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THE BLEED

Where Body Meets Image

Scenario

PASSAGE PRECEDES POSITION.

The Bleed

It is 1937. The future president of the United States is beginning his first acting job. "There I was—," confesses Ronald Reagan, "faced with my nemesis, reading. It isn't that I flubbed the words, or stumbled and mispronounced; I even placed the emphasis on the right syllable. I just lack personality when I read. . . . The second day I was introduced to the rushes. This is the custom of going at the end of each day's work and seeing on the screen what you shot the previous day. What a shock it was!"[1]

Fast-forward, mid-paragraph, to 1965, the writing present of the now experienced actor on the cusp of a spectacularly improbable political career. Poised for the campaign for the governorship of California that was to set him on the road to the White House and apparently no more comfortable with writing than reading, he is coauthoring his first autobiography. One of its primary functions is to explain how half a lifetime as a bad actor actually qualified him for high office, contrary to the then-public perception that the roles of entertainer and governor were fundamentally incompatible. He couches his explanation in terms of a shocking deficiency in movie acting that can only be overcome in the public arena.

> It has taken me many years to get used to seeing myself as others see me, and also seeing myself instead of my mental picture of the character I'm playing. First of all, very few of us ever see ourselves except as we look directly at ourselves in a mirror. Thus we don't know how we look from behind, from the side, walking, standing, moving normally through a room. It's quite a jolt. Second is the fact that when you read a story you create a mental picture of each character. For the first few years this is true even in reading a script. You don't see yourself because you haven't had much experience in seeing yourself. Thus as you act the part, in your mind you envision your mental picture of the author's character. You go to the rushes and somebody has stolen that heroic figure, and there you are—just plain old everyday you—up on the screen. It's one hell of a letdown.[2]

This deceptively complex statement does not condemn acting wholesale, for example, on the grounds that it traffics in fakery, substituting appearance for reality. In fact, it implies that there is power in acting, which is faulted not for the kind of process it sets in motion but rather for its inability to take that process far enough to realize the power inherent in it. The process in question is seeing. A seeing of *oneself*. Specifically, a seeing of oneself *as others see one*. The problem with acting isn't that it carries the actor out of himself, out of his character into another, out of his real self into a false double; it is that it doesn't take the actor *far enough* outside of himself. The movie actor's success hinges on his ability to see himself as others see him, but this is circumvented by what Reagan calls "mental pictures." These are private images the actor forms of the character he is portraying, developed from the script. The actor makes words into images, visualizes text, then renders that visualization public by embodying it before the camera. Watching the rushes is a jolt for Reagan *precisely because he recognizes himself* on the screen. "There you are—just plain old everyday you."

That Reagan should be jolted by this is jolting. As he sits in the screening room watching the day's shoot, he is seeing himself exactly as the director and his fellow actors simultaneously see him and as the public will later see him. He is indeed seeing himself as others see him. So what's the problem? And who did he expect to see on the screen, if not himself? And if seeing a film of himself embodying a visualized text is seeing his plain old everyday self, does that mean that in everyday life he is an actor following a script?

What is clear is that Reagan is not concerned with the difference between reality and appearance. He seems to be speaking of two orders of reality—both of which are composed of appearance, understood more in a performative than epistemological sense. The relevant distinction is not

between reality and appearance, true and false, acting and not acting, seeing and not seeing oneself as others see one. The pertinent criterion of evaluation is ontological and cuts across those registers. It bears on the completeness of an appearance, which it locates on a scale of intensity, as a higher- or lower-degree reality.

The plain, old, everyday self is an actor playing an ordinary role in the ordinary way. Reagan defines that as mirrorlike. *Mirror-vision* is by definition partial. There is a single axis of sight. You see yourself from one angle at a time and never effectively in movement. If you keep your head motionless and your eyes level, you can see parts of yourself move, for example your arms, from one perspective. You can change perspective by immobilizing your body and moving your head. But if you try to move your body and your head together in an attempt to catch yourself in motion, you only succeed in jumping from one frozen pose to another. The movement between is a blur, barely glimpsed. You can never see yourself "moving normally" as another sees you. Either you see movement, but the movement is partial, riveted to a stationary visual axis, stiffened by the effort of maintaining that line of vision, made wooden, deadened, turned into a caricature of itself, or you make a live movement at the price of losing sight of yourself for the duration. Every time you really see yourself, well, there you are. The single axis of vision stretches you between two surfaces recapitulating the same. On that axis, you resemble yourself perfectly. Stilted, static, a perfect picture. Change is excluded. Change is movement. It is rendered invisible.

This specular structure of doubled identity can be transposed into an intersubjective structure with only slight adjustment. In the everyday intersubjective world there are of course multiple axes of vision, but they are still strung out along a single line that subordinates them to resemblance and self-sameness. This line is itself nonvisual, it is a narrative line. In the family or at work, you perform your assigned social role. You interpret the script, you visualize or form a "mental picture" of what it means for you to be what you are, parent or child, mother or father, boss or employee, cop or criminal, and embody that visualization for the benefit of others occupying the contrasting but complementary character roles. For each role there is a privileged other in whose recognition of you, you recognize yourself. You mirror yourself in your supporting actor's eyes, and they in yours. A reciprocal difference stretches between paired retinal surfaces. Between them runs a narrative line carrying both social players

across a series of regulated thresholds. You resemble each other more fundamentally than you differ, by virtue of your shared participation in the same narrative. The difference between you and your specular complement is the minimal difference allowing movement. The axes of vision are at slightly skewed angles, so that the mutually self-defining recognition always imperceptibly misses. This perspectival disjunction creates just enough of an imbalance to prevent fusion. Saved from stasis, life goes on. There is change but only minimal change, a skew-induced dynamic distortion generally consistent with sameness. You grow up, grow old, even reverse certain roles, perhaps becoming a parent, in any case turning into an adult after spending your entire life as a child. But you never outgrow yourself, however distorted your aging body and increasingly unfocused mind become. Privileged moments stand out clearly, perfect as pictures in a family album: birthday, graduation, marriage, anniversary, celebrating the raise, retirement. Plain, old, everyday you progresses through a sequence of life passages photographically preserved as stilted poses. Your life passes before you in succeeding tableaux, continuity shots punctuating a banal script just bad enough to systematically but modestly miss the mark. There is progression but no real transformation, the movement barely glimpsed. Wherever you go, there you are again. Unavoidably you. Then you die. This is utopia, 1950s-style.

Reagan is not content with that. He wants to transcend, to be someone else. He wants to be extraordinary, a hero. It jolts him that when he strikes the pose he sees himself. Acting keeps him him, in spite of the fame, because it only allows him to cross a minimal distance, between himself and his complement, in this case the moviegoer. Sitting in the screening room, he anticipates his fans crossing that same distance in the opposite direction. He sees them seeing themselves in their recognition of him. He sees himself seen, as privileged other. He wants out of that mirror-vision, but the film stock fixes him in it by objectifying the partial mental picture he embodied. As long as he is in the movies, he is condemned to be what he is, a second-rate actor in a bad fifties film, complementing, compensating small lives, on a larger-than-life screen. He is destined for greater things.

Complementarity is not completeness. The completeness Reagan yearns for is to be found in a way of appearing that goes beyond text and visualization, script and picture, beyond the dual structuring of specular identity in which one compensates for a lack in the other. He invokes a

kind of vision that grasps exactly and exclusively what mirror-vision misses: the movement, only the movement ("walking, standing, moving normally through a room"). Reagan wants to see the lack in specular identity and, in the process, transform it into a peculiar kind of fullness. The *movement-vision* he looks to is also perspectival ("from behind, from the side"). But its perspectives lie on the far side of a maximum distance, one that can be crossed but not bridged. Occupying one of these perspectives would render Reagan instantly unrecognizable to himself. In that instant, he would have *become* other, in a way unassimilable to reflective identity. Mirror-vision and movement-vision are discontinuous; between them there is no mediation. The first is relative (ongoing reciprocal determination of I-me/I-you), the second is absolute (self-distancing).

Movement-vision is not only discontinuous with mirror-vision. It is discontinuous with itself. To see oneself standing as others see one is not the same as seeing oneself walking as others see one. Maintaining a simple continuity across standing and walking entails positing a commonality between moving and not moving, a generality in which their difference is resolved. It would miss, again, precisely what is being sought: movement as such, in its difference from stasis. The same goes for seeing oneself walking from behind and seeing oneself walking from the side. Movement is relational. Its specificity is compromised if any aspects of the relation are lost to generality—even if it is the generality *of* the terms in the relation, their self-sameness across time or in different coordinates in space.

Only as a generality can there be said to be a continuity between states (a body standing then walking) guaranteed by a unity of the observer (a subject that remains the same across changes of state in the object). The elementary unit of the space of movement-vision is not a generalizing subject coupled with an object in general, a self-identical observer who recognizes the object as the same, as what is common to different movements and to movement and stasis. Its elementary unit is the singularity of a movement that includes a perspective which occludes the actual functioning of both the subject and the object. The objectness of the object is attenuated as the subject, seeing itself as others see it, comes to occupy the object's place as well as its own. Simultaneously occupying its place and the object's, the subject departs from itself. The subject-object symmetry of mirror-vision is broken. The subject overlays itself on the object in a super position of reciprocal functions. The gap left by the subject's self-departure is filled not by a new subject or object but by a process encompassing their disjunction in a tide of change. This disjunctive encompassing is a kind of continuity but is in no way a simple one like that of mirror-vision (one whose implications may be exhausted following a single narrative line). It complicates things. The continuity of movement-vision is an *included disjunction*. It is a continuous displacement of the subject, the object, and their general relation: the empirical perspective uniting them in an act of recognition. It is an opening onto a space of transformation in which a de-objectified movement fuses with a de-subjectified observer. This larger processuality, this *real movement*, includes the perspective from which it is seen. But the perspective is that of a *virtual observer* that is one only with the movement (of the subject's self-departure). Not: I see you standing then walking. But: I (other than) sees me (now you) standing (from-the-side), standing (from-behind), walking (from-the-side), walking (from-behind), and so on. The elementary unit of the space of movement-vision is a *multiply* partial other-perspective included in a fractured movement-in-itself: change. Change: that which includes rupture but is nevertheless continuous (but only with itself, without complement).[3]

When Reagan enters the space of movement-vision, he is leaving behind the empirical world as he knew it. He is coinciding with a perspective that is neither that of his plain old self vis-à-vis the others and objects populating his everyday world, nor that of the others in that world vis-à-vis him as an object in their sight. He leaves the intersubjective world of the other-in-the-self, self and other identity-bound in mutual missed-recognition, for a space of dislocation, the space of movement-as-such, sheer transformation. There, movement is continuously fractured, unhinged from subject and object, and they from each as other. The eye is out of its socket, hovering on an exorbital axis of vision, seeing elsewhere as a kind of other without other, actually *seeing distance*, the in-itself of distance, the as-such of difference-from. Seeing oneself as others see one in fact means occupying an axis of vision on a tangent to self and other, both as actual entities and as conditions of identity. It is to enter a space that opens an outside perspective on the self-other, subject-object axis. The tangent point at which movement-vision meets mirror-vision and diverges from it is the space between the subject-object poles, superposed, fractured, multiplied. It is relationality in itself, freed from its terms.[4]

How can this be construed as completeness? Clues can be found in

Reagan's recounting of the only time that he achieved this vision as an actor. It happened when he was called upon "to portray a scene of total shock."[5] It was in *King's Row,* and he had to play a young, handsome "blade" who has an accident and wakes up to find that the bottom half of his body has been amputated. "Coming from unconsciousness to full realization of what had happened in a few seconds, it presented me with the most challenging acting problem in my career." Reagan continues:

> A whole actor would find such a scene difficult; giving it the necessary dramatic impact as half an actor was murderous. I felt I had neither the experience nor the talent to fake it. I had to find out how it really felt, short of actual amputation. I rehearsed the scene before mirrors, in corners of the studio, while driving home, in the men's room of restaurants, before selected friends. At night I would wake up staring at the ceiling and automatically mutter the line before I went back to sleep. I consulted physicians and psychologists; I even talked to people who were so disabled, trying to brew in myself the cauldron of emotions a man must feel who wakes up one sunny morning to find half of himself gone. I got a lot of answers. I supplied some more for myself. None of mine agreed with any of theirs. Theirs did not agree with each other. I was stumped.[6]

"Wan and worn" from a sleepless night, a despairing Reagan stumbles into the studio for the shoot.

> I found the prop men had arranged a neat deception. Under the gay patchwork quilt, they had cut a hole in the mattress and put a supporting box beneath. I stared at it for a minute. Then, obeying an overpowering impulse, I climbed into the rig. I spent almost that whole hour in stiff confinement, contemplating my torso and the smooth undisturbed flat of the covers where my legs should have been. Gradually, the affair began to terrify me. In some weird way, I felt something horrible had happened to my body. Then gradually I became aware that the crew had quietly assembled, the camera was in position, and the set all lighted. . . . There were cries of "Lights!" and "Quiet, please!" I lay back and closed my eyes, as tense as a fiddlestring. I heard [the director's] low voice call, "Action!" There was a sharp *clack* which signaled the beginning of the scene. I opened my eyes dazedly, looked around, slowly let my gaze travel downward. I can't describe even now my feeling as I tried to reach for where my legs should be. . . . I asked the question—the words that had been haunting me for so many weeks—"Where's the rest of me?" There was no retake. It was a good scene and it came out that way in the picture. Perhaps I never did quite as well again in a single shot. The reason was that I had put myself, as best I could, in the body of another fellow. . . . No single line in my career has been as effective in explaining to me what an actor's life must be. . . . Seeing the rushes, I could barely believe the colored shadow on the screen was myself.[7]

Reagan was so touched by his truncated self that he organized not just the opening chapter but his entire autobiography around this bed scene and took that fateful line for the book's title: *Where's the Rest of Me?* The passage is so rich that a close reading, especially in connection with Reagan's later presidential performances, would prove inexhaustible.[8] The discussion here will be limited to retracing and retranslating the process he relives in it.

Reagan begins by saying that he was called upon to "portray" not a character but a "scene." What he has to embody as an actor is more fundamentally an *event* than a personality. It is something that can't be faked. He needs to know "how it really felt, short of actual amputation": his challenge is to produce and coincide with a reality "short of" the actual. The event at issue is the culmination, in a verbalized coming to consciousness, of a transformation from one bodily state (characterized by mobility, the ability to walk) to a radically different one (characterized by stasis, being bedridden). Reagan must embody the scene of a man *recognizing himself as irretrievably changed,* as having been transported in total darkness and, unbeknown to himself, from one perspective on life to another that is irreconciliably different. The actor's labor is not one of the intellect; the act of recognition is the end result, not the means by which the scene's reality is produced. Acting is a labor of feeling, but not only that. The feeling is inseparable from motility. Reagan becomes a traveling rehearsal. He moves from one place to another and from one kind of observer to another, repeating the culminating phrase, "Where's the rest of me?" He starts from a difference between two unbridgeable perspectives which, in their disjunction, encompass an entire life, as telescoped into the absolute distance between being able to walk and being crippled. Then he tries to learn how to cross from one of these perspectives to the other by multiplying relative perspectives on the event that they delimit but do not contain: the accident, by which the self becomes

other than it was. The phrase marking the culmination of the event in an act of instantaneous recognition of self-as-other is dragged by his body through his everyday world. It functions through repetition as a trace of the transformation, a spectre of an ungraspable, unthinkable event that haunts the flesh. He recites the phrase to different people from different angles: to himself in mirrors, alone in the car, in front of friends, physicians, psychologists, and amputees. He repeats it so often that it becomes automatic. The event, still a trace, begins to circulate freely through all of the interlocking visual fields composing Reagan's empirical world. Finally, Reagan's realm, that of the ordinary, and the realm of the extraordinary, the realm of the ungraspable event, begin to contaminate one another in a gradual contagion. Reagan's entire world becomes colored by amputation. He is stumped, repeatedly referring to himself as a cripple. But he isn't, actually, and he hasn't yet produced the short-of-actual reality of amputation. He only embodies its anticipation. The problem is that the perspectives he has connected to the event remain relative. They do not "agree." They now communicate across their difference but cannot be superposed. It takes an artifice to jolt them into a synthesis—one that Reagan is incapable of constructing. His compulsive rehearsing has only exhausted him and driven him into a panic. He can no longer act in any sense of the word. His manic activity has only succeeded in working him into a state of heightened excitability that is at the same time the pitch of passivity: he has become a peripatetic panic autonomically repeating a line.

This marks the end of the first phase of the process. The second begins with a "deception" prepared without Reagan's knowledge and to which he is passively subjected. He loads himself into a "rig," a bed with a hole in it to conceal his legs. His activity in the real world is now suspended by artifice; his anticipation of the event is turned into dramatic suspense as he sinks, quilted, into the scene. Will it happen? For a painful hour, he contemplates his torso. A feeling slowly wells within him. The time of contemplation is like an infolding of his previous activity. As if all of the relative perspectives he placed into communication were overlaying themselves on one another and on the disjunct but encompassing perspectives of the before and after between which he now lies suspended. In this state of suspended animation, he is more than himself but less than whole. His eyes close. "Action!" His eyes reopen.

Phase three. The suspension of the suspense by the director's signal transports him across a blackout of vision into the space of transformation. The feeling that was welling inside his body bursts forth in a gesture and a phrase. He bolts up, crying his line. At that moment, he enters the body of another fellow. It's for real (short of actual). This time he cannot recognize himself in the rushes.

In a way, it is both real and actual. Reagan has been changed by the experience. An actual event really did occur. He feels afterward that as an actor he is "only half a man." He is cut to the quick by his moment of triumph. The event he recreated has bled into his everyday life, coloring it forever. Reagan laments that he has "become a semi-automaton," and will remain one as long as he is just an actor. The autonomic repetition into which he collapses during the preparatory phase leading up to the event has carried over into his everyday life. He can't go on that way. He resolves to find the rest of him. He will look for it in conservative politics.

If the event was in a sense real and if it made him a semiautomaton, does that mean that finding the rest of him entails becoming a *complete* automaton? The question is answered by his subsequent career.

The reason Reagan gives for his determination to complete his transformation is that he felt like "a shut-in invalid, nursed by publicity. I have always liked space," he writes, "the feeling of freedom, a broad range of friends, and variety (not excluding the publication [of the same name])." Again, it is not the fakeness of acting, nor the media hype, that he is objecting to. Hollywood is simply not big enough for him. He needs more space, more friends and observers, a greater variety of relative perspectives through which to circulate as he repeats his lines. Politics will allow him to multiply incalculably the contexts through which he drags his founding event of reality-producing, acted amputation, extending the trajectory of its trace, widening the space it colors. If accompanied by adequate artifice, this will allow Reagan to enter innumerable bodies of other "fellows." These bodies, in their eagerness (or at least willingness) to play their social roles, will have worked themselves into a state of heightened receptivity, a kind of panicked passivity marked by autonomic repetition of assigned lines and a susceptibility to becoming-other, on cue. All the world will be a stage, with Reagan in the leading role as carrier of a dehumanizing contagion.

To recapitulate: Reagan invents a technology of the event that is also a technology of the self and a technologizing of the self. He starts from the need to portray a scene culminating in an event that can be taken as

exemplary. The accident, in the suddenness of its inclusively disjunctive transformation not only of the shape of a body but of an entire life, can be seen as a figure of the event in general. The generic or exemplary event is short of actual. It need only be acted. But its acting yields a reality of its own. Through his performance of the exemplary event, Reagan effects an actual change in his life. That change is expressed as a blend between the exemplary event and his ordinary world, a bleed between the two. The bleed occurs in a moment of prolonged suspense. Reagan's activity both as screen actor and as actor in the everyday world is artificially suspended. Reagan's line of sight is trained on his own body. It moves down his torso toward his waist, his center of gravity, and then disappears as if moving through his body's center into another space, experienced as one of affect. A feeling wells. Reagan's vision and body collapse into an intensity that increases in pitch the longer it lasts. The way for the welling of that intensity was prepared by extensive means.

Reagan had spent his time leading up to the bleed moving between empirical contexts, each of which was characterized by a certain kind of relative perspective in the sense defined above: an object (always Reagan) appeared before the eyes of various observers (sometimes Reagan) and was recognized as itself. In each context, Reagan repeated the same words. The words were treated as a kind of incantation, as if they enveloped something of the desired event, contained its trace. Their repetition deposited a trace of the event in each of the contexts, gradually coloring the everyday world. Conversely, each context left its own trace in the words. It is as if the words were absorbing the relative perspectives, absorbing traces of the movements accomplished within them, as well as the movement from one to the other, blending the motion of acting the exemplary event with ordinary circulation through the world. The accumulation immobilizes Reagan under its weight. He enters a state of passivity marked by heightened excitability.

When he places himself in the rig, he continues to move, but only in place. He is reeling, overtaken by vertigo, as if his previous movements were repeating themselves in intensity. Unmoving, he circulates between empirical contexts and incantations of the exemplary event. He relives them sequentially and simultaneously, as if he can pass into each of those contexts and perform all of his rehearsals at the same time without moving his body or parting his lips. He is all eyes and emotion. When his eyes descend to the blankness at his waist, he is only emotion. He is no one, nowhere, in darkness. He is in an in-between space composed of accumulated movements bled into one another and folding in upon the body. And he is in an in-between time after before but before after, in a gap of suspended animation following the preparation of the event but preceding its culmination. He is in the space of the duration of an ungraspable event.[9] The feeling of the event washes through him (or that in-between of space and time), a wave or vibration that crests in the spoken lines. This time, the repetition of the lines effectively produces the event. But the event, as produced, is different. It has the reality of an acted event, a performance: short of actual. The "short of actual" is expressed as a prolonging of the intensive in-betweenness of the event in the empirical world. It is a subsidence of the emotion, a flattening of the wave as it spreads out to fill a wider area. Reagan will now be extensively what he just was intensively. He will be an ambulant blend of the ordinary everyday and of the exemplary event: he will be a walking amputee. His flesh will carry the mark of the artifice that jolted him into the event, endowing it with a kind of half-life: he will be a semiautomaton. He will find a method that will take this new self, semitechnologized through acting, through a similar transformation, after which he will feel it to be complete.

Fleshing Out: Definitions

Call the closing of Reagan's eyes as he sees himself at the pitch of panic and exhaustion *movement-vision*. It is a vision that passes into the body and through it to another space. Call that infra-empirical space, what the blind-sight of movement-vision sees, *the body without an image*. The body without an image is an accumulation of relative perspectives and the passages between them, an additive space of utter receptivity retaining and combining past movements, in intensity, extracted from their actual terms. It is less a space in the empirical sense than a gap in space that is also a suspension of the normal unfolding of time. Still, it can be understood as having a spatiotemporal order of its own.

In its spatial aspect, the body without an image is the involution of subject-object relations into the body of the observer and of that body into itself. Call the spatiality proper to the body without an image *quasi corporeality*.[10] The quasi corporeal can be thought of as the superposition of the sum total of the relative perspectives in which the body has been

implicated, as object or subject, plus the passages between them: in other words, as an interlocking of overlaid perspectives that nevertheless remain distinct. The involution of space renders these relative perspectives absolute: it registers movement as included disjunction. Subject, object, and their successive emplacements in empirical space are subtracted, leaving the pure relationality of process. Quasi corporeality is an abstract *map* of transformation. Its additive subtraction simultaneously constitutes the spatiality of the body without an image and translates it into another kind of time. For pure relationality extracted from its terms can be understood, at the extreme, as a time out of space, a measureless gap in and between bodies and things, an incorporeal interval of change.

Call that substanceless and durationless moment the pure *event*. The time of the event does not belong per se to the body in movement-vision or even to the body without an image. They incur it. It occurs to them. As time-form it belongs to the *virtual*, defined as that which is maximally abstract yet real, whose reality is that of potential—pure relationality, the interval of change, the in-itself of transformation. It is a time that does not pass, that only comes to pass. It cannot be suspended because, unlike empirical time, it does not flow. The event is superempirical: it is the crystallization, out the far side of quasi corporeality, of already actualized spatial perspectives and emplacements into a time-form from which the passing present is excluded and which, for that very reason, is as future as it is past, looping directly from one to the other. It is the immediate proximity of before and after. It is nonlinear, moving in two directions at once: out from the actual (as past) into the actual (as future). The actuality it leaves as past is the same actuality to which it no sooner comes as future: from being to becoming.

Thus far the body without an image has been discussed exclusively as an optical effect. But there are other modes of perception involved. The spatiality of the body without an image can be understood even more immediately as an effect of *proprioception*, defined as the sensibility proper to the muscles and ligaments as opposed to tactile sensibility (which is "exteroceptive") and visceral sensibility (which is "interoceptive").[11] Tactility is the sensibility of the skin as surface of contact between the perceiving subject and the perceived object. Proprioception folds tactility into the body, enveloping the skin's contact with the external world in a dimension of medium depth: between epidermis and viscera. The muscles and ligaments register as conditions of movement what the skin internalizes as qualities: the hardness of the floor underfoot as one looks into a mirror becomes a resistance enabling station and movement; the softness of a cat's fur becomes a lubricant for the motion of the hand. Proprioception translates the exertions and ease of the body's encounters with objects into a muscular memory of relationality. This is the cumulative memory of skill, habit, posture. At the same time as proprioception folds tactility in, it draws out the subject's reactions to the qualities of the objects it perceives through all five senses, bringing them into the motor realm of externalizable response.

Proprioception effects a double translation of the subject and the object into the body, at a medium depth where the body is only body, having nothing of the putative profundity of the self nor of the superficiality of external encounter. This asubjective and nonobjective medium depth is one of the strata proper to the corporeal; it is a dimension of the *flesh*. The memory it constitutes could be diagrammed as a superposition of vectorial fields composed of multiple points in varying relations of movement and rest, pressure and resistance, each field corresponding to an action. Since it is composed of interactions subtracted from their actual terms, it is abstract in the same sense as is the included disjunction of movement-vision. Proprioceptive memory is where the infolded limits of the body meet the mind's externalized responses and where both rejoin the quasi corporeal and the event. As infolding, the faculty of proprioception operates as a corporeal transformer of tactility into quasi corporeality. It is to the skin what movement-vision is to the eyes. Its vectors are perspectives of the flesh. Although movement-vision opens onto the same space as proprioception, the latter can be said to be the mode of perception proper to the spatiality of the body without an image because it opens exclusively onto that space and registers qualities directly and continuously as movement. The eyes also see in the intersubjective space of mirror-vision, but they do not register movement without also registering its arrest, in other words form (the visual image insofar as it is susceptible to geometric expression; movement as captured in a still, snapshot, or tableau giving it measure and proportion). It is because vision interrupts movement with formed images that it must interrupt itself to see movement as such. Movement-vision is sight turned proprioceptive, the eyes reabsorbed into the flesh through a black hole in the geometry of empirical space and a

gash in bodily form (the hole in Reagan's stage bed; amputation). Vision is a mixed mode of perception, registering both form and movement. For it to gain entry into the quasi corporeal, the realm of pure relationality, pure movement, it must throw aside form in favor of unmediated participation in the flesh. Movement-vision is retinal muscle, a visual strength flexed in the extremities of exhaustion.[12]

The temporality of the body without an image coincides with the eclipse of the subject in emotion. It is a time of interruption, the moment vision plunges into the body's suspended animation. It is a gap, like the event, but one that is still attached to empirical time as a punctuation of its linear unfolding. It can be understood as the double, in the actual, of the event, whose reality as pure interval of transformation is virtual, on the order of potential, more energetic than bodily, incorporeal. Or, its attachment to empirical time can be understood as the durational equivalent of the edge of the hole in empirical space into which the eyes of movement-vision disappear, in which case it would be the rim of the virtual at the crossroads of the actual. Reserve the term *suspense* for the temporality proper to the body without an image.

Just as the spatiality of the body without an image opens out onto another time-form, its temporality opens out onto another space. This opening occurs in a second dimension of the flesh: one that is deeper than the stratum of proprioception, in the sense that it is farther removed from the surface of the skin, but it is still at a medium depth in that it also intervenes between the subject and the object. It, too, involves a cellular memory and has a mode of perception proper to it: *viscerality* (interoception). Visceral sensibility immediately registers excitations gathered by the five "exteroceptive" senses even before they are fully processed by the brain.[13] Walking down a dark street at night in a dangerous part of town, your lungs throw a spasm before you consciously see and can recognize as human the shadow thrown across your path. As you cross a busy noonday street, your stomach turns somersaults before you consciously hear and identify the sound of screeching brakes that careens toward you. Having survived the danger, you enter your building. Your heart stops before you consciously feel the tap on your shoulder and identify it as the greeting of a friend. The immediacy of visceral perception is so radical that it can be said without exaggeration to precede the exteroceptive sense perception. It anticipates the translation of the sight or sound or touch perception into

something recognizable associated with an identifiable object. Call that "something recognizable" a quality (or property). Movement-vision as proprioception subtracts qualified form from movement; viscerality subtracts quality as such from excitation. It registers *intensity*.

The dimension of viscerality is adjacent to that of proprioception, but they do not overlap. The dimension of proprioception lies midway between stimulus and response, in a region where infolded tactile encounter meets externalizing response to the qualities gathered by all five senses. It performs a synthesis of those intersecting pathways in the medium of the flesh, thus opened to its own quasi corporeality. Viscerality, though no less of the flesh, is a rupture in the stimulus-response paths, a leap in place into a space outside action-reaction circuits. Viscerality is the perception of suspense. The space into which it jolts the flesh is one of an inability to act or reflect, a spasmodic passivity, so taut a receptivity that the body is paralyzed until it is jolted back into action-reaction by recognition. Call it the space of *passion*.[14] Its elementary units are neither the absolute perspectives of movement-vision nor the vectorial fields of proprioception proper, but rather *degrees* of intensity. The space of passion constitutes a quasi-qualitative realm adjacent to the quasi corporeal.[15] Say that every absolute perspective/vectorial field composing the quasi corporeal is associated with a certain intensity, a higher or lower degree of spasmodic passivity. The intensity can be thought of as filling the interval of quasi-corporeal space with a time-derivative, as bathing its relationality with spatialized suspense. If quasi corporeality is a maximally abstract spatial matrix, intensity is the nonqualified substance occupying it. Passion, then, is best understood less as an abstract space than as the time-stuff of spatial abstraction. Call the coupling of a unit of quasi corporeality with a unit of passion an *affect*: an ability to affect and a susceptibility to be affected. An *emotion* or *feeling* is a recognized affect, an identified intensity as reinjected into stimulus-response paths, into action-reaction circuits of infolding and externalization—in short, into subject-object relations. Emotion is a contamination of empirical space by affect, which belongs to the body without an image.

(The need to keep deriving time from space and space from time testifies to the inadequacy of the terms. The body without an image is a seamless spatiotemporal mix [as is empirical space as understood by physics]. Still, time and space concepts are necessary heuristic devices for

thinking the specificity of the interlocking processes contributing to the construction of the body without an image. See chapter 8 below for more on spatiotemporality.)

Call proprioception and viscerality taken together—as two complementary dimensions of the "medium"-depth perception most directly implicated in the body's registration of the in-betweenness of the incorporeal event—*mesoperception.* Mesoperception is the synesthetic sensibility: it is the medium where inputs from all five senses meet, across subsensate excitation, and become flesh together, tense and quivering. Mesoperceptive flesh functions as a corporeal transformer where one sense shades into another over the failure of each, their input translated into movement and affect.[16] Mesoperception can be called *sensation* for short.

Action!

Affect contaminates empirical space through language. Entranced in his trick bed, Reagan moves through quasi-corporeal space, accumulating perspectives and passages and, with them, affects. As regions of his quasi corporeality are superimposed upon one another, their associated intensities mount. It is as if the body's abstract matrix and its nonqualified filling form a resonating vessel rising to an unbearable pitch, reaching the point where it can no longer contain itself. The virtual resonation overflows as actual sound. A voice, perhaps his own, speaking words charged with feeling but whose meaning Reagan will not fully understand until many years later. "Where's the rest of me?"

Bedded in passivity, Reagan cannot jolt himself out of his condition. He is freed from the body without an image and returned to the everyday world, albeit a changed man, by the words of another called out as a cue: "Action!" Call the cue-call an *order-word.* Call the question-response an *expression*—keeping in mind that the expression is preconceptual and even presubjective, more an existential *cry* than a communication. The expression is the unmeditated and unmediated speaking of the event by the flesh. It culminates Reagan's transformation into half a man. It gives him a demi-self. What it expresses is less an idea or an emotion formed by a signifying subject than an ontological *problem* posing as an open question the very possibility of constructing such a subject. Feelings and ideas

will follow from the expression and, before solving the problem it poses, will develop its problematic nature even further. The line Reagan speaks makes him feel like a cripple and gives rise to the idea that he has become a semiautomaton. He has found half of himself, but he happens to have found it in the "body of another fellow." He is on the road to completing himself, to identifying his body, but he got there by mouthing a prescripted line that made him into a foreshortened other. Many secondary questions arise. All of them can be condensed into one: how can exalted difference be derived from banal repetition? Repeat: how can a difference born of becoming-other be self-identity? Again: how can higher being arise from abject becoming?

The cue-call or order-word that jolted Reagan into the body of another fellow had the force of a magic incantation. It induced a phenomenon of *possession* verbally manifested in the automaton mouthing of prescripted words, that is to say as *ventriloquism.* Susceptibility to possession and ventriloquism are the requisite skills of the true actor Reagan now embodies. Together they define the actor's talent: *self-affectation.* That term should be understood in the double sense of the artificial construction of a self and of the suffusing of that self with affect.

Again, nothing would have happened without artifice. Reagan is extracted from the body without an image and delivered to the actuality of his becoming-actor by the good graces of a "rig." The order-word simply tripped the rig into operation. Call the rigging of becoming *induction.* The activation of the rig by the order-word culminated his passion by inducing his possession of his body. Although he may think of himself as having been possessed by the other fellow of the script, it is ultimately the body without an image that takes his body, endowing it with a measure of potential. Reagan is now in becoming; his being is "short of actual." That is to say, his actual perceptions are colored by the virtual. Unable to recognize the virtual-in-the-actual, Reagan develops it into feelings and ideas whose combined effect is to transpose it into a future possibility: an ultimate actuality in which the potential that has seeped into his body has been fully realized as the complete man that he desperately wants to become but which, as an ideal of being, prefigures the end of becoming. Reagan's body reenters linear time, although it still carries with it traces of the body without an image, transposed into a phantom amputation. Call the phantom amputation that comes to stand for the body without an image in Reagan's mind and emotions the *exemplary event* (or central

phantasm) of his life. Call each threshold he passes on the road to his ideal of being, each movement culminated in an everyday context or between contexts, an *ordinary event* (also a *phantasm*). (As used here, the word phantasm does not connote irreality; quite the contrary, it connotes the mode of reality proper to events, however exalted or ordinary: insistent ontological ungraspability).[17]

The exemplary event is a deferred completion. But the fact that it takes over his life indicates that Reagan has already attained a completion of sorts. For the ideal implied by the exemplary event to have been produced, Reagan had to have rejoined the body without an image for a spasmodic moment. His empirical body was completed by its virtual double. The word "completion" is misleading. In the case of the exemplary event, it is misleading because it is not attainable: it denotes an ideal being and, as such, lies beyond the reach of becoming. Call the ideal of being-complete *unity*. The ideas, emotions, and mirror-vision images attached to unity keep the ideal alive as the object of a compulsion or tendency. Call them *whole attractors*. In the case of the body without an image, "completion" is misleading because it is always-already attained at every turn. Call that perpetual future-past doubling ordinary events *supplementarity*. The exemplary event is the transposition of supplementarity into the lure of unity. Transposed supplementarity is the mode of being of the pure event. Call the event, to the extent that it continues to call from across its transposition, defining a compulsion or tendency to fracture the integrity attributed to the body in everyday action-reaction circuits and to shatter the symmetry attributed to subject and object in their mirrored mutuality, a *fractal attractor*.

Call the seeing of the body without an image by the blind-sight of movement-vision *blank mimicry*. The activity of the actor is less to imitate a character in a script than to mimic in the flesh the incorporeality of the event. Blank mimicry is supplemented seeming (acting injected with real passion and yielding real change) and seeming supplemental (the attainment of real passion and real change through the staging of the body in suspended animation). The rig, the order-word, the question-response, induction, possession, ventriloquism, the development of an emotionally charged ideal of unity and the quest to reach that ideal—all of these are technologies for *making seeming being*,[18] for making a life of acting, for making something unified of supplementarity, something central of liminality, for filling the fractal rim to make a (w)hole.

Reagan could not recognize himself in the rushes of *King's Row*. In the screening room, he misrecognized himself as his new ideal. He looked back into the mirror, even as he was marked forever by movement-vision. He saw himself as other without other that is the body without an image, then blinked and saw himself again as self-in-other, in a mirror image of his own future. His subsequent career would be characterized by a continual flicker between these two visions.

Reagan was a bad actor. This was not an accident. It was *the* accident, the accident of his career, his fate, his professional crippledom. If he had been a good actor, he would not have had to turn to politics in a quest to complete himself. He would have found passion in each new movie. Repetition of that rush would have been enough. He was a real actor only once. He became a politician for life. It is not that there is anything to prevent a good actor from going into politics, but it would be experienced as a career choice, not a compulsion. And the kind of political success a good actor could have would be very different, and undoubtedly lesser, than the success Reagan had. As a politician, Reagan did not stop acting, despite his tendency in his first autobiography to portray the two roles as mutually exclusive. He went about completing himself as a political actor.

> "He once described to me how he got into politics by accident," says a former senior Administration official. "He told me he told someone, 'By God, what am I doing in politics? The kinds of things I've done so far are far away from this. But then I thought that a substantial part of the political thing is acting and role playing and I know how to do that. So I used to worry, but I don't anymore.' "[19]

There he goes again. Repeating lines: "He told me he told someone." Ventriloquizing himself. Still at it after all those years. Reagan not only did not let go of the technologies of making seeming being, he did nothing to hide them. His spectacular political success in fact hinged on making seeming being visible. Reaganism is the regime of the visibility of seeming being. Reagan's professional crippledom, his entry into public life, was the exemplary event allowing the population of an entire nation to develop emotions and ideas along those same lines. As political actor, he catalyzed processes already at work in society. He was the Great Inducer, the national actor-cum-stage director who called a country to action in pursuit of the lofty lure of postwar unity. The amputation written into this script was the "wound" of Vietnam. The all-too-visible rig was TV.[20]

Scenario

Find a cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to the body. Use it to express the unmediated participation of the flesh in the image (whether "natural" or mass-mediated). Find a logic for the corporeal (body *and* image) that does not oppose it to the virtual, even as it distinguishes them, as dimensions of each other. Find a logic for the virtual (imagelessness *and* potential) that does not remove it from the real; for example by equating it with the imaginary. Dis-sever, instead, the imageless from the Ideal.

For an incorporeal materialism.[21]

See the body get rigged. See the flesh suffuse with artifice, making it as palpably political as it is physical. For the artifice is always cued, and the cuing is collective.

Consider that there is no "raw" perception. That all perception is rehearsed. Even, especially, our most intense, most abject and inspiring, self-perceptions.

REPETITION PRECEDES RESEMBLANCE (even to oneself).[22]

Consider that although change is compatible with repetition, it is nonetheless ontologically prior to sameness. See stasis, see station, as a special case of movement (a special case of reiterative movement: that allowing recognition).

PASSAGE PRECEDES POSITION.[23]

Rethink body, subjectivity, and social change in terms of movement, affect, force, and violence—before code, text, and signification. These latter reiterate arrest (the Law: where bodies cease, only to mean, and where meaning carries a sentence).

Even an arch-conservative politician can see and reach beyond the law long enough to catalyze a movement. A special case of reiterative movement (one that allows misrecognition of the fractured time of the virtual as a future Unity). This is becoming—against itself, because subsumed under that Ideal. Against itself—because its self-assigned meaning ("our Unity!") contradicts its own senseless, eminently effective, rallying cry ("the rest of me?"). Remember the becoming-Reaganoid of America through the 1980s. And well beyond.[24] Remember how one bad actor shed his self-likeness to steer a nation sameward. This is becoming—at once highly virulent and self-arresting.

What is left of *us,* after "our" unity has completed "his" amputation?

Do we, cultural theorists, recognize ourselves in the rushes?

Rig writing, unarresting.

DISSEVER THE IMAGELESS FROM THE IDEAL. ✓