

Boundary Violations

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There exist historians of the 18th century who refuse to deal with freemasonry. Their “reasoning” seems to run as follows: – “The Masons believed in mumbojumbo. I do not believe in mumbojumbo. Therefore the Masons are unimportant – indeed, virtually nonexistent.” The eye in the pyramid stares out of everyone’s pocket – and yet still these historians refuse to admit that masonry has any historical significance. Nowadays, thousands are afflicted with alien encounters, UFO sexual molestations by the 100’s; countless others are afflicted with memories of Satanic Abuse. But according to serious science, neither Satan nor UFO’s exist. “Therefore” the abduction hysteria has no historical significance and can scarcely be said to exist. Right? No, wrong. Obviously UFO’s and UFO-hysteria can be considered as two different things, lacking all ontological co-dependency. That is, UFO’s may or may not “exist”, but they need not exist (except perhaps as an “archetype”) in order to arouse the interest of historians in the hysteria and induce them to attempt to interpret it. The hysteria is real and important, “history in the making” as the newsreels used to squawk – but its significance remains buried because “science” has mistaken the content of the hysteria for its inner structure.

Now that Freud has been defenestrated – along with the Unconscious – modern psychotherapy can offer an all-purpose etiology for all UFO/Satanic “memories”: – child abuse. In a recent statement on the subject the APA cautioned that the falsity of certain “memories” should not be used as an excuse to ignore the underlying trauma – or deep inner structure of the “memory” – which is assumed to be “real” abuse. The idea that repressed sexuality in childhood might cause false memories to arise as defense mechanisms in later life has been junked; the “seduction theory” has been revived, and transformed into the “abuse theory.” This theory presupposes the non-existence of “infant and childhood sexuality” (in Freudian terms), and in a broader sense, the non-existence of childhood desire. A tendency arises to regard the child as an erotic blank, incapable of any authentic con-sensuality. Therefore all points of contiguity between the concept “childhood” and the concept “sexuality” can be subsumed into one new and exhaustive concept: – “abuse”.

The APA offers an interesting paraphrase of the abuse-concept when it mentions “conditions that are associated with boundary violations in [the patient’s] past.” New professional jargon always provides the semanticist/sociologist a golden opportunity to unpack hidden political and psychological content from tell-tale words and phrases – and boundary violation is a veritable trick suitcase – a richness of embarrassments. We’d need a whole monograph to dump all the

items jammed into this little portmanteau. The metaphor of nationalism springs to mind first of all – boundaries are borders, violations are invasions. The individual is hypostatized not as a sovereign monarch (who might after all mingle and mate with other monarchs) but as a closed-off area surrounded by an abstract grid of map-lines, political separations, exclusions. A border-crossing here is a violation, not an act of trade, or love, or harmonial association. The border is not a skin which can be caressed, it is a barrier. In relation to the inviolate body, all “others” are simply potential wetbacks, illegal immigrants, terrorists traveling on forged documents.

The next obvious metaphor is the immune system. In fact, we can mix metaphors already here, like the Iranian scholar M. Rahnema (quoted by P. Feyerabend in *Farewell to Reason*, p. 298) who “has compared the effects of developmental aid with the effect of the illness Aids.” The meddling of Capital in the “third” world has a viral effect – it breaks down immune systems made up of traditionally-scaled economics and values, and replaces them only with diseased “growth”. This is true – but the use of the metaphor is interesting, giving an air of hysteria and hopelessness to the argument. After all, there’s a cure for Capitalism, but it doesn’t involve non-contact among peoples; on the contrary. In a sense, Capitalism creates separation – a vicious parody, if you like, or grotesque exaggeration of the “natural” immune systems of peoples and cultures. It imposes uniformity but denies contact. The other, the “different”, is perceived as viral and threatening. The cure for this “condition” might well be to deny uniformity but to make contact. Ultimately it’s not the “immune system” which is at stake, but life itself.

The metaphor of AIDS has been a godsend to crypto-ideologues like the APA, who can make use of its semantic effluvia in terms like “boundary violation” to hint obliquely at the underlying agenda of their therapeutic control paradigm – i.e., to erase the concept “childhood desire” and replace it with the concept “abuse”. If all sex is dirty and causes death, then everyone must be “protected”. Children here serve as metaphors for “everyone”. To “protect children” is to protect the spiritual values of civilization itself against the threat of desire, the otherness of the body. No doubt the APA remains unconscious of these meanings; but then the APA has jettisoned the unconscious, so it’s only appropriate that they should be among the first to fall victim to its surreptitious return. The unconscious – banished safely to the realms of advertising and disinformation, or so we fondly imagined – has come back to haunt us with Godzilla-like vengeance – raped by aliens and satanists! Our boundaries are being invaded, and we are urged to “believe the victim.” The APA warns us that “abusers come from all walks of life. There is no uniform ‘profile’ ...,” etc. Anyone may be an abuser, just as anyone may have been abused. Abuse is universal. There is only abuse. Of course the APA doesn’t believe in UFO’s – but it does believe, quite clearly, that pleasure is evil.

Some extremists in the “Deep” Ecology movements joined certain Xtian bigots in hailing AIDS as God’s plan (for overpopulation, not immorality), and went on to suggest building a wall between the US and Mexico to keep out the teeming billions of the angry South. Cut down to a few million healthy hetero’s America could restore its “wilderness” – which the Deep Ecolo’s seem to envision as something like the Ayatollah Khomeini’s idea of heaven: – clean, pure, aryan ... well, maybe more like the SS’s idea of heaven. Ethnic cleansing is yet another panic reaction to the sensation of “boundary violation”. Abusers are, above all, aliens – even though (as the APA palpitantly insinuates) they might look like ... you and me! The other is the locus of all forbidden desire which we ourselves must deny and hence project onto the unknown. But of course, that’s Freudianism – or even Reichianism! We have no desires. We are the victims of abuse. Q.E.D.

j The new catchphrase “multiculturalism” simply hides a form of ethnic cultural cleansing under a semantic mask of liberal pluralism. Multiculturalism is a means of separating one culture from another, for avoiding all possibility of cross-cultural synergy or mutuality or communicativeness. At best multiculturalism provides the Consensus with an excuse to commit a bit of cultural pillaging – “appropriation” – to add some sanitized version of otherness to its own dreary uniform boredom – through tourism, or vapid academic curricula based on “respect and dignity”. But the underlying deep structure of multiculturalism is fear of penetration, of infection, of mutation, of inextricable involvement with otherness – of becoming the other. Again, there’s a cure for tourism – but it doesn’t involve everyone staying home and watching TV. It necessitates a simultaneous attack on uniformity, and a breaking down of borders – it demands both a genuine pluralism and a genuine camaraderie or solidarity – it demands conviviality.

Knowledge itself can be seen as a kind of virus. On the psychological level this perception manifested recently as a panic about “computer viruses”, and more generally about computer hacking – boundary violations in cyberspace, so to speak. The government wants access to all computer cypher-codes in order to control the “Net”, the InterNet, which might otherwise spread everywhere, transmitting secrets, even secrets about “abuse” and kiddie porn – as if the Net were a disease, rather than simply a free exchange of information. America’s immune system can’t take “too much knowing” (or whatever T.S. Eliot’s lame-ass phrase was); America must be “protected” from penetration by foreign chaos cabals of evil hackers (who might look just like you and me) – b orders must be imposed.

Cyberspace itself however involves a curious form of disembodiment in which each participant becomes a perceptual monad, a concept rather than a physical presence. Cyberspace parodies the gnostic demand for transcendence of the body, which is literally “left behind” like a prison of meat as one enters the pleroma of conceptual space. Ultimately one wishes to “download the consciousness” and achieve purity, cleanliness, immortality. Cyberspace proposes that life is not “in” the body, but in the Spirit. And the spirit is ... inviolate.

A preview of this paradise can be attained through phone-sex. Video-phones were never “invented” because too many people hate their own faces (i.e., bodies) and don’t want others to see them (too much boundary violation). So, until cybersex is perfected, the uv-cyberspace of telephone-land – a soundscape of bodiless voices – must be invested with all the sexuality we cannot share with other bodies, or with “real-time” persons with real personalities and desires. The deep purpose of phone-sex is probably not really the client’s masturbation or his credit card number, but the actual ectoplasmic meeting of two ghosts in the “other” world of sheer nothingness – a poor parodic rendering of the phone company’s slogan, “Reach out and touch someone!” – which is so sadly so finally what we cannot do in cyberspace.

Of course the phone company, and everyone else, knows very well that you cannot reach out and touch someone over a phone. What the slogan really says is: – Don’t reach out and touch someone – that’s a boundary violation! – pay us instead to mediate between you and the very sense of touch itself. The phone will save you from being touched.

Why then use the slogan, “Reach out and touch”? Ah, there’s the secret of desire, Benjamin’s “Utopian trace” still embedded in the commodity. We want to reach out and touch, but we also fear the invasion of sensation it would entail; by using the phone we scratch an itch that we secretly know will never heal. We’ll never be “satisfied” by all this spookiness – but at least we shall be ... distracted.

Protectionism becomes the one true philosophy of any culture based on mass anxiety about border violation; “safely” and “survival” become its shibboleths and highest values. The “security state” emerges like an abstract constellation figured against a random patterning of stars – each star representing a threatened job, “dysfunctional” family, “crime-ridden” neighborhood, black hole of boredom ... Power in the security state emerges out of fear, and depends on fear for its rule. In the society of Safety, all jobs are threatened, all families are dysfunctional, crime is universal, and boredom is god. You may read the signs of this power not only in the texts of the media which define it, but even more clearly in the very landscape which “embodies” it. The PoMo architecture of paranoid urbanism complements the already-picturesque decay of the Modern, the haunted emptiness of industrial ruins and abandoned farms. The aesthetic history of Capitalism maps out a process of retreat, a withdrawal into the psychic fortress, the “drug-free-zone”, the Mall, the planned community, the electronic highway. We design for a life without immunity, believing that only Capital can save us from infection. As we watch “History” unfold for us in the media, including the media of cultural and political representation, we become voluntary trance-victims of “terrorism” (the secret inner structure of “protectionism”); – in consequence, our political acts (such as architecture) can express no higher vision than fear. The design of private space is based on the easiest antidote to fear, which is boredom.

Ideally, Capital would like to disincorporate entirely and retreat into the cyberspace of electronic wealth (and electronics as wealth) – of pure speed, pure representation. The infinite “growth” which is Capital’s concept of immortality will indeed exceed all limits once economics becomes a matter of digitized data, or spiritualized knowledge, or “gnosis”. Not long ago, the glaciers of Capital covered the whole landscape – now the “ice” (William Gibson’s SciFi slang for “data”) is withdrawing from physical space and retreating toward the pole, the mathematical point of abstraction, where a new and spiritualized topology of pure informational space will open up for us, like that “heaven of glass” with which the Gnostic Demiurge attempted to con the Angels of the Lord. And we shall be saved – safe at last – beyond all corruption – gone beyond.

Of course, as you know, very few will actually be taken up in this Rapture. Actually, you’ve probably already been disqualified. As Capital withdraws (like an army fleeing from phantoms, or phantoms fleeing an army), a great deal of social triage will have to be practised. As the No Go Zones are created and the wounded are left behind, entire new populations of outsiders will be created. Too bad you’ll have to miss that last helicopter out of town. “Homelessness” constitutes such a Zone, a kind of anti-architecture, a shell from which all services and utilities have been withdrawn, leaving only a television blaring in a bare and empty room, broadcasting cop-shows and messages of multiculturalism and dignity. That is, the spectacle of Power remains, while the “advantages” of control have been disappeared. Any overt symptoms of autonomy amongst the “victims” can be crushed by the last interface between Power and nothingness: – Robocop, M. de Landa’s “artificial intelligence” or war-automaton, the violence of a society turned against itself.

As the map is infolded, certain privileged zones vanish into the “higher” topology of virtual reality, while certain other spaces are sacrificed to the world of decay, P. K. Dick’s *Ubik*, the universal greyness of social and biological melt-down. In such a scenario how can we play any role other than victim? We’ve already lost, because we’ve defined ourselves in relation to a situation of loss, and to a space of disappearance. In our fear of all boundary invasions we discover that we ourselves have been reclassified and categorized as viral. This time the Abuser/Terrorist doesn’t just look like you and me – it is you and me. The “homeless are criminal”; those who are not “taken up” have clearly “sinned”.

Of course, it remains entirely within our power to construct an altogether different interpretation of “homelessness” and the No Go Zone. We could use terms like psychic nomadism and even nomadosophy to fortify ourselves for a reevaluation of values in which our chances of autonomy would seem to increase in proportion to the actual withdrawal of Power into the Simulo-Spectacle of too-Late Capitalism. We could try to envision situations in which the “value” of homelessness would mutate into the value of “aimless wandering” (as Chuang Tzu expressed it) – situations in which we could organize everyday life into a de facto field of struggle for “empirical” freedoms, palpable pleasures, festal arrangements.

For the “utopian socialist” Charles Fourier, “God is the enemy of Uniformity.” The true blight of Civilization is uniformity – not union. The individual is realized not as the mass-produced monad of Civilization’s alienating social atomism, but as a living star in a constellation of sexualized stars. In fact, the Planansterian orgy is – for Fourier – the ultimate emblem of the social, its heraldic device, so to speak, as well as its clearest manifestation. Think of those pornographic 18th century engravings showing dozens and dozens of naked randy aristo’s, a bit of flagellation, a bowl of flaming punch, an aesthetic dance of multiple and ambiguous copulations – this is Fourier’s political programme, template for the ideal society – Harmonial Association. The body has not disappeared, nor has it become the body without organs. But it has become the infinitely penetrable body.

Physicist Nick Herbert likes to point out that for life here in the mesosphere (i.e. between stars and quarks), here where we actually live, juice and slime play an indispensable biospheric morphic role. Juice and slime are the ultimate freeform connective and penetrative tissues of living systems. Life clearly has no interest in the antibiotic hermetism implied in such phrases as “boundary violations”. Life uses borders and life violates borders and life constructs media of its own to fill up the extra spaces. The amoeba and the fertilized egg are both sacs of juice and slime – one grows by splitting itself, the other by being split. Viral-like DNA is “freely exchanged” in gushes of juice and slime – liquid with paradoxical form – the very liminality of form itself – secret secretions – the viscous slippery in-betweenness of the organic – the placental wetness of becoming.

The appropriate architectural form for a society based on radical conviviality might best be characterized as grotesque – that is, in the original sense of the word: – the cave. Since the Paleolithic, ritual space has always been envisioned as a hollow earth – and in Mao Shan Taoism, for example, heaven itself is honeycombed with countless grottos of faeries and Immortals, dripping with cinnabar and sprouting with magic mushrooms. As an aesthetic term grotesque refers to the organic-looking forms of stalactites and stalagmites, to the curving spiralling line of flesh and vegetation, which re-appears underground and is transformed into the crystal of architectural space – without losing its snaky flowery curviness, or even its matrix-like slick wetness, or even its colors. For the Gothic and the Baroque, “grotesque” serves as a term of aesthetic appreciation; for the Neo-Classical and the proto-Industrial with their mania for straight lines, “grotesque” becomes an insult.

The grotto serves to house the “grotesque body”, as Bakhtin calls it.

“In his writings on carnival, Bakhtin maintains that one of its most salient characteristics is its use of imagery involving what he calls the “grotesque body.”

Contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts

through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation. This is the ever unfinished, ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other.”

This describes what has been called Bakhtin’s “principle of permeable boundaries.”

Folklore is permeated with the carnivalesque/grotesque, with the Rabelaisian/utopian landscape of Rock Candy Mountains, houses of cream and bacon, seas of lemonade – a geography of excess which found its theorist in Fourier (who actually predicted that the oceans would turn to “something like lemonade” once humanity had converted itself into Passional Series) as well as in Rabelais, who drew more directly on the folkloric sea of story. But folklore itself appears as a phenomenon of permeable boundaries. Stories go everywhere, arriving long before anyone “notices” them, and embed themselves at a level of culture which – perhaps more than any other human project – represents the possibility of unity without uniformity. The Omnivorous Ogre and the Giant’s Bride exercise an almost universal “archetypal” appeal because they express certain basics of the body – and the social body. But in each culture the Dragon-slayer and the Ash-girl find new names, costumes, dialects – even different meanings – without losing their recognizable selves and invariable fates. The worldwide dispersion of folklore is the most striking accomplishment of the grotesque social body and its principle of permeable boundaries: – the creation of a carnivalesque narrative which resonates in every land, uniting humanity on the level of shared pleasure even while it expresses the infinitude of archetypal variations. The motifs of folklore act in a sense as memes and bundles of memes, which in turn, have been compared with viruses – they carry meanings from one society to another. The transportation of a folktale is a movement of meaning – but the meaning is never assigned (by an author[ity] or “tradition”) – the meaning is given and received. Imagination here acquires the function of morphogenetic mutuality, or social “co-creation”. This definition serves us better than the term virus with its connotations of disease and terror. But let’s be clear: – If we’re forced to choose between “the viral” and the civilization of safety, we’ll choose the viral. If we must be crude about it, we’ll have to declare in favor of “boundary violations.” We’re not just describing the “grotesque social body” – we’re buying it.

Invariably however this rather existentialist commitment involves a caveat: – that the proposal here is not directed by some sort of “high risk” nihilism or armageddonism. The real Doom-sayers are the proponents of Order and Progress, whose worldview reduces them to a hysteresis of rigidity and body-slander. But the proponents of a Feyerabendian “chaos” (an anti-theory) are in fact the true biophiles, the party of celebration. We suggest that the grotesque body is at one and the same time the magical individual, the freespirt, the fully realized self of the fairytale’s denouement – and also the infinitely permeable body, the body of Fourier’s “Museum Orgy” – the body which is desired. This paradox can only be resolved in the festal body; thus it is the festival (with its ZeroWork and “promiscuity”) that functions as the crucial insurrectionary praxis or principle of social mutability – the creation of festal space, the creation of carnival to fill the festal space – the creation of the temporary autonomous zone within the NoGo Zone – festival

as resistance and as uprising, perhaps in a single form, in a single hour of pleasure – festival as the very meaning or deep inner structure of our autonomy.

Who will give us an architecture based on the slime mold, the bedouin tent, the baroque grotto, and the street festival of (say) an Afro-Brazilian spirit-cult? The answer is: – no one but ourselves. The Supreme Architect is dead; long live architecture. The Border Artists have already begun to assemble – the bricoleurs, DPs, smugglers and Poetic Terrorists of the permeable interface – drawn to the borders, where monoliths rub and creak against each other, whole continents adrift, scraping, shooting sparks, filling the air with ozone and orgone, shifting with millennial dreams, hot, tropically hot, and notoriously unhygienic. This is the region of boundary violations – border raids – penetrations – some pleasurable, others catastrophic – of cross-cultural synergies, ritual brawls, everyday life raised (“sublimed”) to a degree of intensity approaching full presence, full embodiment – and yet still indistinct, romantic as a reverie, an erotic dream of a utopian landscape – at once a wilderness and a “pleasance”, a chaos and a ritual space – the democracy of the mingling of bodily fluids, of divine invasions, of polymorphous sensuality – sharing the break-down of boundaries – – the infinitude of Passion – the shaping power of desire.

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References: For the text of the APA report, *The Lower East Side Rose* (vol. 2, no. 12 [51], April 1, 1994); Paul Feyerabend's definitive *Farewell to Reason* (Verso, 1987); and J. Wafer's excellent Bakhtinian study of "Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomblé", *The Taste of Blood* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

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