

5. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 207.
6. De Sade quoted by Apollinaire quoted by Georges Bataille in his *Literature and Evil*, trans. by Alastair Hamilton (New York: Urizen Books, 1973), p. 89.
7. Bataille, p. 6.
8. Bataille, p. 89.

9.

Critical Languages

First of all, my thanks to Allen S. Weiss whose book *The Aesthetics of Excess* I have learned from and used, and to Steven Shaviro for his passionate *Passion & Excess*. And to George Bataille and the other members of the group Acéphale.

Introduction

When the Divine Marquis, as some have named him, in his *Philosophy in the Bedroom* has his characters "socratize," he is not only referring to Mr. Socrates. He also is pointing to his society's conflation of "mouth" and "anus" ("philosophize" and "sodomize"): a conflation that has, perhaps, been one result of the Descartian mind-body split, that model of human identity.

The current antisodomy law in Georgia reminds us of this equation of mouth and anus in its definition of *sodomy*: "A person commits the offense of sodomy when he performs or submits to any sexual act involving the sex organ of one person and the mouth of anus or another."

On the one hand, this society's confusion between or equating of the mouth and anus reveals a certain truth about its law-making

sector: That they, or we, all the judges, make laws, render absolute and often life-destroying judgments prior to the act of understanding, even the understanding of our own language. On the other hand, this society's equation of mouth and anus has as one of its sub-clauses the following statement: if acts involving the anus, when sexual, are crimes, so are acts of the mouth, expressions, that refer to sex and sexuality.

Art and artist have always been marginal to this polis, the political body. Right now, our government is increasingly attacking acts of the mouth, written and oral speech, which pertain to those parts of the body not ruled by the logos, and acts of speech occurring in other media, visual, theatrical, etc. Once only marginalized, art and artists are slowly becoming criminalized by a government whose real heads are just heads, invisible, without bodies.

It is imperative to return to the body, to return the body. I am going to talk about language, the language of art criticism, but only insofar as that language relates to and occurs in the whole body.

Personal Language Personal History

I'm not an art critic. That is, excuse these remnants of Marxism (I am told that Marxism is an outdated model), I have not and do not earn my living by writing art criticism. In my twenties and early thirties when I lived and wrote in New York City, I was part of the art world. Primarily because my friends were artists. Musicians, painters, performance artists, filmmakers, dancers, anything but writers. We hung out together, shared problems and misery, usually poverty, though I'm not sure poverty's shareable, fucked each other, and worked together. Later on, I wrote some articles for ARTFORUM and a few other publications: all of these articles rose, first, out of friendship. Friendship and an inclination for what I call *joy*.

I actually grew up in New York City, a rarity for those in the art world who lived in the city, spent my college years in Boston and

California, and returned to New York for all the early adult years except for two escapes to San Francisco. Even prior to college I was an art-world baby. When I was fourteen years old, I would sneak out of my high school in order to hang around with downtown avant-garde filmmakers and painters who were probably far more fascinated by my schoolgirl uniform than by any other aspect of whatever's called "me." I remember, when I was fifteen, Jack Smith telling me that what he most wanted to do was to build a huge dome somewhere in North Africa. Whoever entered this dome would tell Jack his or her dreams and instantaneously Jack would make a movie of this dream or series of dreams. Movies would be shown twenty-four hours a day.

Most of all, I remember being taught that it's not an art work's content, surface content, that matters, but the process of making art. That only process matters.

After that, I was taught by the Conceptualists that all that matters, in art, in the making of art, is the intention, intentionality. To use Zen language: one should not mistake the finger that points at the moon for the moon. That all that does not concern intention is simply prettiness; that prettiness is, above all, despicable.

These were the golden cowboy days of art. Unfortunately or fortunately, certainly by some act of fortune, I'm female.

I learned in the New York City art world many other things. That every phenomenon, every act is a text and all texts refer to all other texts. Meaning is a network, not a centralized icon. Most of all, I learned that it is art that matters, the making of art that gives value to my life and that I'm allowed, indeed I *must* do whatever I have to do, to make art.

I thought, in those golden days when poverty was noble and the United States was rich, art is our way, our true Western religion.

Six years ago I started to live in England; except for brief working tours, I didn't return to the United States and to New York City until January of this year.

England, as I'm sure you know, is a society defined, even dominated, by class. Whereas money generally orchestrates social and political differentiation in the United States, in England differences

