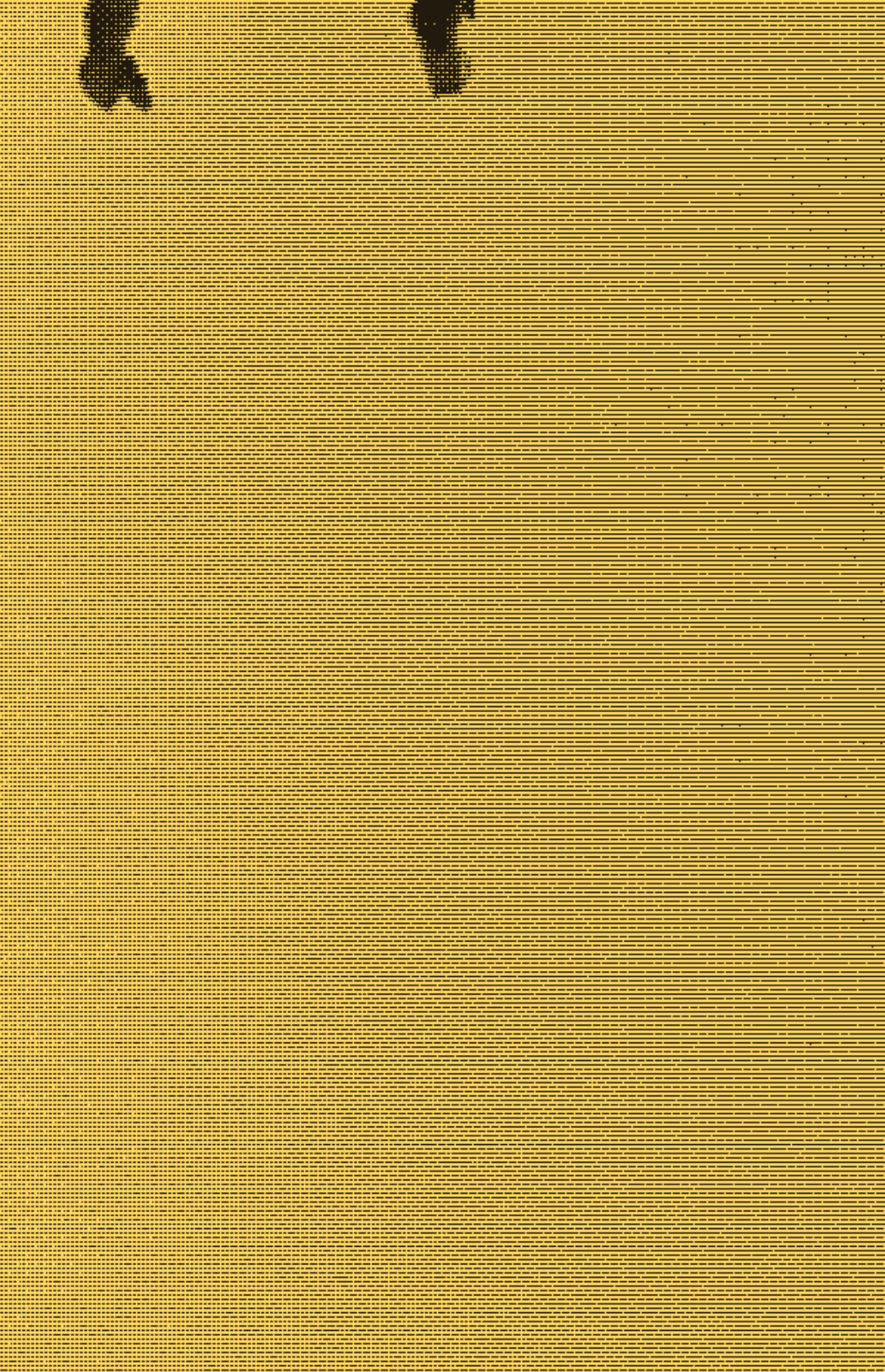


Jamieson
Webster

Three Visions of Psychoanalysis





Psychoanalysis has always traded on the figures of identity and interior depth. Even when these two were placed at odds with one another they were still bound in a tight dialectic. I have become more and more wary, or weary, of both these figures and their embrace. Is there a way of thinking the subject without identity, is there a way of thinking about space and the mind without re-evoking, yet again, the trope of what is 'on the inside'? These questions seem to run head first into the wall of epistemological questions concerning what can be known, not simply, about identity or the mind, but also how we place any knowledge or knowing in relation to them. It is not simply a question of how we know what we know about the mind, the body, the self, but how we envision what we think they know or are supposed to know and how. Present day psychology, neuroscience, the empire of therapies, trades on different visions of this relationship, not only establishing a certain kind of doctor thereby— so regal, so well-informed, so clean— but also his object, which is often an identity to be consolidated, a depth to be plumbed and exposed, or a body that should be rendered seamless or declared out-of-order. I would like to find a different vision of psychoanalysis. One that finds a way to stop this machine. This time, I could only find the means of doing so through the strange medium of fire, touch and madness.

The Psychoanalysis of Fire

To de-objectify the body is to remove a certain vision of the object from it in order “to free it from the narcissism caused by

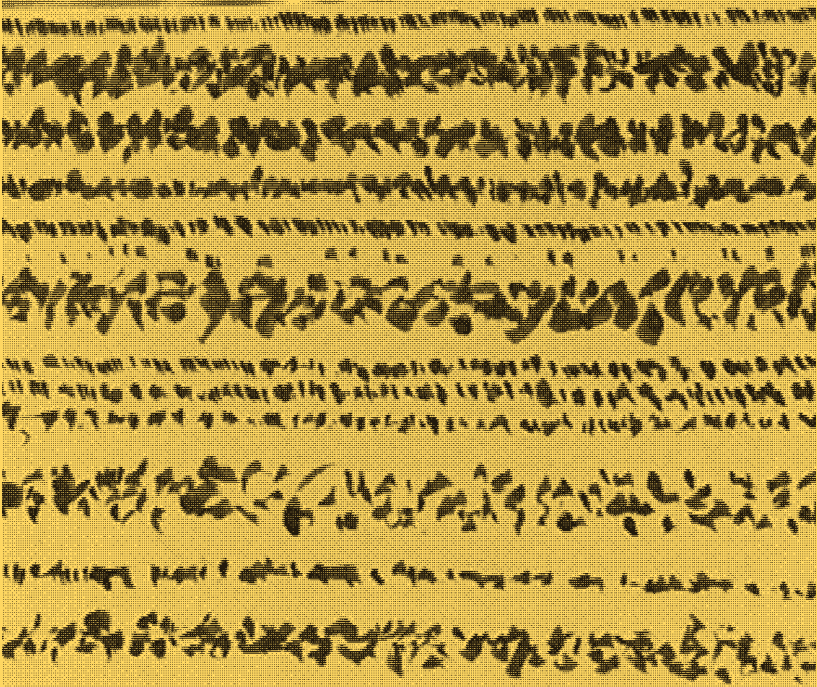
the first contact with the object” (Bachelard 1964, p. 4). This anti-object, surplus and not image, is perhaps best embodied by fire, always already stolen and coveted; fire, whose interior we cannot examine, with a body whose interior is never given. We might give body to fire or flames, give the substance of flames to thought, not the reverse, namely to think of fire. This work would cure the mind of its happy illusions, meaning, we would cure the mind of its thirst for the knowledge of fire, for insight into combustible bodies, an attempt to own the co-ordinates of a self-conversion. Contra this epistemological quest, we need, says Bachelard, a psychoanalysis of fire.

His book comes with a warning: this work will in no way have increased your knowledge. “Turning inwards upon ourselves we turn aside from truth. When we carry out inner experiments, we inevitably contradict objective experiment.” Perhaps, at best, this psychoanalysis of the experience of substances, fire no less than blood, water, salt or air, could demonstrate human error, the clear demonstration of how “the fascination exerted by the



object distorts induction” (ibid., p.5). To the Oedipal complex, the myth of civilization par excellence in the cooling form of family and territoriality, we must add the Novalis Complex, the fire-world of unfallen life, the fires of pre-creation, as well as, the Empedocles Complex, the destruction of the world by fire, the self-consuming flames of the Last Judgment.

Why? For Bachelard, fire demands respect, a lesson communicated first to children, what he calls social interdiction as our first general knowledge of fire, making prohibition a first moment of splitting between the intellectual and the physical— “fire, then, can strike without having to burn... the blow of the ruler is replaced by the angry voice; the angry voice by the recital of the dangers of fire, by the legends concerning fire from heaven” (ibid., p. 11). When the natural, meaning the substances, are quickly mixed in with “complex” and “confusing” social experiences that leave little room for unprejudiced knowledge, while the arduous desire for knowledge is drawn into a Promethean will to overturn the



order of interdiction, to catch up with the knowledge of fathers, this happens by disobedience or acquisition. The life of the intellect will have no other substratum.

If for Freud fire was invented not in order to forge iron, cook, or keep warm, but rather in order to urinate on it— a rather alarming psychoanalytic conclusion that lays bare the strangeness of psychoanalytic deduction— what the psychoanalysis of fire demonstrates is not simply the sexualization of fire, nor even mere burning ambition and its inhibition, but how the conquest of what is superfluous holds greater power than anything necessary, or said to be necessary by fathers and mothers alike. Fire for fire's sake, we return fire to fire; destruction promises renewal more than change, or progress, or the development of any object for utility.

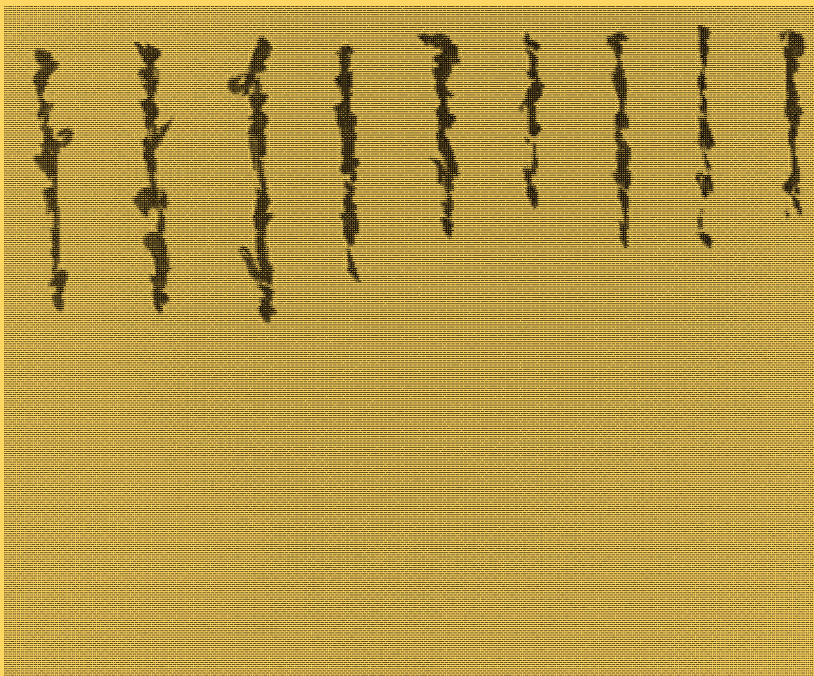
Empedoclean reveries of fire, like the dream of a burning child, make the ever-present call to sacrifice heard— envelope me, let me meet my destiny, and then leave without a trace. “If fire, which, after all, is quite an exceptional and rare phenomenon, was taken to be a constituent element of the Universe, is it not because it is an element of human thought, the prime element of reverie?” (Ibid., p.18). None of this has any basis in objective reality, found through some means of observation, and yet it remains profoundly real and active— hence its place in reverie, or, as reverie itself. A dream of substance, or the substance of dream, fire returns us to fire. “The dream,” Bachelard concludes, “is stronger than experience” (Ibid., p. 20).

But far from fire being a means of moving from reality to metaphor, we are moving ever more in the reverse direction, namely from metaphor to reality— “it is this absurdity which explains the discovery of fire” (Ibid., p. 37). Myths of fire move from subjective origins towards reality; the fire hidden within the human body is the origin of real fire, fire explains the colors of the birds or the earth, fire creates material experiences, hypnotic details of substance, out from somatic and affective life, away from knowledge and codified language. Fire resists sight and touch, and in the intuition of inner heat the dream of going into an interior without interior is born. Like moving to the center of an image, the image is no longer an image, rather

it returns the image to substance. For Bachelard this drains all sentimental or realist pathos from understanding and proves all the more powerful thereby. Nothing could be more sexual, or rather, this is the substance of sexuality, that tissue of dream.

And yet, Bachelard suddenly concludes that this sexualized fire cannot be equated with a sexual relationship, with procreation, seed and spark, nor any reduction of the problem to the stupid tautology: fire is life and life is fire. This naïve lover's dream needs to return to the psychoanalysis of fire to challenge not only the idealists but the materialists as well. "I am manipulating," says the alchemist. 'No, you are dreaming.' 'I am dreaming,' says Novalis. 'No, you are manipulating.' (ibid., p. 55). This ambiguity, or problem, is because fire is a first phenomenon, or first cause, in Bachelard.

The psychoanalysis of fire wants to reach back behind the desire for knowledge, and the desire for love that is behind it. The changes wrought by fire cannot be simply material or ideal; they are changes in substance, pure movement, the play



of forces. “Through fire everything changes. And when we want everything to change we call on fire” (ibid., p. 57). The dream of love is soldered to the value of creation; fire is set against this, moving in the direction of destruction, even if it is renewal; and both death and resurrection, for Bachelard, must be without any particular value— not even the transvaluation of value.

It is simply the value of transformation, or perhaps better, substance, which the psychoanalysis of fire values as the only proof of existence and its continuation: endless conversion and combustion, infinite fire. With this indictment against the idealization of fire, love or birth or even death, Bachelard feels he has worn out the patience of his reader. And with this second warning, and a surprising address to his audience regarding his own writing, he sates towards the end of this strange book, “this impatience in itself is a sign; we would like the realm of values to be a closed realm. We would like to judge values without bothering about the primary empirical meanings” (Ibid., p. 106). The in-mixing of fact and value will be left behind in flames or force alone.

The Psychoanalysis of Touch

To the sign of ‘this impatience’ we will add ‘this is my body’. For Jean-Luc Nancy, the obsession with showing a ‘this’ in ‘this is my body’ lends itself as much to a few jokes as does fire, since the desired ‘this’— this substance, this body— can never show itself with any certainty, while it is, nevertheless, certainly there. Saying so is some strange additive. Trying to hold the thing forth, an awkward redundancy. The assertion, ‘this!’, purely comical. “Sensory certitude, as soon, as it is touched, turns into chaos, a storm where all sense run wild. Body is certitude shattered and blown to bits.” (Nancy 2008, p.5). What can this be? We need a psychoanalysis of touch.

Nancy calls the familiar strangeness of ‘this’ in ‘this is my body’, the non-melancholic agony of nakedness, of being laid open, touched. If we are going to write about the body, it cannot be a discourse on appearance or spectacle, on the imaginary body or body as phantasm, nor can it be a hymn to immediacy or some uninterrupted real to be unveiled, as if the this was simply possible, even in a reachable beyond.

These are religious iterations of incarnation in the model of the image, empty or full— spiritual or disembodied. We should be wary of metaphorizing what is essentially concrete. No access is granted to the body, and still, the body is open. What never asks to be deciphered is what defines opening as space, spatial. Neither full nor empty, but this, there: “it is a skin, variously folded, refolded, unfolded, multiplied, invaginated, exogastrulated, orificed, evasive, invaded, stretched, relaxed, excited, distressed, tied, untied. In these and a thousand other ways, the body makes room for existence” (Ibid., p. 15).

With Nancy, this will not be a discourse on the ineffable, on the silent mysteries, linking the body, again, with the spiritual. There is no ‘sense’ when it comes to bodies. And yet, the non-sense of the sensory is neither the estimation of the sublime, nor the negative coloring of absurdity or contortion. The non-sense of the body is a place of clarity, in the sense of something shining and distinct, rather than lucid. This brilliance of difference. The body, Nancy says, in this way, demands other categories of force and thought, ones that manages to touch, at the limit, the ‘this’ of some singular body— “touching the body with the incorporeality of ‘sense’” (ibid., p. 11). How could this even be possible? Bodies, he tells us, are addressed to one another, “existence addressed to an outside,” like lovers. In the thought of bodies is the purest of separations, namely the separation, or cut, between bodies, which gives form to love, address, touch— “it’s the separation of substances which alone allows them their singular chance” (ibid., p. 19). This simple fact of separation is why touch is the overriding concern.

This exscription of bodies is evoked for Nancy by Freud in what he calls his “most fascinating and perhaps (I say this without exaggerating) most decisive statement” in a posthumous note: ***Psyche ist ausgedehnt: weiss nichts davon***. “The psyche’s extended: knows nothing about it” (ibid., p.21). Nancy translates this: “The ‘psyche,’ in other words, is body, and this is precisely what escapes it, and its escape (we may suppose), or its process of escape, constitutes it as ‘psyche,’ in a dimension of not (being able/wanting)-to-know-itself” (ibid.). This exteriorization maps a terrain beyond sense— a territoriality or ***topos*** of topical tensions— where a

psychoanalysis of touch might take shape. Here, we are close to a crucial part of Freud's vision of the body in *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) where the question of the unconscious was much closer to a sexual terrain that would be described ruthlessly in bodily terms— zonal, tensions, pain-pleasure, stimulation, substitutes— while the ego was merely the projection of this body's surface, extended and exteriorized and having to know nothing about it. How then did the unconscious come to be thought in terms of interior, depth, inside, and even, eventually, in terms of sense or signification?

It's even more surprising then, that a certain psychoanalytic discourse would seem to insist, while denying its object, on making the body 'signify,' rather than flushing out signification as something that always screens off the spacing of bodies. This kind of analysis 'ectopizes' (or 'utopizes') the body beyond-place: it volatilizes it, indexing it to the incorporeality of sense (Ibid., p. 23).

The body is indexed, but there in having been screened off. Not that the body is without sense— that would be oxymoronic— but the sense of the body is something else than sense as signification.

We need the body of sense, the touching of body and sense. For Nancy, this can only take place at the limit, which is the meaning of extension, of a not-being-able to know itself there where it encounters something beyond itself. Sense as feeling, against sense as meaning, happens at the place where we make contact. Everything else, Nancy says, volatilizes, making neurosis an effect of disaffected utopias, the language of the untouched, the movement of the unmoved, and the problem of an incorporeal dream. Once he turns to Freud, Nancy is quick to evoke the hysteric as exemplary of this conundrum since how can she be seen as a signifying or speaking body, as so many would have it, when that would mean no longer being a body. Instead, he wants to see hysteria (and here he moves from the individual to the 'pathology') as this bodily non-knowledge:

the body's becoming totally parasitical upon the incorporeality of sense, to the point that it silences incorporeality, thereby showing, in its stead, a piece, a zone, of a-significance. (Because, ultimately we would have to know whether the hysteric is engaging mainly in translation and interpretation or in something contrary and much deeper, namely, a resolute blockage of the transmission of sense. Discourse incarnate, or a blocking body: who doesn't see that there is no hysteria without a blocking body?) (Ibid., p.23).

For Nancy, the symptom is deployed in hysteria not in order to convey sense or meaning— to return finally to ideation, understanding taking the place of the once convulsive body— but rather to block sense, to put her body between herself and the other and render sense foreign.

The hysteric shows sense as foreign to this body, hers, with a question about what might be made between them, since bodies, mine and yours, will always retain this distance, this strangeness, this separation, and this antagonism to meaning. The hysteric places her body in relation to the other at the place that blocks the transmission of sense. She finds this point, almost, as it were, unconsciously— knowing nothing about it. And even if nothing gets through— bodies will always remain in their separate places— things do touch. The body touches the other at the place where sense is silenced and perhaps even dismantled. Touching when this body of sense finally makes itself felt through another. This is what all lover's language concerning the heart— yes cliché, and rather poor— is meant to convey, literally, not metaphorically, being touched or having been.

Nancy's vision of hysteria exalts hysteria more than the sense of it can, and quiets it, giving it an aura of calm. He protects her, touches her, affirms the limit that her body wants to find in order to be, simply, what it is:

the hysterical body is exemplary in its affirmation— at an unattainable limit— of a pure concentration in itself, the pure being-in-itself of its extension, which in turn denies and renders catatonic

its extendedness and its spacing... this limit manifests the truth of the body, in the form of its implosion. (But perhaps something that opens up in pain or pleasure, and does not withdraw, something that makes room for a passage through the limit, rather than hardening it— is this not, perhaps, a kind of joyful hysteria, and the very body of sense?) (ibid., p.23).

Always the most important thoughts for Nancy in parenthesis, at the end of a paragraph, like two distinct halves of a thought touching. Who doesn't see? The psychoanalysts, he seems to state. For even if she blocks, implodes, convulses, and resists unfolding or opening in a hardening of her body, like in paralysis, room is nonetheless being given. This is how he reads her movements and from this he states— there is the possibility here of a joyful hysteria. This he finds in the possible unfolding of the joy folded in neurotic misery — the pleasure in pure concentration, density, nerve, and fidelity to touch.

So even if she puts her body under the sign of withdrawal, she does so as body, not, as it is for others, as a consequence of ideation. Perhaps she withdraws in order to tease the other, cajole them from their slumber of sense. Finally, Nancy states, “this alone,” meaning this hysterical body, “can close or release a space for ‘interpretations’” (ibid.). What interpretation after this silencing of sense? Nancy is quiet here, leaving us with the thought of the breakthrough of her body. He does this through the figure of writing, etching, more than speaking; the body as opening, exposing, and spacing, rather than any stampede or chaos of signification; and the birthing and sharing of bodies, not the incarnation inflating the spiritual life of the sign. Of course for Freud, the symptom was the parasitical element of hysteria, acting like a foreign body, body implanted within body, agitating psyche. Psychoanalysis converts the symptom into the space of analysis— the symptom extending itself ever outwards, transforming into the order of the day, the rhythm of analysis. Perhaps we should read this in line with Nancy, through this question of the extension of the body, this exscription of body as the psychoanalysis of touch. With the psychoanalysis of touch, this spacing, we have,

instead of meaning and sense— edge, burn, pain, anguish, joy, none of which should be aligned with any hysterical mysterium or melancholic incorporation. This pathos of signification is precisely what is absent at the limit, blocked, in this joyful and hysterical consenting to the body.

It must be said that this consenting to something that you can never gain access to, never get the sense of, is a kind of madness; the double bind of neither being able to speak about it, nor keep silent about it. This anguished joy, says Nancy, is an ordinary madness: “the madness of the body isn’t a crisis, and isn’t morbid. It’s just this endlessly untied and distended place-taking, tending toward itself. The body’s madness is this offering of place... there’s no crisis, no contortion, no goam, any more than there’s room for you and me in the same place at the same time. No secret of the body to be communicated to us, no secret body to be revealed to us” (ibid., p. 59). We must keep pressing speech against this body.

This offering, this injunction even— body, madness, press— is all the more urgent when we reflect on the current predicament of bodies in the world, a whole world of bodies, almost eight billion, dense, visible, more visible than any revelation could be; always already there, hiding in plain sight. How does one even begin to speak about this everywhere excess of body? At one time it was through the language of sin, and the concurrent language of purification. Now, the body, he says, has been saved before it has even arrived: saved for health, for modern medicine and technology, for sport and for pleasure, which only exacerbates the disaster since this is the pure signification of body, forcing the body to withdraw ever inward, falling into itself, touching nobody. This divested body mirrors the strange accumulation of body that is ever more disembodied, the singular body becoming anybody in crowds, armies, mass graves and mass murders, the transport of refugees, like so many bodies, across the globe, the billions of images of bodies, ever more indistinct, anonymous, and yet there, building up, a surplus of over-flowing bodies. This is to say nothing of the accumulation of pornographic displays of bodies, anatomized as zones, parts— hiding, for Nancy

the sexed body as simply the truth of the body in relation to another body.

The body is the subject without an object, which is not a subject in the strong sense, since it is so close to itself as objectal. Nancy describes body as weight; always in the act of weighing, in relation to its own gravity, urgent. The body is an urgency without knowledge, without judgment or value, leaving destiny behind, because there everything is weighed in advance, perhaps, finally, in order to escape the conundrums of weight. This press cannot be shaken off. This is the madness. And it is probably something about the simple truth of separation, which is finally what it means to be this body, in this place. The injunctions, values, the vicissitudes of the super-ego, are, in the psychoanalysis of touch, drained of all ideation; reduced simply to tension, departure, movement and the thought of touch. This, Nancy says, is what psyche is present-to, nothing more, nothing less. Not a body to come, nor an essential existence, neither a judgment or sense of the day—just this permanent press. “Which is why, in this one note by Freud, all of ‘psychoanalysis’ really has its true program always yet to come.” (ibid., 97).

Strange question emerging suddenly about the institution and program of psychoanalysis and this backwards temporality. The body that Psyche is, is suddenly nothing but a “nonknowledge” that “is not a negative knowledge or the negative of knowledge, it’s only an absence of knowledge, an absence of the bond,” incorporeal, “called ‘knowing’” (ibid., 97). It knows only what it touches, this endless transport from one shore to another, this swerving, turning; the experience of conversion, being shaken outside oneself, *res extensa*.

This departure of one body for another is one way to think of the thought of touch. “This is the world of world-wide departure: the spacing of *partes extra partes*, with nothing to oversee it or sustain it, no Subject for its destiny, taking place only as a prodigious press of bodies” (ibid., p.41). The departure merely signals an impatience; here the possibility of passage that the body offers or affirms, if, we could close down the question of the sense of the body. So even when this transport is hysterically blocked, or rather, becomes

too condensed, spasmodic, there is still a search; even in making visible the body of sense, the body lost in sense, but always nevertheless there, room is being granted to this body. Psychoanalysis has always been configured as the meeting of minds, or the meeting of words. With Nancy perhaps we can think of it as this meeting of bodies, subverting the rule of abstinence, or perhaps better, converting it, because to screen out the touching of bodies in the framework of meeting, even if in words, is to betray psychoanalysis, and the one hope we have for joy. This is Nancy's Corpus; his psychoanalysis of touch.

The Psychoanalysis of Madness

“Only the enigma of this exteriority will remain” if language finds the means of rendering everything hidden visible, of making everything serenely positive, especially in the case of madness. If neurosis were simply a constitutive form of society, and no longer a deviation, then a seamless surface of language— with nothing folded, nothing hidden, everything on the outside— will be the only possible result; an even purer form of madness in the eradication of madness. One might wonder if this is already the possibility announced by the Freudian project? The psychoanalytic cure? As if civilization didn't instantly produce a foreign edge, but incorporated every rupture within itself in order to finally do away with it, the great therapeutic nature of civilization— civilization *against*, not civilization and. So we can *prophesize* from the future the very invention of psychoanalysis at the turn of the century. Not even ordinary madness— the madness of no entry or access and the bind of having to decipher, nonetheless, the traces that are there— will have a face in this tranquility that history is reaching towards. “Will these traces themselves have become anything to the unknowing gaze but simply black marks” (Foucault 1995, p. 290), Foucault asks with desperation.

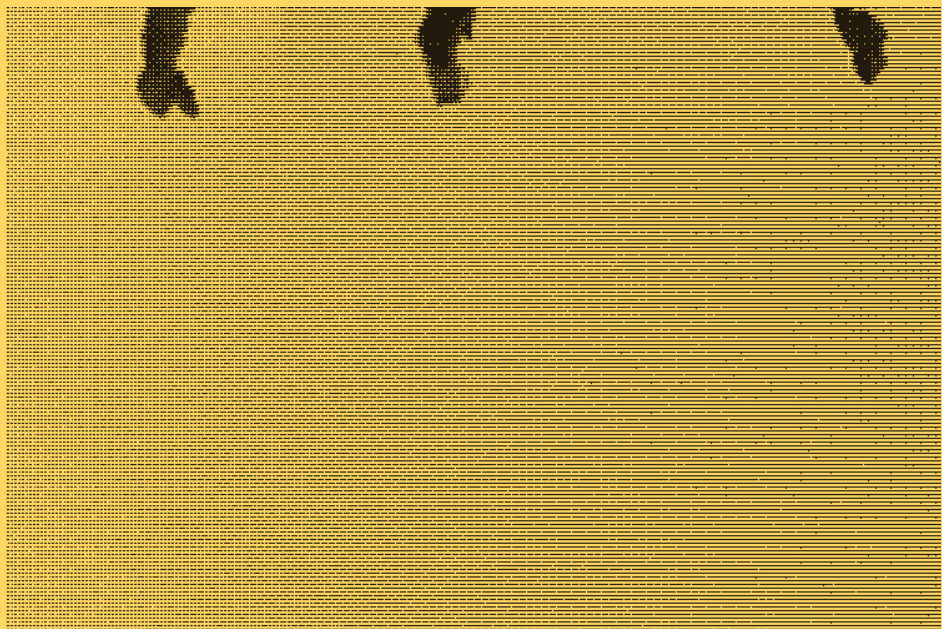
Foucault writes these lines with palpable anxiety; the hint of the question almost already about to vanish, not just from the world in some nearby future, but, from his own work as well, which leaves the question of literature, madness, and language behind, collective practice replacing anything said to

be merely literary or aesthetic. Of course I write this with the prophetic pen of someone already in the future. Why did we bother with the psychoanalysis of madness if we were always going to cancel out its language, cancel out the edge that it occupies? Are we to read this question as already a question about Foucault's own work— and not just Freud's?

So the sharp image of reason will wither in flames. The familiar game of mirroring the other side of ourselves in madness and of eavesdropping from our listening posts on voices that, coming from very far, tell us more nearly what we are— the game with its rules, its strategies, its contrivances, its tricks, its tolerated illegalities will once and for all have become nothing but a complex ritual whose significations will have been reduced to ashes (ibid).

More nearly what we are— this complex ritual, so close to psychoanalysis, will have been reduced to ashes.

What, we might ask Foucault, will remain in this work of fire? He says it will only be the relationship of mankind to “its



ghosts,” to its “bodiless pain” (why bodiless?), to its “carcass of the night” (there is the body). To efface madness like an illness will render madness simply a misfortune that persists even more ghostly. If we were to succeed, we would reduce to ashes the flame of an edge; the space, inverted though it may be, and exteriorized, where we might have discovered ourselves. Before we have even a glimmer of a chance to think a psychoanalysis of the outside, he’s already razed the project to the ground. Foucault writes forward through a backward trajectory, future past perfect incomplete.

I cannot help but hear this erasure of madness as also an erasure of the body, making the language of madness—always first bodily, concrete, literal, resistant to sense and metaphor—the only hope. And yet what hope in this can there be? What is dying in us, Foucault proclaims, is our being as departure, this self-estrangement, these bodies parting and departing—the one who is extended and knows nothing about it. We always only recover “the unity of the self-same” (*ibid.*, p. 292). While this sounds like the lament of much post-modern theory, this, Foucault says surprisingly, is clearly fortunate. If this

is true, he says, we will no longer know how to place anything at a distance. Those who no longer even remember how this distance was created, no longer being within it, will be forced to ask: “how could humans search for their truth, for their essential speech, and their signs, in the face of a peril that made them tremble and from which they were compelled to avert their eyes once they caught sight of it?” They will not have much more than a few charred signs with which to try to begin to formulate an answer, the sharp delineating fire of reason having consumed everything. Maybe there is some hope here in this erasure. Man won’t even know to avert his own eyes.

Impatience rears its head again, this time, where the future catches sight of the “same impatience with which the utterances of madness are rejected and collected, the hesitation in recognizing their emptiness and their meaningfulness” (ibid., p. 292-293). Fire and impatience are again, fortunate signs, or the sign of a psychoanalysis of madness to come; a psychoanalysis that could take its bearings in the traces of a disappearing madness, madness reduced to ashes. No longer the outer edge, it *will* make itself felt in language. For Foucault, we might be able to begin to distinguish the organization that prohibition imposes within language— isn’t this what he will do anyhow— discerning how what is abolished internally appears outside, as a real presence, in discourse and the practices linked to it. Language is tied more closely to reality through this abolition, through this eclipse of distance; something that might make the psychoanalysts tremble in fear since it unhinges language from sense, makes language a call to action, external, practice, self-ritualized.

So here we have Foucault’s early concern with madness and language. I think this attack on psychoanalysis is real, urgent, and strategic. The language of repression, the universal belief in law and taboo, does little to explain something important about the development of our relationship to mad language. “What is not allowed to appear at the level of the word, is not necessarily what is forbidden in the real of deed.” These figures are split and have a varied appearance. Were we to study how what is permitted is nonetheless censored in speech, to trace what is permitted in the code but not in reality, we would only get so far.

Foucault claims that “at this point, the metaphoric detour would no longer be possible, since it is the meaning itself that is the object of censorship” (ibid., p. 294). Not this and that meaning, but meaning in-itself, as what is put under the sign of erasure; a new iteration of the exclusion of madness as something that takes place within the linguistic code.

This is not a world of censorship where a forbidden meaning is communicated and symbolized, like the idea of the spoken body of the hysteric, communicating some truth. It is a more radical exclusion. It is close to what Lacan meant by foreclosure— but if Lacan means it from within the language of psychiatry (and this isn’t clear to me), he breaks with Foucault who renders this historical, therefore inevitable, choosing to see it as a welcome change:

It says what it says, but it adds a silent surplus that quietly enunciates what it says and according to which code it says what it says. This is not the case of an encoded language but of one that is structurally esoteric. That is to say, it does not communicate a forbidden meaning by concealing its meaning; it positions itself from the start in an essential fold of the utterance. A fold that hollows it out from within and perhaps to infinity. Therefore it matters little what is said in such a language and what meaning is being delivered there. It is this obscure and central liberation at the very heart of the utterance, its uncontrollable flight toward a source that is always without light, that no culture can readily accept. Such utterance is transgressive not in its meaning, not in its verbal property, but in its play (ibid., p. 294).

Foucault makes this mad language the final form of linguistic transgression; perhaps a new poetics, where flame meets flame, infinite, showing that it matters not what is said, meaning the meaning of what is said, but something else— this hollowed out place, this uncontrolled silence, this break, this play. The attempt to re-metaphorize language moves in the opposite direction and is just so much psychology. Freud

paved the way in both directions, shoring up the old even as he recognized something new.

It is difficult not to sympathize with this attack on psychoanalysis, more radical even than Lacan. In this attack, Foucault still admires Freud granting him a place in this historical development. He attempts to rescue this edge of a psychoanalysis of madness:

Freud's work ought to be taken for what it is; it does not discover that madness is apprehended in a web of significations it shares with everyday language, thereby granting the license to speak of it in the common platitudes of a psychological vocabulary... Freud did not discover the lost identity of a meaning; he carved out the disruptive image of a signifier that is absolutely not like the others. This should have sufficed to shield his work from all psychologizing interpretations wherein our half of the century has buried it in the (derisive) name of the 'human sciences' and their asexual union (ibid., p. 295).

Should have sufficed, but didn't, not even for the psychoanalysts themselves. To see this signifier 'absolutely not' like the others would take a more refined ear; especially an ear that is looking for a "central and obscure liberation... that no culture can accept." Play, but also what maintains an eye towards the flight of mad language. Unfortunately play, in the way it is used now, is not used to mean anything transgressive. Instead it has become the province of the human in the human sciences *par excellence* built into some silly idea about the wonders of our capacity for communication. Not even the idealization of madness taking place at the time Foucault was writing, with the obvious culprits of anti-psychiatry, would be able to dig us out of this hole, all this psychology, in which, as Foucault said, we were about to be buried.

Madness for Foucault creates a kind of 'reserve' – and he wonders about this word suddenly that he says designates and exposes the place where some possibility, something yet to come, might lodge itself. It also might not. And this desire, without any end in sight, without any known possibility, has

something to do with madness— “a fold of the spoken that is an absence of work” (ibid., p. 296). Like the body of the hysteric that blocks the transmission of sense, yes probably mad also in the same sense, Foucault says that we should see that Freud “exhausted its meaningless logos; he dried it out; he returned its words to their source— to that blank region of self-implication where nothing is said” (ibid., 296). This mad hollow, this place without work, is not something to decry. Foucault exalts it, like Nancy with the hysteric: it is an opening, stopping in its tracks this march of sense, the only place there might be room for a new possibility.

This is not a work of what there was, but what there might be, but isn't; which is why the emphasis is on the absence of work. Again, this stopping point points us towards the future, towards a kind of work to come, leaving us in this empty terrain. This is what is terrifying; and if work has to stage itself in relation to this impossibility, work and madness becomes twins, bound to each other, even as one continually excludes the other, both risking erasure. In this, there is a figure of absolute separation, and also constant departure; what Foucault calls a new form of imminence that remains to be named.

I find Foucault's hope here, born by Freud, touching. Mad language allows us to glimpse something critical that is unfolding, but also promises a site of resistance, if not a practice. Glimpsing within language the possibility of shifts and reversals, the hollowing out of meaning and its oversaturation, all of which changes equilibria and structures of force, might establish the space of another kind of speech and perhaps even another way of living. And there is a freedom, perhaps a new kind of freedom that makes its appearance through the impossibility of speaking, rather than in its rational possibility, rather than all this communication, utility, sense, means to an end.

First, one must recognize the sign of negation or erasure that accompanies madness after the nineteenth century with the hope and the possibility of its actual eradication by sequester or pharmacology. This is true, historical, factual; but Foucault then moves on to a question of discourse. The more paradoxical thought concerns the tie between language and madness in their mutual impossibility

in the twentieth century, rather than one being the converse of the other, as was previously true. In this impossibility of either speaking or being mad, madness, says Foucault, “rediscovers its sovereign right to language” (Foucault 2015, p. 20). It speaks on the condition that it takes itself as an object— which is not an object in the traditional sense since it is empty (or full, depending on one’s perspective)— and while this seems like an act of redoubling, folding in upon the self, self-sameness, it is actually in this hollow, a language of pure address, more pure than any neurotic language, any metaphorical speech, any speech designed for sense and communication.

The twentieth century is defined by all this communication that addresses no-one and nothing. Then there are the mad. Mad language simply asks the other to accept it, to give it the only freedom it needs to be granted, namely the right to exist. It asks this of the other, reaching out to them, without asking for translation, sense, deciphering. It asks without demanding anything other than the simple right to exist. “I have the impression, if I can put it this way, that very fundamentally, within us, the possibility of speaking, the possibility of being mad, are contemporaneous, and like twins, they reveal beneath our steps, the most perilous but also, possibly, the most marvelous or the most insistent of our freedoms” (ibid., p. 25). Finally, the right to exist is equated with this narrow margin of freedom in a world that is, despite all that is said, increasingly unfree.

With madness then, we understand how everything takes root in a verbal matrix, like auditory hallucinations, persecutory anxiety, hysterical paralyses, phobic signs, dreams. But this verbal matrix, glorious as it may be, must always hold the possibility of madness within it, of being able to traverse itself to its outermost edge— a place where the most familiar and insistent of meanings become confused, collide, and catch fire, “turning the world upside down” (ibid., p. 25). Only madness does this, not language or sense in itself. This is the importance of the psychoanalysis of madness in a time when we no longer really believe in freedom— such is our deep cynicism, one that grows by the day. And to say this isn’t to say that this disbelief is wrong; it is absolutely right.

Foucault's touching hope here is something else than the democratic impulse that cannot be allied with psychoanalysis in the slightest, having allied itself with the self-justification of sense. The psychoanalysis of madness would be a work that finds something else to put one's faith in, a differently inscribed freedom linked to madness:

I think we could say that, ultimately, we no longer believe in political freedom, and the dream, the famous dream of unalienated man, is now subject to ridicule. So, out of all those illusions what do we have left? Well, we have the ashes of a handful of words. And what is possible for the rest of us today, what is possible for us, we no longer entrust to things, to men, to History, to institutions, we entrust to signs. Very roughly, we could say the following: in the nineteenth century we spoke... in the twentieth century, we write... for the experience of writing, and to evaluate a freedom that no longer exists... (ibid., p. 27).

We are only free to write and it is only in writing that we can evaluate this question of a freedom that has disappeared. Every action, every spoken word, already contradicts this freedom, and renders itself untrue through an empire of illusionless sense, of communication to no one.

What Foucault stumbles upon here is a freedom that is not about communication, democracy, sense, meaning, self-reflexivity, but a radical passage to the outside. Foucault imagines a reconfiguring of space that is prefaced in the mad language of the 20th century. Language, far from being a self-reference that allows for an interiorization in the most absolute fashion, is revealed as a merely superficial interiority. Speech and writing search for a passage to the outside. Language seeks to get as far away from itself as possible. "From the moment discourse ceases to follow the slope of self-interiorizing thought and, addressing the very being of language, returns thought to the outside, from that moment, in a single stroke, it becomes a meticulous narration of experiences, encounters, and improbable signs— language about the outside of all language, speech about the invisible

side of words” (Foucault 2006, p. 25). He calls this the undone form of the outside, and to place oneself there is to finally challenge the law, which, far from being something fully inside, is an outside that rules the inside. It must be met out there, language advancing into this opening, into an exterior.

Patients have a profound sense of the futility of meaning, the failure of the institutions that were meant to provide meaning, and the extension of an interior space that leaves them receding from the world ever further, while the outside feels like being caught in a vortex of imperatives shorn of any veneer of an ideal. And yet they come to a psychoanalyst. For what, we might ask? Are we not the hallmark therapy of meaning making, of inner life, precisely as an ideal? And if this is true, what does it mean to uphold an ideal such as this in a day and age described by Foucault as the assault of this on our bodies? Is psychoanalysis this violence? What if, following Foucault, patients come less for thoughts from the inside, for a resurrection of the empire of sense, and more because of a curiosity about the kind of clarity one can have about this madness felt at the edges of helplessness, at this most extreme outer edge of oneself? What if they are coming to get outside of themselves?

The writing that begins to take shape in mad language is the only hope for Foucault; a strange hope, like the body deprived of sense, like the substanceless substance of fire. But these are nothing short of a place of pure transformation, conversion— as rupture and the elimination of thought, turning the world upside-down, or inside-out, setting everything on fire, in order to cross a space a reach an edge, touch something out there. With the deep sense of futility in reality, the endless loops of neurotic thought, the erasure of the body, the impotence of desire, perhaps this mad exteriorization is the promise of psychoanalysis, it's conversion disorder. Perhaps free association was always this exteriorization, this automaticity, this encounter outside; that psychoanalysis as a 20th century invention was, along with literature, already this means of passage outside. The defense against psychoanalysis, against Freud's invention, is a defense against this, in an attempt to re-interiorize the subject, bring back self-reflexive language, and

reestablish the smooth control of law and sense. The simple, gentle, and playful right to exist is abolished in this resistance of all resistances to a mad psychoanalysis.

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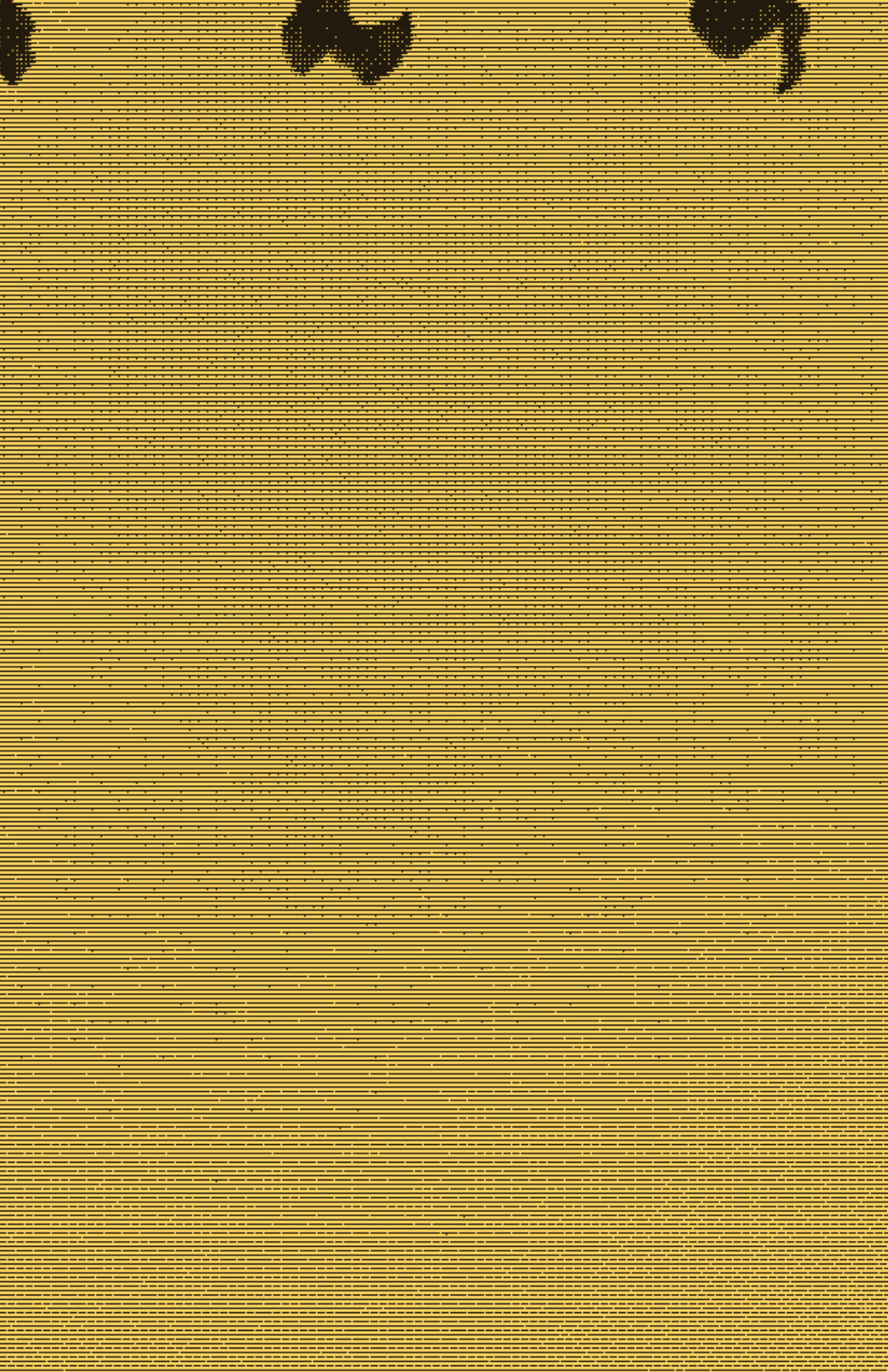
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