

If there's one thing that animals don't need more information on, it's sex. That's because sex holds no mystery.

—Freedman, 1977: 9

We make love only with worlds.

—Deleuze and Guattari, 1977: 294

SEX CONTINUES TO FASCINATE AND OBSESS human subjects, even if, as Freedman suggests, it holds little mystery for animals. That it lacks mystery, that sexual acts and desires are ruled by natural impulses, impelled by instincts, part of a natural cycle of life, reproduction, and death, may not in fact be as clear-cut and uncontentious as Freedman claims, even if one believes in “the natural order.” But even if it is true that sex holds no mystery for the animal (what would “mystery” be to an animal?), it is clearly not true that sex, in animal or human form, holds no mystery for man.¹ Animals continue to haunt man’s imagination, compel him to seek out their habits, preferences, and cycles, and provide models and formulae by which he comes

to represent his own desires, needs, and excitements. The immense popularity of nature programs on television, of books on various animals species, beloved or feared, and the work of naturalists recording data for scientific study, all testify to a pervasive fascination with the question of animal sex: how do animals *do it*? How do elephants make love (the standard old joke: very carefully)? How do snakes copulate? What are the pleasures of the orangutan, the spider, the chimpanzee?

It is ironic that in the rich plethora of animal sex that has been thus far surveyed, two examples taken from the microcosmic insect world continue to haunt the imaginations and projections of men, perhaps more than others taken from entomology/ethology—the black widow spider and the praying mantis. These two species have come to represent an intimate and persistent link between sex and death, between pleasure and punishment, desire and revenge, which may prove significant in understanding certain key details of male sexuality and desire and, consequently, in specifying elements or features of female sexuality and subjectivity.

Any attempt to understand female sexual desire on the models provided by male sexuality and pleasure risks producing a new model that is both fundamentally reliant on (heterosexual) norms of sexual complementarity or opposition, and reducing female sexuality and pleasure to models, goals, and orientations appropriate for men and not women. Such maneuvers shortcircuit any acknowledgement of the range, scope, and implications of erotic pleasure for understanding sexual difference. This is not to say that female and male sexualities must be regarded as two entirely distinct species, sharing nothing in common, each with their own identities and features (the essentialist commitment). This would entail the possibility of attaining a precise and positive understanding of the independent features that characterize each sex (a project that has tempted many women, and perhaps even more men, to outline what they understand to be a universal, characteristic, or essential femininity). Nor do I wish to suggest the contrary claim that the two sexes must be understood only in terms of each other, as mutually defined, reciprocally influential, each conforming to the other's needs and expectations (this is the dominant fantasy that has thus far governed the contemporary West's thinking about relations between the sexes, a fantasy that has left unacknowledged the structural, social, and representational constraints mitigating against any structural possibility of reciprocity).

Originally, I had planned to write on female sexuality, and particularly on female orgasm. After much hope, and considerable anguish that I would be unable to evoke the languid pleasures and intense particu-

larities of female orgasm (hardly a project for which the discipline of philosophy, or for that matter, psychoanalysis, could provide adequate theoretical training!), I abandoned this idea, partly because it seemed to me to be a project involving great disloyalty—speaking the (philosophically) unsayable, spilling the beans on a vast historical “secret,” one about which many men and some women have developed prurient interests; and partly because I realized that at the very most, what I write could be read largely as autobiography, as the “true confessions” of my own experience, and have little more than anecdotal value. I could have no guarantees that my descriptions or analyses would have relevance to other women. Instead, in an attempt both to stay obliquely with my self-chosen topic and avoid these dangers and points of uneasiness, I decided to look at what seems entirely other to women's pleasure and desire—at men, at insects—in an attempt, if not to say what female pleasure is, then at the least to say what it is not, to dispel accounts which bind women too closely to representations of men's or animals' sexuality, to clear the air of certain key projections, even if what is left is not a raw truth of women's desire but perhaps another layer in the complex overwriting/excription of the inscriptive constitution of the body or subjectivity. Thus, instead of focussing on various representations of women's sexual pleasure (in literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, pornography, etc.) or on personal experience, as many feminists and lesbian theorists have tended to, I decided to explore the work of two apparently unrelated male theorists whose candour and intellectual honesty have for some time impressed me, and whose work represents a rare combination of openly expressed personal obsession and scholarly rigor, the rigorous reading and analysis of their driving personal preoccupations:² Roger Caillois, the French sociologist and co-founder of the Collège de sociologie,³ whose life-long preoccupation with insects, with the femme fatale, and with rocks,⁴ signals early anticipations of what might be considered a “philosophy” or perhaps even an “anthropology” of the post-human; and Alphonso Lingis, the distinguished American philosopher and translator of phenomenological theory (most notably, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas), the only professional philosopher I have read who writes openly yet philosophically, and at great length, about orgasm, bodily pleasures, lust, and sexuality in its many permutations and extremes (transvestism, transsexualism, prostitution, pornography, pederasty, and sadomasochism among them). Between them, Caillois and Lingis provide a coverage from among the most primitive and ancient of insects⁵ to the most developed and enculturated of human sexual practices—a veritable panorama of sexual pleasures and practices—that may help to

specify what is masculine about representations of human, and non-human, sexualities.

HOLY INSECTS: LOVE AND THE PRAYING MANTIS

Caillois's pioneering contributions to ethology have long been recognized. His by now well-known analysis of the function of mimicry in the insect world⁶ has proved salutary for any analysis of materiality that reduces it to instrumentality, any attempt to define form in terms of function, being in terms of *telos*. He shows, in this and in his earlier writings, that the particular characteristics defining an insect species—its coloring, camouflage abilities, the organization of its sense organs—are always in excess of their survival value. There is a certain structural, anatomical, or behavioral superabundance, perhaps it is the very superfluity of life over and above the survival needs of the organism:

It is obvious that the utilitarian rôle of an object never completely justifies its form, or to put it another way, that the object always exceeds its instrumentality. Thus it is possible to discover in each object an irrational residue.... (Caillois 1990: 6)

(190) This "irrational residue," this going over the mark, this inherently excessive expenditure, an economy of luxury, becomes a locus of intense fascination for him. In his work on mimicry, Caillois makes it clear that an insect's ability to camouflage itself does not have survival value—it does not protect the creature from attack or death, and in fact may leave it open to even more hideous and unimaginable forms of death. He cites cases of the caterpillar cut in half by pruning shears, or the insect devoured by a member of its own species who mistakes it for a leaf. Camouflage is excessive to survival, just as the plumage of the peacock is excessive to sexual reproduction. Instead of demonstrating the finality of instinctual determinations, an existence defined in Darwinian terms, Caillois introduces a wanton dimension to his explanation of such features of animal existence. Camouflage, the capacity to imitate one's habitat or surroundings, far from performing an adaptive function, witnesses the captivation of a creature by its representations of and as space, its displacement from the center, from a "consciousness" of its place (in its body, located in space) to the perspective of another. The mimicking insect lives its camouflaged existence as not quite itself, as another.⁷

Caillois, who described himself as an "insect collector" (1990: 62), seems to have had a life-long fixation with the *Mantis religiosa*, or praying mantis. He claims to have been attracted to this species partly through frustrated curiosity: where he had lived as an adolescent, they

were not to be found. His curiosity piqued, he seems determined to possess, to see, to know. His description is couched in the terms of an impassioned epistemophilia: "[T]he difficulty of getting a specimen only increased my desire to possess one. I had to wait two years, and finally during a summer vacation in Royan I was thrilled to capture a fine *Mantis religiosa*..." (1990: 63).

Part of the attraction the praying mantis holds, not only for Caillois, but for many others, and which may help explain the insect's privileged status in the myths of many cultures,⁸ is its close and curious association with femininity, with female sexuality—above all, with the fantasy of the *vagina dentata*; with orality, digestion, and incorporation; and with women's (fantasized) jealousy of and power over men. Moreover, its richly evocative power, its ability to be used as a source of fantasy and speculation, must in part be attributed to its uncanny resemblance to the human form, the isomorphism of its limbs with human ones:

...of all insects it is the one whose form most reminds one of the human form, mainly because of the resemblance of its rapacious legs to human arms. As for its ordinary pose, it is not that of someone praying, as common consensus would have us believe (one does not pray lying on one's stomach), but that of a man making love [men on top!]. This alone is enough to justify an obscure and constant identification. One can now see why men have always been so interested in the mantis and its habits, and why it is so aptly associated as much with love as with hatred, whose ambivalent unity it condenses so admirably. (1990: 63)

The ambivalence is derived primarily from a narcissistic identification facilitated by the apparent resemblance of the mantis's posture to the human form; the closer this identification, the more horrifying are the consequences, for the more ominous is the fate of the human/male subject identifying with the (male) mantis. What seems to most provoke Caillois's fascination most are its terrifying nuptial habits, the well-known inclination of the female mantis to devour the male in the act of coitus. The female mantis is the most ungrateful of mates, engulfing and ultimately destroying her lover in a frenzy of self-seeking. This scene is rife with possibilities, and Caillois does not hesitate to suggest that the mantis may serve as an apt representation of the predatory and devouring female lover, who ingests and incorporates her mate, castrating or killing him in the process. The *femme fatale* writ small.⁹ This small insect is heir to a whole series of fundamentally paranoid projections, whereby it is not the male subject or the phallus that threatens the female lover but rather, the female lover who threatens the phallus. The father's cas-

trating position vis-à-vis the son is transformed into the image of the devouring mother. The mother is no longer the potential object of rape, but rather the perpetrator of a *theft*, castrating the son and keeping his phallus for herself, in a kind of retaliation against the father's authority and law.¹⁰

Psychoanalysis is clear that this is not what the mother does to the son, but rather what the son fears of the (fantasmatic) mother. She, no less than the mantis, is the projective vehicle for his worst fears. This may help explain the anthropomorphic identification of the female mantis with the female human—a neutralization of the son's investment in the father's image as a threat and a danger, the cost of which is linking castration to the mother, producing the phallus, and sexual pleasure, in connection with mutilation or death. Indeed, for Caillois, this links the mantis to a series of other vampiric and parasitic images—the vampire, the bat, and the mandrake—which, by virtue of their resemblance to the human, particularly the male, form also renders them objects of projection and identification:

It is by no means coincidental, in my opinion, that the belief in blood-sucking specters uses a bat as a kind of natural point of reference. The anthropomorphism of the bat runs particularly deep and goes well beyond the level of a general structural identity (the presence of true hands with a thumb opposed to the other fingers, pectoral breasts, a periodic menstrual flow, a free hanging penis). (1990: 73 Fn 10)

The female mantis had been "scientifically observed" since at least the sixteenth century in the act of decapitating the male, not only after or during coitus but even before! He would be devoured completely after copulation. For centuries it was believed that such acts of cannibalism could be described in terms of utility: needing protein to make the newly fertilized eggs grow, the female could find great quantities in devouring her mate. However, it seems more likely that the male's decapitation may well serve not only procreative but also specifically sexual functions for the female mantis:

Dubois's theory...wonders whether the mantis's goal in decapitating the male before mating is not to obtain, through the ablation of the inhibitory centers of the brain, a better and longer execution of the spasmodic movements of coitus. So that in the final analysis it would be for the female the pleasure principle that would dictate the murder of her lover, whose body, moreover, she begins to eat during the very act of making love. (1990: 81–82)

The female decapitates the male to facilitate more vigorous coital

movements! Caillois is most interested in the automatic nature of the male's sexual drive: headless, without a brain to take in representations or to undertake voluntary behavior, it nonetheless doggedly persists in its automatic sexual movements, and is even able to utilize various autonomous strategies to evade danger and predators while nonetheless, in a certain sense at least, dead (but still kicking!):

[T]he fact is that there are hardly any reactions that it is not also able to perform when decapitated.... In this condition, it can walk, regain its balance, move one of its threatened limbs autonomously, assume the spectral position, mate, lay eggs, build an ootheca, and, quite astoundingly, fall down in a false corpse-like immobility when confronted by danger or following a peripheral stimulation. I am deliberately using this indirect means of expressing myself because our language, it seems to me, has so much difficulty expressing, and our reason understanding, the fact that when dead, the mantis can simulate death. (1990: 82)

The automatism of this whole procedure strikes Caillois as one of the significant features of the mantis; not only can the mantis "play dead" while decapitated, its sexual behaviour is induced reflexively, like a wind-up (sex) toy. It can perform its functions without the organizational structure of consciousness (whatever that might mean in the case of the mantis), the structurings provided by a even a loosely linked nervous system or an intact perceptual apparatus.

Caillois quotes Binet's claim with approval: "The insect seems to us very much like a machine with a perfect mechanism, capable of functioning automatically" (cited in Caillois, 1990: 82). The mantis as perfect machine: not a machine for survival (the shark is commonly referred to as the perfect feeding or killing machine), but a fucking machine, whose reaction, under threat of imminent death, is coital. Caillois takes Binet's point even further: if the mantis is a human-like machine, an android, it is distinctively coded as female:

Indeed, the assimilation of the mantis to an automaton—that is, in view of its anthropomorphism, to a female android—seems to me to be a consequence of the same affective theme: the conception of an artificial, mechanical, inanimate, and unconscious machine-woman incommensurable with man and other living creatures derives from a particular way of envisioning the relation between love and death, and, more precisely, from an ambivalent premonition of finding the one within the other, which is something I have every reason to believe. (Caillois 1990:82)

Caillois posits a network of associations, an implicit linkage between

the praying mantis, religiosity, food and orality, blood-sucking vampires, the mother who feeds the child, cannibalism, the *vagina dentata*, the devouring female, the *femme fatale*, the mechanisms of automatism, and the female android. He has the insight to suggest, not that this is somehow a natural or innate set of connections, but that it is largely a function of a constellation of concepts that are overdetermined in their mutual relations: by linking sexual pleasure to the concept of death and dying, by making sex something to die for, something that is a kind of anticipation of death (the "little death"), woman is thereby cast into the category of the non-human, the non-living, or a living threat of death.

Caillois's intuition about the formative character of the link between sexual pleasure, death, and dying, finds clear confirmation in abundant examples in everyday life: the production of weapons on the model of the phallus, the functioning of the phallus as a weapon of war and retaliation, the dependence of the phallus on the castration complex, the operations of psychical impotence, the link between male orgasm and detumescence, the depletion of psychical energies after orgasm, the fantasmatic projection onto woman of phallic power during the act of intercourse,¹¹ the "evolutionary" linkage of the death of the individual to the (sexual) reproduction of the species (the perceived link between sexuality and immortality) prefigure or attest to the tenacity of the link between desire and death.

LIBIDINAL INTENSITIES: THE DISARRAYS OF LOVE

In turning away from Caillois's musings about the praying mantis, I will now look in more detail at the work of Lingis on erotic sensibility, libido, or lust to see if we can glean a better understanding of the connections between sexual pleasure and death, and, more challenging and difficult, to see if these two terms might be extricated so that their relations of influence, their particular specificities and details, and thus their possibilities of transformation and change may be explored.

Lingis distinguishes between bodily needs and satisfactions, and lust or erotic desire. Corporeal gratification, functioning in the register of need, takes what it can get, lives in a world of means and ends, obtaining satisfaction from what is at hand. Lingis relates the operations of need and gratification to the functioning of the body-image or corporeal schema, which maps inner physiological and psychological functions onto exterior or "objective" comportment and movements, thereby establishing the body's posture and positioning in the world through a mediating representational schema. Lingis makes it clear that the body image provides the subject with an experience, not only of its own body, but also of

the ways in which its body is perceived by others. The subject's experience of the body is irreducibly bound up with the body's social status.

By contrast, libido or erotic desire involves a certain disquieting or troubling of the body-image, even while functioning in conformity with it. Rather than resolving itself, gratifying its urges as quickly and simply as possible, erotic craving seeks to prolong and extend itself beyond physiological need, to intensify and protract itself, to revel in "pleasurable torment" (Lingis 1985: 55). It no longer functions according to an "intentional arc," according to the structures of signification, meaning, pattern, or purpose;¹² voluptuous desire fragments and dissolves the unity and utility of the organic body and the stabilized body-image. The limbs, erogenous zones, orifices of the other, provoke and entice, lure and beckon, breaking up the teleological, future-directed actions and plans of a task to perform.¹³ If, for Merleau-Ponty, eroticism is the structuring and reorientation of the body-subject according to the lure that the other's body poses, a re-signifying of one's body-parts in a new light, Lingis will nevertheless argue that sensuous desire and voluptuous experience do not involve the affirmation of a bodily totality, nor the passage from formless non-sense to a body offering sense and meaning. Quite the contrary. The voluptuous sense of disquiet engendered by and as lust disarrays and segments the resolve of a certain purposiveness, unthinning any determination of means and ends or goals.

Carnal experience is uncertain, non-teleological, undirected. While not entirely involuntary, it lacks the capacity to succumb wilfully to conscious intentions or abstract decisions. It upsets plans, resolutions; it defies a logic of expediency and the regimes of signification (one often cannot say or know what it is that entices and allures, a gesture, a movement, a posture or look, which becomes loaded with more affect and impetus than is required to explain it). It is like an ever-increasing hunger that supplements itself, feeds itself, on hunger, and can never be content with what it ingests, that defers gratification to perpetuate itself as craving, languishing in its erotic torments rather than hastening to quench them. Its temporality is neither that of development (one experience building on the last in order to create a direction or movement) nor that of investment (a relation between means and specific or pregiven ends). Nor is it a system of recording or memory (erotic pleasures are evanescent; they are forgotten almost as they occur); the memory of "what happened," or movements, setting, gestures, behavior may be open to reminiscence, but the intensity of pleasure, the sensations of voluptuousness, the ache of desire have to be revived in order to be recalled. In this case, there is not recollection but recreation, or rather, creation, production:

Carnal intimacy is not a practical space; it does not open a field for action. The erotic movements are agitation that handles and fondles without keeping anything in its place, without extending its force outward and without going anywhere. Here nothing will be accomplished; one will waste time, unprofitably. Voluptuousness has no tasks and no objectives and leaves no heritage; after all the caresses and embraces, the carnal is left intact, virgin territory. . . . It is not the locus from which would emerge the meaning of one's history. (Lingis 1985: 67)

Erotic desire cannot be recorded or stored, cannot be the site for the production of information or knowledge. Masters and Johnson's empirical research on human sexuality can only measure and record physiological transformations, reactions, responses, bodily changes. It comes nowhere near to mapping desire. Desire's turbulent restlessness defies coding into signs, significations, meanings; it remains visceral, affective, which is not to say that it is in any way reducible to physiology.

Libido is not irrational, illogical, or even non-rational; rather it exhibits a logic of its own governed by modes of intensification. It does not provide information or knowledge, although it probes (this may be part of the problem of the metaphor of knowledge-production as sexual conquest: conquest can only make sense where lust does not operate but something else—the struggle for prestige, control). It breaches the innermost regions, secret parts, of the body, but does not learn anything except that it cannot hold onto, cannot keep itself in its state of excitation. Lust cannot know itself, it does not know what it is or what it seeks. It does not discover, but immerses itself, insisting on a certain formlessness, indeterminacy, the very excess of materiality that makes any creature resist reduction to its functions alone. It insists on an open responsiveness that can be viewed as a passivity or susceptibility to the appeals and resistances of the other. Lust throws one into the vagaries of the other's libidinal intensities.

If the sexual drive is object-directed, and takes for itself a specific series of objects, it is significant that eros, desire, has no objectives, no privileged objects, only a series of intensities. Having outlined the elements of a phenomenology of carnal experience relying on the various writings of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas, Lingis shifts his focus in *Libido* (1985) away from the structures of consciousness, intentionality and givenness to focus more sharply on what might be understood as a materialist analysis of sexual desire, using the work of Lyotard and Deleuze and Guattari. He moves away from a framework, or series of them, which privilege the psyche and systems of representation, and

which understand carnality in terms of concepts, reasons, motives, causes, intentions, fantasies, projects—that is, in terms of interiority, however conceived—to one, or several, that privilege the erotogenic surface, the body's "outside," its locus as a site for both the perception of the erotic (as phenomenology recognized) but also for the inscription and intensification of the sensitivity of bodily regions.

The orgasmic body cannot be identified with the organic body, but is more an interference in and displacement of the body of "nature."¹⁴ This is not the intervention of a supervising consciousness, but the reorganization or the rebinding of bodily energies, passing along the body's surface. Relying on a model established by Lyotard in *Libidinal Economy* (1993), where the subject is viewed in terms of the twisting, contortions, and self-rotations of the Möbius strip,¹⁵ Lingis refigures carnal desire in terms of the lateral ("horizontal") contamination of one erotogenic zone or bodily surface by another, rather than in terms of a "vertical relation" between (bodily) surface and (psychical) depth. The intensification of one bodily region or zone induces an increase in the excitation of those contiguous with it. Significantly, the two or more interacting zones or regions need not be part of the one body but may come from different bodies and different substances. Their relations cannot be understood in terms of complementarity, the one completing the other (a pervasive model of the heterosexual relation since Aristophanes), for there can be no constitution of a totality, union, or merger of the two. Each remains in its site, functioning in its own ways.

The relationship between these regions or zones cannot be understood in terms of domination, penetration, control, or mastery, but in terms of *jealousy*, as one organ jealous of another, as the desire of organs and zones for the intensity and excitations, the agitations and tumultuousness of others. In order that one bodily part (whether an orifice, a hollow, a protuberance, a swollen region, a smooth surface) intensify its energetic expenditure, it must drain intensity from surrounding regions. It is impossible to conceive of a situation in which there is an even intensity throughout the whole body, a situation of pure equilibrium or stasis: any activity at all "prefers" or privileges some bodily regions over others, and even sedentary inactivity focuses on some parts of the body at the expense of others. This creates a gridding or marking of the body in terms of sites of uneven intensity, patterns or configurations of feeling, labyrinthine maps of voluptuous pleasures and intensities. Each organ envies the intensity of its surrounding bodily context, craves enervation, seeks incandescence, wants itself to be charged with excitations.

Lingis seeks to evoke, to replay in words, the intensities that charge all

erotic encounters, whether the amorous relations of the carpenter to wood and tools, the attachment of the sadist to the whip, the liaison of breast and mouth, lips and tongue. There must be some coming together of disparate surfaces; the point of conjunction of two or more surfaces produces an intensification of both.

Modes of greatest intensification of bodily zones occur, not through the operations of habitual activities, but through the unexpected, through the connection, conjunction and construction of unusual interfaces which re-mark orifices, glands, sinews, muscles differently, giving organs and bodily organization up to the intensities that threaten to overtake them, seeking the alien, otherness, the disparate in its extremes, to bring into play these intensities. The interruption and interaction of a surface with another, its disengagement from the circuit of organic functioning (where it operates within an hierarchical and systematic whole) so that it realigns itself in different networks and linkages performs the intensification of libidinal circulation that Lingis seeks. In this way, the subject's body ceases to be a body, to become the site of provocations and reactions, the site of intensive disruptions. The subject ceases to be a subject, giving way to pulsations, gyrations, flux, secretions, swellings, processes over which it can exert no control and to which it only wants to succumb. Its borders blur, seep, so that, for a while at least, it is no longer clear where one organ, body, or subject stops and another begins.

It is the lateral alignment of intensities that makes a hand, the fingers, an elbow, a sexual organ, a site, not just for the production of pleasure in another, but for their own orgasmic intensities, though they cannot be classified as a orifice or genital organ on a psychoanalytic or physiological model. The hand, while in a sense "jealous" of the pleasure it induces in the body it caresses, also participates in the intensities it ignites in a vagina or around a penis: it does not simply induce pleasure in another, for another, but also always for itself. The contiguity of hand and region instills in both a yearning for intensity, a craving for more intensity that both enlivens them, rouses their "jealousy" of each other, and propels them into a path of unpredictable and restless movement.

These sites of intensity—potentially any region of the body including various internal organs—are intensified and excited, not simply by pleasure, through caresses, but also through the force and energy of pain. Pain, as Nietzsche well recognized, is as capable, perhaps more so, of inscribing bodily surfaces, as pleasure. This may help to explain some of the appeal of sadism and masochism, even if we accept, following Deleuze (1989a), that they do not compose a single complex and

reversible relation, as Freud suggests. These are modes of intensification of the body's sensations.¹⁶ Sadism and masochism intensify particular bodily regions—the buttocks being whipped, the hand that whips, bound regions of the body in domination practices—not using pain as a displacement of or disguise for the pleasure principle, but where pain serves as a mode of corporeal intensification. We cannot readily differentiate the processes by which pleasurable intensities are engendered from those by which painful intensity is produced. One craves repetition of these practices because the intensity is ephemeral, has no life span—it exists only in the moments of its occurrence, in the present (the evanescence of pure difference, the momentary shimmering and dazzling of a zone or orifice: it is the trace, the marking of a pathway, *frayage*). This repetition (or rather, the inherent openness of these practices to repetition) produces the intensity of affect, pleasure or pain, but can never repeat its initial occurrence. Each repetition engenders a version of the same without any presumption of identity. Strictly speaking, exact repetition remains impossible.

Erotogenic zones do not desegment the fully functional organic body, for this body is itself a product of the organization and hierarchization of localized and particular libidinal zones: the organic, unified body is the provisional end-result of the alignments and coagulations of libidinal zones. These regions, moreover, continually intervene in the functioning of the organic body and its attendant body image(s). Instead of adopting the psychoanalytic position, which takes erotogenic zones as nostalgic reminiscences of a preoedipal, infantile bodily organization—that is, instead of seeing the multiplicity of libidinal sites in terms of regression—these libidinal zones are continually in the process of being produced, renewed, transformed, through experimentation, practices, innovations, the accidents or contingencies of life itself, the coming together of surfaces, incisive practices, inscriptions. There is nothing particularly infantile about these regions, insofar as to be effective, to function as the sites of orgasmic intensity, they must continually be invested through activity.

Moreover, if libidinal impulses are fundamentally decomposing, desolidifying, liquefying the coherent organization of the body as it performs functional tasks, unhinging a certain intentionality, they are more dependent on the sphere of influence of otherness, on an other which, incidentally, need not be human or even animate, but which cannot simply be classified as a passive object awaiting the impressions of an active desiring subject. The other solicits, beckons, implores, provokes, and demands. The other lures, oscillates, presenting everything it has to offer,

disclosing the whole body without in fact giving up anything, without providing "information" as such.

Resisting redeployment in pragmatic projects, it functions in its own ways, seeking to endlessly extend itself, to fill itself with intensity. But it is incapable of being filled up, completed, for it contains ineliminable traces of alterity: it is an otherness in the subject, something that overtakes one, induces one to abandon what one has planned, and even what one understands, in exchange for its dazzling agitations and stirring sensations. The other erupts into the subject, and interrupts all the subject's aims and goals: "the approach of the other is dismemberment of the natural body, fragmentation of the phenomenal field, derangement of the physical order, breakdown in the universal industry" (1985: 72).

Libidinal desire, the carnal caress, desire as corporeal intensification, then, is being thrown into an interchange with an other whose surface intersects one's own. One is opened up, in spite of oneself, to the other, not as passive respondent but as co-animated, for the other's convulsions, spasms, joyous or painful encounters engender, or contaminate, bodily regions that are apparently unsusceptible. It is in this sense that we make love to worlds: the universe of an other is that which opens us up to and produces our own intensities. We are placed in a force field of intensities that we can only abandon with libidinal loss and in which we are enervated to become active and willing agents (or better, *agencies*). The other need not be human or even animal: the fetishist enters a universe of the animated, intensified object as rich and complex as any sexual relation (perhaps more so than). The point is that both a world and a body are opened up for redistribution, dis-organization, transformation; each is metamorphosed in the encounter, both become something other, something incapable of being determined in advanced, and perhaps even in retrospect, but which nonetheless have perceptibly shifted and realigned. The sexual encounter cannot be regarded as an expedition, an adventure, a goal, or an investment, for it is a directionless mobilization of excitations with no guaranteed outcomes or "results" (not even orgasm).

THE MURDEROUS LOVER; OR KISS ME DEADLY

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1919b) Freud raises the question of the necessary binding or linkage of the pleasure principle with the death drive. He links the accumulation of unbounded intensities or affects with unpleasure, and the relief or satisfaction of libidinal impulses with pleasure. He uses Fechner's constancy principle to suggest that the organism attempts to keep the quantity of energy or excitation as low

as possible—not so low as to "wind down," to approach death, but low enough not to "overstimulate" the organism, causing it to seek all sorts of inappropriate outlets to vent the excessive energy that would otherwise accumulate. There is an entropic principle internally directing the organism towards simplicity and quiescence, impelling it gradually towards death. Life can be seen, on this Freudian scenario, as the limited deferment or delay of the death drive, a detour of death through the pleasure principle. These two principles, Eros and Thanatos—life/pleasure and death/unpleasure—are both complementary and opposed: they function together, each operates through the other; and, as it were, against the interests of the other. The pleasure principle provides a way in which the death drive can express itself through the processes of gratification, in this "unwinding" or diminution of psychical energies; and the death drive provides, as it were, the medium, the material—the accumulation of tension—through which the pleasure principle gains its satisfaction.

Paradoxically, the death drive and libido do not cancel out but reinforce each other. Libido or the life-drives produce self-preservative and pleasurable (respectively, instinctual and drive) processes that aim to protect the organism from dangers coming from without and from the unpleasant accumulation of energies within the organism. In this sense, they allow the death drive to take its own course and its own time: they protect the organism from outside dangers, so that it can be carried towards death by its own immanent processes.

Particularly in Freud's phylogenetic perspective, sex or pleasure and death are internally linked. The pleasurable sexual activities of individuals are closely linked to the reproduction of the species, and the reproduction of the species is contingently dependent on the life, reproduction and death of individuals. Such an assumption has proved very strong in ethology: it is significant that the simplest of living organisms, amoeba and other single-celled organisms, those which do not reproduce sexually through interchange with "the opposite sex" but reproduce through the division of cells, are considered immortal. Sexuality introduces death into the world; or, perhaps the converse: death is inevitable, and sexuality may function as a compensation for and supplement to death. Not only is the sexual act *grosso modo* linked to death and through it, to the reproduction of the species, but more significantly, the eroticism of orgasm—at least of male orgasm (the case of female orgasm is considerably more complicated, and it is not clear to what degree it conforms to this model, if it does so at all)—is modelled by Freud on the build-up of excitation, the swelling of the sexual organ, the accumulation of ener-

gies and fluids, their release, and then the organ's detumescence and state of contentment.

The immediacy and the directness of this link between death and sex is perhaps the intriguing thing about the praying mantis: it provides a tangible example of the worst fears surrounding the ways in which sexuality and relations between the sexes are conceived, the most horrific consequences of amorous passion (even though it is not clear that the mantis is either amorous or passionate outside of any anthropomorphic projection). Severing this link between death and sexual desire is particularly crucial at this historical juncture, not only because of the constricting effects it has on female (not to mention male) sexuality, but also because of its potentially lethal effects within gay men's and other communities.¹⁷

Lingis has recognized the link between horror and lust: the transformative, transubstantiating effects of erotic attachments are echoed in the seeping out beyond boundaries and the dissolution of lines of bodily organization prompted by orgasmic dissolution. There is something about the compulsive incitements of sexuality that may bring one to the brink of disgust and to the abject, not only accepting but seeking out activities, objects, and bodily regions that one might in other contexts disdain. The melting of corporeal boundaries, the merging of body parts, the dripping apart of all the categories and forms that bind a subject to its body and provide it with a bodily integrity—so fascinating for the surrealists, not to mention with the current android and cyborg fantasies that sell movies and feminist science fiction—imperil one in a way that alarms and horrifies, and at the same time, entices to the highest possible degree. It is this lust has in common with the appeal of illicit drugs: their intensity melts a certain subjective cohesion, the "high" more or less obliterates key boundaries between the body and its others, more or less pleasurable and more or less temporarily.

Although his perspective admits a connection between horror and desire, Lingis resists the temptation to make the link between desire and death intrinsic, as psychoanalytic theory has tended to. This may prove particularly instructive insofar as, in the last ten years, Lingis has primarily published material either directly related to sexuality (in its broadest sense) (Lingis, 1983; 1985; 1991a; 1992; 1994b; 1994c) or on the question of death (Lingis, 1989) but has not attempted to link these two projects. This may be because he is attempting, among other things, to disconnect the two, to sever the bond between sexual pleasure and the death drive, to think libido in terms other than the hydraulics of the Freudian model of sexual discharge or cathexis. All of Freud's works can

be understood as a generalization of and abstraction from the model of male orgasm to the fundamental principle of life itself: the constancy principle, and indeed the pleasure principle, the notion of psychological investment or cathexis, the movements of repression that sever an ideational representative from its energetic intensity, all accord with this hydraulics of tumescence and detumescence. The death drive is not simply a "new discovery" made by Freud in his later writings, for it is already inscribed in his understanding of the pleasure principle even in his earliest psychoanalytic texts.

The fantasy of the *vagina dentata*, of the non-human status of woman as android, vampire, or animal, the identification of female sexuality as voracious, insatiable, enigmatic, invisible, and unknowable, cold, calculating, instrumental, castrator/decapitator of the male, dissimulatrix or fake, predatory, engulfing mother, are all consequences of the ways in which male orgasm has functioned as the measure and representative of all sexualities and all modes of erotic encounter. Lingis's project is of relevance to the disentangling of masculinist and Freudian conceptions of sexuality, pleasure, and desire insofar as it provides an understanding of (male) subjectivity and desire beyond and in breach of the opposition between pleasure and death.¹⁸ He demonstrates that sexual passion is not reducible to the goal of sexual satiation, but lives and thrives on its own restless impetus. Orgasm need not be understood as the end of the sexual encounter, its final culmination and moment of conversion towards death or dissipation; instead, it can be displaced to any and every region of the body, and in addition, seen as a mode of transubstantiation, a conversion from solid to liquid:

The supreme pleasure we can know, Freud said, and the model for all pleasure, orgasmic pleasure, comes when an excess tension built up, confined, 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? ... Lust surges through a body in transubstantiation. (1991a: 15)

Caillois also recognizes the binding of the death drive to the pleasure principle in the masculine projection of woman as cold, mechanical, inanimate, machine-like: if we recall, such conceptions "derive from a particular way of envisioning the relation between love and death, and, more precisely, from an ambivalent premonition of finding the one within the other" (Caillois 1990: 82), a particular, presumably not a universal or inevitable, relation between love and death, which in principle can be

disentangled. Desire can be reconsidered in terms that do not see it entwined with death.

The fantasy that binds sex to death so intimately is the fantasy of a hydraulic sexuality, a biologically regulated need or instinct, a compulsion, urge, or mode of physical release (the sneeze provides an analogue). The apparently urgent and compulsive nature of sexual drives is implicit in the claim made by many men who rape, those who frequent prostitutes, and those prostitutes who describe themselves as "health workers," insofar as they justify their roles in terms of maintaining the "health" of their clients. It is a model of sexuality based upon the equation of sexual desire with orgasmic release, with instrumental or functional relief of the body. It is a model that men commonly transfer from their own lived experiences onto the experiences of women, and it reappears in another guise in the current reclamation of female ejaculation by some feminists.¹⁹ When eroticism is considered a program, a means to an end ("foreplay"), a mode of conquest, a proof of virility or femininity, an inner drive that periodically erupts, or an impelling attraction to an object that exerts a "magnetic" force (i.e., as actively compelling, or as passively seduced), it is reduced to versions of this hydraulic model.

The provocations and allure of the other can have no effect on the erotic receptivity of the subject without resonances with the intensities and surfaces of the subject's body. Indeed nothing seems sillier and less erotic than someone else's unreciprocated ardor or passion. The other cannot excite without the subject already being excited or excitable. The other cannot induce erotic impulses and caresses from the outside alone. I am not suggesting a necessary reciprocity here, but rather a complication. There is always equivocation and ambiguity in passion: on the one hand, the erotic is self-contained and self-absorbed—lovers are closed off to the world, wrapped up in each other, disinterested in what is outside; on the other hand, in a contrary movement, eroticism and sensuality tend to spread out over many things, infecting all sorts of other relations.²⁰ Erotic desire is not simply a desire for recognition, the constitution of a message, an act of communication or exchange between subjects, a set of techniques for the transmission of intimacy; it is a mode of surface contact with things and substances, with a world, that engenders and induces transformations, intensifications, a becoming something other. Not simply a rise and fall, a waxing and waning, but movement, processes, transmutations. That is what constitutes the appeal and power of desire, its capacity to shake up, rearrange, reorganize the body's forms and sensations, to make the subject and body as such dissolve into something else, something other than what they are

habitually. Sexual relations need not presume desire—habitual orgasmic (or non-orgasmic) practices are not the most conducive milieu for the ignition and exploration of desire. Desire need not culminate in sexual intercourse, but may end in production. Not the production of a child or a relationship, but the production of sensations never felt, alignments never thought, energies never tapped, regions never known.