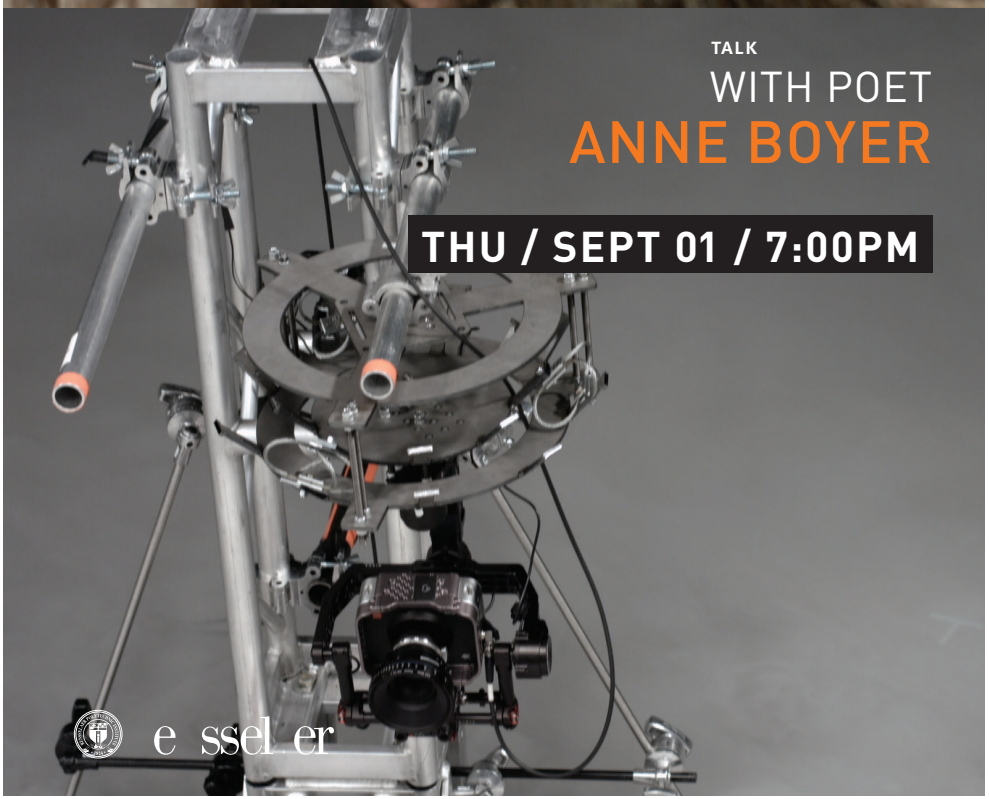
EMPAC

FILM / VIDEO

NEGATIVE REPS
BY PATRICIA L BOYD
FEATURING NOUR MOBARAK



TALK

WITH POET
ANNE BOYER

THU / SEPT 01 / 7:00PM

e ssel er

FILM/VIDEO

NEGATIVE REPS **by Patricia L Boyd**
Featuring Nour Mobarak

TALK

Anne Boyer

"Sensation is the enemy
of quantification.
There is no machine, yet,
to which a nervous system
can submit to transform
into a sufficiently
descriptive measurement."

"DATA'S WORK IS NEVER DONE,"
GUERNICA (March 13, 2015)

San Francisco-based artist **Patricia L Boyd** presents a new video work, commissioned by EMPAC. The project is grounded in Boyd's research into what she calls "the protocol of production-as-exhaustion," which acknowledges the debt (of time, vitality, and labor) that must be paid to capitalism by every living body, as well as the internal economics of self-preservation that a body must undertake to honor this debt. In light of such demands, Boyd's work depicts an "unproductive" body within a structure of "wasted" time.

The shoot, which took place over five days last spring, used a system of four moving cameras in the EMPAC Theater—two bird's-eye views moving up and down on vertical axes, and two horizontal tracking shots—to surround and relentlessly document the space in which performer Nour Mobarak took up an extended and repetitive series of gestures. Within this matrix of cameras—running in constant motion according to pre-programmed commands—the system inevitably documents itself, each camera puncturing the frame of the others and capturing the static lighting rigs and technical equipment used on-set. Mobarak's body, like all the objects represented, is passed by again and again and thereby can never become a fixed subject of the film since the system is not programmed to privilege her presence any more than the adjacent objects.

As a counterpoint to the screening, Boyd has commissioned a new piece of writing from poet **Anne Boyer**, which will be read in person at the event. The text will form part of Boyer's ongoing *On Care* series, a "meditation on the politics of care in the age of precarity," previous installments of which influenced Boyd in the making of her work.

The Following texts were selected by Patricia L Boyd

The Exhausted

Gilles Deleuze

translated by Anthony Uhlmann[1]

Exhausted is a whole lot more than tired. "It's not just tiredness, I'm not just tired, in spite of the climb."[2] The tired no longer prepares for any possibility (subjective): he therefore cannot realize the smallest possibility (objective). But possibility remains, because you never realize all of the possible, you even bring it into being as you realize some of it. The tired has only exhausted realization, while the exhausted exhausts all of the possible. The tired can no longer realize, but the exhausted can no longer possibilitate. "That the impossible should be asked of me, good, what else could be asked of me?" (*Unnamable* 70). There is no more possibility: a relentless Spinozism. Does he exhaust the possible because he is himself exhausted, or is he exhausted because he has exhausted the possible? He exhausts himself in exhausting the possible, and vice versa. He exhausts that which *is not realized* through the possible. He has had done with the possible, beyond all tiredness, "for to end yet again."[3]

God is the originary, or the ensemble of all possibility. The possible is only realized in the derivative, through tiredness, whereas you are exhausted before birth, before self-realization or realizing anything whatsoever ("I gave up before birth").[4] When you realize some of what is possible, it's in relation to certain goals, projects and preferences: I put on shoes to go out and slippers to stay in. When I speak, when I say for example, "it's daytime," the interlocutor responds, "it's possible . . .," because he is waiting to know what purpose I wish the day to serve: I'm going out because it's daytime . . .[5] Language states the possible, but in preparing it for a realization. And doubtless I can use the day to stay at home: or for that matter I can stay at home due to some other possibility ("it is night-time"). But the realization of the possible always proceeds through exclusion, because it presupposes preferences and goals that vary, forever replacing predecessors. It is these variations, these substitutions, all these exclusive disjunctions (daytime/night-time, going out/staying in...) that are tiring in the end.

Exhaustion is altogether different: you combine the set of variables of a situation, provided you renounce all order of preference and all organization of goal, all signification. It is no longer so as to go out or stay in, and you no longer make use of days and nights. You no longer realize, even though you accomplish. In shoes you stay in, in slippers you go out. That does not mean that you fall into indifferentiation, or into the celebrated identified contraries,[6] and you are not passive: you press on, but toward nothing. You were tired by something, but exhausted by nothing. The disjunctions subsist, and the distinction of terms may even be more and more crude, but the disconnected terms assert themselves through their nondecomposable distance, since all they are good for is permutation. Of an event, in general terms, it's enough to say that it is possible, since it does not happen without intermingling with nothing and abolishing the real to which it lays claim. There is only possible existence. It is night, it is not night, it is raining, it is not raining.[7] "Yes, I was my father and I was my son."[8] The disjunction has become *inclusive*, everything divides, but within itself, and God, who is the ensemble of the possible, intermingles with Nothing, of which each thing is a modification. "[S]imple games that time plays with space, now with these toys, and now with those" (*Watt*, 71). Beckett's protagonists play with the possible without realizing it; they are too involved with a possibility that is more and more restricted in kind to care about what is still happening. The permutation of "sucking stones" in *Molloy* is one of the better known texts. Even as early as *Murphy* the hero gives himself over to the combinatorial [*la combinatoire*] of five small biscuits, but on condition of having vanquished all preferential order and of having conquered in this way the 120 modes of the total permutability:

> Overcome by these perspectives Murphy fell forward on his face in the grass, beside those biscuits of which it could be said as truly as of the stars, that one differed from another, but of which he could not partake in their fullness until he had learnt not to prefer any one to any other. (*Murphy*, 57)

I would prefer not to [English in original], in the Beckettian formula of Bartleby. All of Beckett's work is pervaded by exhaustive [*exhaustives*] series, that is to say exhausting [*épuisantes*], notably *Watt*, with its series of footwear (sock—stocking, boot—shoe—slipper), or of furniture (tallboy—dressing-table—night-table—washstand, on its feet—on its head—on its face—on its back—on its side, bed—door—window—fire: fifteen thousand arrangements) (*Watt*, 200-202, 204-206).[9] *Watt* is the great serial novel, where Mr. Knott, with no other need than to be without need, does not reserve any combination for a singular use that would exclude others—whose circumstances are yet to come.

AGAINST ORDINARY LANGUAGE: THE LANGUAGE OF THE BODY

Kathy Acker

Preface Diary

I have now been bodybuilding for ten years, seriously for almost five years.

During the past few years, I have been trying to write about bodybuilding.

Having failed time and time again, upon being offered the opportunity to write this essay, I made the following plan: I would attend the gym as usual. Immediately after each workout, I would describe all I had just experienced, thought and done. Such diary descriptions would provide the raw material.

After each workout, I forgot to write. Repeatedly. I...some part of me... the part of the 'I' who bodybuilds... was rejecting language, any verbal description of the processes of bodybuilding.

I shall begin describing, writing about bodybuilding in the only way that I can: I shall begin by analyzing this rejection of ordinary or verbal

language. What is the picture of the antagonism between bodybuilding and verbal language?

A Language Which is Speechless

Imagine that you are in a foreign country. Since you are going to be in this place for some time, you are trying to learn the language. At the point of commencing to learn the new language, just before having started to understand anything, you begin forgetting your own. Within strangeness, you find yourself without a language.

It is here, in this geography of no language, this negative space, that I can start to describe bodybuilding. For I am describing that which rejects language.

Elias Canetti, who grew up within a multitude of spoken languages, began his autobiography by recounting a memory. In this, his earliest remembrance, the loss of language is threatened: "My earliest memory is dipped in red. I come out of a door on the arm of a maid, the door in front of me is red, and to the left a staircase goes down, equally red..." A smiling man walks up to the child; the child, upon request, sticks out his tongue whereupon the man flips open a jackknife and holds the sharp blade against the red tongue.

"...He says: 'Now we'll cut off his tongue.'"

At the last moment, the man pulls the knife back.

According to memory, this sequence happens every day. "That's how the day starts," Canetti adds, "and it happens very often." [1]

I am in the gym every three out of four days. What happens there? What does language in that place look like?

According to cliché, athletes are stupid. Meaning: they are inarticulate. The spoken language of bodybuilders makes this cliché real. The verbal language in the gym is minimal and almost senseless, reduced to numbers and a few nouns. "Sets", "squats", "reps",... The only verbs are "do" or "fail" adjectives and adverbs no longer exist; sentences, if they are at all, are simple.

This spoken language is kin to the "language games" Wittgenstein proposes in his *The Brown Book*. [2]

In a gym, verbal language or language whose purpose is meaning occurs, if at all, only at the edge of its becoming lost.

But when I am in the gym, my experience is that I am immersed in a complex and rich world.

What actually takes place when I bodybuild?

The crossing of the threshold from the world defined by verbal language into the gym in which the outside world is not allowed (and all of its languages) (in this sense, the gym is sacred) takes several minutes. What happens during these minutes is that I forget. Masses of swirling thought, verbalized insofar as I am conscious of them, disappear as mind or thought begins to focus.

In order to analyze this focusing, I must first describe bodybuilding in terms of intentionality.

Bodybuilding is a process, perhaps a sport, by which a person shapes her or his own body. This shaping is always related to the growth of muscular mass.

During aerobic and circuit training, the heart and lungs are exercised. But muscles will grow only if they are, not exercised or moved, but actually broken down. The general law behind bodybuilding is that muscle, if broken down in a controlled fashion and then provided with the proper growth factors such as nutrients and rest, will grow back larger than before.

In order to break down specific areas of muscles, whatever areas one wants to enlarge, it is necessary to work these areas in isolation up to failure.

Bodybuilding can be seen to be about nothing but *failure*. A bodybuilder is always working around failure. Either I work an isolated muscle mass, for instance one of the tricep heads, up to failure. In order to do this, I exert the muscle group almost until the point that it can no longer move.

But if I work the same muscle group to the point that it can no longer move, I must move it through failure. I am then doing what are named "negative reps", working the muscle group beyond its power to move. Here is the second method of working with failure.

Whatever way I chose, I always want to work my muscle, muscular group, until it can no longer move: I want to fail. As soon as I can accomplish a certain task, so much weight for so many reps during a certain time span, I must always increase one aspect of this equation, weights reps or intensity, so that I can again come to failure.

I want to break muscle so that it can grow back larger, but I do not want to destroy muscle so that growth is prevented. In order to avoid injury, I first warm up the muscular group, then carefully bring it up to failure. I do this by working the muscular group through a calculated number of sets during a calculated time span. If I tried immediately to bring a muscle group up to failure by lifting the heavist weight I could handle, I might injure myself.

I want to shock my body into growth; I do not want to hurt it.

Therefore, in bodybuilding, *failure* is always connected to counting. I calculate which weight to use; I then count off how many times I lift that weight and the seconds between each lift. This is how I control the intensity of my workout.

Intensity times movement of maximum weight equals muscular destruction (muscular growth).

Is the equation between destruction and growth also a formula for art?

Bodybuilding is about failure because bodybuilding, body growth and shaping, occurs in the face of the material, of the body's inexorable movement toward its final failure, toward death.

To break down a muscle group, I want to make that group work up to, even beyond, capacity. To do this, it helps and even is necessary to visualize the part of the body that is involved. Mind or thought, then, while bodybuilding, is always focused on number or counting and often on precise visualizations.

Certain bodybuilders have said that bodybuilding is a form of meditation.

What do I do when I bodybuild? I visualize and I count. I estimate weight; I count sets; I count repetitions; I count seconds between repetitions; I count time, seconds or minutes, between sets: From the beginning to the end of each workout, in order to maintain intensity, I must continually count.

For this reason, a bodybuilder's language is reduced to a minimal, even a closed, set of nouns and to numerical repetition, to one of the simplest of language games.

Let us name this language game, *the language of the body.*

The Richness Of The Language Of The Body

In order to examine such a language, a language game which resists ordinary language, through the lens of ordinary language or language

whose tendency is to generate syntax or to make meanings proliferate, I must use an indirect route.

In another of his books, Elias Canetti begins talking from and about that geography that is without verbal language:

> A marvelously luminous, viscid substance is left behind in me, defying words...
>
> A dream: a man who unlearns the world's languages until nowhere on earth does he understand what people are saying. [3]

Being in Marrakesh is Canetti's dream made actual. There are languages here, he says, but I understand none of them. The closer I am moving toward foreignness, into strangeness, toward understanding foreignness and strangeness, the more I am losing my own language. The small loss of language occurs when I journey to and into my own body. Is my body a foreign land to me? What is this picture of "my body" and "I"? For years, I said in the beginning of this essay, I have wanted to describe bodybuilding; whenever I tried to do so, ordinary language fled from me.

"Man," Heidegger says, "is the strangest." [4] Why? Because everywhere he or she belongs to being or to strangeness or chaos, and yet everywhere he or she attempts to carve a path through chaos:

> Everywhere man makes himself a path; he ventures into all realms of the essent, of the overpowering power, and in so doing he is flung out of all paths. [5]

The physical or material, that which is, is constantly and unpredictably changing: it is chaotic. This chaos twines around death. For it is death that rejects all of our paths, all of our meanings.

Whenever anyone bodybuilds, he or she is always trying to understand and control the physical in the face of this death. No wonder bodybuilding is centered around failure.

The antithesis between meaning and essence has often been noted. Wittgenstein at the end of the *Tractatus*:

> The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen—in it no values exist, and if they did, they'd have no value.
>
> For all that happens and is the case is accidental. [6]

If ordinary language or meanings lie outside essence, what is the position of that language game which I have named *the language of the body*? For bodybuilding (a language of the body) rejects ordinary language and yet itself constitutes a language, a method for understanding and controlling the physical which in this case is also the self.

I can now directly talk about bodybuilding. (As if speech is ever direct.)

The language game named *the language of the body* is not arbitrary. When a bodybuilder is counting, he or she is counting his or her own breath.

Canetti speaks of the beggars of Marrakesh who possess a similar and even simpler language game: they repeat the name of God.

In ordinary language, meaning is contextual. Whereas the cry of the beggar means nothing other than what it is; in the cry of the beggar, the impossible (as the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and Heidegger see it) occurs in that meaning and breath become one.

Here is the language of the body; here, perhaps, is the reason why bodybuilders experience bodybuilding as a form of meditation.

"I understood the seduction there is in a life that reduces everything to the simplest kind of repetition," [7] Canetti says. A life in which meaning and essence no longer oppose each other. A life of meditation.

"I understood what those blind beggars really are: the saints of repetition..." [8]

The Repetition Of The One: The Glimpse Into Chaos Or Essence

I am in the gym. I am beginning to work out. I either say the name "bench press", then walk over to it, or simply walk over to it. Then, I might picture the number of my first weight; I probably, since I usually begin with the same warm-up weight, just place the appropriate weights on the bar. Lifting this bar off its rests, then down to my lower chest, I count "1". I am visualizing this bar, making sure it touches my chest at the right spot, placing it back on its rests. "2". I repeat the same exact motions. "3"... After twelve repetitions, I count off thirty seconds while increasing my weights. "1".. The identical process begins again only this time I finish at "10"... All these repetitions end only when I finish my work-out.

On counting: Each number equals one inhalation and one exhalation. If I stop my counting or in any other way lose focus, I risk dropping or otherwise mishandling a weight and so damaging my body.

In this world of the continual repetition of a minimal number of elements, in this aural labyrinth, it is easy to lose one's way. When all is repetition rather than the production of meaning, every path resembles every other path.

Every day, in the gym, I repeat the same controlled gestures with the same weights, the same reps,... The same breath patterns. But now and then, wandering within the labyrinths of my body, I come upon something. Something I can know because knowledge depends on difference. An unexpected event. For though I am only repeating certain gestures during certain time spans, my body, being material, is never the same; my body is controlled by change and by chance.

For instance, yesterday, I worked chest. Usually I easily benchpress the bar plus sixty pounds for six reps. Yesterday, unexpectedly, I barely managed to lift this weight at the sixth rep. I looked for a reason. Sleep? Diet? Both were usual. Emotional or work stress? No more than usual. The weather? Not good enough. My unexpected failure at the sixth rep was allowing me to see, as if through a window, not to any outside, but inside my own body, to its workings. I was being permitted to glimpse the laws that control my body, those of change or chance, laws that are barely, if at all, knowable.

By trying to control, to shape, my body through the calculated tools and methods of bodybuilding, and time and again, in following these methods, failing to do so, I am able to meet that which cannot be finally controlled and known: the body.

In this meeting lies the fascination, if not the purpose, of bodybuilding. To come face to face with chaos, with my own failure or a form of death.

Canetti describes the architecture of a typical house in the geographical labyrinth of Marrakesh. The house's insides are cool, dark. Few, if any, windows look out into the street. For the entire construction of this house, windows, etc., is directed inward, to the central courtyard where only openness to the sun exists.

Such an architecture is a mirror of the body: When I reduce verbal language to minimal meaning, to repetition, I close the body's outer windows. Meaning approaches breath as I bodybuild, as I begin to move

through the body's labyrinths, to meet, if only for a second, that which my consciousness ordinarily cannot see. Heidegger: "The being-there of historical man means: to be posited as the breach into which the preponderant power of being bursts in its appearing, in order that this breach itself should shatter against being."[9]

In our culture, we simultaneously fetishize and disdain the athlete, a worker in the body. For we still live under the sign of Descartes. This sign is also the sign of patriarchy. As long as we continue to regard the body, that which is subject to change, chance, and death, as disgusting and inimical, so long shall we continue to regard our own selves as dangerous others.

Notes

1. Elias Canetti, *The Tongue Set Free*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1979, p.5.
2. Here and throughout the rest of this article, whenever I use the phrase "language game", I am referring to Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of language games in *The Brown Book*, (Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960).
3. Elias Canetti, *The Voices of Marrakesh*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1978, p.23.
4. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, New York: Anchor Books, 1961, p. 125. By "man", Heidegger means "human".
5. Ibid., p. 127.
6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosphicus*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1972, p. 145.
7. Canetti, *The Voices of Marrakesh*, p. 25.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
9. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 137.

But to really grasp in what way currency can take on this unique role of equivalent without ever confusing itself with the things whose value it indicates, we need to return to Sade.

Abolishing bodily ownership, of one's own body as of any other person's, is one of the perverse imagination's essential procedures. The pervert inhabits the bodies of others as his own and confers his own onto others. Which means that the "own body" is recuperated as a phantasmatic domain: it thus becomes only the equivalent of the phantasm of which it is the simulacrum.

Between the phantasm and its market valuation, currency as sign of the inestimable value of the phantasm forms an integral part of the representational mode of perversion. The pervert's phantasm is in itself unintelligible and inexchangeable; this is why denumerable currency, in its abstract character, constitutes its universally intelligible equivalent. Here we must distinguish, on the one hand the phantasmatic function of money – that is, buying or selling – in so far as currency exteriorizes and reveals the perversity between different associates; and on the other hand, the *mediating function of money*, between the closed system of anomalies and the system of institutional norms.

Money, the token of rare opulence, the sign of effort and struggle in the institutional sense, ought to signify the inversion of these riches for the profit of the perverse phantasm: if the phantasm demands an expenditure *specified in denumerated currency*, that currency will manifest the equivalence of the phantasm, thus concretized, with as much opulence as the buying-power of the currency represents. Thus so much effort, so much striving, is frustrated at the outset. Money, the equivalent for opulence, signifies thereby the destruction of that opulence, *while preserving its worth*: just as language, the sign of what exists (in so far as having a meaning), becomes in the style of Sade the sign of the non-existent, even simply of the possible (deprived of meaning with respect to the institutional norms of language). Money, at the same time that it represents and guarantees what exists, becomes just as much the sign of *what doesn't exist*, of the phantasm, which the transgression of norms, in total monstrosity, represents as the progressive conquest of the non-existent: that is, the possible.

The act of transgressing existent norms in the name of an always non-existent possibility, suggested by the phantasm, is immanently represented by the very nature of an abstract currency: in the freedom to select or reject this or that good among others that exist. In the option to select or reject, the transgressive act indicts the value of what exists in favor of what does not. That which *does not exist* in the language of norms – negatively enunciated anomalies – enunciates itself positively by *a reserve of currency not expended, thereby withheld from that which exists*. The closed system of perversion, by means of currency, sanctions *the very incommunicability between beings*; and that is the only intelligible way in which the system of anomalies positively reacts to the system of norms. To make itself understood to the institutional world, total monstrosity borrows from it the abstract sign of exchangeable goods. Which comes down to affirming that there is only one authentic and universal communication: *the exchange of bodies through the secret language of bodily signs*. The argument [made by Sade] is more or less the following: institutions presume to safeguard personal liberty, thus the integrality of persons, by substituting for the exchange of bodies the exchange of goods in accordance with the neutral, and therefore equivocal, sign of a countable currency; but, under the guise of circulating wealth, that countable currency covertly ensures the exchange of bodies in the name and interest of institutions. The disavowal of total monstrosity by *institutions returns as a de facto prostitution, material and moral*. And the entire point of the secret societies imagined by Sade is to make this dilemma manifest: either *the communication of beings by the exchange of their bodies* – or *prostitution under the sign of countable currency*. In relation to the exterior, the candidates for total monstrosity can only assert themselves, morally, by the language of logic, and, materially, by currency. Morally, they recruit accomplices among normal beings; materially, they hire their experimental victims at the highest rate and thereby compete with the rate that institutions grant for a survival below the "normal."

In the closed system of total monstrosity, *the phantasm, not evaluable in itself*, ungraspable, useless and arbitrary, *once it passes the level of corporeal prestige, constitutes itself as a scarcity*: already here we witness the rise of the modern commodification of arousal, with the slight difference that industrial exploitation will be able to standardize the low price of suggestion, and thereby to render priceless the living object of emotion, while in the time of Sade, an epoch still shaped by manufacturing, *suggestion and the living object of emotion merge*. In the closed circuit of Sadean monstrosity, the living simulacrum of the phantasm is price-less: the statutes of the Society of the Friends of Crime stipulate that the society receive as members only those "worth at least 25 thousand pounds in rents, given that the annual expenses come to ten thousand francs per person." Beyond this condition, no discrimination by rank or birth is permitted. Instead, "twenty artists or men of letters will be accepted at the modest price of one thousand pounds per year. The Society, as a patron of the arts, awards them this deference; it only regrets that its means do not permit it to admit at this mediocre price a much larger number of the sort of men it will always hold in the highest esteem."

Ultimately, it's the man of letters [Sade] who furnishes the substance of this society he imagines; the Society of the Friends of Crime is above all that of his own readers; therefore, as Sade conceives it, a space of spirits; that is, a secret society only justifying itself on a spiritual level. But this spiritual level emerges from the manufacture of the simulacrum; the manufacturer of simulacra relies on the demand of a clientele; the presence of the artist or writer in the Society of the Friends of Crime indicates here the role of the creator within society in general, and this role is closely linked to the problem of the production of goods and of their value in the economic circuit, and, in particular, linked to the manufacture of objects related to psychic life (in itself not evaluable). As the clients increasingly run up against the constraint of their own phantasm, the offer of a corresponding simulacrum increases in price. According to Sade, the Society of the Friends of Crime shamefully exploits the manufacturer of simulacra: it presumes "to pride itself" on his inventions, but declares itself incapable of paying him in an equitable fashion. A similar disproportion is inscribed in the very nature of the enterprise: the more the phantasm demands the simulacrum, the better the simulacrum acts and reacts on the phantasm, the more it elaborates the phantasm, the more steeply the phantasm rises in price – and takes on the *serious* aspect of everything that requires expenditure.

Now, the very representation of venality becomes an increased valorization of the phantasm: not at all from the fact that poverty drives people to sell themselves, but exactly the opposite: that their own wealth obliges them to. So in *The New Justine*, Verneuil registers in d'Esterval an anatomical singularity that guarantees a lecherous propensity, invaluable in his eyes. But he does not wish to deliver himself to this promising experiment unless his partner consents to be paid: to be objectified by having her price set, which induces an immediate orgasm. Numerated sums of currency exercise here an evident function of *transubstantiation* – with no other utility than this very function: thus, a purely ludic transaction. And so Juliette variously rates the charms that make up her body, when she is not or is no longer a professional courtesan, but a settled woman, a widow (by choice) of the count of Lorsange, thus an adventuress in moral corruption – all this comes into the subtlety of the phantasm that Juliette devotes herself to concretizing. And yet the fortune accumulated in this way drives Juliette to an endlessly renewed expropriation of her body; she remains always below the phantasm and her sole satisfaction is to have never lessened human poverty by even a farthing. And this because Juliette, in effect, herself represents human poverty. How to assess in countable currency the inassessable phantasm? Whence its value in denumerable currency if not from the privation it simultaneously signifies?

Supreme degree of *appraisal*: the equivalent of the phantasm (the payed-out sum) represents not only emotion in itself, but also *the exclusion* of thousands of human lives. The value increases even further from this scandal, from the herd's point of view.

Thus money expended in this way signifies: *exclusive arousal* = *famine* = *annihilation* = supreme value of the phantasm. In other words: the more *this money represents thousands of mouths*, the more it upholds *the value of the expropriated body*: the more *this very body represents the value of thousands of human lives*; so: *a phantasm = an entire population*. If the misappropriation [détournement] didn't exist, if there wasn't the *weight* of *poverty*, this *appraisal would immediately disappear into the void*. Thus there must be on one hand the positive signification of money insofar as it represents the equivalent of uncountable human lives; and on the other, its negative signification insofar as it arbitrarily compensates *the insignificance* of a phantasm: now, this very destination for money is in itself arbitrary, because the value of money itself is always arbitrary: *in itself, it is nothing but a phantasm corresponding to a phantasm*.

Henceforth the precarious position of the artist or man of letters (of the fabricator of simulacra) within the Society of the Friends of Crime is absolutely clear and comprehensible; the fabricator of simulacra includes himself as an intermediary between two different systems of appraisal. On one side, he represents the intrinsic value of the fabricated simulacrum in accordance with institutional norms, which are those of sublimation. On the other, he is in the service of the valorization of the phantasm in accordance with the obsessive constraint of perversion. On both sides, the fabricator of simulacra is honored for his spiritual disinterestedness and treated practically as a purveyor/supplier. Such is the personal position of Sade, the day after the Revolution. No one can serve two masters. But on either side is only the same master, who hides himself behind institutions: in the Society of the Friends of Crime, he shows himself in his true colors. This master is yet again total monstrosity: and *the denominations of currency*, the shameful mark of his own wealth, becomes the mark of his glory in the Society of the Friends of Crime. It's by way of the

currency expended for the phantasm that the clandestine society imagined by Sade holds the world of institutional sublimations for ransom. Do away with countable currency and you will have universal communication between beings. By this sort of dare, Sade demonstrates precisely that the notion of value and of price is inscribed on the very plinth of arousal, and that nothing is more contrary to enjoyment than free-dom [gratuité].

*

Living Currency

Imagine, for a moment, an apparently impossible regression – to a phase in industrial production where producers are able to demand objects of sensation, as a form of payment, from consumers. These objects would be living beings.

According to this example, based on bartering, producers and consumers would constitute collections of "persons" apparently destined for pleasure, emotion, sensation. How can the human "person" fulfill the function of currency? How would producers pay themselves "*with* women" instead of paying "*for* women"? How would entrepreneurs or industrialists pay their engineers or workers in this way, "with women"? Who would manage this living currency? Other women. Which assumes the inverse: working women would be paid "in boys." Who would manage, that is, sustain, this virile currency? Those who use the feminine currency. What we are describing here, in fact, already exists. Without relying on a literal barter economy, all modern industry is founded on bartering mediated by the sign of inert currency, which neutralizes the nature of the objects exchanged. This simulacrum of bartering exists in the guise of available labor, a living currency disavowed as such.

If the perfecting of the production of instruments of production results in a reduction of labor, and if the time saved in producing saved time means more time available to sensation, to competitions of pleasure (Fourier), then sensation itself would have a value. But the simulacrum of bartering (created first by the monetary system and then by the conditions of industrial society) insists that time is only to be saved for further production.

Paying the worker in living objects of sensation instead of wages in currency is only practical if the living object itself is evaluated as a quantity of work and its material existence already assured. As soon as it is accounted for, possession of a living object or objects becomes, for the worker, purely symbolic and thus convertible into currency. In order for an object of sensation to be worth a quantity of work, this (living) object must, from the outset, already constitute a value equal to if not greater than the product of work. There is no common measure between the sensation that this living object might elicit by itself and the quantity of work provided in exchange for the resources required to maintain it. What is the relationship between the value of a tool, of a plot of land valued according to its probable yield, and the price attributed to the existence of a living being, source of a rare emotion? None, if the unique living object, source of emotion, is not fortunate enough to have the rare quality of being worth more than the cost of sustaining it.

A tool yields a certain amount; the living object elicits a certain emotion. The value of the tool should compensate for the cost of its maintenance; the value of a living object, source of emotion, is arbitrarily fixed, such that the cost of sustaining it can never be deduced from this value. Some will protest that we are reducing the living object, source of emotion, to the level of the stud farm, or comparing it to a work of art, or simply a diamond. Because we're talking about an emotion that is sufficient unto itself, inseparable from the fortuitous and useless existence of an object that is now "cashable," and for this reason appreciated arbitrarily.

In order for the living object, singular source of emotion, to prevail as currency, we assume that a universal state of mind would have to take hold, this state being expressed in the form of uncontested practices and customs. Is this to say that we would need as large a quantity of living objects as there is inert currency in circulation? Not if such customs meant the very disappearance of monetary practice. But even as a market parallel to that of inert currency, living currency would be liable to substitute its role for that of the gold standard, habitually implanted and institutionalized within economic norms. Furthermore, these customs would profoundly modify exchanges and their meaning. Rare, inert objects – works of art, for example – are never modified through their exchange. But a living object, source of voluptuous sensations, would either be a currency that suppresses the neutralizing functions of money, or else it would found exchange value upon the emotion it elicits.

Gold – whose arbitrary value and particular inutility are the seemingly universal metaphor for any emotion procured within a luxurious environment – is a regime as inhuman as it is practical. Standards of value measured in quantities of work, while apparently more "legitimate" from an economic point of view, continue to retain a punitive character. Considered from the angle of exchange, the living object, source of emotion, is worth its own maintenance costs. The effort or sacrifices undertaken by its obsessed owner represent the price of this rare and useless object. No number would be able to express this demand. But before even considering the living object as an exchangeable good, we must examine it as currency. If, in so far as it is living, the object must represent a certain amount expressed in wages, it must also be fixed as a standard (although at first sight, barter in kind would forestall the possibility of buying inferior goods, if these are goods we can't do without). Under modern economic conditions, however, there is an increasing disproportion between the notions of quantity of work (considered as standard of value) and the living object as a form of currency.

If any tool whatsoever represents invested capital, then all the more so, in a domain supposedly outside commerce, for an object of sensation. A human creature representing a possible source of emotion can also become, on the basis of this possibility, the object of an investment. In the commercial sphere, it's not the creature itself that counts but the emotion that it elicits in potential consumers. A false and also banal example that will allow us to make this understood: the movie star, who represents nothing but a factor of production. When the newspapers, the day after her tragic death, set about adding up the visual qualities of Sharon Tate in terms of dollars, or calculate the management costs or expenses of any other woman on screen, industrialism itself is expressing the source of emotion in numbers, in terms of profitability or management costs, thus quantitatively. This is only possible because these ladies are not designated as "living currency" but treated as industrial slaves. And on that account, they are regarded neither as actresses nor as celebrities nor even as illustrious people. If what we are here calling the industrial slave – an abstraction including all the disadvantages this sort of institution entails – were valued not only as capital but as living currency, she would assume the quality of a sign of value while at the same time integrally constituting value, the quality of the goods corresponding to the "immediate" satisfaction, not of a need but of the initial perversion.

As "living currency," the industrial slave is at once a sign of wealth and wealth itself. As a sign, she is exchangeable for all other kinds of material wealth; as wealth itself, she excludes all other demands besides those whose satisfaction she represents. But satisfaction, properly speaking, is also what her quality as sign excludes. This is how living currency differs in an essential way from the condition of the industrial slave (movie star, advertising model, waitress, etc.) The industrial slave can only claim the title of sign by creating a difference between what she agrees to receive, in inert currency, and what she believes herself to be worth.

This explicit difference, which derives (here, as elsewhere) from morality, nevertheless only serves to mask a fundamental confusion. One wouldn't dream of defining this category of producers as "slaves," since the term "slave" expresses only an *availability* to a demand which underlies *limited* needs. Separated from the living object, which is its source, and turned into a "factor of production," emotion is dispersed between multiple fabricated objects which divert the unspeakable demand through a limited set of needs: this is how it is rendered valueless within "serious" labor conditions. In this way, the industrial slave is *available* only in the same way as any other workforce, since, far from constituting herself as a sign, as currency, she must be paid for "honestly" in inert currency. As soon as she is free to accept her wages or not, the term "slave" becomes excessive, misplaced and insulting. Human dignity remains unscathed and money retains all its value. This is to say that the possibility of choice implied by the abstract function of money means that evaluation will never compromise the integrity of the person, because it applies only to her productive yield, in an "impartial" way which ensures the neutrality of the object. But this is a vicious circle, since the industrial logic can only conceive the integrity of the person in and through its yield, evaluated in terms of currency.

From the moment the bodily presence of the industrial slave is systematically collapsed with the surplus value she can produce – her physiognomy being inseparable from her work – any distinction between the person and her activity becomes false. Bodily presence is already a commodity, independently and *in excess of* the commodities this presence is involved with producing. Either the industrial slave enforces a strict calculation between bodily presence and money earned, or else she substitutes herself for the function of money, since she is already money herself, at once equivalent to wealth and wealth itself.

(1970)

STAFF

Geoff Abbas / Director for Stage Technologies
Eric Ameres / Senior Research Engineer
Argeo Ascani / Curator, Music
Eileen Baumgartner / Graphic Designer
David Bebb / Senior Network Administrator
Peter Bellamy / Senior Systems Administrator
Michael Bello / Video Engineer
Victoria Brooks / Curator, Time-Based Visual Arts
Eric Brucker / Lead Video Engineer
Michele Cassaro / Guest Services Coordinator
John Cook / Box Office Manager
David DeLaRosa / Desktop Support Analyst
Zhenelle Falk / Artist Services Administrator
Ashley Ferro-Murray / Associate Curator, Theater & Dance
Kimberly Gardner / Manager, Administrative Operations
Johannes Goebel / Director
Ian Hamelin / Project Manager
Ryan Jenkins / Senior Event Technician
Shannon Johnson / Design Director
Carl Lewandowski / Production Technician
Eric Chi-Yeh Lin / Lead Stage Technician
Stephen McLaughlin / Senior Event Technician
Josh Potter / Marketing and Communications Manager
Alena Samoray / Event Technician
Candice Sherman / Senior Business Administrator
Avery Stempel / Front of House Manager
Kim Strosahl / Production Coordinator
Jeffrey Svatek / Audio Engineer
Dan Swalec / Master Electrician
Todd Vos / Lead Audio Engineer
Michael Wells / Production Technician