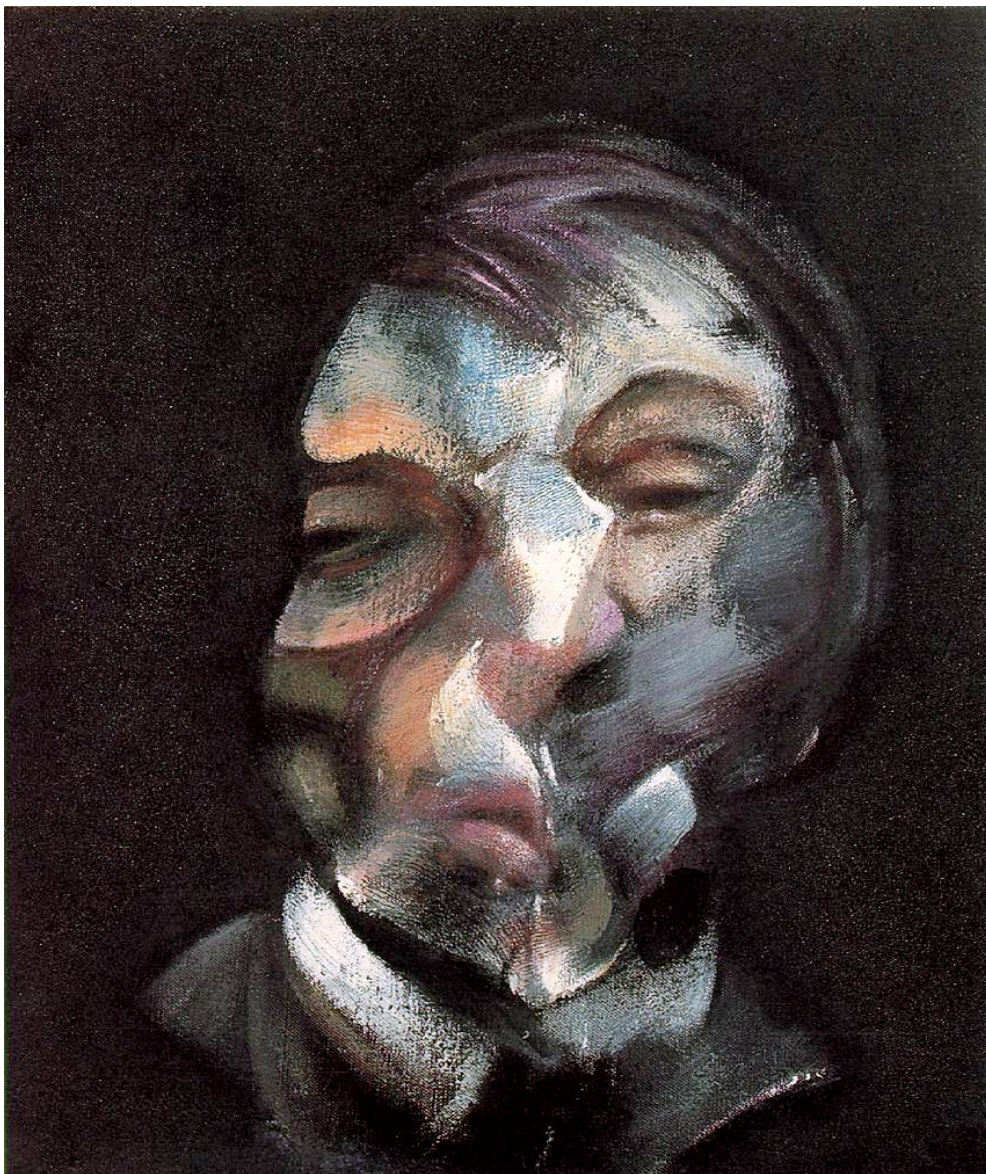

What is the Body without Organs and its Relationship to the Paintings of Francis Bacon?

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Chapter one: The Body without Organs

*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.*

[Antonin Artaud: 'To Have Done with the Judgement of God']

But what is it, this 'Body without Organs?' French philosopher Gilles Deleuze [1925 - 1995] and French psychoanalyst Felix Guattari [1930 - 1992] tell us that, in a general way, the BwO is the Earth (or rather, it is the fictional character Professor Challenger¹ who is invoked by D&G that expresses the notion that, "the Earth - the Deterritorialized, the Glacial, the giant Molecule - is a body without organs" [MP: p. 45]

According to D&G reality is made of flows and breaks in flows. All things flow and are broken and siphoned by other flows. A river flows and is siphoned by water canals and these by other canals, etc. But flows are not restricted to liquid material flows, all material bodies flow: mountains flow, trees flow, bodies flow. One may accept that water, lava, bodily fluids (micturation, saliva, etc.) flow, but, mountains, trees? This is a little harder to fathom. However, geological flows, or, 'geological creep,' is most certainly attributed to most material bodies (for example, the bows in trees on the sides of mountains are a consequence of geological creep). Furthermore, flows are not restricted to material flows: conversations flow, ideas flow, memories flow, etc. The BwO is the point at which all flows flow freely and, more importantly, disorganized. This flow flows into that flow in a swirling chaotic rhythm. Nothing is distinguished, nothing is yet formed.

"This body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles." [ibid]

¹ Professor Challenger is a fictional character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and made his first appearance in 'The Lost World' [1912]. Most notably for D&G the character appeared in Conan Doyle's story entitled, 'When the World Screamed' [1928].

In terms of the geology of the Earth, rock, metal, lava, etc., is flowing freely beneath and even over its surface (if one were to remove the crust and view the Earth from a distance it would resemble a kind of flow-soup, a *soup de terre*, like an egg without a shell provisionally suspended. In fact, D&G make explicit the peculiar sounding claim that, “the body without organs is an egg,” in both ‘Anti-Oedipus’ and its companion ‘Mille Plateaux’). The criss-crossing of ‘axes and thresholds,’ free flows into free flows without form or function, all pertain to the egg, and likewise, to the BwO. Here the Earth and the egg are non-organic. There is no organization of flows into forms, or, organisms, only the free flowing of intensities. Moreover, these intensities are indistinguishable from one another; no intensity has priority over another intensity, no flow is predominant, hence, D&G’s appropriation of the Kantian ‘intensity = 0.’ Within the embryonic egg no organ has yet accumulated, the forces and flows of the egg have not yet reached their organic structure, an organic structure that will raise or diminish the intensities from point zero of the BwO by combining into an organism. It is in this respect that the BwO is also known as, the ‘plane of consistency’ (or, the plane of inconsistency), ‘plane of immanence,’ or ‘planomenon.’

Yet, the BwO of the Earth is only part of the story. According to D&G there is simultaneously, as the BwO of the Earth is moving and shifting, flowing here and there freely, a moment of stratification occurring over the surface of the Earth.

Stratification has two main aspects: firstly, there is a selection of homogeneous materials into layers. Secondly, these layers are folded to create stable structures and create new entities with emergent properties.

“In a geological stratum, for example, the first articulation is the progress of ‘sedimentation,’ which deposits units of cyclic sediment according to a statistical order[...] The second articulation is the ‘folding’ that sets up a stable functional structure and effects the passage from sediment to sedimentary rock.” [MP: p. 46]

At any rate, stratification accumulates indeterminate and unrestricted flows and forms structures and bindings. The material flows within the embryonic sack float through one another, into one another and eventually become coagulated into layers of flesh, bone, nerves, etc. via a process of stratification. This coagulation is not, however, the final word, for there is a process of folding whereby the layers produced by stratification are folded and recoiled and ultimately applied to functionality, or, 'coded': the legs (for walking), the eye (for seeing), the lungs (for breathing). This coding is what D&G will refer to as 'territorialization.' Territorialization is just this process of assigning value and meaning (in some senses, purpose) to non-stratified or partially stratified flows, and is usually synonymous with stratification).

This 'double pincer' is what D&G refer to as 'the judgment of God' and has direct correspondence to Artuad's radio play, 'To Have Done with the Judgement of God' quoted in the opening of this chapter. This is also the motivation behind the odd sounding claim that "God is a lobster," that appears in 'Mille Plateaux.' God is the process of stratification whereby flows are captured and folded, coded and over-coded (more on coding later, but for now one can understand this term as synonymous with both stratification and territorialization). However, the BwO opposes itself to stratification and, therefore, always eludes the 'judgment of God.'

To be sure, on the one hand we have the indeterminate and continuous flows that permeate the BwO, and, on the other hand, we have a process of stratification that organises the flows into structures, layers of strata: the Earth and what comes to pass on the Earth. The BwO is pure potentiality, the limit of destratification; the organism is on the opposite side of the spectrum, being the limit of stratification. In fact, neither the organism nor the BwO exist now and forever for there is always a swinging back and forth, a swing in the direction of the organism and a swing back in the direction of the BwO.

Yet, more must be said on the issue of coding previously mentioned. Here we find the example of the Earth and of the egg as BwO and geological and embryonic stratification far too narrow an example (although all flows may fall back onto the Earth, or, indeed, the egg at some stage).

The concept of ‘coding,’ ‘recoding,’ and ‘overcoding,’ should be grasped in terms of social systems of stratification and territorialization. Language (*speech*), for instance, is a form of coding. Language gives value and meaning to the guttural sounds emanating from the depths of the body. When we apply the sound of the word ‘hat’ to a particular object, we give to it a certain meaning, a certain value. Just as DNA codes the foetal eye, arm, lung, etc., language codes bodily sounds in relation to objects, actions, situations, and so on.

Recoding occurs when an established code, take capitalism for instance, is replaced by an alternative code (and let us be clear that D&G will have it that all codes have there alternatives), communism, for example. It is not in the interest of one code to be recoded by another, in which case the established codes take steps to avoid being recoded by a process of overcoding.

Overcoding is the process of applying codes to other codes; for example, “horses are trained: humans impose upon the horse’s instinctive forces transmitted forces that regulate the former, select, dominate, overwrite them” [MP: p. 172]. Overcoding universalises an arbitrary code in order that one cannot even imagine the arbitrariness of that code. Overcoding is the pervasive process of making a code self-authoritative. For example, capitalism sets up codes for giving meaning and value to money, it then links or binds its codes to another field, art, for instance, and recodes the old code (the code of aesthetics) and does this to such a degree that the new code becomes the dominant one - art becomes a commodity and is judged to have meaning in relation to its monetary value. If enough overcoding takes place this will create a *money illusion* whereby cash currency is perceived as having meaning and value autonomously and in itself. Money becomes self-authoritative and ‘unquestionably’ valuable.

If coding, recoding and overcoding be a process and degrees of stratification whereby structures and organizations are formed out of coagulated flows, de-coding is in the direction of the BwO, along with de-territorialization and de-stratification.

The BwO is, therefore, the point of dis-organ-ization, the limit whereby an organism collapses in on itself and all the congealed flows are set free and flow here and there, void of form or structure, void of the organizing effects of stratification. In which case ‘organ’ of the BwO “is opposed not to the organs but to that organization of organs called the organism” [MP: p. 175]. And for sure we should be clear on this point, there is a distinction between the ‘organ’ and the ‘organism.’ The ‘true organs’ of the BwO do indeed regulate flows, slow them down to make them accessible and “*must* be composed and positioned,”² but these ‘true organs’ are opposed to the stratification of the organs, which arranges them into hierarchical systems, into strata.

Flows oppose organization for it is the will of every flow to flow freely, unrestricted; in fact, D&G goes as far as to contend that the BwO *is* desire. Desire is not manifested through a lack (as Freud would have it), but, it is an entirely creative process. One plugs into a flow, and it is the desire to keep the flow going unrestricted that is the BwO. For example, one plugs into the flow of a conversation and it is desirable that the conversation flow freely and unhindered by other influences. Is there anything more frustrating to the flow than that one is cut off in mid conversation? Stratification gathers up the guttural flows of the body at its most primal level, a shriek, a moan, a grumbling, a growling, from the depths of the body, the BwO, and organizes them into strata, into speech. Nonsense is the primal BwO, not the nonsense of Lewis Carroll (though, in many respects this nonsense is a *similacrum* of both the stratification of bodily sounds and also of the BwO), but rather the nonsense of Artaud. Carroll is opposed to Artaud as the ‘Snark’ is opposed to “Artaud’s howls-breaths (*crissouffles*), ‘Ratara ratara ratara Atara tatara rana Otara otara katara...’” The difference between the two being that Carroll’s ‘Snark’ combines the words ‘snake’

² my italics

and ‘shark’ which give the impression of sense, borrow something from sense, from, as Nietzsche would call it, the ‘code of everyday signs.’ This produces its own stratification and territorialization, a unique organization coagulated on its own stratum. Artaud’s *howls-breath* is a noise, a disorganized trait of the body that de-territorializes, as does Carroll, but it does not re-territorialize. Even the nonsense of James Joyce’s [1882 - 1941] “bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnkonbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoo hoohoordenenthurnuk!” [FW: p. 3], though far more complicated than Carroll’s snark, still re-territorializes: one can dismantle this 101 letter word into thirteen different words for ‘thunder’ in various languages.

So, how does one make oneself a BwO? This is the question posed in plateau six of ‘Mille Plateaux.’ At first sight this question seems a little peculiar, for it would appear that making oneself a BwO would involve the removal of one’s organs, and this would be catastrophic - the body would surely die! However, we have now come to understand the BwO not as being opposed to organs but to the organization of organs into a strata, so we are in a better position than we were initially to understand what D&G have in mind.

The BwO has been defined as a limit and as such it is a limit that does not exist in actuality, for the limit of the BwO is described by D&G as a *virtual dimension of the body*. That is, the BwO is a ‘vast reservoir of potentials’ that have yet to be siphoned, yet to be exploited. The BwO of the egg has been defined as a *place* whereby all flows flow freely and without restriction, one into the other; then a process of stratification occurs whereby the flows are organized into their respective organs and functions. Implicit in this process of stratification is the fact that the organism is congealed onto a stratum; in other words, the organization of the organs becomes set in stone (metaphorically and socially). The eye *is* for seeing, the ear *is* for hearing, the nose *is* for smelling and so forth. The organ becomes fixed onto a stratum that doesn’t allow it to move its position. Likewise, words are for signifying: ‘snake’ signifies, ‘shark’ signifies, ‘snark’ signifies.

But again, how does one make oneself a BwO? To be sure, D&G state that there are two phases of making oneself a BwO: “one phase is for the fabrication of the BwO, the other... make[s] something pass across it.” [MP: p. 168]

D&G offer the example of the masochist body. According to D&G the masochist body is “poorly understood in terms of pain.” The masochist body, in actual fact, is attempting to make himself a BwO whereby flows of intensities can pass freely and unrestricted. The masochist asks that his limbs be tied together, and that his mouth and anus be plugged; this is the first phase of fabrication whereby a plane of consistency is fabricated in order that something may pass across it. The next phase is making something pass, flogging.

“What is certain is that the masochist has made himself a BwO under such conditions that the BwO can no longer be populated by anything but intensities of pain, *pain waves*... The masochist is looking for a type of BwO that only pain can fill, or travel over, due to the very conditions under which that BwO was constituted.” [ibid]

Yet, D&G claim that the BwO can be botched; that is, one can fail, and fail double. Firstly, one can fail at the level of fabrication, and secondly, at the level of making something pass over the BwO. The masochist constantly flirts with the danger at the level of fabrication.

The hypochondriac body fails because nothing passes over it, nothing works, all flows are blocked - the hypochondriac body is what D&G refer to as an empty BwO, for they constitute a plane of consistency, yet, nothing flows across them.

Alternatively, there is the cancerous BwO. The cancerous BwO is a body that perpetually repeats the same patterns over and over, producing the same old flows and never experimenting.

D&G’s solution to the problem of ‘botching’ the BwO *is* just this, experimentation, but cautious experimentation - again, we are clearly told that it is not wisdom but caution. The body

exhibits certain stratified traits and habits and it is not advisable to wildly de-stratify or this could lead one to one's own death: "The BwO never involved killing oneself." If one is cautious one can experiment with the BwO, dip a toe in, then a foot, always retaining enough of the organism as a safety net preventing us from plunging headlong into our deaths. What happens here is that the deterritorialization does not get re-territorialized, just the same as Carroll and Artaud: Carroll re-territorializes, Artaud does not.

Chapter two: Elements of Francis Bacon's Paintings

In this chapter we shall be looking at Deleuze's treatment of the paintings of Irish painter Francis Bacon [1909 - 1992] in his book 'Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation.'

Bacon's paintings are often credited with being violent and horrific, yet, Deleuze states that the horror of these paintings "are overly facile detours, detours that the artist himself judges severely and condemns in his work" [FB: p. xii]. What exactly is Deleuze's meaning here? Surely one can see quite clearly the horror depicted in '*study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*' 1953 [1]; the scream, the terrifying scream, is this not horror - and, more importantly, is this not the main interest for Bacon? Not to mention the violence in such paintings as '*Three Studies for a Crucifixion*' 1962 [2].

First off Deleuze talks about the ring or 'round area' within Bacon's paintings as providing a *place* for a *fact*. We should look more closely at these terms as they are fundamental in understanding Deleuze's interpretation of Bacon's paintings.

According to Deleuze, Bacon is trying to move beyond the figurative in painting. In attempting to remove the figurative Bacon is attempting to paint a simple fact that goes beyond the narrative - Bacon is not trying to tell us a story as one may suspect is the case in more traditional paintings. In order to paint the fact (a fact) Bacon uses the simple (self-admittedly simple) technique of localizing the figure within a place, the round area or the ring. Within this 'place' the events of the fact can take place, but also, the figure is isolated within the place so that no narrative can slip in. The figure exists within its own isolated reality. It is this isolated reality that is key and that Deleuze believes has been given to contemporary painting by past religious painting.

It was in the old religious paintings that an independent reality was first conceived in paint and that narrative was abandoned for sensation. Deleuze claims that for this reason it should not be taken that religious paintings have prolonged the convention of the narrative painting.

Yet, how should we define this ‘narrative’ or ‘figurative’ painting that Deleuze suspects Bacon of escaping? We should at once distinguish between the ‘figurative’ and the ‘figural’ (figuration) for this is integral to the escape. The figurative is not the figural. The figurative tells a story by depicting a relationship between objects, or, between object and figure. It is between this relationship that a narrative can fit itself into. Deleuze uses decidedly Humean language to make the distinction between the figurative ‘relations of ideas’, or, ‘intelligible relations,’ and the figural ‘matters of fact.’ *Matters of fact* are sensible events, whereas *relations of ideas* (or objects) are intellectual events that have to be mediated by the mind and, indeed, may not be considered as ‘events’ at all. This is why we should not suspect photography of doing the same, for, photography documents; that is, a photograph “is not a figuration of what one sees, it is what modern man sees” [FB: p. 8]. According to Deleuze the canvas is never an empty white surface. The canvas is already populated by a thousand clichés and old ideas and, in particular, photographs; this being the case, the task of painting *the fact* becomes increasingly difficult.

Here we can see why it is integral to ‘painting the fact’ that Bacon isolate the figure, because in doing so he removes any narrative relation that can spring up between multiple *facts*. And here we must also comment on the fact that this does not mean that there is never more than one figure in Bacon’s paintings, or, indeed, that there is never any object. In fact, Bacon’s paintings are, according to Deleuze, always double, always populated by more than one. However, these multiple figures come from the same fact, or, “spring from the same fact” [FB: p. 2].

The ring and the round area serves this simple purpose, or, more appropriately, the simple round area serves to isolate the figure and gives the figure its place in an isolated reality whereby no illustrative, narrative, or figurative aspects can slip in. The round area is one of three pictorial elements that Deleuze identifies in Bacon’s paintings: “the material structure, the round contour, and the raised image” [FB: p. 4]. The material structure is identified as the large fields of colour that “fill the rest of the painting” [ibid], and the raised area Deleuze uses the sculptural term *armature*.

To look at the paintings in sculptural terms is fitting because we have all the elements needed for isolation. The raised platform, raised above, isolating the figure; the round area where the figure plays out the event. The large fields of colour also serve to isolate the figure. One can clearly see all these techniques in '*Figure in Movement, 1976*' [3]; here the figure is isolated within a large black field of colour and raised upon a round red/orange platform. One can also find this isolation technique in the works of Samuel Beckett, in particular, '*Waiting for Godot*':

ACT I: A country road. A tree. Evening.

"Estragon, sitting on a low mound is trying to take off his boot." [WFG: p. 9]

What we find minimal in the surrounding area serves to accentuate the event, *the fact*, that is isolated within it.

But what is this event? Movement, and two movements at that. The first movement is the movement of the material structure towards the figure; the structure folds around the figure (hence, the round area, a baring down of material isolation). The second movement is the movement of the figure to the material structure; this is in the opposite direction. Instead of the material structure exerting its forces onto the figure (body), the figure (body) is exerting its inner forces upon the material structure. But more than this, the body is making an 'intense effort' to escape itself into the material structure of the painting. This is what Deleuze refers to as the 'spasm.'

What Bacon is painting here is the invisible effort of the body to escape itself, or the body awaiting its escape.

The scream in Bacon is a spasm whereby the body attempts to escape itself through the mouth; the figure hunched over the washbasin awaits its escape through the plug hole; heads disappear into the apex of an umbrella; faces squeeze themselves into mirrors until they become one with the material background, the large fields of colour. Deleuze states that the contour has a double

function of being an isolating tool and also a membrane through which the body must pass. The contour or round area is replicated in the washbasin, the umbrella, etc. and stands as the limit of the material structure, through which the figure must pass in order to escape - either by condensing itself through a singular point, such as the apex of an umbrella; or, by flattening itself out in the surface of a mirror; or, indeed, the mouth, the scream is the effort, the mouth a perfect replication of the round area. One can see these *escape efforts* beautifully in 'Triptych, 1977' [4]. The figure in the left hand panel pushes through the point of the umbrella; in the central panel the figure pushes his head into the black void while two portrait 'attendants' preside with elongated faces; while the right panel shows traces of the left panel, almost as if the figure were moving in reverse; however, this reverse movement does not reverse the effort, but appears rather like a coiled spring. Also, in the 1977 triptych the face in the left hand portrait is contorted into a kind of scream and in this instance one can see that the bodily escape is doubled in the sense that it is escaping through the point of the mouth but may also be seen to be dissipating outward from the replicated round area (the mouth) into the material structure; this should not be confused with the body trying to turn itself inside out, for in that case the body would remain static - the point is that the figure is 'moving' towards the material structure.

If we return to our earlier example of Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' we shall see all of these elements at work too. We have the raised surface, the armature, of the small mound; the material structure, the evening. The evening wraps around and moves toward the figure, also an isolating technique. But also we have the boot being the replication of the round area, or, the contour membrane through which Estragon exerts an intense effort to pass through (even though Estragon is, in this case, trying to take his boot off). But, of course, Beckett's is a narrative whereas Bacon's is not. The scene from 'Waiting for Godot' is not isolated enough, although *taken* in isolation one can appreciate the Baconesque qualities of the scene, or, event.

Furthermore, we can see that the effort here is not a superhuman effort by any means; in fact, this point is crucial because Bacon is, after all, painting *the fact* - there is no extraordinary event associated with the effort or the body, or, the figure. A figure may indeed attempt to open a door with his foot (*'painting, 1978'* [5]) but this is not beyond the realms of human capability, and what is important is not whether this event is the pictorial representation of a reality outside of the painting, but rather, that the effort it would take to do such a thing is conveyed sensibly in paint. The effort, the invisible forces, this is what Bacon achieves; and again, we have all the elements here: the body pushing itself into a point (the keyhole), the deformation of the head, a contoured area enclosing the figure.

There is another curiosity in Bacon's paintings that we should explore before moving on to the final chapter, and that is, Bacon's rejection of the face in favour of the head.

What is it that the portrait painter usually does? The answer seems clear, he/she paints faces; in which case it seems rather unusual that Bacon would reject the face, or try, as Deleuze puts it, "to dismantle the face" [FB: p. 15]. Let us consider a more traditional portrait painting by Titian [Tiziano Vecelli or Tiziano Vecellio, 1488/90 - 1576], *'Portrait of a Young Man,'* painted in the 1520's [6]. What we have here is a young man looking thoughtfully into the distance. With slight furrows in his brow and tight jaw the handsome young man appears to exhibit an intense concentration, but also, a slightly dreamy quality plays across his eyes that would suggest an inner resolve. Crudely speaking, this is what we see in the Titian, and with varying degrees of scrutiny one may find more or less but the overall effect is the same: we read a mood, a thought, a story even. What do we not see in the Titian? Or, more appropriately, what do we miss? Deleuze and Bacon's answer is, of course, the head.

According to Deleuze, it is the face that covers the head, obscures it, and, as Bacon is concerned with the figure and the figure is the body and the head is part of the body, Bacon must have done with the face "to rediscover the head or make it emerge from beneath the face" [ibid].

Looking back at the Titian one should think that Bacon is missing something by doing away with the face, for, is there not a certain spirit in the Titian, a human spirit of thoughtfulness, off mood and emotion? Does Bacon not risk losing the spirit of portrait painting itself through his dismantling of the face? To be sure, Bacon does indeed forsake this *thoughtful spirit* (after a fashion), however, what Bacon loses in one kind of spirit he makes up for in another kind: bodily spirit, or, animal spirit - “a spirit in bodily form, a corporeal and vital breath, an animal spirit. It is the animal spirit of man: a pig-spirit, a buffalo-spirit, a dog-spirit, a bat-spirit...” [ibid]. In a sense, if Bacon is painting the bodily spirit in human form then Titian is painting the human spirit *over* and *above* the body.

One should not think of the animal spirit that Bacon is driving at as a kind of similarity between human and animal but rather a doubling of the human whereby the human, the figure, the body, is already doubled human/animal. Deleuze makes this point clear by drawing our attention to the ‘*Two studies of George Dyer with a Dog, 1968*’ [7] whereby “a real dog is treated as the shadow of its master... The shadow escapes from the body like an animal we had been sheltering” [FB: p. 16].

It is with this doubling of the animal and human that we begin to appreciate Deleuze’s comments concerning the multiple figures *springing from the same fact*. And also how there can be attendants but no spectators. If we return to ‘*Triptych, 1977*’ [4] we can see that the elongated faces in the middle panel serve merely as attendants to the fact, just as the shadow dog and the master have too sprung from the same fact.

Man is not merely similar to animal, but, *man is animal*. Furthermore, how could we ever experience this fact if we remain on the level of the face?

It is also this bodily fact that inspires Bacon to make a clear distinction between the bone and the flesh. The flesh is the body, the head is flesh and part of the body; bone serves as a structuralizing material. The bone is not the body; in many ways the bone is akin to the face, in that it hides the body. This is why Bacon shows the flesh as opposed to the bone. He does this is a

number of ways. Firstly, there is the *descent* technique whereby an arm or leg is painted in suspension and the flesh seems to creep off the bone - the flesh has a life of its own, aside from the rigid bone structure. Secondly, there is the overt painting of bones, ribcages, spinal columns, etc. Here the flesh seems to play around on the bones, performs feats of acrobatics, as Deleuze would say. Lastly, there is Bacon's treatment of the teeth. Deleuze tells us that teeth are after all little bones and one should find them a lot in Bacon.

There is the final element in Bacon that is the moment where animal and man finally come together: meat. Meat is the indeterminate point between man and beast. "Meat is not dead flesh," says Deleuze, and it is not thoughtful; it is no longer that part of the human that thinks, it is, however, nothing more than the body, the animal-man. Meat does not have a face but it does shiver with sensation, "it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colours of the flesh" [FB: p. 17]. In the final chapter we shall look more closely at the sensations of the flesh.

Chapter three: Painting the Invisible: Sensation and the BwO

“Picasso was the first person to produce figurative paintings which overturned the rules of appearance; he suggested appearance without using the usual codes, without respecting the representational truth of form, but using a breath of irrationality instead, to make representation stronger and more direct; so that form could pass directly from the eye to the stomach without going through the brain.” [Francis Bacon]

In the last two chapters we have discussed the Body without Organs and the elements of Francis Bacon’s paintings as discussed by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. In this final chapter we shall see how Bacon and the elements of his painting relate to the BwO with particular reference to the two chapters of ‘Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation’ entitled ‘Painting and Sensation’ and ‘Hysteria.’

Giving a description of the elements in Bacon would be of little value if these elements are treated as little obscurities within the paintings themselves. What we should like to know is how these elements relate to Bacon’s overall project and how these elements are successful in that project.

It has, in the previous chapter, been stated that Bacon’s goal was to paint *the fact*, but also that this *fact* is not a narrative or story - in fact, the narrative or story really is opposed to the *fact* and covers it over - in which case what is this *fact*?

To be sure, in the ‘Author’s Preface’ we are given a quite clear account of what Bacon is up to, he is painting “the invisible forces that model the flesh or shake it... making invisible forces visible through their effects on the flesh” [FB: p. xii]. It is for this reason that Bacon sometimes condemns his own paintings for depicting horror, for, Bacon is not interested in painting the horror of a scene, or at least not the object of horror, but rather the action of violence upon the flesh, the scream. This is also the reason for the isolation of the figure, Bacon does not want the spectator to see the object of the horror, too much story and narrative can slip in between the horrific image and the scream. However, Deleuze is also aware that from the scream itself, no matter how isolated, all manner of horrors can be inferred; “As soon as there is horror, a story is reintroduced, and the

scream is botched... In the end, the maximum violence will be found in the seated or crouching figures, which are subjected to neither torture or brutality, to which nothing *visible*³ happens, and yet which manifests the power of the paint all the more” [FB: 28]. Here again we see the restating of the past contention that the *efforts* of the body should not be something sensational, but, on the contrary, in order for the painting to work as sensory it must jettison the sensational in favor of the relatively bland and human efforts: Estragon taking off his boot will produce a far better image of the sensation, or, the effort of the body, than a sensational scene of horror.

One can infer a multiplicity of horrors from the scream even in the seated figures [1], yet, this is only reflective. One initially experiences the scream as peculiar, singular; explanations and ruminations on the possible causes of the scream occur after the event, after the *fact*. Of course the paintings of figures sitting contorted on chairs spring more naturally from the depths of the body and the cause has only a relation to the bodily forces cut off from any external motivation, but this only shows that there are varying degrees of success on a time scale between fact and contemplation of the fact, not that the scream is botched from the outset, but that it is liable to become contaminated more easily than the paintings of contorted figures whereby forces seem to spring immanently. Also, there really is no adequate inference one can make about the horror relating to the scream - one may have ideas and stories to apply, but these all drift into insignificance once one turns to face the painting once again. So, once again the spontaneity of the *fact* is conveyed.

Previously we had contemplated the differences between Titian’s ‘*Portrait of a Young Man*’ [6] and Bacon’s paintings, concluding that Titian’s conveyed emotion whereas Bacon was aiming at an animal spirit, or, human spirit in bodily form; what this amounts to is the fact that Bacon is not painting moods or emotions but ‘sensations,’ affects. The narrative tells us of things such as mood, emotion, thoughts, etc. as with the pensive gaze of the young man in Titian; Bacon,

³ my italics

on the other hand, tells us nothing of these things, *tells* us nothing at all *in fact*; and it is for this reason that we should not make such a clear distinction between the viewer and the the painted figure as one may wish to do. That is, the viewer is not simply a calculating machine for the concepts of the painting (there are no transmitted concepts as one would find in conceptual art), but rather, the viewer is to be part of the *rhythm* of sensations being painted. It is in this sense that Deleuze states that the paintings act directly on the nervous system and bypass the cerebral organ. The bodies in Bacon are plexus and as such transmit sensations to the viewer becoming plexus too.

The face is an obvious problem in painting sensation because it harbors all manner of stories, whereas the head, on the other hand, reveals sensation. The face and the expressions on the face must be mediated by the brain and contemplated on a cerebral level, a structured level (the brain being the structuring organ in this case). It is for this reason that the bone is stood in opposition to the flesh; the bone is a structural material as is the face; the flesh is sensation and thus the head. One may identify with the young man's mood in Titian, one may even be inspired to empathize at a deep level with the feelings of the young man in the painting to the point of feeling those emotions; however, one would first have to think the painting in order to 'work out' what is going on here. And further still, emotions may be spontaneous, yet, they should not be confused with sensation. The sensations produced by horror are not the same as the *sense* of horror, the thought of horror or the mood of horror - all these do not happen at the level of the flesh and do not act directly onto the nervous system. Of course, one must understand that the audience and the painting can be intellectually separated here: the painting depicts the invisible forces in the contorted figure; the viewer experiences these sensations at the visual level. In which case there must be a point at which the violent fleshy sensations become visual. Deleuze contends that this can be found in the 'rhythm' of the painting. It is this rhythm that is at the chaotic level of the painting. It is at this level that we find the Body without Organs.

Deleuze states that Bacon “has not ceased to paint bodies without organs,” [FB: p. 33] and with the abandonment of the face for the head we can see how this relates to the BwO discussed in chapter one. The face is an intellectual organizing structural feature in painting, much like the bone; Bacon does not paint faces and clearly opposes the bones to the flesh.

Sensations traverse the flesh as the waves of intensities previously discussed in relation to the BwO, “the body without organs is flesh and nerve.” [ibid]. It is precisely for this reason that Deleuze talks of levels of sensation; one level being the visual level and the rhythm of all these levels, the point at which all levels meet, is the BwO.

One can see this in the scrubbed and rubbed out zones on the faces in Bacon; these scrubbed zones are the BwO, the point at which the face is quite literally being dismantled and replaced by a zone of indiscernibility - the face is being deterritorialized just the same as language is deterritorialized in Artuad and Carroll’s nonsense (but less like Carroll’s deterritorializing because Bacon’s is not reterritorialized).

Here we arrive at the most peculiar aspect of Deleuze’s account of the BwO and sensation. According to Deleuze it is the waves of sensation that trace out levels on the body and that when these levels reach a particular intensity they constitute an organ; however, the organ that is constituted by these waves only lasts for as long as the sensation is at a particular level of intensity. In which case the organs can be here one moment and somewhere else at another moment; the eye, for example, is constituted by a particular intensity of sensation, but when that wave changes its intensity then the eye will cease to be determined. This does not, however, mean that the eye is indeterminate, because at the level of visual sensation the eye is determined; yet, this does not mean that the eye is not determined once and for all, it is a transitory organ that can be here one moment and gone the next.

It is at this point that we should like to pause for a moment and object to the apparent absurdity of this claim. Are we expected to believe that the eye, for instance, does not remain in

place as an eye? This seems utterly ludicrous! If not conceptually at the very least from a point of experience. My eye remains an eye, it does not migrate, it has a definite position on my face and is determined to react to visual stimuli. But, with this objection we may be missing the point of what Deleuze is trying to give account of. It is not that the eye is not a determined organ, or even that the eye shifts positions, but simply that the eye is determined by a particular level of sensation and that these levels change, and if the levels change then very 'nature' of the eye changes. Organization does not occur at the level of the BwO; linguistic determinations do not occur at the level of sensation, overcoding is not a matter of levels of intensities; if one thinks that the eye is determined once and for all then one is stuck at the level of stratification whereby the eye is assigned a value and purpose, and overcoded to make this value and purpose appear terminal. One need only poke oneself in the eye to understand that the eye, at the level of sensation doesn't necessarily amount to a visual organ. The olfactory sense is certainly confused with the sense of taste; in fact, taste has as much to do with smell as anything else.

Here we can see that the BwO has organs, also has determined organs, but still, these organs are temporary and transitory. It is this situation that Deleuze calls the *hysterical reality of the body*.

But, what is *hysteria* in painting? If we look back to the first chapter we shall find that Deleuze gives us a number of ways to *make oneself a Body without Organs*: drugs, masochism, alcohol, etc. But he also talks in clinical terms with regards to the hypochondriac, the schizophrenic, the paranoiac - it is in these clinical terms that Deleuze talks of a hysteria.

According to Deleuze, hysteria is a presence, and painting has a special relationship with hysteria due to the fact that it reveals presence in paint. It is the colour fields in painting, colour itself, that reveals a presence, act directly on the nervous system and does not tell stories or narratives; fields of colour are immediate. It is not simply a case of getting past the narrative, but, getting past representation (which amounts to the same thing). Again the imaginary line between painting and viewer is broken down - one no longer looks at this painted representation of an object

or figure, but, one experiences the presence of a sensation via the eye. A canvas painted red has no less sensory value than Titian's '*Painting of a Young Man.*' In this sense no painting is ever representational - or, at the very least, representation as the goal of only a few (abstract painting may fail, but the colours and lines remain apart from any intellectual representation). We have seen how Bacon does not represent horror, but we should also be aware that Bacon is not representing the sensation of horror either; that is, Bacon is capturing the violent sensations associated with horror.

The idea of presence also includes the notion of time in a very intimate way. Bacon Paints time no less than he paints sensation and the *invisible forces that mold the flesh*. Deleuze tells us that in Bacon there is the *before* and the *afterward*. The hysterical painting captures the anticipation of the sensation as well as the effects on the flesh of that sensation. If we look again at the very first painting we discussed, '*study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*' 1953 [1], we shall find time, the before and afterward, apparent here. The pope sits still, almost calm and yet tensed (the flesh is tensed); the scream seems to come out of the future with regards to the rest of the figure: the tense, the before hand; the scream, the afterward.

It is through painting, through paint, that presence becomes visible. The whole swirling chaotic rhythm of the moment, *the fact*. Bacon's painting are not just depicting a hysterical scream or violent spasm, the entire painting, each and every painting, is hysterical. Bacon himself is hysterical for he is hyper-sensitive to the world, the intensities and waves of intensities over the flesh. His models are not hysterical, but it is Bacon himself that hystericizes his figures, his models, his photographs - Bacon abandons his head into the camera and becomes intensified.

It is with the painting that the sensations finally find their common point, the eye hears and breathes and smells. Painting gathers the seemingly disparate sensations (which are in fact only levels of intensities) at the level of visual sensation.

In Bacon we are witnessing the presence of the escape of the body as it's levels of sensation are "violently mixed," the point of the BwO.

However, why should this relationship be special to painting and not, say, the written word; why not Beckett, for instance (with 'Waiting for Godot' taken in its written form)? In order to answer this question we may again return to the face as opposed to the head as a illustration. The written is always mediated by the mind, whereas the large fields of colour act directly on the nervous system; of course, a narrative can slip between the paint and the sensation, but this is not Bacon's project, and this is reflective after the fact. In order for the written word to act on the nervous system it would have to abandon the word altogether and cease to be the word; alternatively, the word could be spoken, as with Artuad's howls-breaths; however, this will not do because although the ear becomes the polyvalent organ whereby the levels of sensation meet at the sonorous level, presence is not captured; that is, in Bacon it is the moment of bodily escape that constitutes the sensation as presence, whereas with, for instance, music, the rhythms are escaping, or, more specifically, escape-ed. No body is left in music, in fact, the body is perpetually stripped. The body in Bacon, however, is insistent and persistent; the persistent smile of the pope like the smile that persists in Carroll's cheshire cat. The eye is "the destined organ that receives this presence," this hysteria in paint, this *fact*. It is only by going beyond the organism that this rhythmic unity, this Body *without* Organs can be discovered. Then meat, the bone, the spasm, the scream, the before hand and the afterward, all these elements allow Bacon to succeed in his project of 'recording the fact' and delivering it directly onto the nervous system as a wave of intensity passing across the BwO and its transitory organs.

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