

and I sigh after that suspension of karma which is *nirvana*. Hence the situations which happen to impose no responsibility for behavior upon me, however painful, are received in a sort of peace; I suffer, but at least I have nothing to decide; the amorous (imaginary) machinery here operates all by itself, within me; like a workman of the electronic age, or like the dunce in the last row of the classroom, all I have to do is *be there*: karma (the machinery, the classroom) functions in front of me, but without me. In misery itself, I can, for a very brief interval, devise for myself a *little corner of sloth*.

“When my finger accidentally . . .”

contacts / contacts

The figure refers to any interior discourse provoked by a furtive contact with the body (and more precisely the skin) of the desired being.

Werther

1. Accidentally, Werther's finger touches Charlotte's, their feet, under the table, happen to brush against each other. Werther might be engrossed by the meaning of these accidents; he might concentrate physically on these slight zones of contact and delight in this fragment of inert finger or foot, fetishistically, *without concern for the response* (like God—as the etymology of the word tells us—the Fetish does not reply). But in fact Werther is not perverse, he is in love: he creates meaning, always and everywhere, out of nothing, and it is meaning which thrills him: he is in the crucible of meaning. Every contact, for the lover, raises the question of an answer: the skin is asked to reply.

(A squeeze of the hand—enormous documentation—a tiny gesture within the palm, a knee which doesn't move away, an arm extended, as if quite naturally, along the back of a sofa and against which the other's head gradually comes to rest—this is the paradisiac realm of subtle and clandestine signs: a kind of festival not of the senses but of meaning.)

Proust

2. Charlus takes the narrator's chin and slides his magnetized fingers up to the ears "like a barber's fingers." This trivial gesture, which I begin, is continued by another part of myself; without anything interrupting it physically, it branches off, shifts from a simple function to a dazzling meaning, that of the demand for love. Meaning (destiny) electrifies my hand; I am about to tear open the other's opaque body, oblige the other (whether there is a response, a withdrawal, or mere acceptance) to enter into the interplay of meaning: I am about *to make the other speak*. In the lover's realm, there is no *acting out*: no propulsion, perhaps even no pleasure—nothing but signs, a frenzied activity of language: to institute, on each furtive occasion, the system (the paradigm) of demand and response.

PROUST: *The Guermantes' Way*.

Events, Setbacks, Annoyances

contingences / contingencies

Trivialities, incidents, setbacks, pettinesses, irritations, the vexations of amorous existence; any factual nucleus whose consequences intersect the amorous subject's will to happiness, as if chance conspired against him.

1. "Because, this morning, X was in a good mood, because I received a present from X, because our next meeting is all set—but because, unexpectedly, tonight, I ran into X accompanied by Y, because I imagined them whispering together about me when they caught sight of me, because this meeting has demonstrated the ambiguity of our situation, and perhaps even X's duplicity—the euphoria has stopped."

2. The incident is trivial (it is always trivial) but it will attract to it whatever language I possess. I immediately transform it into an important event, *devised* by something which resembles fate. It is a covering which falls over me, enveloping everything. Countless minor circumstances thus weave the black veil of Maya, the tapestry of illusions, of meanings, of words. I begin *classifying* what happens to me. The incident will now produce an irritation, like the pea under the princess's twenty mattresses; like one of the day's thoughts swarming in a

Andersen

Freud

dream, it will be the instigator of the lover's discourse, which will reproduce and multiply by means of the Image-repertoire's capital.

3. In the incident, it is not the cause which pulls me up short and which echoes within me thereupon, but the structure. The entire structure of the relation comes to me as one might pull a tablecloth toward one: its disadvantages, its snares, its impasses (similarly, in the tiny lens embellishing the mother-of-pearl penholder, I could see Paris and the Eiffel Tower). I make no recriminations, develop no suspicions, search for no causes; I see in terror the *scope* of the situation in which I am caught up; I am not the man of resentment, but of fatality.

(For me, the incident is a sign, not an index: the element of a system, not the efflorescence of a causality.)

4. Sometimes, hysterically, my own body produces the incident: an evening I was looking forward to with delight, a heartfelt declaration whose effect, I felt, would be highly beneficial—these I obstruct by a stomach ache, an attack of grippe: all the possible substitutes of hysterical aphonia.

FREUD: *The Interpretation of Dreams.*

The Other's Body

corps / body

Any thought, any feeling, any interest aroused in the amorous subject by the loved body.

1. The other's body was divided: on one side, the body proper—skin, eyes—tender, warm; and on the other side, the voice—abrupt, reserved, subject to fits of remoteness, a voice which did not give what the body gave. Or further: on one side, the soft, warm, downy, adorable body, and on the other, the ringing, well-formed, worldly voice—always the voice.

Proust

2. Sometimes an idea occurs to me: I catch myself carefully scrutinizing the loved body (like the narrator watching Albertine asleep). *To scrutinize* means *to search*: I am searching the other's body, as if I wanted to see what was inside it, as if the mechanical cause of my desire were in the adverse body (I am like those children who take a clock apart in order to find out what time is). This operation is conducted in a cold and astonished fashion; I am calm, attentive, as if I were confronted by a strange insect of which I am suddenly *no longer afraid*. Certain parts of the body are particularly appropriate to this *observation*: eyelashes, nails, roots of the hair, the incomplete objects. It is obvious that I am then in the process of fetishizing a corpse. As is proved by the fact that if the body I am scrutinizing happens to emerge from its inertia, if it begins *doing something*, my desire changes;

if for instance I see the other *thinking*, my desire ceases to be perverse, it again becomes imaginary, I return to an Image, to a Whole: once again, I love.

(I was looking at everything in the other's face, the other's body, coldly: lashes, toenail, thin eyebrows, thin lips, the luster of the eyes, a mole, a way of holding a cigarette; I was fascinated—fascination being, after all, only the extreme of detachment—by a kind of colored ceramicized, vitrified figurine in which I could read, without understanding anything about it, *the cause of my desire*.)

Talking

déclaration / declaration

The amorous subject's propensity to talk copiously, with repressed feeling, to the loved being, about his love for that being, for himself, for them: the declaration does not bear upon the avowal of love, but upon the endlessly glossed form of the amorous relation.

1. Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire. The emotion derives from a double contact: on the one hand, a whole activity of discourse discreetly, indirectly focuses upon a single signified, which is "I desire you," and releases, nourishes, ramifies it to the point of explosion (language experiences orgasm upon touching itself); on the other hand, I enwrap the other in my words, I caress, brush against, talk up this contact, I extend myself to make the commentary to which I submit the relation endure.

(To speak amorously is to expend without an end in sight, without a *crisis*; it is to practice a relation without orgasm. There may exist a literary form of this *coitus reservatus*: what we call Marivaudage.)

2. The energy of commentary shifts, follows the path of substitutions. Initially it is for the other that I discourse

upon the relation; but this may also occur in the presence of my confidant: from *you* I shift to *he* or *she*. And then, from *he* or *she* I shift to *one*: I elaborate an abstract discourse about love, a philosophy of the thing, which would then in fact be nothing but a generalized suasion. Retracing our steps from here, one might say that every discussion of love (however detached its tonality) inevitably involves a secret allocution (I am addressing someone whom you do not know but who is there, at the end of my maxims). In the *Symposium*, we may find this allocution: it may well be Agathon whom Alcibiades is addressing and whom he desires, though he is being monitored by an analyst, Socrates.

Lacan

(Love's atopia, the characteristic which causes it to escape all dissertations, would be that *ultimately* it is possible to talk about love only *according to a strict allocutive determination*; whether philosophical, gnomic, lyric, or novelistic, there is always, in the discourse upon love, a person whom one addresses, though this person may have shifted to the condition of a phantom or a creature still to come. No one wants to speak of love unless it is *for* someone.)

The Dedication

dédicace / dedication

An episode of language which accompanies any amorous gift, whether real or projected; and, more generally, every gesture, whether actual or interior, by which the subject dedicates something to the loved being.

1. The amorous gift is sought out, selected, and purchased in the greatest excitement—the kind of excitement which seems to be of the order of orgasm. Strenuously I calculate whether this object will give pleasure, whether it will disappoint, or whether, on the contrary, seeming too “important,” it will in and of itself betray the delirium—or the snare in which I am caught. The amorous gift is a solemn one; swept away by the devouring metonymy which governs the life of the imagination, I transfer myself inside it altogether. By this object, I give you my All, I touch you with my phallus; it is for this reason that I am mad with excitement, that I rush from shop to shop, stubbornly tracking down the “right” fetish, the brilliant, successful fetish which will *perfectly* suit your desire.

The gift is contact, sensuality: you will be touching what I have touched, a third skin unites us. I give X a scarf and he wears it: X *gives* me the fact of wearing it; and, moreover, this is how he, naïvely, conceives and speaks of the phenomenon. *A contrario*: any ethic of purity requires that we detach the gift from the hand which gives or receives it: in Buddhist ordination, personal objects and the three garments are offered to the bonze on a pole; the bonze accepts them by touching them with a stick, not

Zen with his hand; thus, in the future, everything which will be given to him—and on which he will live—will be arranged on a table, on the ground, or on a fan.

2. I have this fear: that the given object may not function properly because of some insidious defect: if it is a box (selected very carefully), for example, the latch doesn't work (the shop being run by society women; and, moreover, the shop is called "*Because I love*"—is it *because I love* that the latch doesn't work?). The delight of giving the present then evaporates, and the subject knows that whatever he gives, he does not have it.

Ph.S. (One does not give merely an object: X being in analysis, Y wants to be analyzed too: analysis as a gift of love?).

The gift is not necessarily excrement, but it has, nonetheless, a vocation as waste: the gift I receive is more than I know what to do with, it does not fit my space, it encumbers, it is too much: "What am I going to do with your present!"

3. A typical argument of a "scene" is to represent to the other what you are giving him or her (time, energy, money, ingenuity, other relations, etc.); for it is invoking the reply which makes any scene "move": *And what about me! Haven't I given you everything?* The gift then reveals the test of strength of which it is the instrument: "I'll give you more than you give me, and so I will dominate you" (in the great Indian potlatches, whole villages were burned, slaves slaughtered with this intention).

To declare what I am giving is to follow the family model: *look at the sacrifices we're making for you;* or again: *we*

Ph.S.: Conversation.

gave you the gift of life (—*But what the fuck do I care about life!* etc.). To speak of the gift is to place it in an exchange economy (of sacrifice, competition, etc.); which stands opposed to silent expenditure.

Symposium

R.H.

4. "To that god, O Phaedrus, I dedicate this discourse . . ." One cannot give language (how to transfer it from one hand to the other?), but one can dedicate it—since the other is a minor god. The given object is reabsorbed in the sumptuous, solemn utterance of the consecration, in the poetic gesture of the dedication; the gift is exalted in the very voice which expresses it, if this voice is *measured* (metrical); or again: *sung* (lyrical); this is the very principle of the *Hymn* or *Anthem*. Being unable to give anything, I dedicate the dedication itself, into which is absorbed all I have to say:

Baudelaire

*A la très chère, à la très belle,
Qui remplit mon coeur de clarté,
A l'ange, à l'idole immortelle . . .
To the beloved, the beautiful being
who fills my heart with light, to
the angel, the immortal idol . . .*

Song is the precious addition to a blank message, entirely contained within its address, for what I give by singing is at once my body (by my voice) and the silence into which you cast that body. (Love is mute, Novalis says; only poetry makes it speak.) *Song means nothing*: it is in this that you will understand at last what it is that I give you; as useless as the wisp of yarn, the pebble held out to his mother by the child.

5. Powerless to utter itself, powerless to speak, love

R.H.: Conversation.

nonetheless wants to proclaim itself, to exclaim, to write itself everywhere; *all'acqua, all'ombra, ai monti, ai fiori, all'erbe, ai fonti, all'eco, all'aria, ai venti* . . . And once the amorous subject creates or puts together any kind of work at all, he is seized with a desire to dedicate it. What he makes he immediately, and even in advance, wants to give to his beloved, for whom he has worked, or will work. The addition of the name will take its place as a way of uttering the gift.

Yet, except for the case of the Hymn, which combines the dedication and the text itself, what follows the dedication (i.e., the work itself) has little relation to this dedication. The object I give is no longer tautological (I give you what I give you), it is *interpretable*; it has a meaning (meanings) greatly in excess of its address; though I write your name on my work, it is for "them" that it has been written (the others, the readers). Hence it is by a fatality of writing itself that we cannot say of a text that it is "amorous," but only, at best, that it has been created "amorously," like a cake or an embroidered slipper.

And even: less than a slipper! For the slipper has been made for your foot (your size and your pleasure); the cake has been made or selected for your taste: there is a certain adequation between these objects and your person. But writing does not possess this obligingness. Writing is dry, obtuse; a kind of steamroller, writing advances, indifferent, indelicate, and would kill "father, mother, lover" rather than deviate from its fatality (enigmatic though that fatality may be). When I write, I must acknowledge this fact (which, according to my Image-repertoire, lacerates me): there is no benevolence within writing, rather a terror: it smothers the other, who, far from perceiving the gift in it, reads there instead an assertion of mastery, of

The Marriage of Figaro: Cherubino's aria (Act I).

power, of pleasure, of solitude. Whence the cruel paradox of the dedication: I seek at all costs to give you what smothers you.

(We often notice that a writing subject does not have his writing "in his own image": if you love me "for myself," you do not love me for my writing (and I suffer from it). Doubtless, loving simultaneously two signifiers in the same body is too much! It doesn't happen every day—and if it should happen, by some exception, that is Coincidence, the Sovereign Good.)

6. Hence I cannot give you what I thought I was writing for you—that is what I must acknowledge: the amorous dedication is impossible (I shall not be satisfied with a worldly or mundane signature, pretending to dedicate to you a work which escapes us both). The operation in which the other is to be engaged is not a signature. It is, more profoundly, an inscription: the other is inscribed, he inscribes himself within the text, he leaves there his (multiple) traces. If you were only the dedicatee of this book, you would not escape your harsh condition as (loved) *object*—as god; but your presence within the text, whereby you are unrecognizable there, is not that of an analogical figure, of a fetish, but that of a force which is not, thereby, absolutely reliable. Hence it doesn't matter that you feel continuously reduced to silence, that your own discourse seems to you smothered beneath the monstrous discourse of the amorous subject: in *Teorema* the "other" does not speak, but he inscribes something within each of those who desire him—he performs what the mathematicians call a catastrophe (the disturbance of one system by another): it is true that this mute figure is an angel.

Pasolini