hand not only holding but caressing and being caressed—pleasure-surfaces are produced, and infantile life discovers surfaces and the pleasures of surfaces, the pleasures of having surfaces, of being outside, of having been born. These surfaces function vitally to block the regressive death drive. This first infantile libido that extends an erotogenic surface is not a want or need, but a production. In this activity surplus energies are discharged; Freud, who

saw in the discharges of genital orgasm the physiological model for all libidinal pleasures and all pleasures,² saw libidinal pleasure expressing the drive of an organism to return to the quiescence of the inorganic.

The timeless, non-teleological libidinal drives repeat, repeat not only pleasurable states but also painful ones. The painful states when repeated generate sexual excitement. "It is easy to establish" Freud writes, "that all comparatively intense affective processes, including even terrifying ones, spill over into sexuality."³ Any relatively powerful emotion, even though it is of a distressing nature—Freud mentions intellectual strain, verbal disputes, wrestling with playmates, and railway travel—generates sexual excitement. "The compulsion to repeat presumably unpleasurable, repressed experience could therefore be understood as a permanent tendency on the part of the ego to resexualize its structure," Leo Bersani writes. "This would be done in the name of pleasure, just as any such shattering resexualization would also be resisted in the name of pleasure."⁴ We could then distinguish this libidinal excitement from the pleasure in the anacritic deviation of an organ-function, which the excitement would take all the way to a shattering of the psycho-physiological organization. The drive in libidinal excitement in general, and its pleasure generated by the shattering of an established biological and physiological equilibrium and ego-control, is masochistic. The focus and comprehensive integration of the postural schema would be, for Merleau-Ponty, the very consciousness of things, but the production of excitement in the shattering is also a broadening of consciousness; there are violent pleasures in the advance of knowledge. The cruelty of our pleasure in things we no longer couple on to, but pursue, penetrate, detach, dismember, and dissect seeks in them a mirror of the shattering that pleasure pursues in ourselves.

In order to explain how we can be sexually aroused by the suffering of others, as distinct from the easier question of why we wish to exercise power over others, Freud submits that the spectacle of pain in others produces a sense of that pain in ourselves, which undermines our control while generating sexual excitement. Sexual excitement does not show a simple drive for the release of tensions and quiescence; it reinstates tensions, even increases them. There would be ways of shattering our psycho-physiological organization and ego-control such that tensions are not simply released and dissipated, but exasperated. Such would be the pleasures of sadism where the masochistic identification with the suffering object can maintain us active with tensions that increase, as the shattering that another suffers reverberates across our intact organism.

Freud speaks of the precocious efflorescence of infantile sexual experiments and enterprises, a sensual life which is doomed to extinction because its wishes are incompatible with reality and with the inadequate stage of development which the child has reached. The capacity of the human psycho-physiological system to resist or integrate, to "bind," the influx of sensation lags behind

what its psychic identifications lead it to expose itself to. This would make the human child, born more helpless and maturing more slowly than the other mammals, particularly subject to the shattering of its structures of physiological equilibrium and ego-organization. The sexually precocious child fails to get all the love he or she wants, infantile sexual probings are unconsummated, he or she suffers sibling jealousy, fails to make babies himself or herself, suffers punishments from uncomprehending parents, and suffers the increasing demands of socialization and culturization. The efflorescence of infantile sexuality, Freud writes, "comes to an end in the most distressing circumstances and to the accompaniment of the most painful feelings."⁵ But the precociousness of the libidinal probings did not precede the distress and painful feelings; they rather fed one another.

Bersani, with Freud, still seeks to place libidinal excitement in the perspective of evolutionary progress. The supplement of exposure to shattering influxes of stimuli comes from the prematuration that engenders the behaviors of the human infant. An essential function of the human psyche is identification with figures of biological and socio-cultural maturity in advance of itself. In the gap between established psycho-physiological structures and ego-control, functions which are shattered under the pressure of excess stimulation, whether gratifying or unpleasurable, and another resistant or defensive equilibrium yet to be established, the influx of sensation that cannot yet be integrated spills over into libidinal excitement, which contains a drive to repeat and increase its pleasure. Libidinal excitement would then function as an incitant to shatter the equilibrium and ego-control our biological and cognitive development had made possible. Libidinal excitement would be specific to humans—young animals try to mate, Bersani says, human juveniles seek libidinal excitement⁶—it would serve the transformation of the stages of their biological and physiological organization, it would be an inherited disposition resulting from an evolutionary conquest.

But is the pleasure of this excitement the pleasure of shattering established structures in the anticipation of more advanced, more integrated ones—or is it a pleasure just in suffering, in shattering established structures that made resistance, defense, and domination possible? It would be in the anticipation of structures more integrated still, to be shattered in their turn, that sexual excitement could be, not only aroused again, but increased. Yet Bersani concedes that the excitement itself is unmarked with regard to the types of structures involved. "We desire what nearly shatters us, and the shattering experience is, it would seem, *without any specific content*. . . . Sexuality manifests itself in a variety of sexual acts and in a variety of presumably nonsexual acts, but its constitutive excitement is the same in the loving copulation between two adults, the thrashing of a boundlessly submissive slave by his pitiless master, and the masturbation of the fetishist carried away by an ardently fondled silver slipper."⁷ Libidinal excitement would be inherently solipsistic and masochistic, "a

jouissance which isolates the human subject in a socially and epistemologically 'useless,' but infinitely seductive, repetition. . . . Sexuality would not be originally an exchange of intensities between individuals, but rather a condition of broken negotiations with the world, a condition in which others merely set off the self-shattering mechanisms of masochistic *jouissance*."⁸

Yet Plato had seen in this "solipsistic" sexual excitement an *ecstasis* that opens us to the outside, to the most remote dimensions of the universe. It is with worlds that we make love, Deleuze and Guattari write.⁹

What we call sex is many things. We call sex the innate reproductive organs and processes and drive. We call sex what Freud called libido—the swarming of non-teleological impulses seeking the pleasure/unpleasure of excitement and which invest in representations. For Freud libidinal impulses cannot be measured like forces and can only be deduced from an interpretation of representations—oneiric images, *double-entendres*, eruptions in patient discourse of a stream of latent representations, *actes manqués*, obsessive and ritual acts, corporeal symptoms. The Freudian analysis of libido is a hermeneutics of the latent meaning of representations. The theater of appearances, adornment, masquerade, simulation, and intrigue by which individuals make themselves attractive to one another, captivate and enslave one another Baudrillard has identified as seduction, and distinguished from the sex of bared bodies and biological coupling.¹⁰ There is also what we shall here call lust: the corporeal transformation itself—the shattering of the form that frees the substance, its transubstantiation, and the voluptuous pleasure of this transubstantiation. In addition to the biology of sex, in addition to the hermeneutics of libido that psychoanalysis elaborates, in addition to the cultural anthropology of seduction Baudrillard calls for, we propose a material phenomenology of the corporeal transubstantiations experienced as lust.

Does not the direction of libidinal excitement which is imposed from the outside, and the shattering of the psycho-physiological organization which is the frenzy of lust exposing our carnal substance to that outside, contain a distinctive contact with the materiality of that outside? Far from being solipsistic, would not the masochistic pleasure desire to suffer transubstantiation from the outside, and to open itself to the transubstantiations of the most remote things? Would the cruelty and violence lust unleashes, shattering the organization of things while shattering its own psychophysiological organization, be an incitement to these transubstantiations?

As the aroused body becomes orgasmic, it loses its postural integration, its limbs, dismembered, lie or roll freely, are moved with repetitive movements and convulsions. Its stances and positions arrayed for objectives dissolve, become dissolute, the hand that caresses moves aimlessly, not knowing what it is seeking, not gathering information, not moving itself intentionally but moved, agitated by the torments and pleasures that surface in the other.

Lust surges in the collapse of physiological equilibrium and ego-organization.

This collapse does not prepare for the constitution of another set of structures of psycho-physiological equilibrium and ego-organization; for in the collapse of postural organization and ego-control there occurs a material *change of state*. The wanton frenzy surges in the flux from one material state to another; the tormenting pleasure flows with the transubstantiation.

Lust is the posture become dissolute, the bones turning into gum. Sinews and muscles become gland. The body tenses up, hardens, gropes and grapples; then it collapses, melts, gelatinizes, runs. The mouth loosens the chain of its sentences, babbles, giggles, the tongue spreads its wet over the lips. There is left the coursing of the trapped blood, the flush of heat, the spirit vaporizing in inhalations. Lust is the dissolute ecstasy by which the body's ligneous, ferric, coral state casts itself into a gelatinous, curdling, dissolving, liquefying, vaporizing, radioactive, solar and nocturnal state.

The supreme pleasure we can know, Freud said, and the model for all pleasure, orgasmic pleasure, comes when an excess tension, built up, confined, and compacted, is abruptly released; the pleasure consists in a passage into the contentment and quiescence of death. Is not orgasm instead the passage into the uncontainment and unrest of liquidity and vapor—pleasure in exudations, secretions, exhalations?

These convulsions and transubstantiations are not simply internal dis-integrations of structures of psycho-physiological organization and shatterings of ego-control; the excitement is provoked from the outside. The sensual experience of lust is a communication with what is most remote from the integrating, interpreting, decoding nature of the conscious ego—communication with materiality in transubstantiation. It is provoked by the body of another divested of its socially coded uniforms, its body armor, its performative posture, dissolving in musks and sighs and torments of pleasure. It is provoked by the hard edges of reality radiating in twilight halos and perfumes, landscapes flowing into mists and languor, leaves incarnating into glands, rocks and sands liquefying and vaporizing, beams of sunlight caressing like fingers. The communication with the other that is in lust is not a communication with the idealized signals nor with the postures of things but with their material states, a materiality freed from information and even from the formation into states. A materiality not holding its own forms, undergoing transubstantiations, suffering.

Lust finds idols and fetishes in human bodies and in the bodies of stallions and vipers, the philosopher's stone in the crepes and silks of garments and the plumes of exotic birds and those of cirrus clouds over the seas, petrified splendor in the powdered gestures of faces and arms and the iridescent flanks of sand dunes, time solidified in vaporous heaths, time sprinting in the flash fires of adamantine jewels.

To be sure, what we are here calling the surgings of lust occur in sex

acts, that is, behaviors biologically programmed for reproduction; occur in the socio-cultural theater of seduction; occur in the directions fixed by libidinal investment in representations. To be sure, species reproduction lies ahead whenever a man approaches a woman with lust; the captivating appearances of individuals socio-culturally made seductive with material and psychic adornments draw one closer to the lustful contact; the representations of self libidinally invested map out the directions in which the lustful contact may occur. To be sure, long hair and hard musculature are auxiliary features of individuals marked for genital intercourse; candlelight and wine represent *grand-bourgeois* distinction and *raffinement*, indolence and availability; leather represents hunters and outlaws; diamonds represent security forever. But lust cleaves to them differently. Encrusting one's body with stones and silver or steel, saturating one's skin with creams and lubricants till they glisten like mucous membrane, sinking into marble baths full of champagne bubbles or into the soft mud of rice paddies, feeling the grasses of the meadow or the algae tingling one's flesh like nerves, dissolving into perfumed air and into flickering twilight, lust seeks the transubstantiations of matter with a body in transubstantiation.

The one who plunges into the aimless night of lust descends into a Heraclitean cosmos, or rather chaos, not even ordered by the Law of Eternal Return of All Things, where earth becomes water and water becomes earth, air becomes fire and fire becomes air. There is no economy of lust; lust is squandering, discharge without return. One senses obscurely one is sinking into the night without return and the dark tides of death.

Notes

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).
2. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarter Press, 1953-74) Vol. XXI, p. 82.
3. S. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey, *Standard Edition*, Vol. VII, p. 203.
4. *Three Essays*, p. 61.
5. S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey, *Standard Edition*, Vol. XVIII, p. 20.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 39f.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 90.
9. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. M. Seem, R. Hurley, and H. R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977).
10. Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

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