

THE BODY WITHOUT ORGANS¹ SAID THE EYE TO THE EAR: DELEUZIAN
THEMATICS IN SOPHOCLES, MANN, BECKETT, AND SÜSKIND

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Man is sick because he is badly constructed... For you can tie me up if you wish, but there is nothing more useless than an organ. When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom. Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out as in the frenzy of dance halls and this wrong side out will be his real place.

Artaud (1947: 12)

With the former statement, Antonin Artaud concludes his radio play, *To Have Done With the Judgment of god*. In the meanwhile, Samuel Beckett's M, the ever dismantled monologuing character, exclaims: 'M.M.M. stood suddenly for music, music, MUSIC...' (Beckett 1963: 161); and Grenouille, the monster-master perfumer goes on seeing with his 'nostrils... more piercingly than eyes could ever do' (Süskind 1985: 8).

This essay likes to present itself in the form of an irregular fugue, a polyphonic composition within which each of the voices echoes, mirrors, harmonizes with, supports all others, while retaining its singularity. Its basic presumption is that an artwork, at its acme, is mainly a scenic, theatrical *appresentation* of the essentiality of art itself, aiming at making 'see', the word theatre originally meaning a place, a space where visibility is possible. A scene, a jigsaw puzzle, the kind hinted towards by Deleuze, whose parts, although not perfectly coinciding, still bring forth a loud, resonating perception; a platform, where the actors themselves are enunciations, art works and concepts. Four authors, with the complicity of Gilles Deleuze, will be the main illustrators of our saga: Sophocles, Thomas Mann, Samuel Beckett and Patrick

¹ A concept borrowed from Antonin Artaud and developed by Gilles Deleuze.

Süskind. A heroic story at a crossroad (a crucifixion) between destructivity and creation, fueled by Desire, ultimately leading into intensity - a pure, unnamable quality: Time regained. In Deleuzian terminology: *Libido*, *Numen*, *Voluptas*². In other words: deterritorialization (triggered by Desire), territorialization and joy. Virginia Woolf, in *Orlando*, powerfully illustrates such a deterritorialization, as the nomadic character is ready for a new transfiguration:

The river had gained its freedom in the night. It was as if a sulphur spring (to which view many philosophers inclined) had risen from the volcanic regions beneath and burst the ice asunder with such vehemence that it swept the huge and massy fragments furiously apart.

Woolf 2005: 428

Four monsters will be present on our stage, that cannot but leave us in awe; four cases of God-given, or shall we say, God-inflicted genius³, daemonic, irrational. Oedipus' King kills his own father and weds his mother. Adrian Leverkühn⁴, the serial composer, seemingly assassinates the tonal system. Beckett's M... is busy attempting a desperate ongoing suicide, and Grenouille sacrifices twenty-five (or should we say twenty-four⁵ and one) young virgins in order to extract their scent, their essence, on the way to concocting his '*essence absolue*'⁶. But what is a monster, if not an extraordinary creature, something to be shown, something to be seen, something phenomenal! In Deleuzian terminology: a remarkable case.

We shall start by a short explanation of the use of the word organ in our title. An organ, and therefore organization, at the biological as well as at the societal and the psychological level, is necessarily correlative to delimitation, to definition, and

² *Libido* corresponds to the deterritorialization phase, *Numen* to territorialization through, for example, a work of art, and *Voluptas* to joy as intensity: a cyclical process.

³ The expression is used by Thomas Mann in *Doctor Faustus* (1948).

⁴ We believe Adrian Leverkühn, Mann's character, to be a mixture of composer Schoenberg and Nietzsche: the one kills the tonal system, while the other pretends that god is dead, although Deleuze insists that Nietzsche's killing of god is a mere protest of the latter who was never really understood regarding the matter.

⁵ We believe that this number is very significant, and that it has to do with music: it is the double of 12, the 12 tones of a tempered scale, the same 12 tones of Schoenberg's dodecaphonic system. Moreover, Süskind's book *La contrebasse* (2016) demonstrates the author's knowledge and interest in music, particularly Wagner's, who's endeavor lead into serialism. The extra 'one' illustrates the fact that 'quality' remains outside the series: it is the one that creates the repetition as well as the difference. Cf. Deleuze's *Différence et Répétition* (1983).

⁶ In French in the text.

therefore belongs to the realm of the relative. This delimitation has its *vis-à-vis* in the world of language, such as in the form of syntax. Words, in the form of grammar, or syntax, are related, for both Deleuze and Foucault, to politics defined as a struggle for power, tools for control. 'Words, English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of associations... And it is one of the chief difficulties in writing them today' (Woolf 29 April 1937)⁷: so begins a recording by Virginia Woolf, who ended up hearing birds singing in ancient Greek⁸. 'Any act requires oblivion', proclaims Nietzsche (1997: 62), becoming ahistorical, echoes Deleuze, being 'un-oedipianized' (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 133).

Our four monstrous heroes, similarly to most creators, share an irrepressible blind urge - or shall we say a urge for blindness, a desire for absoluteness perpetually struggling against their own individuality, or corporeity; but also, paradoxically, a longing for intensity that cannot survive outside that same corporeal limitation. We are thus in presence of a certain crucifixion, an attempt at realizing the most absoluteness possible, without risking total annihilation.

A case that could illustrate such an annihilation can be seen in Bizet's *Carmen*, with the slaying of the gypsy nomad seductress at the end, knowing that in the card scene she had foreseen the inexorable death which necessarily accompanies total, absolute freedom or disorganization: '*la mort, toujours la mort*', she sings⁹. It is worth noting that Escamillo, the bullfighter, on the other hand, succeeds at coupling the two antagonistic brothers, Apollo and Dionysus. The arena: a plateau, 'as much a Dionysian as an Apollonian work of art' (Nietzsche 1872: 11). Carmen was a disorganizer: she literally tries to disfigure one of her colleagues at the cigarette factory by stabbing the latter, tearing up, destroying the limits between organs, trespassing. At the level of words, or language, as well as that of guilt, when Carmen is required to respond (to be responsible) for her crime, she replies the following: 'tralalalala...cut me, burn me, I shall tell you nothing'. Desire does not speak: it sings, it dances, like a child at play

⁷ Woolf's 'today' has ever been every artist's today, as creating is an ongoing repetition, making use of the old in order (or disorder) to create the new.

⁸ The recording was first broadcast by the BBC on 29 April 1937 as part of a series called 'Words Fail Me'. Just eight minutes of the original remain - and it is believed to be the only surviving recording of the British writer.

⁹ The bullfighter, on the other hand, was able to ally content with form, and in this sense, he was an artist. We believe *Carmen* to be the almost perfect theatrical illustration of Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian and the Apollonian.

(Nietzsche 1886). Zarathustra too danced, sang and laughed. But more importantly, Carmen disturbs the most ordered of all orders, if we may say, by turning an orderly military man into a smuggler, an outlaw, ultimately a killer; she had warned him though, that entering in touch with her, with blind desire (love in this case) would turn his world upside down¹⁰: *'et si je t'aime, prends garde à toi'* (Carmen libretto 2). Desire is contagious: 'anyone who has violated a taboo by touching something which is taboo becomes taboo himself, and no one may come into contact with him', explains Sigmund Freud (SE XX: 18).

What are our heroes joyfully guilty of, if we agree with Deleuze that there is no tragic art, since the process of creating is essentially joyful? They are disorganizers, innocent criminals, since genius is innate, not chosen and not learnt. The scariest thing of all is innocence insists Deleuze¹¹; the tiniest grain of art having the potential capacity of shaking up a whole social system. Let us also keep in mind that crimes are always such in view of a correlative law, the latter subjected to the idea of a better - if not an absolute - good, that same goodness tirelessly staged by Plato. Our four heroes are, each in his own way, creators. Our analysis of the four cases will follow a chronological itinerary, thus starting with the case of Oedipus. But before our short promenade into the actual texts, let us hear and remember Nietzsche's very powerful definition of what is good: 'Everything that is good makes me productive' (Nietzsche 1911: 20). To produce: to bring forth, to see and be seen, although not necessarily with the eyes.

The case Oedipus: disorganization as anarchy:

'Anarchy, anarchy! Show me a greater evil! This is why cities tumble and the great houses rain down...

And no woman shall seduce us. If we must lose, let's lose to a man, at least! Is a woman stronger than we?' 'Like father, like daughter: both headstrong, deaf to reason'...

Soph. Ant. 534, 539

¹⁰ This contagious aspect of desire is illustrated in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (SE XIII). It is the reason why the trespasser becomes taboo himself and must be banished from the tribe.

¹¹ Deleuze brings out this concept, as it is illustrated in Lewis Carroll's writings, which often involve children, little girls in particular. 'Boys are too logical' he likes to say (Carroll 1865: 81).

By unwillingly assassinating his father the king, and wedding his progenitor, Oedipus disorganizes the order of time¹², of seniority, the latter being correlative to a consensus of power. He becomes politically disruptive, and therefore has to leave the city, thus opening up the way to nomadism¹³. At this level, Oedipus' offence is a political one. On the other hand, from a psychoanalytical point of view, we can say that Oedipus re-enters the realm of absoluteness by wedding his mother: he is un-oedipianized, in Deleuzian terminology; he forsakes Jacques Lacan's Name-of-the-Father, the latter representing the law. But also, we can interpret the mother as symbolizing the pre-phenomenal world¹⁴, a sort of Eden where space and time do not yet exist, a world where individuation, and therefore organization do not yet fully exist, an idea very present in German Romanticism through the idealized image of nature or mother nature,¹⁵ as we can hear in Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy'. Would this be the reason why Creon so relentlessly rejects womanhood?

Another disorganization, a literal one may we say, horrific, monstrous, is the act of Oedipus piercing his own eyes, an act that actually allows him a better vision, an almost prophetic power¹⁶ - such is seen in *Oedipus at Colonus*. The blind prophet, Tiresias, was not he himself a visionary? If it is true that Oedipus is not guilty because he was predestined to commit the so-called crimes, a greater prophecy was destining him for sanctity, his burial site eventually recognized as holy. Indeed, to Antigone's request to see her father's resting place, Theseus answers: 'It is not permissible to go there... because your father told me children, that no one should go near the spot, no mortal should tell of it, since it is Holy' (Soph. OC: 1760).

Mann's *Doctor Faustus* was written between 1943 and 1947, and set in the context of great political turmoil – disorganization - in Germany¹⁷. Its main character, Adrian

¹² We believe this is related to Hamlet's: 'time is out of joint' (I.5.190-191.). Deleuze insists that *Hamlet*, similarly to *Oedipus Rex*, is generally wrongly interpreted (1972: 81).

¹³ For Deleuze, nomadism has positive connotations; it is the path of experimentation rather than interpretation; of geographism rather than historicity. Carmen herself was a gypsy, a nomad of no fixed habitation. One of Deleuze's favorite nomads is Cain, the brother "favored by the mother".

¹⁴ We have in mind Schopenhauer's (1966) phenomenal world - space and time, the art of music bringing us the closest possible to absolute 'will' itself.

¹⁵ A certain nearness to the mother is sympathetic with the idea of psychosis, neurosis acquiring a negative connotation with Deleuze (1972). In psychoanalysis, psychosis implies a pre-oedipal phase, while Deleuze militates for a total non-oedipianization.

¹⁶ The actual prophet in *Oedipus Rex*, Tiresias, had been blinded because he had seen 'too much'.

¹⁷ It is interesting to note that in several Mann books, there is a sort of osmosis between outer and inner turmoil, illustrated by cholera on the one hand, and homosexuality on the other, as we can notice in *Death in Venice* (1912).

Leverkühn,¹⁸ is portrayed as the first serial, dodecaphonic composer¹⁹, the man to ‘assassinate’ the tonal system so to say - a basic omnipresent musical ‘law’, founded on a hierarchical order, that of the relation between the tonic and the dominant chords of a musical scale. Leverkühn’s crime is similarly of anarchic nature, since in his series, all twelve notes are equally recurrent: they hold the same importance; there is no head or *arche*. But at another level, and in parallel to the old system’s annihilation, there is a masochistic self-destructivity, a sort of self-emasculatation, since the musical system he is desperately trying to ‘cut-off’ is, just as in the case of any avant-garde artist, part of himself in the form of memory²⁰, or nostalgia: attachment. To memory, Deleuze openly prefers the concept of ‘blocks of childhood’, as we can see in *Proust and signs* and *Kafka toward minor* literature: pure qualities, building blocks the artist uses throughout the elaboration of an artwork. This struggle between Leverkühn’s own nature, what he spontaneously and helplessly tends towards - here represented by love, and the necessity for going forward, experimenting, is expressed in the following devil’s²¹ interdiction:

‘Love²² is forbidden you, in so far as it warms. Thy life shall be cold, therefore thou shalt love no human being...The illumination leaves your mental powers to the last unimpaired, yes, heightens them to an ecstasy of delirium – what shall it then go short of save the dear soul and the priceless life of feeling?’.

Mann 1947: 249

Ups and downs: Leverkühn thrives anywhere but in the middle, where societal organization keeps ‘normal’ folk on-track, where it feels warm, where people are human, all too human. Besides numbers and theology, which took up an important part of Adrian’s time, there was

¹⁸ There is a similarity between Leverkühn and another ‘disorganizer’, Nietzsche, who ironically had claimed the death of god: both were composers, both had acquired Syphilis, Leverkühn knowingly and willingly so.

¹⁹ The father of the twelve tone row series is Arnold Schoenberg, Jewish Viennese composer who immigrated to the USA due to Nazism.

²⁰ This goes in the same line of Nietzsche’s concept of necessary forgetfulness.

²¹ Just like in Goethe’s *Faust*, Leverkühn signs a deal (or at least he imagines doing so) with the devil, which will allow him years of inspiration, of illumination.

²² Another interpretation of love can be that of a middle zone, a comfort, a bearable zone, where it is neither hot or cold. A human zone, rather than that inhabited by Nietzsche’s ‘overman’.

...the cowgirl Hanna, whose bosoms flapped as she walked, and whose bare feet were always caked with dung. She and the boy Adrian had a close friendship...Then there was the dairywoman, Frau Luder...who took us to the cow-stalls, where the milkmaid crouched on her stool, and under her fingers there ran into our glasses the lukewarm foaming milk, smelling of the good and useful animal that gave it.

Mann 1947: 249

recalls Serenus Zeitblom, the composer's childhood friend²³.

'The artist is the brother of the criminal', insists Thomas Mann in the book (1947: 236), the composer ends up killing the only creature he ever was attached to - or at least he hallucinates doing so, his own nephew, by merely allowing himself to love him. Creating involves a leap of faith, it goes against all attachment: as soon as a newborn creation exists, it must be slain, sacrificed²⁴, such as were Bluebeard's numerous wives. Deterritorialization, a term dear to Deleuze: the only dwelling, the only truth or comfort the artist is momentarily allowed is his own creation, his work, his 'desert island'²⁵. Kafka's burrow can be envisioned as such an island, where one is unable to live, and unable to die, where one must continuously create ²⁶.

Leverkühn seems tortured all along the novel, not knowing whether to consider himself a prophet or an evil creature²⁷: 'Do you believe in anything like *ingenium* that has nothing to do with hell?' (Mann 1947: 236). He finally has a breakdown, after which language (*logos*), whether at the level of speech or musicality, is disrupted:

We saw tears run down his cheeks and fall on the keyboard, wetting it, as he attacked the keys in a strongly dissonant chord. At the same time he opened his

²³ In several writings is present 'the friend', a character less endowed with genius than the main character. His main role: approve of the latter's endeavor. E.g. *Don Quixote*, *Don Giovanni*, *Doctor Faustus*. We relate this to what British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein sometimes refers to as 'the good breast' (1975: 179).

²⁴ We can relate this to Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham's case in *Fear and Trembling* (1941).

²⁵ Gilles Deleuze has an essay on this same issue, titled *L'île déserte* (2002).

²⁶ Franz Kafka's *The Burrow* is an unfinished short story in which a badger-like creature struggles to secure the labyrinthine burrow he has built as a home.

²⁷ Lerverkuhn is the only one of our four characters really afflicted by guilt. We believe this has to do the Jewishness of the context.

mouth as though to sing, but only a wail which will ring forever in my ears broke from his lips.

Mann 1947: 503

A few days before the end of him, we see the composer undress and plunge into a river: a sort of baptism scene. Later, on his death bed: his hands 'lay crossed on his breast, like a saint's on a mediaeval tomb...the hollow face...it was now strikingly like an El-Greco nobleman's' (Mann 1947: 509). Here again, the criminal dies in sanctity, nay, in martyrdom.

Beckett's M: for Murder?

Beckett's characters, a serial dismantling of the bodies. Ablations, distortions, extensions, maltreatments, entanglements: the organs go schizophrenic²⁸. Murphy enjoys strapping himself naked to a rocking chair and working it up to its maximum rock, until the world dies down, until his body is quiet, until he is set free, before he is literally parched. His remains become an offertory for art, while he dedicates his ashes to the toilet of a theatre while a play is being performed. Death by burns, says the coroner:

With regard to the disposal of these my body, mind and soul, I desire that they be burnt and placed in a paper bag and brought to the Abbey Theatre... and without pause into what the great and good Lord Chesterfield calls the necessary house, where their happiest hours have been spent, on the right as one goes down into the pit, and I desire the chain be there pulled upon them, if possible during the performance of a piece, the whole executed without ceremony or show of grief.

Beckett 1963: 183

Molloy keeps forgetting which leg to lean on, since they both are stiff and painful. In *The Unnamable* (Beckett 1955), confined to a jar, the monstrous character sits in his own excrement, his motion finally reduced to an eye, orbiting, watching, reporting, seeing and making see. Theatre: a space within which vision takes place! Malone lays naked in his hospital bed; his body, dysfunctional. He admits having killed six men,

²⁸ Deleuze favors schizophrenia, a psychotic disorder, as opposed to the very 'sad' and guilt impregnated neurosis (1972: 400, 480). He humorously likes to use the expression 'the happy schizophrenic', particularly in a text portraying Beckett's work.

but seems to think it is not a big deal. ‘How many have I killed, hitting them on the head or setting fire to them’ (Beckett 1963: 342). A crime reiterated, humorous, unfinished: a repetition. ‘Then it will be all over with the Murphys, Merciers, Molloy, Morans and Malones, unless it goes on beyond the grave’ (Beckett 1955: 336).

It is said that during his stay in Berlin, in the thirties, Beckett had seen and much admired Fritz Lang’s film *M – A City Searches for a Murderer*. But who is M, that runs through very many Beckett writings, at least starting with *Murphy*, as he says?

Perhaps Molloy is not here at all. Could he be, without my knowledge? ... To tell the truth I believe they are all here (at least from Murphy on). I believe we are all here. But so far I have only seen Malone. Another hypothesis: they were here, but are here no longer... No, no, we have all been here forever, we shall all be here for ever. I know it.

Beckett 1955: 412

The following is a (probably non-exhaustive) list of the M characters we see strolling about before they are mostly finally decimated, mutilated, torn apart, terminated in Beckett’s novels: Murphy, Malone (am-alone?), Molloy, Mother, Me, Moran, Mercier, Mahood, Watt, Worm (W is an inverted M), Marguerite (we cannot be certain, but we sense that Marguerite’s name is borrowed from Goethe’s *Faust* character, the innocent virgin young woman who must perish, or rather be sacrificed in order for creativity, in this case in the form of intensity, to take place). Then come the biblical characters: Mary Magdalen, Martha, and Matthew. Could it be that Matthew is in reference to the biblical verse ‘Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh’ (Matt. 18,7). This certainly goes along with Adrian Leverkühn’s choice of libretto for his final opera; as expressed by his friend Zeitblom:

I recall that I scolded Adrian for choosing this almost intolerable passage as his theme...The impression was painful and, intentional or not, it wounded. But I quickly forgave him as we went on, and I heard the moving musical diction given to the parable in the *Purgatorio* of the man who carries a light on his back at night, which does not light him but lights up the path of those coming after. The tears

came in my eyes... Music and speech, he insisted, belonged together... How music could be first of all word.

Mann 1948: 162

Of course, we suppose that M could also stand for Mask, taken in a Nietzschean sense. Being as masquerade, behind each mask another mask, each mask a new re-creation of an illusionary self, a temporary territorialization in Deleuzian terminology, a new attempt at capturing pure essence, intensity, an attempt at entering into a communion with the absolute, incarnated in an artwork, even if the jubilation is short-lived. M for me? for Beckett?

Is Beckett portraying himself, the artist, as crucified? Mary Magdalen and Martha's presence certainly hints towards a certain resemblance between M and Christ, not just the crucified one, but also the maker of miracles, artistic creation, according to Deleuze, incarnating the act of making 'the impossible possible' (Deleuze 1991: 62)²⁹. Let us, too, not forget that it was to Martha that Jesus said: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' (Jn. 11, 25). M: a creator torn between self and the world, art presenting a trace, a sort of scream, even when silent, a scream in search of silence, a loud, monstrously resounding silence?

I seem to speak (it is not I) about me (it is not me)... Is not this rather the place where one finishes vanishing? Will the day come when Malone will pass before me no more? ... In a word: shall I be able to speak of me and of this place without putting an end to us? Shall I ever be able to go silent?

Beckett 1955: 409

Nietzsche says:

We will have achieved much for scientific study of aesthetics when we come, not merely to a logical understanding, but also to the certain and immediate apprehension of the fact that the further development of art is bound up with the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, just as reproduction similarly

²⁹ For Deleuze artistic creation might be the only means of making the impossible possible, just as Christ once has 'Ce qui ne peut pas être pensé, et pourtant doit être pensé, cela fut pensé une fois, comme le Christ s'est incarné une fois, pour montrer cette fois la possibilité de l'impossible', in *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (1991 : 62).

depends upon the duality of the sexes, their continuing strife and only periodically occurring reconciliation...”

Nietzsche 1872: 11

Art is a desperate search for absoluteness, it goes hand in hand with a necessary de-personification, a dis-individuation of the artist, Apollo the speaking god, Apollo representing the limited, orderly and organized ‘I’: to be a better writer, claims Deleuze, one must become a traitor to writing itself. Dionysus: the dismantled body, seeking the universal: a growth. A productive suicide must therefore take place in order (or disorder) to allow for the artwork to be, death leading to rebirth and increased intensity, a ‘resurrection’ insists Deleuze, in *Proust and Signs* (2000: 120). If this disaggregation of the ‘I’ is present, one way or another, throughout Beckett’s writings, in one of his late works - written in French, *comment c’est*, and after the author has very humorously disintegrated some of his M characters, this dis-order is illustrated by the partial dismantling of the textual structure: the text is written with no punctuations. It is clear that the original title of the book has two meanings, both backing up our interpretation: ‘to begin’, and ‘how it is’.

Comment c’est ‘to begin’: Beckett’s novels are often about restarting a more or less similar narrative, using the same panoply of elements (shoes, teeth, toes, legs, pens, notebooks, eyes, hats, pants, stones, bicycles...etc), a series, if we may say, often leading into the partial or total destruction of the main character: a repetition. But this repetition is, unlike Freud’s ‘compulsion to repeat’ (Freud SE XVIII: 14), non-circular; a new intensity is generated with each new narrative or variation. Put in Deleuzian terms, we can say: *Différence et répétition*³⁰. From a Nietzschean eternal recurrence optic, each new attempt can be thought of as a step leading further towards Nietzsche’s ‘overman’, the creator, in this case, the artist.

If we opt for the *Comment c’est* (how ‘it’ is) interpretation (we opt for both), we rejoin Deleuze’s insistence on dis-individualization and reaching towards universalization, which is nothing like generalization the author insists. The neutral ‘it’ replaces the wanting individual; activity meets passivity, but it is not an empty passivity, it is an immensely, unbearably intense one, implicating a visibility, where one sees, where one

³⁰ The title of Gilles Deleuze’s first doctoral thesis.

becomes the world, where one offers himself sacrificially to the universe, where one is penetrated by the whole, where one becomes contemplative, where one lays, 'horizontally', says Deleuze, horizon defined as: the line at which Sky and Earth appear to meet.

Regardless, to feel stretched out to this point is tempting... My extremities are disappearing... far away from here... the best way not to be noticed, to lay flat and no longer move

Beckett 1955: 334

Hermann Melville echoes: 'Are you looking for the silent man? Lives without dining... Yonder he lies... sleeping in the yard there... his dim eyes were open; otherwise he seemed profoundly sleeping' (Melville 1856: 38). While he died to the world, Bartelby's eyes remained open!

Süskind's '*essence absolue*'

'Now the world of art is the ultimate world of signs, and these signs, as though dematerialized, find their meaning in an ideal essence' (Deleuze 2000: 11).

If we hear³¹ it in Latin, *esse* relates to being; if we hear it in German, Süskind's mother language, *essen* hints towards eating, in this case, to be eaten. To be = to be eaten.

The desire for absoluteness is perceived by the genius bitten individual as a search for the self, not in a logical rational sense, not as a grammatical 'I', but as an urgent irrepressible need for intensity: to be bitten by the world - in this case literally³². To Be! *Perfume: The Story of a Murder* is set in Paris, 1738. Grenouille's abandoned body is found in the garbage, after his mother left him to death among the stinky discarded fish guts. The young boy realizes that he has no smell of his own (no essence), and yet his olfactory sense is as perfect as can be. Words, once more, in our context, fall empty:

³¹ We use the word 'hear' because Süskind's writings often allude to music, one way or another.

³² Grenouille ends up devoured by a mob in a cannibalistic eucharist.

[the] grotesque incongruities between the richness of the world perceivable by smell and the poverty of language were enough for the lad Grenouille to doubt if language made any sense at all.

Süskind 1985: 12

It later becomes clear to him why he had clung to life so tenaciously: 'He must become a creator of scents... the greatest perfumer of all time' (Süskind 1985: 19).

[He] 'even knew how by sheer imagination to arrange new combinations of them, to the point where he created odors that did not exist in the real world... But there were no aesthetic principles governing the olfactory kitchen of his imagination, where he was forever synthesizing and concocting new aromatic combinations.

Süskind 1985: 12

To combine, to put together: to compose! The monster was a composer³³; he was a creator.

Grenouille starts off his composition: twenty-five (or rather twenty-four plus one) biologically organized living creatures must perish, must be dismembered, disorganized, sacrificed, in order for him to possess the most powerful scent of all, *essence absolue*, the one that inspires Love, love beyond attachment, love as intensity. When questioned about his motives, he replies with nothing more than: 'I needed them' (Süskind 1985: 89)³⁴. The artist works out of necessity. He was to be crucified - yet another crucifixion! His execution was scheduled for five in the afternoon. He did not look like a murderer: 'The man who stood at the scaffold was innocence personified' (Süskind 1985: 92). Grenouille splashed a drop of his creation onto himself before his appearing to the crowd, and 'a miracle occurred'! (Süskind 1985: 92). The artist is the maker of miracles.

The people were overcome by a powerful childish infatuation, yes, God help them, a sense... of love for this little homicidal man, and they were unable,

³³ We believe there are several allusions made, in the text, to music. We regret not being able to interview the author in person, since, following his great success, Süskind spends his time in reclusion. One of his plays is nonetheless titled *La contrebasse*.

³⁴ It is more or less the same answer Carmen gave.

unwilling to do anything about it...These people were now pure liquid, their spirits and minds were melted; nothing was left but an amorphous fluid.

Süskind 1985: 92

In other words, they were disorganized! In his two volumes about cinema (1983, 1985), Deleuze pushes the idea even further, beyond liquification: he talks about gasification, maximal de-materialization. The otherwise orderly citizens are suddenly 'driven to ecstasy' (Süskind 1985: 92): the whole town takes part in a massive orgy - the organs get entangled, bodily limits are trespassed. 'He had performed a Promethean feat. He had persevered until, with infinite cunning, he had obtained for himself that divine spark' (Süskind 1985: 95), we read. Prometheus was a Titan, a deity of disorder. A disorganizer.

After this first provoked orgy, Grenouille returns to Paris, seeking to die in the exact same stinky spot where he was born. Riffraff, 'thieves, murderers, cutthroats, whores, deserters, young desperadoes' (Süskind 1985: 97) were gathered around a small campfire. He empties the remaining perfume onto himself,

[and] then all at once the last inhibition collapsed within them...They tore away his clothes, his hair, his skin from his body, they plucked him, they drove their claws and teeth into his flesh... In very short order, the angel was divided into thirty pieces, and every animal in the pack snatched a piece for itself, and then, driven by voluptuous lust, dropped back to devour it. A half hour later, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille had disappeared utterly from the earth. When the cannibals found their way back together after disposing of their meal, no one said a word... Though the meal lay rather heavy on their stomachs, their hearts were definitely light... For the first time they had done something out of love.

Süskind 1985: 98

Let us go back to where we started, to Antonin Artaud:

To exist one need only let oneself be, but to live, one must be someone, to be someone, one must have a bone, not be afraid to show the bone, and to lose the meat in the process. Man has always preferred meat to the earth of bones.

Artaud 1947: 5

Grenouille had dared show his bone. In full power, in full destruction, the artist finally became one with the universe: a strange, deranging eucharist. A glorific, monstrous end, the perfect scenic representation of the creative act; Dionysus, god of resurrection, torn out, scattered by the Titans, children of primordial deities, sons of heaven and earth. Biquette, Mr. Seguin's favorite goat, was restlessly calling for the wolf: eat me please (Daudet 1869).

Innocent, innocent, innocent they all plead, all but one: Leverkühn, eaten up by his guilt. Joy and dread, elatedness and guilt. What do you make out of the mental distress, the madness or even the eventual death threat awaiting the artist, the one who dares? A risk of the trade, says Deleuze. Joy prevails. 'The finest clay, the most expensive marble – man - is here worked and chiseled, and the cry of the Eleusinian mysteries rings out to the chisel blows of the Dionysian world artist: 'Do you fall down, you millions? World, do you have a sense of your creator?' (Nietzsche 1872: 13-14).

An so there it goes, one after the other, all must perish to life, to be conserved as beauties, pure qualities, a repetitious murder, over and over refined by time, lanterns lighting up a gigantic night, one after the other, a series, works of art, the wives of Bluebeard:

The first I found at daybreak... hers is now the swelling sunrise...The second I found at noon... Hers the blaze of every midday...The third I found at evening... Hers is every solemn sunset...The fourth I found at midnight... Every night is thine hereafter... Thine is the wealth of my kingdom...Thou art lovely, passing lovely. Thou art queen of all my women. My best and fairest! Henceforth all shall be darkness. Darkness, darkness.

Bartok 1911: 14

And the cycle goes on. 'It is only on the level of art that the essences are revealed' (Deleuze 2000: 38).

Abbreviations

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