



THE SEA OF TRANQUILLITY

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A white body floats in a steaming volcano lake high in an icy range. The body floats face up. The lake is a colour called aqua. Black, broken trees stand around the lake. Nomadic dogs move in shifting configurations through the wood. The camera pulls back: the scene is depicted on a computer screen. Deep in the substratum of the mountain range, in the body of the earth, a hand moves a mouse. The cursor stops on the face in the lake. Click. The face becomes a hole ...

Void, and without form, the natural system lies in darkness; deep, awaiting faciality. Then it is divided from itself. Grass and herbs, and seeds and fruit appear, and birds and creatures, and humans—and an economy is complete. Upon the vast white screen of the garden black holes appear through which the gift of nature flashes in consciousness and passion. This is the story of nature.

However: “The mask does not hide the face, it *is* the face.”¹ Nature is on the white wall, not waiting down the black hole for us to dive in—the garden itself is a white wall/black hole system. A face. For Deleuze and Guattari the face is the supreme icon of signification. But because the signified is always ultimately the signifier, nature always ultimately the garden, the *final* signifier, nature itself, is redundant. All possible signification has already occurred. The form of this redundancy is the face, the white wall/black hole system, which “emits and receives, releases and recaptures signifying signs.” Faciality is their name for this operating system.

In the garden, therefore, nature is no longer necessary. The white wall/black hole system crystallises the structures and flows of (that which has been called) nature, which is both decoded and overcoded in the garden. For the “multidimensional, polyvocal corporeal code” of earth has ceased. The garden has spread across the body of the earth. The landscape industry has totalised this face: faciality is all there is. And yet the operation of this machine does not end here. It organises, combines, repeats—it is horrible, and magnificent. It spreads its white tableaux across the intersecting “fields” and “flows,” and causes black holes to appear along the horizon and, yes, at your feet. The white wall/black hole system of the garden calls you. Put your fingers in the water, put your nostrils to the rose. Lie down. Let the sun burn your face. You are part of the process. The facial order calls your body—it is decoded and overcoded too. We say the garden is not nature; neither is it culture. The human is not nature, and neither is it separate from nature. But Deleuze and Guattari do not distinguish between the natural and the artificial at all.

If the destiny of human beings is to escape the face, to dismantle both the face and facialisation, to become imperceptible by “strange becomings that get past the wall and get

Note

All images by author.

1. All references are to G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).



out of the black holes,” then the white face must become one with the black holes. The body (of the earth, of the human) will become the site of intersecting fields, of processes and flows which expend without end rather than return. *The garden will lose its capacity to signify nature and will become nature.* Nature as abstract machine. The garden deterritorialises; the human is removed from nature (“the stratum of the organism”) and is connected momentarily to other strata—such as signifiante (the signs of nature) and subjectification (the promise of nature—nature is God’s holy promise to the subject), before the dissolution of both.

You visit a beautiful garden. There is signification, but nothing is explained. You explore its paths, recesses, domains and lawns, its wildernesses and temples—but you find nothing. There is nothing. All is shining back at you in bright luminosity. It is a pure abstract machine, a blank slate, a twilight world. Certain elements (trees, bulbs, flowers, birds, water, wind) circulate in a white wall/black hole system. The system organises and circulates the elements according to its codes and passions. On the white screen of the garden we project our nervous accounts of the black hole. The screen receives our projections by opening out. Through the black hole the garden opens on to openness itself. And through the selfsame hole the universe floods the garden with its light. The black hole becomes the white wall and for an instant there is meaning and resonance after all. But it is only the “meaning” of an instant and cannot be eternalised. “Real” for as long as it carries us away.

The abstract machine of faciality gives the signifying impulse its white wall, and the human link with nature is given in the black hole. As both inscription and participation the garden is made possible by an industrial process of abstraction that produces typologies, formations, histories ... The garden industry places the garden in an archive, as an archive.

The relationship between the garden, the landscape and the face is an aggregate “in which black holes sometimes distribute themselves on a white wall, and the white line of the horizon sometimes spins toward a black hole, or both simultaneously.” Desire—decentred, fragmented, dynamic—“operates in the domain of free synthesis where everything is possible.” On the white wall “the reproduction of desire gives way to a simple representation.” The productive unconscious makes way for an unconscious that (according to Freud) “knows only how to express itself ... in myth, in tragedy, in dream.” Freud turned the unconscious from a factory into a theatre. The modern period turned the landscape from a factory into a

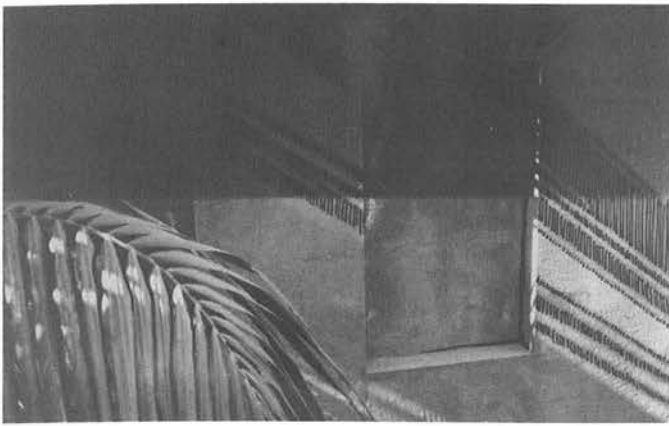


theatre. Human and nature became opposite terms, confronting each other across a proscenium of signs instead of “one and the same essential reality, the producer-product.” The human being, who wishes only to dive into the black hole finds him or herself repeatedly and unendingly inscribing wish lists on the white wall. And then man, “the eternal custodian of the machines of the universe,” responsible “for even the stars and animal life,” who “ceaselessly plugs an organ-machine into an energy-machine, a tree into his body, a breast into his mouth, the sun into his asshole,” writes his treaty with the devil on the white wall of the garden and, turning from the black holes in the shadows, dives into the sunlit pool.

Meanwhile the garden/landscape/city flicks from culture to nature and back again. At the point of deterritorialisation (winds, shadows, clouds) reterritorialisation occurs. Capitalist commodification and social flows simultaneously present and efface coded and decoded flows (the lemon tree will cost you \$59.95). The garden is a machine driven by a machine. The natural system disaggregates and reforms on the white wall. Black holes shift and shimmer ...

In the landscape, mere artefact, representations of nature obscure and mystify nature: rain falls on the tiles, ripples the water in the pond. But the garden is not external to natural systems—it inhabits them, just as they inhabit the garden. Like the city, the garden is a network of intersecting artificial fields. The most opaque of these is nature—that which has been called nature. Without the garden nature is empty, without nature the garden is empty, without nature the city cannot exist. The garden forms the locus of resonance that “selects” the “natural” sign which must conform in advance to the cultural requirements made of it: the “dominant reality.” Like the city, the garden simply constructs the wall on which signs of nature are inscribed—the frame, the screen through which (that which signifies as) nature flashes. The garden lays the fuse through which the force drives the flower.

In the landscape the dream contents of nature/subjectivity are inscribed on a white wall. This face is a surface, a map. It provides locations for black holes by means of a coding of elements which emerge from an economy that exists alongside the landscape as a carnival of passions which seduces and repels. The force which reverberates through the (body, earth, universe) flashes in the black holes that the industry of abstraction configures within the garden. The geography of holes shifts and shimmers ceaselessly according to diurnal rhythms



which move like spacemen on the surface of the white wall. The gravitational pull of nature causes signifying elements to struggle to remain within the economy of the garden. Scratch marks appear on the surface of the wall where holes have been. Seconds later, not even these remain.

The landscape is always the humanised landscape (Antarctica, Sahara, Sea of Tranquillity, you name it). The landscape, then, is the face on which the blood of nature drops and man “forgets himself.” The landscape *is* the garden. Deleuze and Guattari are quite explicit: “the snowy white wall of the landscape-face, the black hole of the falcon.” The black hole is the cavity through which the blood of nature pours (in and out). Could it be that nature has blood but no body? A body without organs, blood without a body? The white face of the garden, the black hole of nature. When, in the novel of the Holy Grail, the knight is catatonic (madly deterritorialising) he is a black hole towards which the “landscape-face” spins. The story of the Grail poses the question: Can the knight cross the event horizon, break through the white wall—even if the attempt may backfire? Can the knight accept the gift of nature, the black hole that swallows up the white wall? To do so is to become not-knight, become animal, become nature.

The city is a white wall/black hole system too. It is always renegotiating its relation with the natural processes preordained as its infrastructure. Forever destabilised by this ambivalent set of relations, the urban system under landscape architecture is required to trace a nature that has already mapped the city. But just as nature is not separate from the garden neither is nature other to the city. The presence of nature in the discourse of the city is premised as an interweaving moment between what is there and not there—in the very words “nature” and “city” as much as in a street, a park, an “industrial edge.” The city, then, like the garden, far from beginning as a geometric grid is a fractile topology, a multiplicity of facialities that act as switching centres for reticulating signs.

Cities, gardens, landscapes: boundary conditions, points of change. The white wall/black hole system weaves the city as a field of intersecting flows; the gift of nature appears as carnival, as sacrifice, as poetry and laughter as much as rain and wind and snow, as much as outcrop of underlying lava, or as tree, as grass, as water in fountain, cistern, sewer, duct or swimming pool. But the garden has a doubling movement. It reflects light: cultural and

social institutions are reinscribed and become luminescent. It also absorbs light: its shadows lead through the screen of signs to a projected subjectivity, the consciousness of nothingness/plenitude—the expanding/contracting universe simultaneously flying down lines of departure and squeezing into a ball. Light and darkness, wall and hole, dimensionless surficial nature finds its form in the landscapes of the garden and the city, bodying forth through enscribed tree and flower, laughter and poem, combining and recombining with the codes by means of which it becomes acceptable, permissible, but untouchable too—near as your hand and more distant than the stars.

In the city the white wall also rises. But the black holes written across the face of the urban system (signs of signs) are so much more mundane: you step in a pile of dogshit, over fallen twigs on the sidewalk. Nature here is strange and uncertain. In its very unpredictability it is potent; through its potency it seems to recede. Black holes rove, they lie in wait—it's hard to pin them down. Regulation, prohibition, attenuation. This landscape's signs attest to a place of origin that is so remote that the chain of signification seems to lead only to circles within circles, wheels within wheels: gardens appear on rooftops, in atria, behind walls, as if nature might be there too. As if nature might be in the city's squares or at the end of the pier, or up the second flight of stairs where writers stiffen between laundered sheets, instead of down the black Victorian manholes or between the pistons of charging cars, or in the gutters and downpipes waiting for the storm.

Nature—that which has been called nature—presents itself as both a lack and an excess. As the limit of the possible, nature is that at which thinking stops. As the sum of that which can be, nature instantiates the principle of plenitude: everything which can exist, does. Nature, world-consciousness, life force, Gaia, passion, crime, carnival, expenditure without return.

A black hole, a white face, a body floats ... Leaves click in the dark, and then the thud of choppers from the city. In the garden, in the city, a white wall waits for its black hole. Black hole, white wall, nature zero sum.