Skin Aesthetics as Incarnation: Gilles Deleuze's Diagram of Francis Bacon

Jakub Zdebik
Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art

Francis Bacon's abstract strategies to represent the surface of the furies' skin in *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944) and the flayed bodies of *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* (1962) can be intercepted by Gilles Deleuze's treatment of the painter's oeuvre according to notions of descent (fall) and flesh (meat)—two elements contained in his underused notion of incarnation.

Incarnation brings to mind the idea of descent (the spirit coming down) and flesh (the spiritual clothed in skin). The term is seldom used by Deleuze, a materialist philosopher, but when it comes up in his corpus it is concerned with the virtual and the actual and, most importantly, with the concept of the diagram, which has implications of systematic scale in his philosophy.

Descent implies a movement in time and flesh, a destination. Between the two, skin filters the fall into sensation. Skin is the liminal membrane that articulates the dimension of time in the concept of incarnation. Adding time to incarnation provides a fuller picture of the complexity of the concept.

Skin is not simply a receptacle but an elastic organ progressing through time, as Bacon shows with his figures shifting from one panel of

ESC 34.1 (March 2008): 149–164

his triptychs to the next, with the torsions that he puts his figures through, and with the oft-used circular zones endowed with arrows that illustrate movement and directionality in time. Also, Bacon's violent, sombre, and horror-laden aesthetics are an apt terrain onto which to bring Deleuze's particular refinement of time through the notion of morose time. Morose time deploys a dynamic dimension in a figure teeming with potential and adds to his already rich analysis of Bacon's oeuvre.

The juxtaposition of a modern British painter and his French poststructuralist commentator opens a strange space populated by religious imagery and mythical creatures, namely crucifixions and furies. To these are added a rhinoceros skin and incarnations into meat, cephalopods turning into quadrupeds, Bodies without Organs and masochists. There are also bones and skin and a head split in half by an ocean. Accordingly, to navigate this polymorphic crowd, the essay is divided into five parts. The first section is a description of Bacon's work. The second section explains incarnation through analogy, essence, and the virtual/actual duality. The third section demonstrates the topological (diagrammatical) transformation of a fish into a crucified body according to the virtual mechanics of nineteenth-century biology. The fourth section shows the morose time at work on the surface of the skin between the virtual and the actual. Finally, the last section proposes a diagrammatic duality of the surface of the skin.

Jakub Zdebik received his doctorate from the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at the University of Western Ontario after completing his dissertation on the aesthetics of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. He is Visiting Research Fellow at the Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art where he is working on the concept of the diagram, cartography, and geophilosophy in visual arts and philosophy.

I. Studies of Furies

Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944) is at the centre of all this. A triptych painted toward the end of the Second World War, it is based on the three furies whose screeches torment those racked by guilt. They were referred to as "The Kindly Ones" (Eumenides) because calling them "The Angry Ones" (Erinyes) would lead to insanity: "The Kindly Ones"—*Les bienveillantes*, as in the title of Jonathan Littell's novel depicting the brutality of the Holocaust from the perspective of a Nazi SS officer. Calmly recounting his actions as a man going through the "banality of evil," dealing with the flesh in a detached manner, he is nevertheless caught by the titular furies as Soviet and Allied troops enter Berlin. The appearance of the furies at the end of the novel coincides with Bacon's depiction of furies in the triptych at the end of war. The novel's pages scream behind the print as the soft title on the cover appeases the copy of the book. The euphemism designating the horrors of World War II resolutely underlines the unspeakable. What else is euphemistically designated not by some gradation on the original term that should not be spoken but by its absolute contrary? When the mind cannot fully grasp a

concept, chimeras fly over the landscape. The monsters inhabit the regions of which the mind cannot accurately draw a map. T. S. Eliot, in his play *The Family Reunion*, exemplifies this unrepresentable vision in the speech of a man haunted by the Eumenides: "Here and here and here—wherever I am not looking, / Always flickering at the corner of my eye, / Almost whispering just out of earshot—And inside me too, in the nightly panic / Of dreaming dissolution" (308). The senses are not reached and therefore are frustrated by something that is elusive and unlocalized. Bacon, whose avowed influence by Eliot's work manifested itself most directly in *Triptych—Inspired by T. S. Eliot's Poem "Sweeney Agonistes"* (1967), paints these three furies from the perspective of an eye that cannot encompass their full shape. It is like an eye that wants to see the front but also the back at the same time. But these furies are not abstracted. From that point of view, they are realistically depicted, for they are imaginary creatures personifying something unrepresentable—the three screaming hags with snakes in their hair tormenting Orestes in Bourguereau's late nineteenth-century painting are far more unrealistic.

In *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944), the long neck of the first figure wearing hair as a dusty mask points downward. The dress hanging off the collapsed shoulder blades by pink strips more closely resembles a robe made of flayed pink skin. The central figure, with a blindfold above a ridiculous double row of teeth circled by red lips, exercises a quiet horror that spreads through space like a hackneyed nightmare. The naked fabric of the canvas adds to a stripped silence. These grey, pale figures are muted against a red background. At the end of a long neck, a wide open maw hangs open, unsupported by a head. The organ at the end of the neck is made up of dentition, with an ear at the corner of the lip: the ear is a blind and mute organ. The figure's body follows predetermined torsions, the paths of which are suggested more precisely by a white circle in the *Second Version of Triptych 1944* (1988). These act as hinges that swing in the directions of loose skin in order to achieve maximal horror.

The 1944 triptych is more subdued, but no less bone chilling, than another painted almost two decades later: *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* (1962) unwraps the horror contained in the intangible furies of 1944. The legs and feet pointing from the lower edge of the first painting are flayed, and yet the anatomical parts they are supposed to contain cannot be determined with certainty. The ankles look like bloody pork chops and the tibia is a small spine. The calf seems to contain a thoracic cage: another species is folded within these legs. And there are two figures looking toward the

presumed body of which we see only the legs. It is the figure beyond the frame. The backdrop is orange and red and black.

What is this mess on the bed in the second frame? A body so twisted on itself that it bursts at the seams? The skull is gruesomely exposed and exploded at the top, with blood splashed on the pillow. The orange floor, the red walls, and the black, drawn blinds suggest we are in the same room as in the first painting in the triptych. Has there been a change of perspective? Are we seeing what the two figures had been looking at on the first panel? Has this clutter of meat, through its brutalized skull, seen these figures and its own flayed feet, as we did? Has it been looking at this scene with us?

There is no respite. If the perspective changed again from the second to the third panel, are we looking from the vantage point of the ceiling, above the head of the bed? Or has the bed been flipped back so that it serves as an open display case for an upside-down corpse? Upside down, the lower jaw protrudes with baboon fangs. There is a carcass splayed like a side of beef *à la* Soutine. Are we seeing a black dog drawn to the meat standing at the forefront of the picture plane? Or is it outside the frame, like us, with only its shadow projected on the ground, looking very much like the black ooze trickling out of the carcass? Or is it one of the figures from the first panel, taking the triptych full circle? After all, this shadow is of a similar shape and colour as the legs of the standing figure. The floors are orange; the walls are red.

If the first triptych represents descent through the downward pointing figures and the hanging skins, then the second triptych captures the meat of the flesh so that the unrepresented crucifixion is the schema for the descent into meat underscored by the concept of incarnation.

II. Incarnation as Downward Movement

Bacon's paintings illustrate the mystery at the heart of the device of incarnation by hinting at an absence—the cross signaled by the crucifixion of the title is not shown. The lack of certainty on the viewer's part about what is observed on the canvases adds to the unknown. Incarnation focalizes that which, up until its fleshly manifestation, was not precisely known. It makes, according to words Deleuze used in a different context, "invisible forces visible" (*Francis Bacon* 49). What is unintelligible is captured, trapped in the skins of representation, trap being part of the etymological chain linked to descent. Yet despite its function of representing the intangible, incarnation has the advantage of tracing this aesthetic problem according to a downward trajectory.

To grasp the direction given to incarnation, an immediate comparison to the thought process of analogy should start things rolling. Analogy brings together the world of the unknown and the familiar world by translating one in terms of the other. Analogy reaches vertically into the unknown, as the etymology of the term demonstrates: "This logos, this reason, of the ana*logy,* is at the same time an *ana*logos. Where *ana* means 'up,' 'upwards,' and gives the idea of a passage or a surpassing, a transcendence when it is a question of passing into a superior order. From the animal to the human, for example, from the human to the divine" (Stafford 106). And just as the construction produced by the crystallization process—where each crystal spawns another identical to itself, as if it was a self-generating architectural edifice—the analogy is also compared to a "bridge that crosses over a border. But this border is not abolished by the bridge: rational proportion does not destroy real differences" (Stafford 106). However, with an etymological constraint, descent is also possible: "*Ana* means 'upward,' perhaps even the upward movement associated with transcendence, and so there should be, in turn, a *katalogia*, a movement downwards" (Fenves 226 n10). This downward catalogue movement classifies, organizes, and constrains. If analogy points upward toward the divine, then its contrary is the downward movement toward the flesh.

I propose to model Deleuze's incarnation on these opposing vertical paths, following the contrary euphemism of angry/kindly and the constellation grouping concepts with bodies: "The concept is an incorporeal, even though it is incarnated in bodies" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 21). Deleuze utilizes the device of incarnation on several occasions in his writings but does not specifically elaborate on it as he does with other concepts. However, *What is Philosophy?* addresses the issue of incarnation in the context of art and aesthetics: "A curious Fleshism inspires this final avatar of phenomenology and plunges it into the mystery of incarnation. It is a pious and a sensual notion, a mixture of sensuality and religion, without which, perhaps, flesh could not stand up by itself (it would slide down the bones, as in Bacon's figures)" (Deleuze and Guattari 178). It seems out of place in Deleuze's ontology as a term that usually means the materialization of something (usually spiritual or divine) in fleshly or human form. It is the skin sliding down the bones that gives us the direction to follow in this concept of incarnation.

Michael Hardt, in "Exposure: Pasolini and the Flesh," explores this downward direction as he explains how the materiality of incarnation, even though it has its source in the transcendental, slips away from it, loses it: "Incarnation is all about abandonment—abandonment to the flesh.

Paul writes that in becoming flesh Christ abandoned the form of God; he emptied himself by taking on a limited materiality. This self-emptying is the exposure of the flesh" (78). The contrary movement of the expected trajectory is traced from the divine to the flesh. Hardt demonstrates how Christ "emptied the transcendental *form* and carried divinity into the material" (78). This detachment from the transcendental does not show how the material is lesser than the typically superior dimension; rather, the full importance of the material comes into being in incarnation: "The self-emptying or *kenosis* of Christ, the evacuation of the transcendental, is the affirmation of the plenitude of the material, the fullness of the flesh" (Hardt 78). It is precisely the materialist context of this incarnation and its falling away from the transcendental that Deleuze describes as coming into the form of meat. It is becoming meat. The furies of Bacon's 1944 triptych are pointing their necks downward; the body falling from the cross.

I wish to explore this process of incarnation through the dichotomy of the virtual and actual. The virtual is tightly encased within the play between difference and repetition, where repetition is "like a skin which unravels, the external husk of a kernel of difference and more complicated internal repetition" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 76). As Deleuze explains, "Difference and repetition in the virtual ground the movement of actualisation of differenciation as creation" (*Difference and Repetition* 212). But in order to bring us closer to the notion of incarnation, I suggest following one aspect of the virtual, the "essence" as explored in *Proust and Signs*. Essence is a synonym for the virtual, and incarnation stands for actualization. Deleuze repeats the motto he derives from Proust that crops up in a multitude of places throughout his corpus: "Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract"[1] to which he adjoins the explanation: "This ideal real, this virtual, is essence" (*Proust et les signes* 76; my translation).[2] Incarnation takes part in the constellation of the virtual and the

1 *Difference and Repetition*, page 208, for example.

2 I have translated this text on my own because the English translation by Richard Howard reads as follows: "'Real without being present, ideal without being abstract.' This ideal reality, this virtuality, is essence, [Howard continues the sentence that Deleuze finished] which is realized or incarnated in involuntary memory" (*Proust and Signs* 60). I wanted to make sure that the term "present" was understood as "actual" and also thought that "ideal reality" did not have the precise meaning of "ideal real," terms important to Deleuze's whole corpus. The original French reads: "'Réels sans être actuels, idéaux sans être abstraits.' Ce réel idéal, ce virtuel, c'est l'essence. L'essence se réalise ou s'incarne dans le souvenir involontaire. Ici comme dans l'art, l'enveloppement, l'enroulement, reste l'état supérieur de l'essence. Et le souvenir involontaire en retient les deux pouvoirs :

actual: "The essence realizes itself, or incarnates itself in the involuntary memory. Here as in art, the envelopment, the coiling, remains the superior state of the essence" (Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* 76–77; my translation). The point is similar to Hardt's: the mortal coil is favoured over the transcendental (in the case of Hardt) and the essential (for Deleuze), on an aesthetic platform.

The subject does not possess an essence but is constructed by one.

But one has to be careful about the origins of essence and its incarnation. The subject does not possess an essence but is constructed by one: "It is not the subject that explicates the essence, it is rather the essence that implicates itself, envelops itself, coils itself within the subject" (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 43). This coiling or folding can be exemplified by embryology, where the foetus is the sketch of an unfolding individual, the virtuality of an individual. The development of the embryo occurs from one stage to another without design or resemblance: "Actual terms never resemble the singularities they incarnate" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 212). The worlds, or essences, constitute the individual, and so thought does not belong to the individual subject (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 43). A force pushes thought onto us: "Essences are coiled inside of that which forces us to think, they do not respond to our voluntary effort" (Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* 122; my translation). We do not think out of our will: we are constrained to think. We have to think, like cells split and tectonic plates shift: "Essence only allows us to think when we are constrained to do so" (Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* 122; my translation). So essence, weighted down by flesh, wrapped in skin, makes us think, in effect, as the virtual pushes through onto the plane of the actual.

What is the link between essences and their incarnation in the fleshly coil? It is through the process of incarnation that the incorporeal passes into the material, the concept becomes real: "Qualities and species incarnate the varieties of actual relation; organic parts incarnate the corresponding singularities" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 210). As Hardt explains, incarnation holds the essence and existence under its banner: "Incarnation is first of all a metaphysical thesis that the essence and existence of being are one and the same" (78–79). And in this process, it is the descent into flesh through incarnation that animates essences into existence, simply because they are given flesh: "There is no ontological essence that resides beyond the world. None of the being or God or nature

---

la différence dans l'ancien moment, la répétition dans l'actuel. Mais l'essence se réalise dans le souvenir involontaire à un degré plus bas que dans l'art, elle s'incarne dans une matière plus opaque" (Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* 76–77).

remains outside existence, but rather all is fully realized, fully expressed, without remainder, in the flesh" (Hardt 78–79). It is the valorizing of the paradoxical depth on the surface of the skin. This is because without flesh holding together thought we cannot imagine God and therefore the transcendental is quite literally in the flesh.

The materiality takes precedence over the transcendental; Hardt even sees the transcendental as the "empty husk" because Christ descended from it into the material. This materiality that holds the depth of existence is what is found on the meaty surface of Bacon's figures. Rather, it is at this surface that the material being dwells, in the same way the concept that captures this being is just as real: "Transcendence, the condition of possibility of being, should not be imagined as above or below the material—it dwells, rather, precisely at its very surface" (Hardt 78–79). The surface is not shallow—transcendence at the surface opens the depth of the skin.

Soon, the Body without Organs (BwO) will be another station in the process of uncovering the surface of the skin to a timely dimension. But first, we can see how the surface of the skin can be the vehicle that crosses both categorical and essential boundaries.

III. The Topology of the Cross

The surface of the skin is teeming with potential; it possesses a virtual depth that can be manipulated. Here, at the level of the skin instead of the body, a diagrammatic transformation can be made. It will not be the vertical direction of a spirit descending into a body but the multidimensional manipulation of the virtual folding into an actual state. This diagrammatic process has its basis in architecture (a simple definition of the diagram is a plan containing all the coordinates and measurements for the realization of a physical object), topology (an object drawn on this plan is folded and virtually manipulated into a completely different object), cartography (a plan provides a link to the imaginary, that is, it helps "find one's bearings in thought" [Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 37]), and, finally, nineteenth century biology (when the analogical process is still trained on the material and the physical). All these elements work together yet independently toward one goal—they trawl the depths of the virtual for the material necessary to construct the actual.

Nineteenth-century biology seems out of place in the list of the previous paragraph, but it is the theatre of Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's nimble mind that skips over prefabricated, rigid categories of biological classification and shows how a cephalopod can be folded into a quadruped, if only virtually: "[A]n actual animal that does not exhibit the hyoid

bone during the dissection possesses it *virtually*" (Le Guyader 123; my translation). Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire navigates the virtual planes of the classificatory system with extraordinary ease. "A 'system,'" in this case, is understood as "the organic ensemble formed of all the realized organs and of all of its *potentialities*" (Le Guyader 122; my translation). If the system holds the realized (actual) and the potential (virtual), the biologist who looks only at what is in front of him on the dissecting table fails to see *what is not there*. The unified plan cannot be conceived if the anatomist relies only on what is in front of him: some animals might not have the organ or bone that is needed to make a comparison but they carry it *in potentia*. The animal's virtual dimension is an anatomical plane which must be manipulated topologically.

Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's analogical method is articulated according to "torsion" or "*plicature*," in order to provide a path for the vertebrate to be broken and twisted into a cephalopod according to the deployment of a mechanism of folding (*pli*), refolding of terms (*re-pli-ment*), and explication of an idea (*ex-pli-cation*) (Le Guyader 116). Whether or not these distortions can result in the twisted parts of Bacon's miasmic skeletons and ripped skin of the 1962 triptych, folds such as these occur before the stage of the actual. This functional *plicature* occurs when an idea can cover terrain without bordering itself with classificatory limits which results in the transformation of a cephalopod into a quadruped. If bones can skip from one animal to the next, what does this tell us about ideas that change their form according to a process of thought, such as analogy? Thoughts would be as solid as bones, which means not that solid after all.

Anatomical analogy skips over the line drawn between species: a contraction of this sort can be witnessed in Mieke Bal's treatment of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's painting of *The Ray* (1728). In this case, a fish is folded, contracted, into a crucified figure. This process illustrates the zones of indiscernibility or the fuzzy border of becoming: "Man becomes animal, but not without the animal becoming spirit at the same time, the spirit of man, the physical spirit of man presented in the mirror as Eumenides or Fate" (Deleuze, *Francis Bacon* 20). Chardin's painting depicts a splayed ray hanging by a hook in a kitchen, surrounded by molluscs, fish, a cauldron, and a cat. The ray holds the central position of the picture plane and has the shape of a diamond: "This diamond is also like a crossroads: in it meet the different angles of vision located in the four corners of the painting, like the faces in the four corners of ancient maps" (Bal 32). This ancient map, in the cartographic shape of the ray, can be abstracted in its four corners and provide the orientation the eyes of the viewer are

to follow: the cat, the cauldron, the dead fish below, tracing, in effect, a cross. And in an extraordinary move, Bal uses this four-point diagram to fold into the image of the ray, that of a crucified Christ. It is a topological manipulation: the geometrical shape of the cross turns into the diamond through "continuous, elastic deformation" (*Merriam-Webster*). In this case, topological means: "being or involving properties unaltered under a homeomorphism" (*Merriam-Webster*). Homeomorphism is the function through which a coffee cup can be reshaped into a donut: "a function that is a one-to-one mapping between sets such that both the function and its inverse are continuous and that in topology exists for geometric figures which can be transformed one into the other by an elastic deformation" (*Merriam-Webster*). It is not hard to imagine a diamond-shaped kite, the points of which are held up by a delicate wooden cross.

In the Renaissance body, the three-dimensionality is demonstrated by the folds of the cloth hiding the body of Christ.

Bal does more than point out a simple analogy between the fish (incidentally, as she reminds us, a symbol of early Christianity) and Christ—she identifies the function that allows the comparison between both figures: "The significance of this form is inevitable: the diamond shape, the representation of the body splayed open as if martyred, and the disposition of the corners all bring to mind the Crucifixion. But here the traditional form of the Crucifixion has been reversed in several different ways" (Bal 32–33). First, the wounds on the surface of Christ's skin are compared to the single wound eviscerating the ray. Second, the extremities of the cross radiate out, whereas the ray's surface unifies these points, very much like the kite. Third, the volume of Christ's body is essential to the body's "nature as incarnation." The ray is flat, but the contrast is striking since "the [ray] is also shown to be most definitely 'hung,' nailed like Christ on a hook that is clearly represented" (Bal 33). In the Renaissance body, the three-dimensionality is demonstrated by the folds of the cloth hiding the body of Christ. In the case of the ray, the three-dimensionality is the tear in the mottled screen, the gap revealing a depth in the flat diamond, as the depth in the canvas slashed by Lucio Fontana. These three points need to be connected and followed for a homeomorphic translation to follow its course.

Leo Steinberg, on whose work Bal based her analysis of the crucifixion, describes the mental topography of the body of Christ—its diagram—necessary for artists to paint him in the full glory of pictorial realism. What is interesting in this virtual mapping of the body is that it was made in order to be covered up: "For even if the body were partly draped, a decision had to be made how much to cover: whether to play the drapery down or send it fluttering like a banner; and whether the loincloth employed, opaque or

diaphanous was to reveal or conceal. Only the painters and sculptors kept all of Christ's body in their mind's eye" (Steinberg 17). This description of the process of painting a body covered with cloth can be considered an illustration of the virtual aspect of the diagrammatic structure. The body of the ray traveling on a continuous trajectory toward the shape of the crucified body of Christ dips momentarily into a tunnel, away from our view, only to emerge on the other side in another form. This process of transformation, this darkened indeterminate state, like a mysterious schema of art (to reshuffle Kant's characterization of his concept of imagination), is what is at stake in the virtual process of incarnation.

The virtual aspect of the diagram is the schema that is held up mentally between the ray and the figure of Christ on the cross. But this is the amorphous process that Bacon captures on the canvas. Tom Conley, in turn, describes the emblematic transposition of these anatomical acrobatics onto the plane of aesthetics and art, that is, Bacon's studies for figures at the base of the crucifixion. He explains the "intensities" resulting from the figures' "indeterminate state":

> [T]hey are amphibian, androgynous, polymorphous, simultaneously organic and inorganic—[they] offer the viewer an intense experience of painterly variation that runs through the bodies, in and along the spinal columns and nervous systems, of both the Figures that are grasped and the viewer who grasps them. In the dexter panel of *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* [...], a splayed carcass reveals a dorsal column leading downward to a head with a gaping mouth whose teeth seem to be miniature vertebrae. (Conley 140)

It is precisely the materialist context of this incarnation and its falling away from the transcendental that Deleuze describes as coming into the form of meat. The furies' necks for the 1944 triptych are pointing downward at the fallen body. Perhaps this jumbled mass of organs, flesh, skin, and bones could be emblematic of the dehierarchization crucial to Deleuze's philosophy?

IV. Morose Time of Apprehension

Even though the torsions through which Bacon puts the bodies in his paintings remind Deleuze of Body without Organs, I propose to go to *A Thousand Plateaus* to find the element of time necessary to give the vertical trait of the schema a vertical timeline so that the schematic cross can be complete.

Skin, bones, organs, body, mouth, anus, nose, and stomach: "It has itself strung up to stop the organs from working; flayed, as if the organs clung to the skin" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 150). The organs are scrambled in their order, resembling the flayed and mixed up organs of Bacon's triptychs. But an organizing notion, however tenuous, is implied. After all, the chapter of Deleuze and Guattari's book is a how-to guide called "How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?" This program follows the morose time of a sado-masochistic schedule.

The mistress acts upon the subservient slave and sews all of his possible openings. The hierarchically determined body is then rendered into a single invariable surface as a programmatic: "'Mistress, 1) You may tie me down on the table, ropes drawn tight, for ten to fifteen minutes, time enough to prepare the instruments; 2) One hundred lashes at least, a pause of several minutes; 3) You begin sewing, you sew up the hole in the glans'" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 151). After the long quotation is over and the narrator on the table has asked to be turned on his stomach, his buttocks sewn together, and whipped some more, Deleuze and Guattari add: this is not a fantasy, it is a program (*A Thousand Plateaus* 151). It is a program indeed. However, it is not a sado-masochistic relation, as Deleuze discovers in his book on Sacher-Masoch, where the slave is ordered by the mistress. Here, the mistress is not doing anything. Nothing has been done. But a relationship has been established.

> It is nonstratified, unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity, intensity = 0; but there is nothing negative about that zero, there are no negative or opposite intensities.[…] That is why we treat the BwO as the full egg before the extension of the organism and the organization of the organs, before the formation of the strata; as the intense egg defined by axes and vectors, gradients and thresholds, by dynamic tendencies involving energy transformation and kinematic movements involving group displacement, by migrations: all independent of *accessory forms* because the organs appear and function here only as pure intensities. (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 153)

The program of the BwO is praxis without being practised. It is the virtual in the moment before the actual hatches. *Intensité zéro* is transformed into another object: *l'oeuf*, the shape of zero, or love in tennis (itself an English distortion of the French *tenez* exclaimed before the serve). At this stage, the BwO = zero in intensity. At this level of intensity, the egg represents the moment right before the formation and subsequent organization of organs.

It is not the space, but the silent empty *vacuus*. Right before it breaks into the whole cinematics of style, right before the complete transformation of this space through speed, acceleration, and deceleration, it is all waiting, expectation, and trepidation. It is according to "speeds and slownesses" that the virtual is incarnated into the actual (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 185).

This particular time scale is filtered through masochism and defined as moroseness in terms of lateness: "The masochist is morose: but his moroseness should be related to the experience of waiting and delay" (Deleuze, *Masochism* 71). For Deleuze, the morose mechanism remains incomprehensible if not given a form, a form that in turn makes the mechanism possible (*Masochism* 71). He stretches the definition of delay by complementing with lateness:

> Formally speaking, masochism is a state of waiting; the masochist experiences waiting in its pure forms. Pure waiting divides naturally into two simultaneous currents, the first representing what is awaited, something essentially tardy, always late and always postponed, the second representing something that is expected and on which depends the speeding up of the awaited object. (*Masochism* 71)

To this duality of what we are waiting for and what we expect to come, Deleuze adds another duality that inserts itself into the mechanism. It is the duality of pleasure and pain believed by Deleuze to be a necessary consequence. The mechanism of waiting constitutes the structure of masochism: it is the trepidation.

To this duality of what we are waiting for and what we expect to come, Deleuze adds another duality that inserts itself into the mechanism.

John Maybury's *Love is the Devil* (1998), the film representing the relationship between George Dyer (Daniel Craig) and Francis Bacon (Derek Jacobi), stages a scene of sado-masochistic sexual anticipation. After a meal in a stark apartment, Bacon and Dyer undress casually and fold their clothes neatly over chairs. Dyer than ropes a leather belt tightly around his fist, making it crack as it coils over his whitened knuckles. Bacon, for his part, kneels at the side of the bed: genuflexion away from the off-camera sound of the belt tightening behind him, elbows over white sheets. After a cut that shifts to the postcoitus moment, Bacon's narrative monologue hovers above the lovers lying in bed. The artist matter-of-factly directs his attention to the food grumbling in his bowels: the flesh and what it infolds inside have been in some way uncoiled. We are directed from the skin flagellated by the leather belt to the podgy flesh draped in white underwear to, finally, the meat in the belly.

V. Painting Skin

Let us turn our attention to the meat-stuffed diagram, so to speak. In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, the diagram is exactly made up of a duality which consists in the sensation and the frame (91). Sensation is too fluid and the frame too abstract, but together they form an equilibrium. The concept of the diagram consists in a duality: tracing and map, repetition and difference. Tracing functions by constraint: "It is instead like a photograph or X ray that begins by selecting or isolating, by artificial means such as colorations or other restrictive procedures, what it intends to reproduce" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 13). Mapping, on the other hand, exposes undiscovered spaces, expands the terrain on which thought habitually dwells and extends the boundaries so as to make it spill out into unexplored regions. Tracing and mapping must be superimposed to form a process of simultaneous constraint and expansion. There is, in Maybury's film, between Dyer and Bacon, a mapping of the flesh surveyed by the belt and the monologue that functions as an X-ray opening the belly to explain the meat moving through the bowels.

But this dual diagrammatic process can be witnessed in Eliot's *The Family Reunion*. His description of the loneliness and anonymity within a "crowded desert" draws a directionless map where "no direction / Leads anywhere but round and round in that vapour" (294). If this verse serves as an illustration of the mapping of unexplored spaces, Eliot, in another passage, uncannily illustrates the process of coloration contained in Deleuze and Guattari's concept of tracing: "While the slow stain sinks deeper through the skin / Tainting the flesh and discolouring the bone— / This is what matters, but it is unspeakable" (294). Both the X-ray perspective of digested food and a stain reaching the bone are mediated by the skin.

The diagram, according to Deleuze, is like a desert, or like the skin of a rhinoceros (*Francis Bacon* 82). This manifestation of the diagram is exemplified by Bacon's splotching of paint on the surface of figurative paintings. It is a squirt of paint carrying a depth of information inside its core. The result of a quick hand gesture delivering a dash of paint, the splash is another manifestation of the disturbance created by the photographs and snapshots Bacon consulted before applying the paint on the canvas. Just as, whilst in the middle of painting a portrait, Bacon distracted himself from the figure he was painting with a photograph of rhinoceros skin, the paint flung from the brush took the painting into a different direction.[3]

3 Deleuze, in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, footnotes this exchange between Bacon and David Sylvester that he deemed very important: "Bacon: 'Very

The diagram, this controlled chance factor, this freedom from the expected within the act of painting, is "like the emergence of a new world" (Deleuze, *Francis Bacon* 82). And like Harry, the tormented character of Eliot's play shows, the unrepresentable erases the flesh into the world: "I know it, I know it! / More potent than ever before, a vapour dissolving / All other worlds, and me into it" (311). The vapour rubs out the contour of the figure and connects it to a world.

Incarnation is not simply the embodiment of the transcendental or the essential but the revelation of an ontological depth of the surface. It is not simply the spiritual in the skins of the actual but a descent that keeps going farther once the surface has been reached. "One no longer paints 'on' but 'under'" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 194). Or through, like Fontana's wounded canvases. This is shown in the representation of skin and flesh in Bacon's crucifixion triptychs but also in the structural diagram upholding these representations. There is the downward movement implied by Christ's incarnation and the underlying materiality shown in the mortification of the flesh. By taking the Deleuzean path traced by the virtual and the actual, our vision is trained on the surface of the skin and its potential for aesthetic manipulation of form. From cephalopod to quadruped, from the ray to the crucified Christ, the surface of the skin reveals its aesthetic elasticity. The shape of the cross is completed by a horizontal axis being added to the vertical line of descent. This horizontal axis is drawn by the moroseness of time functioning through virtual / actual stages of the trepidation experienced by the surface of the injured skin.

---

often the involuntary marks are much more deeply suggestive than others, and those are the moments when you feel that anything can happen.' Sylvester: 'You feel it while you're making those marks?' Bacon: 'No, the marks are made, and you survey the thing like you would a sort of graph [*diagramme*]. And you see within this graph the possibilities of all types of fact being planted. This is a difficult thing; I'm expressing it badly. But you see, for instance, if you think of a portrait, you may be have to put the mouth somewhere , but you suddenly see through this graph that the mouth could go right across the face. And in a way you would love to be able in a portrait to make a Sahara of the appearance—to make it so like, yet seeming to have the distances of the Sahara'" (*Interviews* 56). In another passage, Bacon explains that when he does a portrait, he often looks at photographs that have nothing to do with the model—for example, a photograph of a rhinoceros for the texture of the skin" (*Interviews* 32; Deleuze, *Francis Bacon* 160n3).

Works Cited

Bal, Mieke. *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*. Trans. Anna-Louise Milne. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

Conley, Tom. "A Politics of Fact and Figure." Afterword to *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. 130–49.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.

———. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

———. *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*. Trans. Jean McNeil. New York: Zone Books, 1989.

———. *Proust and Signs*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: George Braziller, 1972.

———. *Proust et les signes*. Paris: PUF, 1976.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

———. *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.

Eliot, T.S. *The Complete Poems and Plays*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.

Fenves, Peter. "The Genesis of Judgment: Spatiality, Analogy, and Metaphor in Benjamin's 'On Language as Such and on Human Language.'" *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*. Ed. David S. Ferris. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. 75–93.

Guyader, Hervé Le. *Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1772–1844: Le naturaliste visionaire*. Paris: Belin, 1998.

Hardt, Michael. "Exposure: Pasolini and the Flesh." *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*. Ed. Brian Massumi. London: Routledge, 2002. 77–84.

Littell, Jonathan. *Les bienveillantes*. Paris: Gallimard, 2006.

Stafford, Barbara Maria. *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Steinberg, Leo. *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.