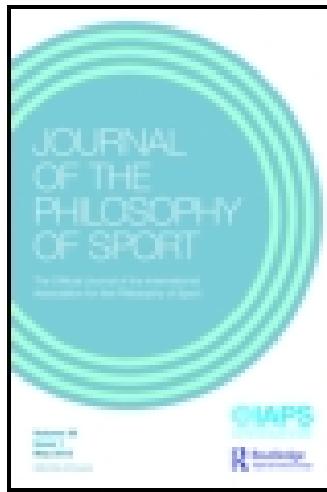


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Orchids and Muscles

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The Body Builders

A cult, certainly, rather than an enterprise—that of *mens sana in corpore sano*—that culture can know and integrate. A cult that has its clandestine repairs, its passwords, its initiations, its legends, its rituals, its undeciphered codes. The alerted eye can spot them in the crowds, not, like punks, by the tribal garb and arcane jewelry, but rather by the way neither work nor leisure garb fits their bodies, by the strained fabrics, the pulled seams. If they wear jewelry, they most often do not wear them as embellishments or citations, but as amulets. Sports-wear and beachwear, designer conceived for voyeurist eroticism, pulled tight over their loins like chastity belts. In the bus stations and sidewalks, in the midst of the streams of the busy and the preoccupied, space warps and strains about them, as though lacking the gravity these sprung arms and plowshare thighs are made to furrow. The civilized head that looks at them is deviated; it wonders not where they are going, but where you can get with them.

The erotic eye, that which scouts the erotogenic terrain in the body of another—not the rolling surfaces of taut cutaneous membrane, but the spongy zone of susceptibility just beneath and the mucous membrane of orifices—is disconcerted to run into packed thongs of drawn muscle. Not muscle that answers to the ungendered resistance of tools and implements, but specifically male and specifically female muscle alignments. One cannot resist feeling the very hardness of these muscles to be the badgering of the glands of lust. Whole anatomies pumped like priapic erections, contracting poses and shifting with held violence from one pose to the next with the vaginal contractions of labor pains. Flaunting in the nose of an antiseptic consumer public leathery rutting odors, gleaming with oils that deviate the hold the inspecting eye fixes on these bodies into the sliding suctions of octopus eros.

Their codes are undeciphered; one does not understand the programming, or the decision process that assigns them their hours in cellars full of iron millstones and rudimentary machines. The process that elaborates, selects, and distributes the programming is not in the control rooms of culture nor even in the

science of coaches and trainers; it is rigged up in their own taciturn and superstitious skulls. The unguarded, unwary eyes with which they walk in the frenetic halls of stock exchanges or in the night of urban jungles do not seem practiced in the predatory uses of the sense organs perfected by the millenia of hunters whose genes we inherit; and, unlike the surveillance a miller maintains on the ox or the waterwheel that turns the millstone, their eyes unfocused on their unrotating wheels of iron seem rather to watch the inward spread of monotonous fatigue and seeping pain. Their arms that handle but poles without fulcrum and wheels that grind nothing are uneconomic, detaching or transforming nothing from the raw or recycled materials of nature and industry. In their handshake we feel no understanding; we feel an index-tuous hand that is not held to the equipment of our culture. Like kundalini yogis forcing the semen flow back upstream and upward, they detach the few implements they use from the instrumental complex of civilization, detaching themselves from these very implements even as they fit themselves into them, forcing the power and the mass back upstream, from clenched fist toward drummed vortex of the solar plexus.

The Civilizing of the Body

Natural evolution elaborated the neurological and physiological potentials in the human primate that made culture—implements, language, social institutions—possible. But *Homo sapiens* is a domesticated species, whose nature is civilized. What has civilization done to the biological nature of this primate? Paleontologist Leroi-Gourhan (4) distinguishes four stages in the technological history of our species that have decisively evolved our biological nature. The first stage is that of the use of tools—cutters, choppers, and grinders. The baboons, as all earthbound mammals, advance into the world snout-first; it is with their teeth that they maneuver their way. The human primate puts chipped stones in his front legs to cut, to chop, and to grind. He exteriorizes the functions of his teeth and powers them with what now become hands. He transforms himself biologically into an upright animal feeling his way with his hands, lifting his eyes to survey the distances. At the same time the senses of his nose and the power of his teeth begin their atrophy. The exteriorized teeth, the chipped stones, still have to be maneuvered with muscle power.

The next species-decisive stage will be the harnessing of exterior motor power, that of animals, water, and wind, to drive his implements for him. The primacy of the sense of the vision that surveys will be definitively enhanced—even in his sexuality, Freud hypostasized, now unseasonal, for not primarily excited by menstrual odors but by the visually exposed genitals of the upright ape. At the same time his hide thins into skin and his muscles begin their atrophy. But the wind, water, and draft animals that operate his implements—instead of his own hands—still require his surveillance. The next species-decisive stage will be the invention of machines—contrivances that start and stop, control, and, more and more, correct their operations.

This stage begins with the invention of the mechanical clock. Its new virtue, by comparison with the hourglass and clepsidra, is that it recycles itself, and can trigger other movements. The first clockmakers of Europe immediately set

out to construct clocks that filled towers and, as they struck the hour, opened doors from which the three kings and the four horsemen of the apocalypse advanced and gesticulated, while the cathedral clarion tolled above without a belli-ringer. Mechanisms now liberate humans from their surveillance—and the attention span of machine-age humans begins its atrophy. Television viewers, their fingers on channel-change knobs, today look with incomprehension at Guatema-lan Indians whose attention may be held on the patterns of a loom for hours on end. Still, the surveillance mechanisms have to be programmed by the neurolog-ical circuitry of the human brain.

Today our technological civilization has entered into a cybernetics revolution—which is also a new stage of our biological evolution. Computers hence-forth assemble and evaluate the data, and make the decisions. The faculty of memory, reason, and decision evolved in our nature through the history of our civilization now begins its atrophy. The film *The Terminator* is set a generation from now, when the master computers deciding the racing of the military-in-dustrial complex now determine the use of all resources and of the human spe-cies. A band of guerrilla resistors, led by John O'Connor, is waging operations of sabotage against the cybernetic police. The master computers select the Ter-minator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) to be time-projected back into the 20th centu-ry with a mission to terminate the life of Sarah O'Connor, John O'Connor's mother, and thus ensure that the guerrilla leader will never be born. The human species has, with the next evolution of its technological civilization, undergone regression back into manpower, and the film plots its retrogressive abortion as a biological species endowed with initiative.

This film is in fact no science fiction fantasy; today the stockpiling of weapons of extinction is the most important sector of our industry, and its exponential advance is already programmed by internal feedback circuitry. This 40-year-old industry has already stockpiled nuclear weapons enough to detonate a Hiroshima-size thermonuclear bomb over a city of our civilization every day for the next 3,500 years. The equivalent of the annual production of the poorest fifth of toiling humankind is now devoted to weapons—the total productive ener-gy of one human being employed to fabricate weapons to exterminate the other four. Certainly not our fellow citizens, but not their political leaders either, are in control of the military industry; our Secretary of Defense awaits the data elec-tronically satellite-espionage from the Soviet Union to be processed by the Pen-tagon computers, and they will make the decisions as to what new weapons our technology must fabricate; the Soviet Presidium similarly only relays the decisions.

We have already evolved into pure spectators, the mouse folk Kafka im-agined, with huge eyes feeding into massive brains, floating in the air, with minus-cule, atrophied limbs dangling. Or rather, our sight disconnected from any deci-sion or motor functions, its content determined by the image industry pro-gramming, hoisted into the space of visibility on the massive trunks of cyber-netic forests—our bulbous and succulent organisms biologically evolving, Leroi-Gourhan says, into orchids. Organisms with atrophied trunks and limbs, para-sitically clinging on the rising trunks that shut out the sun, flowering their huge showy sex organs, awaiting the bees for their orgasmic unions. But is not the glorification of our primary and secondary sexual splendors—the orchid-woman flower-ing against the hood of the Mercedes, the orchid-man flowering under the

sky-diver parachute—also destined to lose their biological relevance and atrophy, in the measure that the flickering computer chips of biological engineering, and not our physiological ostentations, will decide which genes will be reproduced?

Every great epoch of culture, Nietzsche wrote, is not only an epoch in humankind's cultivating of nature—transforming of nature's resources in accordance with its own idea—it is also an epoch in the history of humankind's cultivation of its own nature—transforming its own nature in accordance with its ideal. Every great culture, marked by distinctive intellectual, artistic, and moral productions, has also set up a distinctive icon of bodily perfection. The physical ideal of the yogi, the lion-maned moran of the African savannah, of the serpent-plumed Mayas, of the Olympians of the age of Pericles, of the samurai, of the baris knights of Bali—each great center of culture has set up the corrals, perfected the breeding and training methods, ordered the subjugations and the testings for its own body ideal. In the new institutions specific to modern western society—barracks, factories, public schools, prisons, hospitals, asylums—Foucault identified the specifically modern ideal of the *disciplined body*.

All these ideal bodies have now become obsolete. Yukio Mishima (5) remarked on the anomaly of the cult of body building (it appeared in Japan only after the defeat of the Second World War—the last samurai fantasy) that it is pointless in a Japan where massive musculature is without employ in high-tech industry and in a nation whose constitution forbids any remilitarization. It is, indeed, irrelevant across our planet without such constitutions, where the next war will be won or lost (more exactly, reciprocally lost) by fingers pushing buttons, and where in the hour it will last there will be no occasion for ingenious strategic plans, skillful tactics, heroic feats of endurance, or nonparticipation.

The Cause, the Adventure, the Corrida

There is a pervasive resentment of the exhibitionism of body builders. It is not a resentment of physical exhibitionism; human nature in our epoch is cultivated especially by means of the glorification of athletes, female nudity, and feats of physical bravado.

A cause wins with the athlete—the school, the French nationalized automotive industry, the nation state, the free market world. In the team instincts of football players, the tailgaters read the name of a brand of beer that is on their own gregarious chests too; in the personal engineering of mountain climbers, the telespectators read the name of a multinational corporation in which they are programmed stockholders; in the single-mindedness of boxers they read the ruling finality of one of those multicorporation consortiums with a world market in view called nations. The bodies of athletes are causes. They are also feedback loops in the marketing industry. Achievement comes from the computer-revealed genetic potential, individually computerized diet and training, drugs and publicity and marketing. The purely abstract, formal, numerical, causes of their competitions feed into the causes of the rising and falling stocks of multinational enterprises.

At Penn State, Ken Graves attends a body-building meet at the local high school; he reports that not even the high school kids were there, only the body

builders, their siblings, and their spouses. The amateurs Ken Graves is interested in have no patrons, and train and go to exhibitions at their own expense, which the trophy the top one of the class will receive will not reimburse; even the world-class professionals can earn extra dividends as ad layout models only for barbell companies and vitamin supplement products bought by the other body builders.

Ken Grave's camera encounters them pumping and oiling themselves in the dilapidated movie theaters of small towns, in locker rooms covered with graffiti and in classrooms whose blackboards are covered with musical scales and high school geometry formulas. Indeed the public imagination depicts them as fixated adolescents in high school locker rooms after hours. In the absence of a public cause before them and before us, the public mind can only rummage around for psychological causes producing these cases—distorted father figure, antisocial underworld instincts sublimated by fear of the police, fixated libidinal compulsions. One sees them narcissistically pumping themselves into ostentatious sex symbols—but symbols the sexually liberated public recognizes as the obsolete figure of virile protector, who was also phallograt and wife beater. When the mind finds itself seduced to look where there is no cause written, it turns away in resentment.

What is she trying to prove, that women who has gotten herself hung up on a centimeter here and a centimeter there on her calves and neck? The image industry of our time instead glorifies the exhibitionism of the unathletic female, but not male, body. The nudity of the male athlete is a locker room nudity before or after the competition, just the time to buy or sell a Marlboro. The nudity of the male nonathlete is that justified baring of the arms to operate machinery, baring of the legs for speed, stripping for underwater welding. The precision tooling gives the male body seriousness and seemliness; the axis of bravery can give it nobility. Without the gearing-into the tool—or without a vision of bravery at grips with death—the unathletic male nudity is ridiculous.

But the female anatomy verges on the ridiculous too, as our advertising, our high art, and our pornography know; it has to be relayed with stage props—be they reduced to the minimum, as in Nô theater, to high-heeled shoes, a garter, atmosphere spread with vaseline on the camera lens, or, as Marilyn Monroe said, perfume. With the props the female anatomy is exhibited in a theater where acts, be that of lying there indolent and fatuous, have consequences and weave a plot. The theater of adventure is a space maintained alongside the politico-economic fields of our enterprises.

Maleness is exhibited in an enterprise, where the causes that produce results are also the causes of our industrious and mercantile zones; femaleness is denuded in a theater, where the causes are aleatory and the chain of consequences an adventure. Secretively, clouded with gauzy sunlight, or brazenly, in front of a cast-off nurse's uniform, the female nudity is a cause in the plot of an adventure that justifies it. The voyeur, crouched behind his telescope lined up with the windows of the building opposite, or crouched before his videoscreen, thinks not of blueprints, data, and will power, but dreams of luck and white magic, believes the chemistry of alchemical legends, the chance encounters by which an ineluctable destiny in the time of horoscopes is deciphered. He fiercely resents those women who, rebuilding their bodies out of muscle, are ruining the anatomy of the central character required for the theater of adventure.

But what about the corrida? No woman spread-eagled in a stripshow is as brazenly exhibited as the matador in the corrida. His body and his blood are exalted in a monstrance of scarlet velvets, spun-silver lace, and jewels over against the black fury of the bull. Insolence flaunts his torso, contempt splays his thighs, flash-fires of foolhardy intelligence crackle across his tensed and cynical posturings, his testicles and penis jeweled in the codpiece and provocatively exposed to the lusts of the crowds. It is, Hemingway (3) says, not gladiatorial spectacle, but tragic theater. It also became this only in our time. Only a century ago did the corrida change from being an activity of aristocrats for the sake of killing bulls into a theater for the extreme glorification of the torero, whose splendor blazes not in the ecstatic love of killing (the love of killing, and consequently the gift for it, Hemingway reports, all but obsolete in the legendary matadors of our time), but in the sovereign power to lead the raging horns of the doomed bull to his own brandished torso and to a torrent of blood and death at his feet.

Hemingway misleads us to think of it not as Roman gladiatorial spectacle but Greek tragic theater. Greek tragic theater is not a theater for the exhibition of deeds, but for the ineluctable revelation of a concealed truth. The death of the hero is decided by a destiny that the spectators are induced to grasp with a higher intelligence, which the insertion of the individual into a cosmic order or providence or political cause made possible. In the corrida it is not the death of the torero but that of the bull that is plotted, in the third act, within 15 minutes of the opening of the gates. The facts are that all the toreros do get gored, but most die of syphilis or tuberculosis. The death present in this Black Mass is not a sacrificial death; it is not the Orphic death of a god by which his power will pass into the cosmic order; it is not the intelligible exposition of death in nature where the dying of one organism is its redistribution into others; it is not a cultural death where a dynasty, an age, a revolution triumphs through or perishes with the death of the tragic hero.

Here there is not a solitary life that confronts its place in a revolution, a kingdom of God, or the cosmic order; there is an animality in which nothing is visible but a condensation of the ferocity of nature, a single-minded and brave, unretreating rage that drives the bull to his death, but which has made of the organization of life in him the most powerful in nature. The corrida then is not a theater with a plot of interactions to be intelligibly grasped, nor a truth to be deduced from events, nor a confused spectacle to be understood in narrative order, with beginning, middle, and end; it is a ritual of atavist nature, in the time of repetition, the time of In the Beginning.

What is true is that it is the inner force that calls forth death that here is revealed as what the male body is made of. This force is the dark blood of nobility that swells the phallic anatomy. All the minor arts of costume and jewelry, or choreographed mannerisms and manicuring, all the flattering cultivation of patronage and the priming of critics with gifts, which would make an athlete fall to the ridiculous, do not tarnish but set off the dark light of nobility in his exposed carnality. The ritual of the torero is made of precise and complex and instantaneously discharged intelligence, to be sure, and neurological precision, and the impeccable taste breeding and not training can produce, and the unwavering force of valor. All this visibly is inscribed on, is sustained by, or produces an

epiphany of arrogant and fateful phallic sexuality. It is virility erected in splendor at the brink of raging death.

What our culture's mind can understand is a *virile body*, a body whereby virility is virtue, the primary virtue of courage. Socrates at his trial, at which the virtue or aberrancy of his pedagogical enterprise was to be defended, instead spoke of his courage in battle, which all his fellow citizens knew. Aristotle was to explain further, when in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1) he put courage first in the list of virtues, that courage is the transcendental virtue, the condition for the possibility of all the others; without courage neither honesty nor magnanimity nor service nor even wit in conversation are possible.

But all courage, the courage to endure physical pain as well as the courage required to make decisions, is but a ramification of the courage in the face of death. It is through the power to hold one's own posture as the ground gives way beneath one that every power to take a stand is derived. Is it not the dim sense that all the causes and works of civilization are so many ideals or idols set up to defy death, that the virtues of laborers and of athletes, inasmuch as they are ways of holding firm when pain assaults and when the support of the others gives way, are derivative of the power to withstand the confrontation with death, that saves us from seeing a ridiculous anatomy under the glory we flood on their bodies? Is not the corrida a ritual in which this dim intuition is maintained in the midst of our laborious culture that produces only comfort and security?

There is then perhaps in our resentment of them a dim sense that the cult of the body builders desecrates the ritual structure with which we maintain dignity in and conjure ridicule from our physical nature. The public does not see in body builders ferocious and destructive brutes that offend its sacralization of civilization—they are known to use their massive power as guardians of bourgeois property, taking jobs, typically, as night watchmen and bouncers in night clubs where the rich idle, and are suspected of being steroid-pumped eunuchs from whom the debutants have nothing to fear. But the resentful senses in them a virility insulated from death. Years of training that lead to no corrida, only to the footlights of a high school stage.

Rather than a brave contest with death, a sentimental fantasy of immortality on glossy photographs, fetishized into the metal figures of trophies. The duelling scars obligatory in German university students of the last century confirmed the nobility of their caste; the steel of the body-builder's equipment is nothing but inertia, exorcised of the death that forged the saber. There is a feeling at large that the musculature gained in work and in rule-governed contests, the bodies of construction workers, deep-sea divers, and boxers, is virile and virtuous; the musculature built in the rituals of the body-builder's cult grotesque.

The hands of the body builders do not contend with the inertia of implements or weapons, but rise to unfold in the sunlight or fold to frame their great swollen bosoms; beneath their wasp waists their legs pirouette; Arnold Schwarzenegger studied in a ballet studio how to walk with the grace of a prima donna. The discomfort so voiced today before the new breed of women body builders makes rise to the surface the vision of the hermaphrodite that one meant when one called the excessive anatomy of the male body builders grotesque. Psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, after viewing the film *Commando*, spoke of how ex-

plicit this has now become, Arnold Schwarzenegger in happy domesticity, tender, caring, feeding his child—no mention of a woman that would have given birth to this child or of what had become of her. The body builder does not only stand in phallic hardness; he or she also moves rhythmically with the tensed violence of labor pains.

Is it not true that this body is not ennobled with the contention of power with death within it because it is oriented in the other direction—toward the fatality of genetic potential it is grappling with, toward birth? Bringing the dead weight of the steel within his/her muscles, the body builder brings himself/herself ever closer to that limit determined by birth. One's genes harbor another death, an inner death; as soon as we are born we are old enough to die, says an ancient wisdom. In pushing back to the genetic coding of the genus, one pushes one's way to the death sentence written in the individual by the immortality of the genetic formula.

The living organism, Freud taught, discharges its forces to ward off the death exterior to it only in order to seek its own death, its own advance to the death that is its own. The courage that forces one into this internal death, this death that is one's own, is the very courage with which one is born. Freud was only thinking that every living organism has a life span that is indistinguishable from its definition as a species, even though its life forces are so many resistances to the death-dealing blows that fall upon it from without; the sequoias are not killed by the lightning that strikes them every year and burns our their cores; the seed was programmed to live for 2,000 years, and then to die.

But the body builder tears down, muscle system by muscle system, all the strength in his/her fibers and cells against the death of the steel, and he/she knows that the hard will that takes him/her all the way to the limits of his/her exhaustion is the very movement by which power, and new, greater, power is born. His/her work, and feats, are nothing but labor pains; and he/she knows what is genetically coded to be born in him/her only in knowing the time and the effort it takes to leave all his/her force on the dead inertia of the steel. There is then in the force with which the body builder assumes all that is and could have been born in him/her also a courage and a splendor—even if, viewed from the outside, it appears as the monstrous excrescence of maternity in the virile figure of power.

The Surfacing of Splendor

Monstrous—that is, not only the anomalous and the gigantic, but the ostentatious (*monster, monstrare*). This anomalous, gigantic, and ostentatious figure would be the way the cult overcomes derision before the evolution of the human anatomy reduced to nature. Is not the conviction that our anatomy, ridiculous by nature, has to serve as the material for art coextensive with all civilization?

The civilization our species has launched and pursued to relay its evolution appears in nature not only as the exteriorization of the powers in our organs but also as the exteriorization of the splendors in the periodicity of our impulses. Leroi-Gourhan (4) divines that the first art is the most inward—an artistry done on one's visceral core in the yoga of Mohenjodaro and Harappa 4,000 years ago, an artistry that condensed chant or invocation into a mantra which is sound-

ed only inwardly, which concentrated the periodic motility of the body into the scanned rhythms of the circulation of air and blood and semen. The compulsion for ordering the circulation of men and goods in outer, public space, which Freud found contemporary with the first beginnings of civilization, and which he attributed to the compulsion of the principle of economy, we would rather see to be an exteriorization of the sense of inner rhythm and circulation that were the materials for the first artistry our species worked on its own nature. The first artists worked, Nietzsche said, with the noblest clay and oil, the artist's own flesh and blood.

The epochs of the splendors of civilization appear to Leroi-Gourhan (4) to be epochs of the progressive exteriorization of this inwardly working artistic compulsion. Thus the art of body movement and vocalization, dance and song, would issue from the older visceral artistry of the yogis. Glorification of the body surfaces exposed to view comes out of the distant epochs where dance and song were the media for our species's self-glorification; making of the body surfaces a collage of bird-of-paradise plumes and boars's tusks, or a cuneiform tablet of tattooings and scarifications is an artistry that arises in a culture of festivity and chant.

A next stage of exteriorization is that of the architectonic splendors of Babylonian, Athenian, Mayan, Ottoman, and Gothic culture, which honored as major artists those who frame the construction and urban layout that houses human movements. The art exteriorized on surface effects—in the age when those who are preeminently called artists were painters—, the “humanist” art of the European Renaissance and subsequent modern period of painting, was in fact an artistry worked on the exterior spectacle as blocked off and framed into a perspective by the human eye.

Now the buildings that humankind's earlier artistry had surrounded them with serve as the points of departure for an artist's eye that orders into splendor the views from the balconies and the towers. Our contemporary art now extends itself beyond the perspective spread out before the human sense organs to the spaces reached for by the mind and by its electronic relays—to microcosmic and macrocosmic exteriority. Contemporary art is conceptual, framing the designs of microchemistry and astronomy; contemporary music captures the songs of the whales and those of the earth's magnetic field.

The meaning and the origin of the drive productive of splendor seemed to Freud as enigmatic as it seemed certainly coextensive with the defensive and utilitarian drives that transform nature and transform our nature. Living things are not only equipped with organs to perceive what is exterior; they are also equipped with organs designed to be perceived. Splendor, if created by the chance coincidence of random events in a canyon in a desert, in a sunset over equatorial waters, is also an organic production of living things.

This was the thesis of Adolph Portman (7), who argued that the patterns of animal body surfaces have their own intelligibility. The morphology of the inner, functional body, the form and the arrangement of the skeleton, of the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, and reproductive organs, and of the prehensile and locomotive organs, does not make intelligible the always regular and often intricate and ostentatious patterns of the body surfaces and extremities. These have to be understood, he argues, as organs-to-be-seen, whose designs and colors be-

come intelligible only when we correlate them with the specific powers of the witness-organs for which they are contrived. The inwardly coiling horns of the mountain sheep and the hairless, protuberant buttocks of the baboons are, he says, organs as closely fitted to the eyes and lips of the spectator as the jaws and hoofs are fitted to the terrain and the specific foods of the species.

In the human primate, a distinctive reflexive circuit was set up with the evolution of the hand. The human species began by putting the cutter, chopper, and grinder functions of the jaws into its hands. The front legs no longer serve to drive the jaws to make contact with the world; they rise from the ground and conduct samplings of the world to the head. The human animal now acquires a face. Its muscular configurations no longer react immediately to the front line of contact with external nature, but turns to its own hands. A smile and an apprehensive grimace now become possible—movements that are *expressive*, that is, that address a sample, a representative of the independent exterior held in the hand—and, soon, held with a mental grasp before an inner eye, an animal that faces another considers representations it has apprehended. Its manual musculature becomes not prehensile only but also expressive; the hands position their take for an appraising eye. They address themselves also to the eyes of another animal that has acquired a face; they speak. Little by little our whole musculature has learned to speak. The throat muscles designed for devouring and for expelling substances and the body's own biles and rages now learns from the hands how to shape the samples and representatives of the outside, how to exteriorize the comprehensive expressions the hands first learned to make. The whole torso becomes organs-to-be-seen, the abdomen struts and cowers, the legs and thighs acquire humility and pride, the shoulders and back, turned from the face-to-face circuit, sway with resentment and defiance.

Unlike the birds-of-paradise and the mountain sheep and the baboons, the human species did not develop distinctive organs-to-be-apprehended in addition to its organs-for-apprehending. Its hair, become functionally obsolete, is in an advanced state of disappearance; it has not deviated into a patterned pelt. Its teeth, whose functions were exteriorized onto tools, are in an advanced state of atrophy, and have not deviated into coiling tusks to make impressive the face. With the upright posture, Freud assumed, the primate genitals are permanently exhibited to the frontal view of another, and, Freud assumed, this has led to the primacy of the eyes over the nose as the chief organ for sexual stimulation, to the end of a rutting season, and the unseasonableness of human libido. But the human genitals remain organs fitted for contact, and have not become expressive organs. To be sure, the human species has contrived snares for the eye—penis sheaths, cache-sexes, pendants hung over the breasts—but these are exterior to its own genitalia, which remain glandular, orifices of the inner, functional body.

What has happened is that it is the human muscular system that has taken on the second, expressive, role for which the other animals have evolved distinctive organs-to-be-seen. The human muscular system is not only the scaffolding that positions and turns the sense organs, the organs-for-apprehending; the vectors and surges of motor energy illuminate the muscular network itself and make its mesh and mounds snares for the eye. On human bodies muscle frettings are their peacock tails, curls worked on the lips their crests, biceps and pectorals their coiled horns, finger waverings their lustrous pelt.

But civilization, in that epoch when the hunter-gatherers mutated into self-domesticated animals, altered the human muscular system. As it exteriorized motor efficacy from the human muscles to the animal, wind, water, and steam power that relayed them, it exteriorized the ostensive functioning of muscles into masks, talismans, and costume.

To be sure, this exteriorization has not yet become complete and definitive; there still floats in civilization an imagination that feeds on muscles. Indeed the imagination, that unpenetrating, superficial vision, vision of surfaces without depth, is a *faculty of the muscles*. Mishima spoke of the *displacement* of his sense of himself when, an intellectual, he committed himself to body building; there is a specific sense of one's identity that rises out of the visceral or cerebral depths to find itself henceforth in the contours one's substance spreads out to the sun. This self, spread in the tensions of the musculature, doubles them up as imagination, inhabiting and fascinated with forms, patterns, surfaces, a fascination anchored in the image one's self forms. And muscles are not exposed without doubling up their surfaces before the imagination of another. It is the first effect of their reality; their contours excite the imagination before they displace resistances.

That the visceral system does not have such an effect can seem puzzling. The awareness of the content of fluids in us of the saline and mineral composition of ocean water, the inner gulf streams, currents, and tides, the coral reefs, channels lined with tentacled anemones, and floating plankton within does not double up our sense of ourselves with a vision of the oceans from which, tide pools now enclosed in a porous sack of skin, our muscles have carried us. In fact the imagination is not divinatory and does not penetrate the deep; it is a surface sense, its mirages mirroring superficial mappings of the terrain, excited by the contours of muscles. And our muscles, becoming more and more obsolete in mechanized industry and automated war, become the more designed for the faculty of imagination.

In the obsolescence of an epic imagination does there not spread now only a topical erotic imagination? The Marlboro man, a torso hardened, according to the legend, by riding the range, is perhaps a torso riding the range in order to be hardened into a Marlboro model. The editorial writers of *Playboy* and *Playgirl* declare that the anatomies they exhibit have been fashioned by Olympic nautical training and ocean sailing; but swimming, sailing, bicycling (on stationary machines before mirrors), and workouts on Universal equipment are perhaps designed to produce the play musculature. Is the human muscle sheath, strapped to machines, monitored by cardiovascular and fat ratio dials, turning into the showy carnal corollas and petals of human orchids?

This evolutionary destiny is unclear; the future is complicated by the existence of the cults. In them the body substance is turned into muscle everywhere, the glands of the abdomen and its coiled membranes into muscles that can parry the blows of a fist, the atrophied mammary glands of males into matrices of trust and power, the chords of the neck are not neglected, nor the threads pulling the fingers. But they use the most elementary bars and weights; to this day no world-class body builder has trained on the Nautilus machinery scientific intelligence has designed for them. These are atavist bodies, halted before the age of the self-domestication of the hunter-gatherer. We found no real difference between the

scene in Gold's Gym and on the banks of the Ganges, where the origins of every method to divinize the mind with every possible cosmological system but also every method to divinize the body with sublunary power can be traced back to, and where we saw, in 1980, young men making the prostrations before the idols of the Aryan ape-god Hanuman which we term push-ups and calisthenics, and, while intoning mantras, lifting before him rocks and pairs of millstones fixed on poles. Cults where we see not body mechanisms made on machines, but primogenitor bodies made of *the elemental*—the weight of the terrestrial, and rivers, and sun.

The body builder's implements do not relay the passage of his/her own body force outward. He/she confronts the steel, the opaque, inert mineralization of death, with all his/her animate power, in what is not a contest but a process of symbiosis or synthanatosis. He/she tears down his/her muscles on steel, exhausting all his/her force on it, and when muscle failure has been reached, receives from the metal its properties. His/her biceps become tempered flails, his pectorals, that is, his mammarys, his femaleness, become gearing, the membrane of his/her abdomen a sheet of corrugated steel, his/her knuckles themselves brass. The luster of his/her muscle contours acquire for the eye the opaque impenetrability of metal. At the same time in the repetitions, the contractions and flexions, the body builder internalizes into channels of surging power the fluidity of the sweat and the oils, the vaporous currents of steam, showers, surf, and sunlight. The power that holds him/her upright is no longer that of a post before equipment civilization has erected. Tide pools of the maternal ocean enclosed in a porous sack of skin carried up to dry land by developing muscles, they stand erect now with the form that a fountain maintains by the incessant upsurge and fall of streams of power.

The body builder senses his/her identity on the bronzed, metalized luster of the beams of musculature exposed to the sun; it is on the sweat sheets across this hard skin and the surface gleam of the sun, and on the surfaces of mirrors displaying the oiled definition that he/she now seeks himself/herself. Existence, for the self, no longer means inwardness, visceral or cerebral involution, but exposure. This self is a movement to extend itself across contours and forms, and not to maintain a point of view, a repair in space. As the ego surfaces, distends and exposes itself, it depersonalizes. The steel does not only transfer its own properties into the living tissue that has exhausted its own force on it; its homogeneity drives out the principles of individuality in the bodies that devote themselves to it. It does away with the eccentricities—the dry and irritable skin, the concave faint-hearted chest, the indolent stomach, the furtive hand, the shifting eye—by which movements of retreat set up the as-for-me of individuality and leave their marks on the body. On his/her contours the body builder watches emerging not the eccentricities his tastes and vices leave in his carnal substance, but the lines of force of the generic *human animal*.

How little the rest of us see of our bodies! Our genitals we conceal, even from ourselves, judging them, with Leonardo da Vinci, of an irremediable ugliness; our visceral and glandular depths, the inner coral reefs and pulsating channels of antennas and gyrating polyps, our very imagination blinds itself to. Our musculature we attend to with a clinician's or mechanic's inspection. The drive

to visibility, to high-noon exposure, is so alien to us that it has to be driven into our substance by the steel. Ken Graves speaks of the watchmaker eye body builders have for the individual components. They do not, like the rest of us, see a charm or a brutality; their eye is specialized for details, trained in instant measurings, intolerant of dissymmetries. As they wait in the wings for the decisions of the judges, the contestants line up, he says, in almost exactly the order the judges will have placed them. As though it is not the individual eye permanently fixed in a point of view and a perspective that sees, but the impersonal eye of a species in evolution appraising its organs and limbs for an advance whose duration and direction are unknown.

Body builders look at one another, and each at himself/herself, also with an alchemist's eye full of chemical formulas, protein supplementations, quack remedies inspired by analogies, and drugs made in biochemical laboratories. They know their muscle substance with a cellular and not general and conceptually formulated knowledge, with a knowledge that thinks in the pain of cells being stretched and elongated, being torn down, a knowledge that does not preside over but yet somehow accompanies the invisible movements of the millions of antibodies within that are the real cause of and reality of the separateness of our bodies.

One does not know what role evolution will find for these prodigies of musculature—or, rather, what evolution their artistry is contriving for the species. No one, Nietzsche wrote, is more readily corrupted than artists. Their souls, their taste, can be bought by venal priests of pagan religions, by the big investors in the image industry, by the master computers of the racing military-industrial complex, and by their own followers and flatterers. Today the names of the body builders whose names are known are the names of so many industries, auxiliary epicycles in the wheels of the planetary machinery.

But the imagination that feeds of muscles imagines something else—imagines that the deviation their cult makes from the path of civilization might be carried further. Civilization destined the self-driving power of human bodies to be transferred into tools, and then to be transferred out of human muscles into draft animals, wind, water, steam, atomic fission. The body builders at this late date reverse the movement, disconnect from the tools, having interiorized their elemental properties, and make of musculature a splendor. Civilization destined the powers of surveillance in human sense organs to be directed on the motor force now exteriorized in draft animals, windmills and waterwheels, electric and atomic-fission generators, and then to be transferred out of human sense organs into automatic and feedback mechanisms. Can we imagine at some future date the eyes, the touch, the heart disconnecting from the machinery that feeds in the images and the information, and swelling and glowing with their own resplendence? Civilization evolved the faculty of memory, reason, and decision, and destined it to program the electronic sensors and feedback mechanisms that make the human sense organs obsolete. Can we imagine at some future date the faculty of memory, reason, and decision disconnecting from the computers it now serves, ceasing to be but an organ-for-apprehending, and, swollen with its own wonders, become an organ-to-be-apprehended, orchid rising from the visceral and cerebral depths of the cybernetic forest with its own power, rising into the sun?

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