Deformed, altered in their physique, in their gestures, in their thinking, no matter what their sex, their species, their race, creatures, enslaved by the social and political body as a whole, testify, even in the shape of their bodies, to the effects of the brutality and the violence of what we call culture.

— Camille Larsen, *Culture or Domination*

At noon the garden is covered in a violet haze.¹ There is no movement on the paths of rose-colored sand. Rows of flowers of different species receive a cloud of water dispersed by big rotating sprinklers. But there is no wind to agitate them. The bodies are laid out side by side in deck chairs, immobile, naked. A voice is heard from time to time. Then silence. Numerous hours pass without anything happening. One watches the sky through the fountains’ mist, one waits for a cloud to form and to disintegrate, but most of the time the sky is empty, gray, blue, white. Not even a bird passes. In the middle of the day the feeders come to nourish the bodies. They arrive from everywhere, and despite the transparency of their wings, the sky is all obscured. Their bodies are red, blue-green, very shiny, ringed in various places. The feeders fly up close, and without touching down they practice mouth-to-mouth, their beaks slide between the lips, and they vomit into the gullet thick and syrupy liquids whose composition varies every day. One closes one’s eyes so as not to see the large pendulous eyes that move in all directions, but despite long habit it is still difficult to get used to them. One can, however, watch without displeasure the multiple veins of their wings that one discerns clearly despite their movement. At times some of the bodies refuse nourishment. Then the beaks are forced between the lips, and it is impossible to offer any real resistance despite their apparent fragility. When the feeders have gone, at times some of the
bodies start to make long and sweet raucous howls, never-ending. Or some start to
laugh and shake their heads in all directions. They are drunk, to tell the truth,
and they shout, they make all kinds of noises with their throats. Others fall asleep.
Time stands still. Now and then the noise of a petal falling attracts attention. Or
it’s the whistling of one of the numerous jets of water at the end of its run and
about to stop. One hardly speaks. From the body, in this position, only the head
can perceive the other parts when looking down, the cylindrical chest, the stom-
ach, the legs both fused and divided, whose diminishing shape resembles the tail
of the big blue fish that can be seen in the pools. It is said that the bodies used to
live in the oceans. They were called mermaids. But the mermaids had forelimbs.
The bodies have this in common with the mermaids; they swim perfectly and they
sing, it is said, as the mermaids used to sing. One sings only when one is in the
water, at bath time. One can do it any time when in the open air. One never does.
In the water of the pools, the sound waves don’t leave the surface. So one sings.
This is the time of day that everyone awaits. The big apes come a bit before sunset.
They walk solemnly while beating their tambourines with bare hands. Their bod-
ies are without clothes, and on their heads they wear silver-colored caps. One by
one they carry the bodies to the pool where they let them fall with great splashes.
One lets oneself go to the bottom of the pool. One comes and goes very quickly,
from bottom to top, in all directions, and in passing one brushes against the enor-
mous blue fish that move aside. Sometimes one plays with them, belly-to-belly, in
a kind of battle. Most of all one sings. One makes stridencies, modulations, low and barely audible sighs.
One twirls or goes upside down. When one goes back up to the surface one sees
the big apes covered with hair, jumping all around the pools clapping their palms
together. Or they lean down, trying to catch a body when it passes by. One always
escapes them. At a given moment the big apes plunge in long-handled nets to
gather the bodies one after another. They struggle violently. Many don’t let them-
selves be taken the first time or else they manage to upset their net and they
escape as fast as they can. In the end all the bodies are taken prisoner. During
this capture the big apes show neither impatience nor anger. They treat the bodies
very gently and rock them in their arms to calm them when they are caught. Later
on they place them on tables in the relaxation rooms, and they start to massage
them by covering them with benzoin oil. Their skin gleams. Sometimes one of the
bodies, slipping in the hands of the masseur, falls to the floor and lets out a loud
cry. The beings come to the garden when they organize parties. It’s usually at
nightfall after bath time, and it’s only during these occasions that one has the
freedom to see the night. The flowers aren’t visible, but one perceives their odors
much more than during the day. Girandoles and Bengal lights are lit in the paths and above the pools. Immobile in the deck chairs one always fears being struck by cinders or sparks. Colored lanterns hung all along wires light up the rows of bodies. The beings arrive, dancing laughing very loudly shouting. They go in groups, or two by two, holding each other by the waist or by the hand. When they pass next to the mute and immobile bodies, they start to sing, O seesaw, O lilies / silver enemas, pointing at the enormous sexes stretched out on the bellies all in a row.

Or else they make derisive gestures. Or they call out to one or another of the bodies inviting them to the party, challenging them to follow. For the ones so summoned, there is no other option but to bow their head to their chest or close their eyes. Sometimes the beings ask mocking questions. No one responds even when threatened with beatings. When one of the bodies in these circumstances is taken with fear and rolls in the sand of the path, one of the beings uses a whistle to call the big apes. Without waiting for them to arrive, the beings turn and leave together, laughing and making remarks. The body writhes about on the ground and rolls over, sometimes on the belly with head held high, sometimes on the back, split legs convulsively projected in the air. One of the big apes seizes the body, rocking to calm it, and wipes away the sand sticking to the recently oiled skin. At times during the feasts the milking of the bodies takes place in the garden paths instead of the relaxation rooms. The big apes place the milking machines on the sexes in the presence of the beings. On these occasions there are a lot of beings. They come and go from one machine to the next, evaluating the various bodies' productions, establishing a winner. When the winner of the milking is declared, one of the beings comes forward with a heavy garland of flowers while music, a kind of flourish of trumpets, breaks out. In the reestablished silence the body receiving the garland is relieved of the milking machine and celebrated with a great pompous speech. At certain times the winner is celebrated by what the beings call the beating. The winner is then carried in triumph onto a stage and placed belly down on the knees of a being whose hands are gloved. The head hangs down on the same side as the garland. All the rest of the body is supported on its sexual bulb. The trumpets flourish as the being flings its hands in studded gloves at full speed on the body's backside. The music covers the cries except for those who are nearby. Only the satisfied bodies enjoy the beating. Everyone else systematically practices insomnia so as not to be a winner. Other than the pain caused by the blows, the facedown position on the being's knees is in itself a source of misery because of the enormous pressure exerted by the body when bellydown on the sex. Each blow applied to the buttocks is such a shock to the body that the heart stops beating. Sometimes the winner is carried away unconscious to a deck chair to the raptur-
ous applause of the standing beings. The parade of the bodies ends at the same
time as the feast, at the moment when the lanterns are almost all out, when the
smells of cooked sugars fade away. Before that the beings leaving the scene of the
feast must cross back over the paths. Sometimes they pass by very quickly, yawning
not talking much without stopping beside the bodies. Most often the beings
come back from the feast with melting lumps of marshmallow on the end of sticks,
or yams, or caramels. They take up positions in the shadows behind the deck
chairs where they can’t be seen, and one by one they jump out shouting to lance
their hot and sticky projectiles on the faces on the torsos on the bellies on the
sexes of the bodies all in a row. It’s hard to not cry out when one is hit. Some
beings wipe their hands right on the bodies to get rid of the rest of the food. Some
nights when the full moon turns the garden white, the beings arrange races. They
call them performances. The big apes bring the spheres in which the bodies are
inserted before being released into the air. The pressure of the bodies on the inner
walls maneuvers the spheres. They would make excellent machines if their speed
during the race were not regulated by the beings. When the beings seize the
spheres, they open them by throwing them to the ground with all their might.
Once captured, the bodies are carried and held in the sandy path so that they can
be treated according to the performance code. Rape is but one of the abuses they
undergo. One hears screams, protestations, sounds of falling, whistles. Each one
is carried to the pools by the big apes. Then one swims with all one’s might to the
bottom of the water; one screams, one struggles to escape the nets. The big apes
have to work in groups to capture each of the bodies. The torches create refections
in the water. One twists in the big apes’ hands in order to fall into the water
of the pool. It is said that one night, one of the bodies succeeded in this way to be
free and was found dead from fatigue in the morning. That one is called victorious
and is celebrated by long collective murmurings the day after each feast. It is said
that there are other gardens like this one and that the beings have their festivities
there on the nights when they are not busy here. Some say that there are many
other beings like those we know as well as other bodies and other gardens. Some
rare afternoons after the feedings the regurgitations and the naps there are rebel-
lions. One of the bodies complains, crying and yelling. Then one after the other
they all make themselves heard. There are moans howls grumblings buzzes hoots
curses angry incoherent speeches groans clamors. Disorder spreads in the rows of
deck chairs among the shaken bodies, jumping throwing themselves down beating
their heads on the ground. The disorder continues like this until bath time or until
one after the other the bodies fall asleep from fatigue, even on the ground, mouths
full of sand. The big apes wake them up with caresses, throaty noises, a kind of
The rebellions can take other forms. One or another starts to tell a story, for example, there was a time when you were not a slave, remember that. Each one in turn recovers the story of this mythical time when bodies had legs for walking when they stood upright, some even tell that they had arms like the beings. When the beings are questioned on this subject before the feasts they laugh, guffaw, pat the questioner’s cheek, talk of insanity, demonstrate proof of a fundamental biological difference, crudely point out the genitals, origin, they say, of a paralyzing function in itself. It is difficult for the questioner to protest when faced with the accumulation of proof. Raucous noises escape from some of the throats, stifled shrieks, grunting. The beings ignore them and move away in the midst of laughter. Rebellions are sometimes accompanied by plots to be executed during the brief moment when the beings stop near the deck chairs before going to the feasts. The plan is to spit on them or to bite if one of them comes close enough to permit it or in one great exertion to throw one’s entire body against one of them like a weapon. The day after such an attack the beings send their guardians. The guardians come with chairs and seat themselves next to a body. Their task consists of making the bodies talk. They themselves don’t say anything. When the bodies refuse to talk in the course of the guardians’ intervention, the feeders are called to pour the appropriate liquids into their mouths. That’s what the guardians call untying the tongues. Tongues thus untied talk, and even if one plugs up one’s ears the repeated recriminations are heard. There are complaints against forced feeding, forced milking, forced parading, the beatings, the performances. The guardians write on tablets. The guardians’ silence has the goal of sending the speakers back to their own speech. The speakers must use their own material to organize what they are describing in a coherent manner. The description in each case, nevertheless, ends up revealing a strictly coercive system. But that is none of the guardians’ business. They come back every day until the cure is complete. The cure is complete for each of the bodies when it is silent after absorbing the appropriate liquids. Some say that the guardians are also beings. Even though they have the outward appearance of it, the allure, the clothing, the limbs, one can’t be sure. The face of each guardian is hidden behind a mask. The uselessness of the plots is a subject debated by the bodies during downtime in the garden. Some say that the presence of the guardians cannot be avoided except by avoiding plots altogether. Most of them say that they must try, try again. But generally the interludes with the guardians are followed by long periods of apathy during which the bodies close their eyes when the beings pass by them to go to the feasts. No one moves despite the beings’ provocations in response to what they call sulkiness. What makes the afternoons particularly monotonous are the games played by the satisfied bodies.
Their gatherings cut the reading sessions short. These are so-called creative games. To easily manage them the big apes regroup the satisfied bodies. They improvise in dialogues, monologues, decorous speeches but also in all kinds of poems. The themes are the quality of the food, the diversity of tastes, the garden’s beauty, the sensual joys of the milking, the pleasure of receiving garlands. The violence of the beating and the performances are some of the themes that they reserve for the tragic genre. Even though the satisfied bodies are not the majority, one must listen to them. They must be read as well, unless one closes one’s eyes, because their words occupy all of the reading space in which they are projected as well as emitted. Sometimes a generalized buzzing that little by little covers up the sound of their voices interrupts the satisfied bodies’ exercises. Here and there a body suffocated by shame throws itself to the ground, crawling to hide under its deck chair. When the commotion becomes uncontrollable and all of the bodies in their excitement have thrown themselves to the ground, the big apes interrupt the so-called creative games and project holograms of the alphabet into the reading space. Calm is reestablished instantaneously. One goes on then without transition to some grand story about a being or to a philosophical dissertation. The big apes take care of the bodies that have hurt themselves in jumping from their deck chairs and reinstall each one of them in their initial place. It is often debated after the reading sessions why the beings teach the bodies to read their books. The most accepted response is that in order for the servitude of the bodies to be pleasant for the beings and not just profitable, it has to be guessed at and even rationally understood by the bodies. That’s why so much time is devoted to reading in the garden. Some argue that the beings thus run a risk because those who understand can change the situation and that the beings endanger themselves with the readings that they allow. They are given the answer that the beings’ books never call into question the bodies’ existence such as it is and that at the root of their systems and serving as their foundation is what the bodies call servitude. The beings call it something else. Some of the bodies even claim to be able to use the beings’ concepts in order to disrupt their system as a whole. Either by the beings or by the bodies themselves, they are sent back to their deck chairs from which they cannot budge. Some being can say, get up and walk, and think itself mischievous. To add to the despondency about reading there are those who go around repeating that truth is blinding. There is no exaggeration to the preceding formula if it is true that the print in the books, by their holographic form, burns the retinas of the eyes in the end. At least the bodies don’t run the fatal risk of confusing, as do the beings, the words composed of solid and bulky letters in their books with the real things to which they refer. As to whether it is reason enough to go on living, many
are those who respond in the negative. Those are the ones who organize suicide campaigns instead of useless plots. The suicides can be by indigestion at feeding time or by suffocation in the waters of the pools at bath time. They are prepared for over a long time, like the plots, to be collective demonstrations. The results of the waves of suicides are not clear. In practice the bodies are immediately replaced. Most say that the exchange, inasmuch as it is carried out against the satisfied bodies, is of no benefit. They say that they have to cease behaving like that if one does not want to ensure definitive elimination. Some of them say that inasmuch as one can never leave the garden for lack of legs the only thing to do is to let oneself be drugged by the food. They say that in so doing the state that they attain other than being pleasant contributes to insomnia and guarantees that they will not be the winners of the milking. Despite the unending debates on the impossibility of getting out of the garden there are those who do not give up on finding a way to escape. They get the big apes to let them gather together for consultations. Their rallying sign is a saying from one of the beings’ tales whose meaning they have twisted. Whoever wants to join them sings this saying until one of the big apes carries them over to the group of allies. Even if every initiative seems unsuitable to the concrete situation, even when the temptation is to enjoy the garden without doing anything, it’s hard to remain outside the plans that they are constructing. One of them, for example, claims to have discovered that the food stored in the fleshy part of the cheeks, once putrefied, is a noxious poison to the beings. The tactics then consist in biting one of the beings until the flesh is opened and projecting a stream of the decomposed liquids into the open wound. The speaker claims that the being thus bitten was executed in several minutes and died in the midst of convulsions in the sand of the path. This one says that if this event went unnoticed it was because one of the big apes immediately concealed the cadaver from view. Right after that most of them become restless. Hope without precedent runs through the rows of bodies. The discussions are accomplished in pairs, in threes, in groups of several. Large groups are avoided. The beings seem to not see a cause and effect relation between the bite carried out by the body and the being’s death. They have apparently been content to seize the biter. Some stricken with fear say that for right now it is necessary to postpone any action for fear of reprisals and because the beings are doubtlessly performing tests on the body that they have confiscated. Others say that the longer they wait, the more they risk being discovered. They say that they must act quickly while there is still time. Some of them say that the beings have no way to identify the bodies’ weapons. Everyone says, what to do? The restlessness grows. More and more bodies in their excitement fall from the deck chairs. Gradually each one realizes that quick action is
necessary and that they betray themselves by all of the commotion. Not to mention that the satisfied bodies are on the lookout and that it will be more and more difficult to hide the facts from them. Some say that as soon as they know their new strength the satisfied bodies will rally all of the allied bodies. Some of them protest this reasoning, saying that the satisfied bodies have been brainwashed forever by the beings’ guardians. The last plan to date is the one that was adopted unanimously. It has the advantage of responding to the objection of those who say that even if all the beings are killed the bodies will still be equally powerless. They say, do you intend to take the beings’ legs or what? There are still the spheres and the big apes. The plan is simple and consists of a signal given to rush the most beings possible. It can be done during performances at the moment when the beings open the spheres to appropriate the bodies. It will take biting, spitting, and throwing oneself back into the sphere all in one movement. If one has been ejected, immediately getting the help of a big ape to be put back in. And then it will take leaving the garden as quickly as possible. Some say that to kill a larger number of beings, all of them maybe, it will take going into action during a big milking ceremony, one of those that are followed by a pompous speech, when the beings are all assembled in the same place. To that it was objected that it would be better to divide up their forces and that in attacking the beings individually during the performances their confusion would be increased. It was also objected that on these special occasions at the time of the pompous speeches the spheres are nowhere in sight and that the big apes will not have time to produce them at the site of combat. Some among the bodies don’t share the general enthusiasm. They stay silently slumped in their deck chairs. Sometimes they say, to what good anyway, we will all be killed in the end. Or still they say, what will the bodies find at the gates of the gardens; they say that the bodies’ ignorance about the things of the world outside is absolute, that the beings have carefully removed all possibility for concrete knowledge for the bodies, including in their books. They say that the bodies without the feeders and the big apes cannot survive. Nevertheless, one waits for the next performances. One spends the long nap times after the feedings preparing the poison; one distills it; it goes from the fleshy part of the cheeks to the mouths where it is ruminated for a long time and rehashed until it becomes a concentration of the original liquid. It is preserved in this form in the cheeks that have developed interior pockets from uninterrupted suction. It is there that the desired putrefaction or fermentation takes place. This action is systematically carried out by all of the bodies, including those that are slumping in their deck chairs. Each one contributes a concentration so intense that the restlessness is calmed. From now on silence reigns in the garden paths. The creative games of the satisfied bod-
ies are not interrupted. The reading sessions go on, too, with eyes shut, all of one’s attention fixed on the putrefaction in progress. The time to act may be tomorrow. And if it takes dying, hold on to this sovereign happiness, vile creature to whom nothing on this earth belongs, except to die. Is it not written that in risking death you will cease to be a slave?

Notes

Thanks to the gracious and diligent revision sessions with Sande Zeig, this short work is now accessible to anglophone Wittigian scholars.
