

Animal Body, Inhuman Face

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Bodies

Sea anemones are animate chrysanthemums made of tentacles. Without sense organs, without a nervous system, they are all skin, with but one orifice that serves as mouth, anus, and vagina. Inside, their skin contains little marshes of algae, ocean plantlets of a species that has come to live only in them. The tentacles of the anemone bring inside the orifice bits of floating nourishment, but the anemone cannot absorb them until they are first broken down by its inner algae garden. When did those algae cease to live in the open ocean and come to live inside sea anemones?

The flowers of Brazil nut trees can be pollinated by only one species of bee. This bee also requires, for its larvae, the pollen of one species of orchid, an orchid that does not grow on Brazil nut trees. When did Brazil nut flowers come to shape themselves so as to admit only that one species of bee? What we know as Brazil nuts are kernels which, on the tree, are enclosed in a very large wooden husk containing hundreds of them. The Brazil nut tree is hardwood, and the husk about its seeds is of wood hard as iron. There is only one beast in Amazonia that has the teeth, and the will, to bore into that husk. It is a medium-sized rodent, and when it bores through the husk, it only eats some of the seeds. The remaining seeds are able to get moisture, and push their roots into the ground. Without that

rodent, the nuts would be permanently entombed, and Brazil nut trees would have died out long ago.

There is perhaps no species of life that does not live in symbiosis with another species. When did celled life, with nuclei, come to evolve? Microbiologist Lynn Margulis established that chloroplasts and mitochondria, the oxygen-processing cellular energy-producers in plants and animals, were originally independent cyanobacteria that came to live inside the cells of plants and animals. Colonies of microbes evolved separately, and then formed the symbiotic systems which are the individual cells, whether of algae or of our bodies.

Human animals live in symbiosis with thousands of species of anaerobic bacteria, six hundred species in our mouths which neutralize the toxins all plants produce to ward off their enemies, four hundred species in our intestines, without which we could not digest and absorb the food we ingest. Some synthesize vitamins, others produce polysaccharides or sugars our bodies need. The number of microbes that colonize our bodies exceeds the number of cells in our bodies by up to a hundredfold. Macrophages in our bloodstream hunt and devour trillions of bacteria and viruses entering our porous bodies continually. They replicate with their own DNA and RNA and not ours. They, and not some Aristotelian form, are true agencies of our individuation as organisms. When did those bacteria take up lodging in our digestive system, these macrophages take up lodging in our bloodstream?

We also live in symbiosis with rice, wheat, and corn fields, with berry thickets and vegetable patches, and also with the nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil that their rootlets enter into symbiosis with in order to grow and feed the stalk, leaves, and seeds or fruit. We also move and feel in symbiosis with other mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish.

A pack of wolves, a cacophonous assemblage of starlings in a maple tree when evening falls, a whole marsh throbbing with frogs, a whole night scintillating with fireflies exert a primal fascination on us. What is fascinated in the pack, the gangs of the savannah and the night, the swarming, is the multiplicity in us—the human form and the nonhuman, vertebrate and invertebrate, animal and vegetable, conscious and unconscious movements and intensities in us that are not yoked to some conscious goal or purpose that is or can be justified in some capitalist program for economic growth or some transcendental or theological fantasy of object-constitution or creativity seated in us. Aliens on other planets, galaxies churning out trillions of stars, drops of water showing, under the micro-

scope, billions of squiggling protozoa are mesmerizing. What is mesmerized in us are the inhuman movements and intensities in us, the pulses of solar energy momentarily held and refracted in our crystalline cells, the microorganic movements and intensities in the currents of our inner rivulets and cascades.

Our bodies are coral reefs teeming with polyps, sponges, gorgonians, and free-swimming macrophages continually stirred by monsoon climates of moist air, blood, and biles. Movements do not get launched by an agent against masses of inertia; we move in an environment of air currents, rustling trees, and animate bodies. Our movements are stirred by the coursing of blood, the pulse of the wind, the reedy rhythms of the cicadas in the autumn trees, the whirl of passing cars, the bounding of squirrels and the tense, poised pause of deer. The differentials of speed and slowness liberated from our bodies do not block or hold those movements only; our movements compose their differentials, directions, and speeds with those movements in the environment. Our legs plod with elephantine torpor; decked out fashionably, we catwalk; our hands swing with penguin vivacity; our fingers drum with nuthatch insistence; our eyes glide with the wind rustling the flowering prairie.

These movements have not only extension; they surge and ebb in intensity. They are vehement, raging, prying, incandescent, tender, cloying, ardent, lascivious. It is by its irritability, its fear, its rage, its languor, its zest that an octopus in the ocean, a rabbit caught in our headlights, a serpent in the grass, a cat on the couch, a cockatoo in the morning mists, become visible to us.

Our movements become irritable with the insistent whine of a mosquito, fearful before the fury of a hornet whose nest we have disturbed, languid with the purring of a cat, exuberant in the sparkling of the coral fish in the tropical surge.

We assign special importance, in everyday life, to purposive or goal-oriented movement. Certain movements of our bodies are isolated and the circuitry set by conditioning for certain operations in conjunction with the movements and velocities of household utensils, tools, and machines. Of themselves, these movements are not initiatives by which an agent posits and extends its identity. They are nowise the movements by which a conscious mind seeks to maintain and consolidate and stabilize itself; even less integrate itself.

Most movements—things that fall, that roll, that collapse, that shift,

that settle, that collide with other things, that set other things in motion—are not goal-oriented. How little of the movements of the bodies of octopuses frolicking over the reef, of guppies fluttering in the slow currents of the Amazon, of black cockatoos fluttering their acrobatics in the vines of the rain forest, of terns of the species *Sterna paradisaea* scrolling up all the latitudes of the planet from Antarctica to the Arctics, of humans, are teleological! How little of these movements are programmed by an advance representation of a goal, a result to be acquired or produced, a final state! All these movements do not get their meaning from an outside referent envisioned from the start, and do not get their direction from an end point, a goal or result. Without theme, climax, or denouement, they extend from the middle, they are spreadings of duration.

In the course of the day, our bodies shift, lean, settle, agitations stir them, most of the movements of our arms and hands are aimless, our eyes glide in their sockets continually buoyed up and rocked by the waves of the sunlight. Even most of the movements to which we assign goals start by just being an urge to move, to get the day going, to get out of the house. We leave our house for a walk in the streets, a stroll along the beach, a saunter through the woods. In the Ryongi Zen Garden in Kyoto, for five hundred years each morning the monk rakes again the sands into waves, his own movements cresting in waves. The campesina in Guatemala occupies her hands with the rhythms and periodicity of her knitting as she sits on the stoop gossiping with her friends; the now old Palestinian who will never leave this refugee camp fingers his prayer beads.

Every purposive movement, when it catches on, loses sight of its teleology and continues as a periodicity with a force that is not the force of the will launching it and launching it once again and then once again; instead it continues as a force of inner intensity. The carpenter climbs up the roof to nail shingles; almost at once his mind lets loose the alleged objective and the rhythm—dum-dum-dum-DUM, dum-dum-dum-DUM—continues his movements as it does the dancer in the disco, and the force he feels in those movements is not the force of his deciding will but the vibrant and vital intensity of his muscles on the grip of his fine, smoothly balanced hammer he likes so much. The rhythm of his hammering composes with the rhythm of the wind currents passing in which he hammers and of the falling leaves and when he pauses he, alone in the neighborhood, registers the nearby tapping of a nuthatch on a treetrunk.

The movements and intensities of our bodies compose with the movements and intensities of toucans and wolves, jellyfish and whales.

The hand of the child that strokes the dolphin is taking on the surges of exuberance that pulse in its smooth body while the dolphin is taking on the human impulses of intimacy forming in close contact with the child's lips and cheeks. The woman who rides a horse lurches with the surges of its impulses, while the horse trots with her prudent programming. The movements of her body are extending differential degrees of speed and retardation, and feeling the thrill of speed and the soothing decompression of retardation. These movements are not productive, they extend neither toward a result nor a development. They are figures of the repetition compulsion; one strokes a calf each night on the farm, one rides a horse through the woods with the utterly noncumulative recurrence of orgasm.

The parents of their first baby feel all sorts of feelings about that baby—astonishment, curiosity, pride, tenderness, the pleasure of caring for a new life, and the resentment the mother feels over the father's unwillingness to share also the tedium and distastefulness of nursing the baby and cleaning its diapers, and also the jealousy the father feels as the woman he so recently chose to devote himself to exclusively as she him now pours most of her affection on the baby. What does the baby feel, aside from hunger and discomfort? Whatever feelings simmer in that opaque and unfocused body are blurred and nebulous. Brought up in a state orphanage, he or she would reach the age to be transferred to the car or tobacco factory assembly line with still opaque, blurred, and nebulous feelings. Brought up in an American high-rise apartment where the parents stay home weeknights watching action movies on television while fondling their gun collection, and go for rides weekends through a landscape of streets, boulevards, underpasses, and highways, seeing only other cars outside the window, the baby would reach sexual maturity with the feelings of Ballard and Vaughan in J. G. Ballard's *Crash*.

Is it not animal emotions that make our feelings intelligible? The specifically human emotions are interlaced with practical, rational, utilitarian calculations which tend to neutralize them—to the point that the human parent no longer knows if she feels something like parental love, finding her time with the baby dosed out between personal and career interests, not knowing how much concern for her child is concern with her own image or her representative. It is when we see the parent bird attacking the cat, the mother elephant carrying her dead calf in grief for three days, that we believe in the reality of maternal love. So much of the human courage we see celebrated is inseparable from peer pressure and

the craving for celebrity and for the resultant profit, that it is the bull in the corrida that convinces us of the natural reality of fearlessness.

Is not the force of our emotions that of the other animals? Human infants are tedious at table, picking at their food, playing with it, distracted from it; they pick up voracity from the puppy absorbed with total Zen attentiveness at his dish. They come to feel curiosity with a white mouse poking about the papers and ballpoints on father's desk. Their first heavy toddling shifts into tripping vivacity with the robins hopping across the lawn. They come to feel buoyancy in the midst of the park pigeons shifting so effortlessly from ground to layers of sun-drenched air. They come to feel sullenness from the arthritic old dog the retired cop was walking in the park and that they try to pet. They contract righteousness and indignation from the mother hen suddenly ruffled up and her beak stabbing when they try to cuddle a chick. They pick up feelings of smoldering wrath from the snarling chained dog in the neighbor's yard and try out those feelings by snarling when they are put under restraints or confined. Temper in a human infant dies away of itself; it is from finding reverberating in himself the howling of dogs locked up for the night, the bellowing of tigers, the fury of bluebirds pursuing hawks in the sky, that his and her rage extends to nocturnal, terrestrial, and celestial dimensions.

The curled fingers of an infant ease into tenderness from holding the kitten but not tight, and rumble into contentment from stroking its fur with the pressure and periodicity that are responded to with purring. In contact with the cockatoo who, though he can clutch with a vice-grip around a perch while sleeping, relaxes his claws on the arm of an infant and never bites the ear he affectionately nibbles at, and who extends his neck and spreads his wings to be caressed in all the softness of his down feathers, the infant discovers that her hands are not just retractile hooks for grabbing, but organs to give pleasure. In contact with the puppy mouthing and licking his legs and fingers and face the infant discovers his lips are not just fleshy traps to hold in the food and his tongue not just a lever to shift it into the throat, but organs that give, give pleasure, give the pleasures of being kissed. In feeling the lamb or the baby skunk extending its belly, its thighs, raising its tail for stroking the infant discovers her hands, her thighs, and her belly are organs to give pleasure.

Far from the human libido naturally destining us to a member of our species and of the opposite sex, when anyone who has not had intercourse with the other animals, has not felt the contented cluckings of a hen stroked on the neck and under the wings rumbling through his or

her own flesh, has not kissed a calf's mouth raised to his or her own, has not mounted the smooth warm flanks of a horse, has not been aroused by the powdery feathers of cockatoos and the ardent chants of insects in the summer night, gets in the sack with a member of his or her own species, she and he are only consummating tension release, getting their rocks off. When we, in our so pregnant expression, *make* love with someone of our own species, we also make love with the horse and the calf, the kitten and cockatoo, the powdery moths and the lustful crickets.

Orgasm proceeds by decomposition of the competent body, the body upon which have been diagrammed and contracted the efficient operations for functioning in the environment of kitchen utensils, tools, and machines. It begins in denuding oneself. Clothing is not only a defensive carapace against the heat, the cold, the rain, the sleet, and the importunate impulses, curiosity, and advances of others, and protection for our flesh from the grime, dust, and harsh edges of the implements we manipulate and machines we operate. Whenever we go out in the street, or open our door to someone who knocked, we see someone who has first washed off the traces of the night, the anonymity and abandon of the night, from his or her face, who has rearranged the turmoil of his or her hair, who has chosen clothing for his or her departure into the public spaces. He and she dress punk or preppie, worker or executive, inner city or suburban, he dresses up in business suit or dresses down in jeans, she puts on a pearl necklace or a neckchain of Hopi Indian beads. He and she also dress today like he and she did yesterday and last year; she maintains the two-piece crisp look of an active woman with responsibilities, a business executive. He keeps his masculine, outdoors look even when visiting the city or coming to our dinner party; he does not put aside his plaid shirt and jeans for a tie-dyed hippie t-shirt or an Italian designer silk shirt. When we see her, wearing a t-shirt or sweatshirt with Penn State on it, we see someone who is not only dressing in the uniform of a college student, but who has dressed her movements, thoughts, and reactions with those of a college freshman, a dormitory rat, or a sorority sister. We also see in the uniform the uniformity of a series of actions, undertakings, thoughts, opinions, feelings maintained for weeks, months, years, and predictable for the weeks, months, years ahead. We see the time of endurance, and respond to it.

Now he or she undresses before our eyes, and under our embrace. In denuding him and herself, he and she take off the uniform, the categories, the endurance, the reasons, and the functions. Of course in the

gym-built musculature we see another kind of clothing, body-armor, uniformization, a body reshaped to fit a model. But in the slight sag of the full or undeveloped breasts, in the smooth expanse of the belly, in the contour of the ass, in the bare expanse of the inside of the upper thighs, we see flesh, carnality, and our eyes already caress it to make contact with what makes it real and tremble with its own sensuality and life. This carnality, this naked flesh is only real in the carnal contact with it, dissolute and wanton.

As our bodies become orgasmic, the posture, held oriented for tasks, collapses, the diagrams for manipulations and operations dissolve from our legs and hands which roll about dismembered, exposed to the touch and tongue of another, moved by another. Our lips loosen, soften, glisten with saliva, lose the train of sentences, our throats issue babble, giggling, moans, sighs. Our sense of ourselves, our self-respect shaped in fulfilling a function in the machinic and social environment, our dignity maintained in multiple confrontations, collaborations, and demands, dissolve; the ego loses its focus as center of evaluations, decisions, and initiatives. Our impulses, our passions, are returned to animal irresponsibility. The sighs and moans of another that pulse through our nervous excitability, the spasms of pleasure and torment in contact with the non-prehensile surfaces of our bodies, our cheeks, our bellies, our thighs, irradiate across the substance of our sensitive and vulnerable nakedness. The lion and stallion mane, the hairy orifices of the body, the hairy bull chest, the hairy monkey armpits, the feline pelt of the mons veneris, the hairy satyr anus exert a vertiginous attraction. We feel feline and wolfish, foxy and bitchy; the purrings of kittens reverberate in our orgasmic strokings, our fingers racing up and down the trunk and limbs of another become squirrely, our clam vagina opens, our penis, slippery and erect oscillating head of a cobra, snakes its way in. Our muscular and vertebrate bodies transubstantiate into ooze, slime, mammalian sweat, and reptilian secretions, into minute tadpoles and releases of hot moist breath nourishing the floating microorganisms of the night air.

Human sexuality is not just what priggish suburbanites call animal sex, the random and mindless copulation of their domestic dogs; it elaborates all the refinements of eroticism. Lust enlists all the Platonic eros that craves beauty and immortality, the beauty that looks immortal and the immortality of beauty; it elaborates the skills and the arts of seduction, the teasing and provocative usage of language, metaphor and metonymy, synecdoche and irony, the no that is a yes and the yes that is a no, the specific pleasure in appearance, simulacra, and masquerade, the

challenge and purely imaginary stakes of games. The consummately feminine look, Baudelaire said, is “that blasé look, that bored look, that vaporous look, that impudent look, that cold look, that look of looking inward, that dominating look, that voluptuous look, that wicked look, that sick look, that catlike look, infantilism, nonchalance and malice compounded.”¹

Courtesans of old Persian gardens, sacred women devoted to all the arts of the Kama Sutra in the temple compounds of old India, sacred women elaborating erotic epics in the temple compounds of the Mayas and Incas in America, Geishas of Japan. A woman not striding in sensible walking shoes, but pirouetting in stork heels, or gliding in water-buffalo sandals; not wearing laundromat-washed t-shirt and jeans, but clad in the silk made by moths and chains of Polynesian shells dangling in the way of her melodic movements. Not muscled arms and bloated, milk-full breasts, but satiny breasts and a belly not destined for pregnancy and stretch marks. An abdomen not emitting the gurglings of digestion and a *derrière* not smelling of defecations, a woman who survives on celery stalks and champagne, or brown rice and water. One does not see the female, one sees the feminine, obeying nothing but aesthetic laws of her own making. An astral woman who appears in the crowd like a mirage, and who drifts effortlessly through doors to wander in rose gardens and crystal pools the moonbeams create wherever she turns.

Males in the Middle Ages became erotic objects in the ostentatious garb of knights and in tournaments taking place in an enchanted world of sorcerers, stallions, dragons, and rescues, and in the siren songs of outlaw gypsies, predators on the organized feudal world. The male erotic objects on the silver screen are eighteenth-century cavalry or naval officers who gamble away fortunes, duel, and dance, and Latino bandidos, or twentieth-century outlaws and high-society con men. The starched white uniforms of naval officers, with their gold epaulets and the hats, capes, and mirror-polished boots of cavalry officers with never the least trace of the muck of the barracks and the gore of the battlefield make them appear as astral men who appear from the outer spaces beyond society like mirages. Nineteenth-century bandidos and twentieth-century outlaws and high-society con men stud their black uniforms with silver and their bloody hands with precious jewels. They prowl in the outer region of sorcery and necromancy, consecrated in that other religion of amulets, talismans, luck, fate, omens, curses, spells, werewolves, and vampires.

But in this the courtesan, sorceress in the rites of eroticism, is in symbiosis with the resplendent quetzal whose extravagantly arrayed glittering

plumage serves no utilitarian function; the cavalry officer is in symbiosis with the coral fish whose Escher designs do not outline the functional parts and organs of their bodies and whose fauviste colors are no more camouflage than are his white jodhpurs and scarlet cape. The ceremonies and etiquette with which courtship was elaborated among the courtesans in the court of the Sun King were not more ritualized than the rituals of Emperor penguins in Antarctica; the codes of chivalry in medieval Provence not more idealized than the spring rituals of impalas in the East African savannah; the rites of seduction of Geishas in old Kyoto not more refined than those of black-neck cranes in moonlit marshes.

Humans have from earliest times made themselves erotically alluring, as Immanuel Kant noted, by grafting upon themselves the erotic splendors of the other animals, the glittering plumes of quetzal-birds and the filmy plumes of ostriches, the secret inner splendors of mother-of-pearl oysters, the springtime gleam of fox fur. Until Versailles, perfumes were made not with the nectar of flowers but with the musks of rodents. The dance floors cleared of vegetation and decorated with shells and flowers that birds-of-paradise make for their intoxicated dances, a cock fight exhibits the extravagant and extreme elaborations far beyond reproductive copulation into the eroticism that humans have composed with the other animals.

And today, in our Internet world where everything is reduced to digitally coded messages, images, and simulacra instantaneously transmitted from one human to another, it is in our passions ceremonious delays of eroticism.

Faces

Primates in the savannah, chimpanzees, gorillas, Neanderthals, Cro-Magnons, in packs. Moving with the sun rising on the horizon, with the wind rustling the staves of elephant grass, the movements of their legs and hands composing with the elastic bend and spring of the staves of grass. A flight of a crane draws their heads upward, a rush of wildebeests excites the velocities emanating from them, they dance a punk slamdance with the scavenger hyenas. Hands extended upon the arms, backs, legs, heads of one another, the tensions and flexions of their torsos composing with the tensions and flexions of those arms, backs, legs, heads. They lie on the ground, shifting under the spring of the grass and the stirring of small insects, overhead the branches laden with leaves and berries sway with the gusts of wind. Their fingers clasping the fingers of those leafy branches, berries shifting, holding, falling into their fingers. Their fingers

composing with the movements of their lips, their tongues, bringing berries also to the lips and tongues of one another, taking berries from the fingers and lips of one another. Inside their mouths marshes of bacteria, six hundred species shifting in the foaming saliva, pulsate, neutralizing the toxins in those berries. They murmur with the rustling leaves, answer the chatter of monkeys and lemurs and the bellows of elephants and the cries of parrots and eagles. They hum and murmur and chant with one another as they move. It is in laughter that they both recognize one another as members of the same species, and are attracted to one another. Outbursts of laughter spread among them, making them transparent to one another. They wail and weep together over a dead child, an adult dead of fever. They speak in words, words of blessing over exquisite forest-floor and grandiose cosmic events that delighted them, words of cursing that pursue the evil forces to their own lairs. They have evolved speech, to speak of the things they laugh over, weep over, bless and curse. As the sun descends and the light turns into darkness, their eyelids descend. Lying on the ground, they rest their heads on the bellies, thighs of one another, their legs and hands extending and retracting when the torsos they rest on shift to open bends of intestines for leaves and berries and four hundred species of bacteria to move again. Through the long night the wind stirs, the staves of elephant grass spring up as they shift positions.

In this animal pack, there are forces, intensive movements that are stronger. The antlers of two elk lower, swerve, lock, their feet push, the one buckles and falls. The foot comes down upon the tail of the calf, but the tail swirls and the swift feet of the calf bound away. The feet of one human animal stumble on the cliff face, the hand of the other grasps and pulls him erect. One human, the alpha male leads the pack, drives off the cupidinous junior male, who feints, and another cupidinous son runs off with the alpha female.

Then, in the desert, in the steppes, there arose the despot. He no longer wrestled with the others for the alpha male position, exposing his legs to be kicked under him, exposing his moves to the composition of adversary moves and velocities. He covered the head of his body with a surface, a blank wall, his face. On this blank wall formed signs. The movements and velocities of the pack ran up against this blank wall. When they did so they were sent off, recoded. His signs, his words are directives, imperatives. Action, movements must take their origin in his words.

His directives extend in linear progression: each word follows the last, takes up its sense and extends it to the next word. They extend a line of

coherence and cohesion. Of themselves, words are polysignificant, extending rays of allusion in many directions. "Fly" may indicate rhythmic movement through the air, or a departure into the air being ordered, or an escape, a disappearance, or a move in baseball, or a brazen initiative, or an insect. Setting another word after it, and another word after that, progressively eliminates the ambiguity, the polydirectionality, and when the series of words has come to an end, a single line of coherence and cohesion has been laid out. The radiating spread of sounds, tones, and also of movements coming from an animal body, the multiple velocities issuing from that body composing with myriads of surrounding mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, insects, bacteria, have been lined up into one line of inter-referential words, which is one line of meaning. "What did he mean?" becomes an anxiety darkening the laughter and tears, blessings and cursings by which they had come to communicate.

The despot demands an account of themselves of his subjects. They must give an account of what they did yesterday, what they will do today. They must inwardly code what they are now as coherent with, consequent upon, what they did yesterday. They must make what they will do tomorrow be the consequence of what they say today. Their movements must no longer be immediate responses to the rhythms, the melodic velocities they composed with the differentials of velocity and intensity about them, those of the other animals they move and feel in symbiosis with. Their voices no longer resonate, chant, invoke, call forth; they respond to the voice of a law that orders one to move on down the line. They extend before him the blank wall of faces, extended over their heads, surfaces upon which words are inscribed. These surfaces are loci of words, of meanings which become the commanding motor force of their inner coral reefs. They are these blank walls, these surfaces, these faces, nothing but these subjects of discourse, coding, ordering their animal bodies.

On the blank wall, the surface, of his face, there are black holes, dark as the black of the night, in which his pleasure and his displeasure simmer. The words of his subjects facing him, lining up their actions upon him, enter these black holes, where the turmoil of his pleasure and his displeasure turns upon itself, exists for itself. In the black hole on his face turns a spiral of subjectivity, a movement existing for itself, turning on itself, affecting itself.

His authority is these black holes, before which lies the turbulence of a drifting desert, an undulating sea. The crabgrass lines of advances, of radiation, of entanglement in the pack are by his look lined up, directed

upon himself, sanctioned or terminated, in the black hole of his look. In these black holes his look orders them.

The black hole of his look is judgment. To be seen by him is to be judged. His arbitration operates by binary oppositions, dichotomies, bipolarities. No. Yes. They will know his pleasure or his displeasure only in more words inscribed on the blank wall of his face.

His words rebound upon his subjects. The lines of movement, of composition with other movements, with which they live and act, they are to line up; the present movement they are to make the consequence of the past movement, coherent with it, the present moment they are to make a pledge for the movement to come. They are to exercise surveillance upon their own movement in his place, subject each movement to judgment, absorb the line extending outward in the black hole of their own look, where it turns in spirals of subjectivity, subjected to judgment, to yes and to no.

The desert world about him becomes a landscape, direct correlate of the landscape of his face. It becomes a blank surface upon which drifting dunes and shifting shadows become significant, material tracings of lines of meaning, a face of the earth facing him, the respondent, the complement and correlate of his own face. In the black holes of its glades and caverns and in the black hole of the night that envelops it, he sees the moods, the passions, the compliance, and the defiance of the landscape corresponding to his subjectivity.

The polis, the geopolitical empire. In every cubicle of the high-rises, the blank screen of the television faces the inmates. The blank screen flickers, traits, lines, wrinkles, within a border long, square, angular: the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, the leader of the opposing army, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the President of Qantas, the star of the national rugby team, the star of the Hollywood superproduction, face millions of inmates in those cubicles. All the radiating, swarming lines of velocities and movements, in the electoral campaign, in the economy, in the stadiums, in the neon-lit night of the city, run up against the blank wall of this face. The traits, lines, wrinkles of the face oscillate. One does not see, divine, touch the nervous circuitry, thin strands of muscles, and the inner rivers coursing billions of bacteria and macrophages in a depth behind this blank wall; the face is all surface, a signboard, on which a succession of words will take form to be heard and read. The words, a ninety-second sound bite, enunciate the meaning that gives coherence, lines up, the radiating movements and velocities of the electoral campaign,

the economy, the airline industry, the new line of fashion, the new series of Hollywood action movies. The blank wall of the face is perforated with black holes, in them the eyes turn, sanctioning or censoring, yes, no. The President, the Minister of the Interior, the leader of the opposing army, the president of the multinational corporation, the captain of the Olympics team, the heavy metal star is authoritatively pleased, is authoritatively displeased.

In the corridors, in the streets, the citizens have covered up their bodies to expose blank surfaces—uniforms of business executives and store clerks, nurses and waiters, teachers and students, suburban homeowners and teenage groupies. The legs advance forward and backward, used to move linearly toward a goal fixed by a word. Lest they stray there are words written at highway intersections, on street corners, on doors, along the corridors of shopping malls. If ever these so strictly monitored movements happen, even through no fault of one's own, to so much as brush up against the body of another, one immediately, guiltily says words: Oh, I'm sorry! Oh excuse me! The hands extend to words written on boxes, bottles, cans. The fingers touch letters and words on security alarm pads, on computers, on microwaves, on phonographs, on television sets, on cellular phones. The line of posture in the torso and neck responds to words: attention, the boss is looking, the highway cop is looking at the radar screen, the father, teacher, tour guide is looking over there, the judge, foreman, inspector, borough councilman, coach, star has arrived, the face is appearing on the screen, attention, at ease, attention, at ease.

The citizens do not lean against, rub against, fondle, smell, palpate one another's bodies, feeling the streams and cascades and backwaters within; they look upon the blank wall of the faces, the pure surfaces extended over their heads. They read there the linear traits of meaning. The zigzag, broken radiations of movements and velocities are lined up, past phases taken up and continued in the present, subsequent phases programmed in the present.

A face faces to express meanings. A face is there to express subjective feelings. More than "expresses" there are no meanings without a blank wall on which are inscribed and effaced signs and redundancies. There is no subjectification without a black hole where consciousness, self-consciousness, its passions, its redundancies turn.

A face is a determinate zone of frequency or probability, a field which accepts some expressions and connections and neutralizes others. It is a screen and a framework. To face someone is to envisage a certain range of

things there that could be expressed, and to have available a certain range of things one could address to it. One sees what he might say, what he should not have said. One senses the sorts of things one might say, those one might not say. We do not speak the English language, with all the vocabulary available in the dictionary; we speak as “a father must,” as an office manager or factory foreman, to the lover we speak a puerilized language; in falling asleep we sink into a oneiric discourse, and abruptly return to a professional language when the telephone rings.

A face is where consciousness and passion exist in the world. They exist in the black holes on the blank wall of the face. In these black holes appear the eyes, the nose, the ears, the mouth. The eyes, the nose, the ears, the mouth subjectivize the outside environment. The movements, fluxes, rhythms, melodies, velocities of continental shelves, oceans and skies, the other animals, the plants and the viruses are covered over with the blank screen of a landscape, appearing only through meanings, gloom, and pleasures.

To seek out a face is to put a question to it. A question is not a supplication, an entreaty, nor a velleity for knowledge just put out in the air; it is already an order, a command. Beggars, the destitute, students, proletarians, enlisted soldiers, prisoners, patients have no right to question; they can only beg. If they are heard, they will be given scraps to silence them.

The questions command a certain focus of attention, a selection of resources on hand, a certain type of language. The answer lays down a direction, imposes a directive to think further in a certain direction.

Facing one another, we require responsibility. And responsibility requires integrity—that is, not only sincerity, but an integration of the faculties and resources of the speaker. One has to not only respond to the greetings and questions of others, but one has to answer for what one says or said. The others face you as the one present here now who has to answer for things said five minutes ago and yesterday and last year. “But you said . . . But you promised . . .” To speak, to say “I” is not simply to designate oneself as the one now making this utterance; it is to reiterate the same term and attribute to it again utterances and deeds predicated of it before. If one has changed, one has to reinstate what one was as the motive for what one has now become. “Yes I promised to go to India with you this year, but I changed my major and have to study for medical school admissions. . . .”

To find one’s identity in facing others is to exist and act under accusation. The temptation to not answer for something that was seen or said

or done through one's organism yesterday, to attribute it to another psychic agency, to begin to break up into discontinuous psychic sequences is the very formula for antisocial existence. The schizophrenic is a sociopath. Multiple personality disorder is the ultimate psychosis psychiatry has to deal with, and society sees the sociopath not so much in violence—violence can be, as in policemen or professional boxers, perfectly socialized—but rather in someone who leads a double, or triple, life.

To exist under accusation is to have to provide a coherent verbal justification for every movement that emanates from one's body. One cultivates a memory in which everything is filed in an accessible system; makes what one feels and does today consistent with what one felt and did yesterday, what one was trained to do, what one was brought up to be. Know thyself! The unexamined life is not worth living! What one thinks and says today is a pledge and a commitment, to which tomorrow, next year, next decade is subjugated. The blank wall and black holes of the face of philistine Socrates, one unable to build a house or compose anything but a nursery rhythm out of Aesop's fables, prowls about all the workshops, assembly halls, and studios of the city, accusing, discrediting the carpenter, the leader of men or of women; discrediting even the artist, the poet, the composer if he and she cannot give a verbal account of it motivating each stanza of their compositions with a linear rational justification.

The face extends down the whole length of the body. The hands and fingers no longer probe, punch, caress with the furry caterpillars, the raccoons, and the octopods; held at a distance from contact from any other body, they gesticulate, diagramming meaningful signals and punctuations consistent with the words set forth. The very genitals themselves, exposed in the collapse of posture and skills, the collapse of will, the dissolute decomposition of orgasm, undergoing material transubstantiations solidifying, gelatinizing, liquefying, vaporizing, are under accusation the whole length of their existence: they must mean something, they must carry the dead weight of the meaning, they must express respect for the person, the ego, the identity, the authority of the face, they must confirm the partner in his or her identity, they must serve the population policy of the nation-state and its patron God. Everything animal in the body must be covered up, with clothing which extends the face, the blank surfaces of the business suit and the tailored two-piece suit of the career-woman, with the black holes of its buttons, the blue of deliveryman's and the white of painter's dungarees, the uniforms of air hostesses and politicians' wives and university students, uniforms upon which ordered words

are inscribed, where black holes of subjectivity judge and sanction. The surfaces of clothing are facial; they circumscribe zones of frequency or probability, fields which accept some expressions and connections and neutralize others.

But it also happens that the depth of the body breaks through the face, invades it, darkens it with ambiguity and ardor. The expressive lines of the lips and cheeks vacillate, lose the train of the expression, shimmer with the caresses of the sunlight, tremble and begin to rock to the melodies of the insects and rustling trees. Into the smooth contours of the cheeks blank for the inscription of signals, there emerges an exposed and susceptible carnality, where millions of microorganisms swim in churning rivulets and cascades, craving contact with the lips of a calf, the powdery plumage of a cockatoo, the caresses of blades of grass, themselves teeming with minute swarms of living organisms. All the animals within carapaced in the uniforms migrate to the face, sole surface of exposure, to compose with the animals outside.

When our gaze encounters such a face, we see red spots, freckles that stream off in the autumn leaves, eyes one crosses instead of seeing oneself in them, looks our looks surf with. Mane of the centaur-woman bareback riding across the windy prairie, sunlight dancing across the wrinkles of the old woman feeding pigeons in the park, sand dunes of the forehead, cheeks, nose, and lips in Kaneto Shindo's film *Woman of the Dunes*, gelatinous crystals of the eyes in which we see the effulgent light of stars that burned out millions of light-years ago, open mouth upon which we push our tongue upon ecological gardens of six hundred species of microorganisms.

When another greets us, with a voice that trembles with the dance of springtime or threnody of winter, his or her voice invites us to hear the murmur of nature that resounds in it. When someone turns his eyes to us, he or she does not only look in our eyes to order them or find the map of the landscape; his or her eyes seek out first the vivacity and delight of the light in them that summons him and her forth. Does not the gaze of another, which touches us lightly and turns aside, and invokes not the glare of our gaze but the darkness our eyes harbor, refract to us the summons of the impersonal night?

And then when we make contact with the face of another, we make contact with the wounds and wrinkles of the skin, surface of exposure of susceptibility and vulnerability.

The suffering we see may well be a suffering that does not seek to be

consoled; Nietzsche warned against imagining that we should alleviate a suffering which another needs and clings to as his or her destiny—the inner torments of Beethoven, the hardships and heartaches of the youth who has gone to join the guerrillas in the mountains, the grief of someone who has to grieve the loss of her child. To be afflicted with his or her suffering requires that we care about the things he or she cares for.

Another's words of greeting open a silence for our words but also for our reticence and our tact before the importance, urgency, and immediacy of the demands of animal packs and of constellations of things. The suffering of the one who faces me, a suffering visible in the bloodless white of her anguished face, may well be not the suffering of her own hunger and thirst, but a suffering for other animals in her care dying of the drought or the peregrines in the poisoned skies, a distress over the crumbling temple and for the nests of seabirds broken by the tidal wave, a grieving for the glaciers melting under skies whose carbon-dioxide layers are trapping the heat of the earth.

Is it only his or her suffering that appeals urgently to us, has importance, and afflicts us immediately? Is there not always joy in the one who faces us, even joy in his suffering—the joy of finding us? Joy is an upsurge that affirms itself unrestrictedly, and affirms the importance and truth of the packs, the gangs of the savannah and the night, the swarming, illuminated by joy. The one who faces us in joy does not only radiate his joy which we find immediately on ourselves; it requires a response. The thumbs-up that the Brazilian street kid—his mouth too voraciously gobbling our leftover spaghetti to smile or say *obrigado*—gives is a gift given us that we must cherish in the return of our smile, a gift that we have no right to refuse. But the joy of the street kid is not only a contentment in the satisfaction of his hunger; it is a joy of being in the streets, in the sun, in the urban jungle so full of excitements, and it is in his laughter pealing over the excitements of the urban jungle and the glory of the sun reigning over the beaches of Rio that gives rise to his hunger and his relishing the goodness of restaurant spaghetti.

Notes

1. Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 1256.