Pierre Guyotat's autobiographical fiction *In the Deep* is a backwards look, from the author’s 69th year, at the beginning of a creative vocation. Indeed, the term vocation is not excessive to describe Guyotat’s devotion of more than fifty years to inventing the language for a dark horror: the writing of a prostitutional scene where prostitute slaves are bred for the sole purpose of their labor of lust and where all human life has a price.

Over its long development, Guyotat has given this brothel scene many names. He has shifted its setting from the former French colonies in North Africa (*Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* or *Eden, Eden, Eden*) to invented contemporary metropolises (in the recent and as-yet-untranslated *Joyeux Animaux de la Misère*). Its slave figures have names borrowed from combatants in the struggles against colonialism and post-colonialism (for example, one hero is named Samora Machel after the revolutionary and eventual president of Mozambique who successfully fought Portuguese colonial rule), and are inflected by Guyotat’s observations and personal experiences (sexual encounters, men and women seen during his travels, or on the streets). Pictures from the camps of World War II seen in books by the young Guyotat had impressed their slaughterhouse images of naked and tortured bodies on his mind. But beyond this historical anchor, the scene breaks with historical boundedness to reach farther and farther through time, coursing man’s endless alienation, driving for the “divine slaving infinite,” the endless and utmost abandon to need, or control, or power. It concerns the never-satisfied drive to profit (or cum) on the backs of whatever can be exchanged—the human, the animal, the natural. The scene is populated with prostitutes, pimps, procurers and procuresses, slaves and workers; it has its own locale, its twists and turns of (bodily) events and exchanges of fluids and money, its reason, and its own specific language: a Word, an invert of divine speech. It is not predominantly a place of sexuality, but of exchange: its abjection results from the truth that being cannot be sold. “In prostitution or slavery,” writes Guyotat, “I am obsessed not as much by domination or obedience, but by gold on the organ (l’or sur l’organe), the commercialization of circuits, of the anatomical and physiological circulations” (*Vivre*, 63).

Guyotat’s vocation is absolutely excessive, in its singularity and strangeness, in its ambitions, its contradictions, and its dangers. In 2007, Guyotat began writing a series of autobiographical fictions, part historical fact, part theoretical, in which he returned to the salacious moments of his life inasmuch as they are interwoven with the writing. *Coma* (2006) narrated the degree of exhaustion and despair to which he was driven by the difficulty of his work and its intractable contradiction, a physical coma that coincided with a spiritual crisis, his writing bottoming out as did the exhilaration of the project of collective emancipation that had fueled much of its imaginary space, and the physical sensations connected into a mingled sensorium with adjoining intellectual and emotional facets.

The first castration that had to go was the partition between the human, the animal, the natural. The scene is populated with prostitutes, pimps, procurers and procuresses, slaves and workers; it has its own locale, its twists and turns of (bodily) events and exchanges of fluids and money, its reason, and its own specific language: a Word, an invert of divine speech. It is not predominantly a place of sexuality, but of exchange: its abjection results from the truth that being cannot be sold. “In prostitution or slavery,” writes Guyotat, “I am obsessed not as much by domination or obedience, but by gold on the organ (l’or sur l’organe), the commercialization of circuits, of the anatomical and physiological circulations” (*Vivre*, 63).

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The first castration that had to go was the partition between wrong and right knowledge. Everything was fodder for material production. Knowledge (of all kinds, clear or obscure, true or false) met physical fondling to produce feelings, perceptions, and rationalizations. The young Guyotat called facts what some who are more rigorously empirical would relegate to religious doctrine, social convention, received ideas about genders, sexes, physical organs. Here is the list of facts that he develops in the book, a blend of physical sensations, imaginings, and rationalizations: “a Creator God, a Re-}
life's incessant drive and of the enslavement to feed it, the language of bodies partaking of the physical labor of production. But theirs is a labor of sexuality without reproduction, without regard for anything other than itself, rigorous beyond violence, an exploded reason.

There is a political logic to the deep: no women, because they have been too used and abused in history for this, and none of the classical subjects of exploitation, indigenous peoples, the global colonized. Instead, the children of the powerful are led to the brothel, the prostitutes are almost all masculine, bred for the purpose, their entire lives given over to the destiny of laying beneath the human—what we reserve for animals: absolute abandon.

From a material base, using the means available—organs, hands, but also the entire arsenal of the symbolic with its share of misapprehensions—Guyotat writes a material origin of humanity, and of human production and thought. It is a writing of immanence, the textual, sonic, and ritual productivity of the physical body showing how the nonsignificant, and then, via the usual (Western) slippage, the insignificant or base (the base organs) can balloon into the mysterious and the grandiose. Its long, swelling sentences patiently describe the development of reason from a physical base, building up rhythm. But because Guyotat's reason is an extremist and essentialist organ, it is always tottering on the brink of its self-doubt, and its exhaustion through that doubt. What does it mean that art is constructed altogether from wanderings and error? From the Latin errare comes erring and error, which so easily tilt into sin.

For the child Guyotat, this masturbatory origin blended pleasure with the forbidden, the unknown, the hidden, and the shameful in an illicit act of writing that represented an attempt at absolute transgression, with its correlative moral outrage and the despair that followed once the deed was done. From this early wrenching apart came a vocation for writing that would embody the contradictions of aesthetics through the 20th century: quickly stated, the coexistence of Richard Wagner with the death camps of World War II, the dark side of modernity and humanism, slavery conjoined with the universal rights of man. Born the year of France's surrender to Germany, Guyotat's life is intimately paired to this history, and its art (he refuses to call it work) struggles with its dark horror, with what beauty or reason lies in a beyond of good and evil where it seems the sacred lurks.

What does the vocational aspect of the work imply? First, the project clearly engages with the history of art as sacred practice. At semiinary school, young Guyotat had first conceived of a priestly vocation in the "exhilaration of the continuous celebration of God": light, calm, revelation, joy, a blinding light behind which the child sensed incomprehensible excess. "As a child, the sacred—what isn't sacred for me then?—dazzles me so much that my small reason sees and suspects that there is excess there, and that behind the amazement—object, figure, notion—lies its opposite: behind the absolute of virtue, the absolute of its opposite" (In the Deep). When the calling shifted to art (first painting, then writing) this only made the transgression at its base more pronounced, and gave it grounds in what the child knew from religious instruction, where he sensed that the partition between good and evil was not so clear and started probing their intimate concatenation. If the deep is composed of figures, they must be known. Guyotat names "art" the process of that knowing, a creative, it's because God, as a movement toward excess, is for him productive. The excreta of sex, writes Guyotat, incite "to the unreason of the self and of the other. "In the Deep" reveals just how productive this inherited notion was for a young Catholic boy writing under the throes of the prohibited. More importantly, sexuality is a root, a seminal impulse, sealing our pact with life, with procreation and the imperative of survival. There are also political reasons to this choice, which are that sexuality opens the floodgates for the injustices of history on the oppressed, churning out fodder for exploitation. Also, that capitalism has latched onto desire as one of its latest, and most intimate, frontiers. Aesthetic reasons turn to sexuality as a pro-creative source, the impulse and possibility of material creation. And then there is the physical and emotional reality of sex as a place of surrender and bliss, where the self can be forgotten in undifferentiated becoming, belonging, where one is delivered to what is stronger than oneself. The excreta of sex, writes Guyotat, incite "to the unreason of the self in the great reason of the Universe" (In the Deep). And add to this a base productivist reason: wouldn't you write if you'd hooked the protocol to masturbation?

So it is all about sex. And it is not about sex at all. And honestly, it's true, as a species we produce ejaculate scum (power, violence, control). Guyotat is nothing if not a realist. But his comes with optimism. "The more you evacuate, the more there is; but the more text there is, the more Word there is to modulate" (Explications, 28). The reasons for the purge of sexuality are multiple. Certainly, the Catholic injunction against sin played an early role, although one that Guyotat understood was erroneous, and productive. In the Deep reveals just how productive this inherited notion was for a young Catholic boy writing under the throes of the prohibited. More importantly, sexuality is a root, a seminal impulse, sealing our pact with life, with procreation and the imperative of survival. There are also political reasons to this choice, which are that sexuality opens the floodgates for the injustices of history on the oppressed, churning out fodder for exploitation. Also, that capitalism has latched onto desire as one of its latest, and most intimate, frontiers. Aesthetic reasons turn to sexuality as a pro-creative source, the impulse and possibility of material creation. And then there is the physical and emotional reality of sex as a place of surrender and bliss, where the self can be forgotten in undifferentiated becoming, belonging, where one is delivered to what is stronger than oneself. The excreta of sex, writes Guyotat, incite "to the unreason of the self in the great reason of the Universe" (In the Deep). And add to this a base productivist reason: wouldn't you write if you'd hooked the protocol to masturbation?

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