

Sensorial Trajectories

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Edited by

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PREFACE

Generally speaking, a preface is intended to take into account and introduce the material it prefaces. It is determined and thus constituted by what it prefaces. In a sense, then, a preface requires that it be ahead of itself. The movement from the preface to what follows, and the movement from what follows back to the preface may be said to constitute one movement. At the same time, the preface and subsequent material may be understood as co-dependent movements that constitute trajectories that inform one another and that each reside within the other. Considering this relationship, we may also observe a spatiality and a temporality that accommodate the experience and appreciation of the experiential dimensions of an aesthetic trajectory. The trajectory that is operative here assumes an aspect of circularity. The enigma of circularity is that it has neither a point of departure nor one of arrival. The normal understanding of a trajectory is that it starts at point A and ends at point B. A is indistinguishable from point B and vice versa, the trajectory is paradoxical. Of course, we may speak of the space that separates these points, too. Yet, paradoxically, we may also speak of the space that vanishes between the two, as may be understood in the case of the trajectory under consideration here, a trajectory in which new space emerges, with differences intact yet indistinguishable each from the other. What we have here is an experience of the paradoxical, an experience of space that is inspired by its contents, its flesh, so to speak. It is a bodily experience, the experience of the lived-body. In this experience, the space and the motion within it may be understood in terms of physics, which, in turn, gives way to a kind of hodological space. Animation in this space clears a path for multiple senses of perception. Each of the senses constitutes a trajectory of meaning and a meaning that we may associate with that of a trajectory.

We may say that every trajectory is corporeal. It is a narrative of the body. This is the case not because it is perceived by the body but because it is made up of the same stuff as the body. In a phenomenological description of perception, what is not obvious in perception becomes obvious. In this description, the body that senses is part of what it senses. It is co-extensive with the body. At the same time, in sensing, it finds itself on the same side with that which it senses. Indeed, to be sensible to

itself does not require turning away from what it senses. That we may speak of what separates it from what it senses is undeniable. Yet equally undeniable is the lack of separation we may speak of between itself and what it senses, as both are a part of the sensible world. As Merleau-Ponty has observed,

Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; It is one of them. It is caught up in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body. These reversals, these antinomies, are different ways of saying that vision is caught or comes to be in things -in that place where something visible undertakes to see, becomes visible to itself and in the sight of all things, in that place where there persists, like original solution still present within crystal, the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed.¹

It is the same insightful phenomenologist of perception who reminds us that,

In principle, all my changes of place figure in a corner of my landscape; they are recorded on the map of the visible. Everything I see is in principle within my reach., at least within the reach of my sight, and is marked upon the map of "I can". Each of the two maps is complete. The visible world and the world of my motor projects are each total parts of the same Being.²

It is important to experience what is at stake in the world of the sensible. It is not exclusively the world of sight. All our senses are constitutive members of the world of the sensible. It is not only the case that it is solely what we see that is, in principle, within our reach or within the reach of our sight. This is equally the case with all our senses. What we can hear, touch, smell, or feel is in principle within our reach and equally within the reach of our field of sensibilities. We are our trajectories. They take us with them wherever they are because our beings are inescapably bound to them. What Merleau-Ponty calls to our attention is the lived spatiality that lies at the core of perception. It is precisely this type of spatiality that lies at the core of a trajectory. A projectile cuts through space, creating a path that marks its trajectory. It is subject to the perceiver. It does not exist independent of being seen. It is not even a projectile if there is no one for whom it is a projectile. Similarly, a trajectory does not exist independent of a perceiver. It is a trajectory for the perceiver and, in this perception, the perceiver is constituted of it.

Broadly speaking, for the editors of this book, the preface is to be understood as, itself, a trajectory. The authors of the chapters within this book have presented their trajectories within this over-arching trajectory. The 'within' is to be taken and understood as an open trajectory as opposed to one that constrains or limits. The authors whose chapters comprise this book are also the authors of a given trajectory defined by their uniquely informative and imaginative perspectives. Each of the chapters is to be understood as a trajectory defined by its author as much as it also contributes to defining something about its author. Thus this preface offers an open space that prepares the trajectories introduced by their authors, trajectories that collectively define the over-arching trajectory of this book. In this sense, we again encounter a kind of circularity in that the preface is also that which is prefaced.

Normally, a trajectory is regarded as having a beginning and ending point. For example, when a missile is launched, it is expected that it will land somewhere. When a golf ball or baseball is struck, the expectation is that they will land somewhere. It is not expected that they will go into orbit, where their motion is eternal. Of course, there are indeed bodies that we may say are in perpetual motion. The rotation of the earth would be one example of this. What does not appear to be perennial is not in opposition to that which is. The beginning and end of a trajectory are open, while also serving as punctuations. In this sense, that which they punctuate also becomes a part of it, as what is being punctuated is the motion of the sensible. What they punctuate is the motion of the sensible. The sensible cannot be temporally or spatially circumscribed. Each of the trajectories presented in this book constitute the contents or flesh of the sensible, with their respective authors being citizens of the sensible world. Unequivocally, he/she or she is singular while, at the same time, transcending this singularity. This book invites its readers to contemplate and experience the dynamics associated with the rich confluence of sensorial trajectories contained herein.

Notes

¹ The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty edited by Alden L. Fisher, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969, p. 256

² Ibid., p. 255

CHAPTER ONE

THE SONGLINES

ALPHONSO LINGIS

What is resounds. The things about us drone and rumble and buzz; they babble and sputter and sizzle; they whirl and twang and pop. Animate beings murmur and hum, chortle and chatter, roar and sing. Sounds extend in time and they extend space. They extend a stretch from close-by, a stretch from far-off to where we are. They materialize the above and below, the left and right. We should not say that sounds occur in space, as though first empty, infinite geometric space extends about us, or as though first visual space extends about us to horizons on all sides. The space that extends about us as we awaken and move is sonic from the first. Rumbling the city widens about us, rustling the prairie stretches about us, murmuring the forest extends before us.

We see and feel the resonance of things. We see the hardness and brittleness and also the ringing resonance in the homogenous and sleek substance of the wine glass. We see the heaviness and also the dull reverberation in the dense but fibrous substance of the log. We feel the staccato already in a handful of corn before we spray it across the surface of the pond for the ducks.

Our bodies are zones of circulation of blood, nutrients, energies, according to specific rhythms: pulse of the heart beat, pulse of breath. Circadian rhythms govern the functioning of organs and glands.

The rhythm of the breath is internally coded, but it conjoins the pulse of the wind, the flow of air thinned out at high altitudes and weighted down with humidity in tropical valleys. The heartbeat synchronizes with the onrush of exciting or menacing events, and, at night, with the tick-tock of the clock. Our circadian rhythms synchronize with the cycle of day and night, with the lunar month. When we walk, we launch a gait that prolongs itself according to our intensity of energy or languor. But our gait also takes up the rhythm of the rocky or sandy ground, and that of the

waves against the beach. It takes up the rhythm of the friend we walk with.

There is an inner music of the body, made not simply of rhythm but also of kinetic melody, which activates our movements. The kinetic melody of our movements picks up the throbbing of the calling frogs, the songs of the cicadas, the salsa and the samba of carnival, the Gospel singing of the revival tent. Neurologist Oliver Sacks found that in patients afflicted with Parkinson's disease the "silent music of the muscles" could be quickened by hearing music. The movements that they could not make by forming mental projects and intentions would come--and be really their own movements, movements in which they found their own identity, life, and will.¹

Space is sonic from the first. A child, in the dark, uneasy, reassures herself in humming. The humming materializes a location. It is also in humming, singing, or babbling that she extends a radius about this center. From this home base she departs into the outer zone. She opens the door to call someone, or let someone in. She sets forth striding, swinging her arms, or gesturing to someone, humming or singing.

Jack Richardson² woke up one autumn Saturday morning to the rumble of traffic and the chattering of birds. His apartment was not a cavern of silence. He turned on the radio, and turned on the running water to shave and then to shower. The space was filled with familiar rustle, hum, and the familiar voice of the newscaster, a faceless voice you can turn on in your home and that you don't have to pay attention to or answer.

Outside the birds were calling and singing and the autumn sun energizing the tremulous leaves of the trees. Jack decided to talk a long walk instead of spending his hour in the gym. The area he is familiar with, makes his way around, occupies. He became aware of different zones by the different sonorities. He began in the familiar sounds of his apartment. He had felt he had left the town when the thin Saturday-morning traffic no longer rumbled in his ears and he became aware of the thin hum of insects in the fields and the whirl of the breeze—and also heard from a distance a car approaching. The sound of planes arriving or departing made him aware he has passed into the airport zone. Then, entering the woods there was a difference in ambient sound—rustling leaves and occasional bustling squirrels. At the bottom was the sound of the cascading stream. Once outside the woods, passing through an area where people had small houses on big lots, there was now the barking of different breeds of dogs. Finally the Saturday evening sounds of the town, where traffic sounds are muffled with the greetings and jokes and laughter of crowds of idle students.

Jack's own walk tuned into the ambient sonority. He walked through the early morning traffic with determined steps, ambled across the prairies tingling with insect chatter, the long roar of airplane engines imparted a surge to his stride, his steps staccatoed down the woods, and swung loosely along the stream below. Back in town he slowed into a stroll, weaving loosely through the crowds.

Jack became aware that it was the ambient sonority that extended the different zones of his vital area about him. These zones were not really staked out and surveyed by sight. His eyes instead caught sight of something to look at--an objective hung at the end of the look. They gauged this line of sight. They sometimes held this objective in focus as Jack approached it. The rest of the time, his gaze drifted. His eyes were not scanning the space for something to look at. They were lulled by the rhythms of the billowing roadside growth of crown vetch and goldenrod. They bathed in the patches of sunlight through the banks of branches turning copper, red, ochre in the woods. The rhythm of fields and of the clouds over them, the dappled light on the stream and mossy banks were a medium his gaze sunk into, without measuring its breadth or depth.

From time immemorial humans had mapped the Australian continent musically. The aboriginals perceived the rhythms of the landscape, the syncopations and melodic lines of the land. As they walked they picked up the rhythms and melodies of the land and sang their way across the land. They did not make visual maps of the land. An aboriginal person today about to set out on a journey is taught the song, and he or she will travel a thousand kilometers over terrain never before seen and following the songlines of the landscape arrive at the destination.



When, in 1816 about the world's largest natural harbor, the city of Sydney, Australia was laid out, 30 hectares (74 acres) descending to the harbor were set aside as a Botanic Garden. The State Parliament, the State Library, and the Art Gallery of New South Wales were built along the edge of the Garden, such that legislators, readers of books, and amateurs of fine art pursue their activities before this expanse of enormous tropical trees and thousands of plant species endemic to the Australian continent. Flocks of white cockatoos arrive by day and big fruit bats called flying foxes depart at twilight. The outback begins here, in the heart of the city.

On a small island in the bay just offshore from the Garden floats the Sydney Opera House, designed by Danish architect Jørn Utzon and completed in 1973. The small island had been a religious sanctuary for the aboriginal people. Inspired by the podiums upon which Mayan and Zapotec temples were set, Utzon built a podium upon which the three structures of the Opera House were set. The ten glossy white and matte cream vaults of the roofs are sometimes called shells and sometimes called sails, names that Utzon repudiated.³ They look like the wings a swan lifts to float over its back as it rests in the water. When Utzon was asked what had been his inspiration for the three buildings of the Opera House, he pointed to a family of swans in the lake beneath his office.⁴ Day and night too the vaults of the building hold on themselves the celestial vault; "the sun did not know how beautiful its light was" architect Louis Khan exclaimed, "until it was reflected off this building." Meeting of the sun, skies, earth and waters, the Opera House is now the focus of the city, of the shores and hills of the harbor, of the array of the neighborhoods of the city and the Botanic Garden that brings the continent into the city. There is no other city that has a monument that so arrays the city about itself. This focus is not a house of law or of power or a temple of gods but a house of music. At the opening ceremony in 1973, aboriginal Ben Blakeney stood on the apex of the roof vaults and called out "Here my people chanted—their stories of the dreamtime—of the spirit heroes—and of earth's creation—and our painted bodies flowed in ceremony." The Opera House is itself a musical structure; the waves of the harbor reverberate rhythmically along the podium; the vaults of the roof sound a crescendo in the sunlight. Architect Utzon was gifted with synesthesia; wherever he saw form he heard sound. The Opera House extends melodically from itself the circling wakes of the ships and ferries of the harbor and the streets ascending and descending the hills. The Opera House is set in a great musical map of the rhythmic and melodic lines of forests, lakes, deserts, and mountains of Australia, and it gathers these songlines about itself and reverberates across them.



Notes

¹ “We have seen, again and again, that patients' own kinetic melodies can be given back to them, albeit briefly, by the use of an appropriate flow of music. . . . Other ‘natural’ motions of Nature and Art are equally potent if experienced visually or tactually. Thus, I have known patients almost totally immobilised by Parkinsonism, dystonias, contortions, etc., capable of riding a horse with ease—with ease and grace and intuitive control, forming with the horse a mutually influencing and natural unity. . . . While severely affected Parkinsonians are particularly dangerous at the controls of motorcars and motorboats (which tend to amplify all their pathological tendencies), they may be able to handle a sailing boat with ease and skill, with an intuitive accuracy and ‘feel.’ Here, in effect, man-boat-wind-wave come together in a natural, dynamic union or unison; the man feels at one, at home, with the forces of Nature; his own natural melody is evoked by, attuned to, the harmony of Nature; he ceases to be a patient—passive and pulsive—and is transformed to an agent—active and free.” Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings* (London: Picador, 1991) 348-9.

² Jack Richardson, Professor of Art Education, Ohio State University, unpublished paper.

³ “Utzon breaks his silence,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sep 4, 2014
<https://www.smh.com.au › Lifestyle › Good Weekend>

⁴ Anne Watson, ed., *Building a Masterpiece: the Sydney Opera House* (Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 2006), 74.

CHAPTER TWO

THE KISS IN JAPAN

BARBARA SANDRISSER

Walking along West Broadway in lower Manhattan with a friend, I noticed a tall, dark-haired man in his 30s, talking on his cell phone. Striding toward us at a fast clip, he explains in a loud voice: “I kissed her on the lips, but it wasn’t an emotional kiss. It was a peck in the night; you know what I mean.” That kiss was neither meaningful nor memorable. We jokingly labeled it a typical “New York kiss,” the kind we take for granted: superficial, egocentric, lacking old-fashioned, straightforward sincerity, in short, a fake kiss.

We agreed that this was not a conversation we could imagine overhearing while walking along the Ginza or in Shinjuku in Tokyo, and certainly not in other parts of Japan. Yet some high school and college people in the Tokyo area are now kissing in public, causing concern and distaste among older generations, who continue to equate the kiss with the passion of sexual intercourse. Any public displays of emotion, other than the ubiquitous smile, is still frowned upon, including touching another person. Fortunately, I remembered this small detail one evening while attempting to keep my balance as I stood with a Japanese colleague in a swaying subway train in Tokyo. I asked permission first, before touching his arm.

The rift between young people, mostly teenagers, and the rest of Japanese society has widened considerably in recent years, fueled in large part by Japanese commercials and TV sitcoms that frequently imitate American ones, occasionally showing passionate lip kissing anytime, anywhere. Still, public kissing is not yet common even among adolescents. I watched a TV sitcom in which a young, female office worker suddenly kissed her platonic office companion while riding a roller coaster in a Japanese theme park. The kiss plus the roller coaster, in case we did not quite get the point, are the prelude to the next scene which shows them in

his bed. Before departing early the next morning, she leaves him a thank-you note.

One Japanese newspaper speculated that many young people who kiss in public are merely trying to provoke a reaction.¹ It quotes a middle-aged man who was offended, but not just because public kissing was inappropriate: "It's a horrible thing to watch," he said. "It really makes me wonder where the Japanese sense of aesthetics has gone."² The *Mainichi Shimbun*, one of the largest newspapers in Japan, published an essay on whether kissing in public should be permitted, and according to the *New York Times*, JNN, a national TV network, broadcast a "special report" on the subject.³ Opinion letters received by the *Mainichi Shimbun* reflected the anger, disgust, and indignity felt by those who perceived the kiss as a special, private, human interchange, combining sensuousness, sexuality, and aesthetic sensibility. One woman feared that public kissing would eventually ruin "our traditional Japanese-style grace that has been handed down to us."⁴ Even the editor of the *Mainichi Shimbun* article on kissing, Kenji Tamaki, 44 years old, was concerned: "I cannot help thinking that public kissing simply does not fit into our culture."⁵

In the United States, many parts of Europe, and Russia, we assume that public kissing on the lips is perfectly acceptable, even desirable. We often kiss on the lips adults and children whom we hardly know. Lip kissing is so ingrained in Western society that we hardly give it a second thought. During the past one hundred years, it has permeated virtually every aspect of our daily lives. A New York City radio station at broadband 98.7 FM calls itself KISS FM. Everywhere we look, people are kissing each other. One intriguing result is that we have become a lip-conscious society. Magazines abound with glossy lipstick advertisements. Lips, some puckered, take up entire pages, presumably to entice us to think about kissing. For a time, cigarette advertisements focused on lips and kissing. A huge billboard along the highway entering Manhattan from the Bronx flaunted in large lettering a slogan on behalf of Winston-Salem cigarettes: "It's the best butt I've ever kissed." In the corner is a cigarette with a lipstick stain. Even the *double-entendre* does not trouble us.

The entire globe seems to be kissing. Everyone does it, if only to be socially polite and politically correct, or so we think. Dance historian, Selma Jeanne Cohen, reminded me of the many ballets where kissing on the lips is the focal point of the plot, most notably "The Hundred Kisses" ("*Les Cent Baisers*"), choreographed by Nijinski in 1935, and danced by the Ballet Russe. If every aspect of our daily lives is smothered by kissing, why are most Japanese shy about it? Many visitors leave Japan thinking that Japanese never kiss, which is not true. The kiss is viewed

differently, partly because of Japan's history combining indigenous Shinto ideas with outside influences, namely Chinese and Western, and partly because of their traditional concerns about etiquette, courtesy, and aesthetics.

The Japanese have at least three words for kiss, which can be found in their literature, but are not normally used in everyday speech. The contemporary word for kiss, *kissu* (キス) is one of hundreds of English (and other foreign) words incorporated into the Japanese language since the Meiji era. *Kissu*, a commonly used word, became popular during the American occupation after the Second World War.

The character for mouth (口) looks like an open mouth and appears as a radical in many other words such as lips. Most importantly, 口 this character is used everywhere in Japan to indicate entrance (入り口) and exit (出口). These are kanji we must learn immediately if we intend to navigate our way through any public transportation system, or any public building in Japan.

In a charming essay entitled "The Japanese Kiss," film and book critic, and late essayist Donald Richie, a resident of Japan since 1946, describes the audience reaction to the 1896 Thomas Edison moving picture "The Widow Jones" in which a long, lingering kiss was shown on screen for the first time. By 1897, it had made its way to Osaka, Japan and became an immediate sensation. According to Richie, the police came to view the spectacle, and a local narrator-interpreter explained that the hero and heroine were merely saying hello, not about to engage in intercourse in front of the audience. Richie notes that public kissing was outlawed in Japan in the early 1920s. He describes with amusement how, during the 1930s, Rodin's "The Kiss" never made it to Japan, not because the two lovers were naked, but because they were kissing. Japanese authorities suggested that a cloth be wrapped around their heads. The French were not amused.⁷

Public versus private displays of emotion, was, and continues to be a debated issue in Japan. The intimate relationship between lip kissing and sexual intercourse is taken for granted in Japanese society. The most obvious visual sources are late eighteenth century and nineteenth century *shunga*, or spring pictures, and privately held "pillow books," which, in traditional times, were handed down from generation to generation. A male college student I interviewed told me with surprise, that when his grandfather died a few years ago, his father discovered a collection of erotic prints among his possessions. *Shunga* are beautiful to look at. They

are occasionally quite witty, revealing much about the lovers, their lovemaking, and their environment.

Although *shunga* do not emphasize lip kissing, we can sometimes find it depicted during intercourse. In Hokusai's "Azuma Nishiki" (Brocade of the East) a man and a woman are "united above and below," to use Richard Lane's phrase.⁸ The woman is wearing a gorgeous tie-dyed purple kimono. The stripes on the man's kimono undulate with his body. Paper tissues, a Japanese invention, I am told, lie on the floor next to the woman. Tissues are frequently found in *shunga*. The composition, the rich colors, and the expert drawing were meant to excite aesthetic as well as erotic responses.

Tongue kissing appears to be a passionate expression occurring at the height of physical excitement. Utamaro explicitly depicts this in some of his *shunga*. Color and pattern dominate. We feast on lush blues, purples, and red. In one example, a couple's lovemaking is surreptitiously observed by another woman who is as aroused as the Japanese viewers of the woodcut. Utamaro has cleverly hidden the voyeur's mouth by placing her face in just the right position behind the wooden slats.

Another Utamaro woodcut suggests that the weather that day is quite mild. The woman is holding a fan to cool the heat of her passion. The couple is making love on the veranda with only a discretely hung bamboo shade providing semi-privacy. Utamaro frequently depicts persons in the next room, children asleep or awake in the same room, or someone observing these scenes which inevitably took place in the pleasure quarters. However, tongue kissing is a privilege, not a right. It, along with coitus, are meant to suggest the supreme passion of united bodies. Utamaro's prints also remind us that many times in the pleasure quarters, it is the woman who initiates sex. In one of his woodcuts, the woman's tongue is reaching for the man's mouth.

One of my favorite Utamaro *shunga* woodcuts reveals a partially clad young man signaling his desire to the woman who was combing her beautiful long hair. Her mirror, in the background, reflects her naked foot, which is not yet bent back in passion. While she is not ready, he is, and he tells her by sticking his tongue out while simultaneously covering his mouth with his hand, so that she does not yet see his tongue or the inside of his mouth. We, the viewers, know precisely what is on his mind, because we see the tongue.

Men and women covering their mouths with their hands, a fan, or the sleeve of their kimonos, is a common sight in visual images dating back hundreds of years. More than a thousand years ago during Heian times, aristocratic women hid themselves behind screens so that potential lovers

could not read the emotions on their faces. During the seventeenth century, Confucian ideas influenced relations between men and women. For male heads of households to show affection toward their wives or children was considered inappropriate. Fujimoto Kizan (1626-1704) pursued a lifetime study of the art of lovemaking, which he conducted in brothels, since courtesans were considered professionals. Most of them combined the art of lovemaking with aesthetic sensibility and good manners. Between 1656 and 1678, Kizan wrote, *The Great Mirror of the Art of Love* in which he paid careful attention to each courtesan's overall appearance and how she conducted herself, including whether she covered her mouth. "But for her to open her mouth and bare her teeth or to laugh in a loud voice is to deprive her instantly of all elegance and make her seem crude. When something is so extremely funny that she *must* laugh, she should either cover her mouth with her sleeve or else avert her head behind the customer's shoulder."⁹

The courtesan's teeth, and, more than likely those of her customer, were blackened (*ohaguro*), a custom that began more than a thousand years ago and continued until the beginning of the twentieth century. Apparently a piece of iron is soaked in rice vinegar, and the colored liquid is applied to the teeth. This deliberate attempt by people to repeatedly darken their teeth for aesthetic reasons strikes us today as appalling. We can only speculate about how the custom began and why it continued for so long. Two possibilities come to mind.

1. If the inside of the mouth is perceived as a dark hole, then the teeth should also be dark, in order to call attention to the beauty of the small, rosy lips, or the labia, as it were.
2. Crooked front teeth are commonplace in young and old alike, interfering perhaps, with the aesthetic impact and desirability of the small mouth. In Saikaku Ihara's novel, *The Life of an Amorous Man*, originally published in 1682, the hero, named Yonosuke, or man of the world, says: "Last summer I treated Yoshioka [a courtesan] to some fresh watermelon and she ate it so ravenously that she unwittingly exposed all her protruding teeth."¹¹ Although some men admired crooked or overlapping front teeth, few of them received the special opportunity to observe a woman's teeth or the inside of her mouth, since she invariably covered her mouth or hid her face.

Today in Japan, most women and some men, cover their mouths whenever they laugh. Female Japanese students I interviewed told me that their mothers told them, sometimes indirectly, or by example, that it was inappropriate to show the inside of their mouths. They were not told about the sexual implications. As they matured, they detected a direct correlation between an open mouth and a receptive vagina. By the time they were pre-teens, said one student, kissing as a subject for discussion became a hot topic. They sometimes discussed how their first kiss, their “lemon kiss,” would taste: clean, fresh, like a lemon drop. During their early teens, another female volunteered, boys and girls sometimes practiced what they called the “indirect kiss”, sending signals to one another by starting to drink a soft drink from the same can and then sharing the can with that “special” person. She called it a “hidden message,” something Utamaro suggested two centuries ago by showing the hand over the young man’s mouth. Even if the courtesan cannot see the tongue, she understands the message.

What is not spoken often becomes intensely, even on occasion, perversely revealing. In his book, *The Face of Another*, Kobo Abe (1924-1993) wrote about a man’s desire to seduce his wife by pretending to be someone else. A professional chemist, he became the victim of a horrible accident which completely disfigured his face. Abe, who in his youth obtained a medical degree, vividly details the technical process and aesthetic difficulties of designing, producing and wearing a lifelike mask which has the features of another man. The husband pays for the privilege of using the facial structure of a total stranger rather than his own. When he put the face on for the first time, he was amazed by its human appearance. The nostril tubes worked perfectly. The skin tone, the pores, the capillaries of the “gelatinous membrane” which fit over his scared face “like a wet plastic bag,” were technically accurate.¹² The lips proved to be problematic, since they completely covered his own and were attached to the inside of his mouth. After practice, he could open his mouth, move his lips to speak, eat, even smoke. But the mask would not smile. Also, his taste buds were affected, and he needed to be especially careful not to dribble when drinking soup. No point in licking his lips, since the mask’s lips always felt the same.

Other than the ongoing discomfort of painfully scarred facial tissue subjected to glue and a non-porous membrane directly attached to it, everything seemed fine for Abe’s hero, and he proceeded with his plan to seduce his wife. The crucial issue of the kiss is ignored. He assumed she would not recognize him and planned to make love to her in the dark so that she would not notice the old scar on his hip from their skiing trip. But

how will he kiss her? Will he kiss her? Abe does not tell us. Instead, he has us believe that she would not know unless she tore the mask off, or put her lips directly on it.¹³ Of course, she knew without doing either. Abe also deliberately omits in his novel that, during their sexual contact, she never touches his lips. We know this, because the erotic kiss, the reveling kiss, the kiss of betrayal, the kiss of life and death, emerges as the kiss of death. In a post-coital letter to his wife, Abe describes a post-war movie seen by the husband in which the lonely, young, beautiful heroine was completely disfigured on one side of her face. She lived with her older brother who loved her intensely. She convinced him to take her to the seashore “just once in her life.”¹⁴ They spend an erotically charged, anticipatory night together. Finally, she entreated him to kiss her. He could no longer resist. The kiss engendered passionate lovemaking. The phrase “just once in her life” re-emerges in our minds and in his. Leaving her brother behind, she walked along the sand into the waves to drown herself. Their first kiss was so meaningful, and so powerful, that it could never be repeated. “I should like to ask you,” wrote Abe’s masked husband to his wife, “when the boy kissed his sister in the film, what side did he kiss her on?”¹⁵ One could call this a kind of philosophical *noir*. Abe, Mishima, Kawabata and other authors (and artists) describe and depict a Japanese philosophy of life.

The erotic kiss on the lips that results in death leads us to wonder about the conclusion of Abe’s novel. Does he kill his wife and then himself? Abe, unlike Yukio Mishima (1925-1970), ends his novel ambiguously. However, like Mishima, he likens fighting soldiers about to experience death to the erotic experience. Mishima’s short, powerful, novella, *Patriotism*, describes the circumstances surrounding the deaths of a young lieutenant and his wife of six months. The year is 1936, and Japanese imperialism is rampant. The lieutenant chooses honorable suicide over blind obedience, and his wife agrees to follow him. But first they make love for the last time. As they deeply kiss, Mishima vividly intertwines erotic ecstasy with imminent, painful death by sword and knife: “they felt as if the still unknown agonies of death had tempered their senses to the keenness of red-hot steel. The agonies they could not yet feel, the distant pains of death, had refined their awareness of pleasure.”¹⁶ He describes their intense, yet tender, lovemaking as the pinnacle of aesthetic experience for each of them. Finally, he describes their suicides in the same detail, even referring to the lieutenant’s splattered blood leaving a “bold, vivid pattern” on her white kimono.¹⁷ She wipes the blood from his mouth, kisses his dead lips, and then kills herself.

All this occurs, without interruption, within the confines of their small, two-story flat in Tokyo. We, the readers, understand that it is a confidential matter, a private decision between them. Throughout Mishima's story, we observe their elegant decorum and attention to aesthetic detail. She attends to her makeup and changes to a white kimono (signifying death), and he dons his uniform before beginning the ritualized death proceedings. From the beginning, they both exhibit courtesy and refinement, almost too much from a Western point of view.

Unlike the Meiji era, where dramatic change took place over time, the American occupation caused many instantaneous upheavals in Japanese society. Immediately upon their arrival, the American occupation authorities created a Civil Information and Education Service (CIE). Filmmakers were given a list of taboo subjects, and they were encouraged to make new films which would be subject to pre-censorship by CIE, and final censorship by both CIE and the Civil Censorship Detachment Unit (CCD).¹⁸ This is how so-called "kissing films" were born. The idea was to immediately "remold the Japanese mind," to use Kyoko Hirano's phrase.¹⁹ Apparently, David Conde, Chief of the Motion Picture and Theatrical Branch of CIE, wanted Japanese directors to include kissing scenes, specifically ordering Yashushi Sasaki to include them in the 1946 movie *Twenty-year-old Youth*. According to Sasaki, Conde's reasoning was, "Japanese tend to do things sneakily. They should do things openly."²⁰

Other kissing films followed. Conde apparently insisted that lovers who did not kiss each other would not be portrayed in Japanese film, ignoring the taboo that kissing was considered a private matter in Japan.²¹ The quality of the acted kiss left something to be desired, since rumor suggested that the stars used thin paper or gauze on their lips so no direct contact would occur.²² Some well-known actors refused to play kissing scenes. One popular actress, Yoshiko Yamaguchi, traveled to the United States in 1950, in order to learn, she said, kissing techniques from American films.²³

Kissing films fostered a more relaxed public attitude toward eroticism, yet how many post-World War II kissing scenes are prevalent in film and theater, novels and poetry? Many Japanese still prefer the "hidden message," that is, what is implied rather than explicit in their personal relationships. Yet pornography and prostitution thrive in Japan. *The Japan Times* reports that just about half of adult males visit prostitutes. Do they kiss them? Probably not often. As one male Japanese student I interviewed pointed out, unlike women, men are less interested in kissing, preferring to focus more on sexual intercourse. This is plausible if we canvass erotic films and books published after the Occupation ended in

1952. The kiss on the mouth is reserved for that special relationship. It is a sign of love, not gratification. Japanese erotic films and books, produced overwhelmingly by men, not surprisingly, reflect men's desires.

The kiss as a symbol for sexual intercourse is beautifully illustrated in the short novel, *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, by Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972). Kawabata explores the difference between lust and eroticism, the similarity between eroticism and death, and the aesthetics of eroticism. Briefly, the story concerns a 68-year-old man named Eguchi, who visits a unique house of pleasure. All of the women are young virgins. They are given sleeping potions by the house matron, which renders them totally inert. Whenever Eguchi visits, he is shown to a private room in which a young, naked girl lies sleeping. Kawabata paints a poignant *sumi-e* of seeming voids. What is omitted becomes significant. The kiss emerges as a powerful symbol, since, by not referring to it directly, Kawabata tells us that no intercourse is possible. All the old men who visit these young women are impotent, and Eguchi ponders his own fate, that is, his impending impotency and death, while simultaneously gently touching and admiring the individual beauty of each woman. He barely touches the lips of one of the girls with his mouth, and he peers into the sleeping open mouth of another. But for him, kissing and lovemaking are now memories. He thinks of a particular kiss which occurred in his mid-twenties. The embarrassed recipient refused to admit they had just kissed. "I don't [kiss]", she said hanging her head slightly, choked with tears."²⁴ Throughout the novel, Eguchi imagines what he might do with each of these young virgins, but most of his thoughts are not enacted outside of his mind. Every time he visits them, he, too, takes sleeping pills to escape his environment and his desires.

My discussions with Japanese students reinforced my feeling that kissing is still a private matter, even if a few young people are doing it in public. One student said that she thought that many of these young people would stop kissing publicly as they got older, since, eventually, embarrassment would overpower rebellious behavior. Another said that it was fine for Westerners to show their feeling in public but that she would be uncomfortable doing so. A male student, who had spent part of his childhood in Chicago, volunteered that he had never thought much about the subject, even after watching American movies and real American kisses. After pondering a while, he suggested that the Japanese notion of what is public and what is private transcends class and education in Japan. Whether you are a graduate student or a food server on the Shinkansen (Bullet Train), the rules are the same. Public displays of emotion are not appropriate in Japanese society.

Conclusion

One of my favorite Japanese films, *Tampopo*, brilliantly sums up all the wit, sensuality, and sexiness of the kiss in Japan and the apparent Japanese appetite for salaciousness in sexual matters and in food. The story concerns a youngish widow, Tampopo (Dandelion), who is desperately trying to keep her late husband's noodle restaurant open. However, she makes perfectly dreadful soup, and her noodles are terrible. Few customers return. The film focuses on the mouth, on sucking and slurping, on tasting and eating, and eventually, on kissing. The aesthetics of the full noodle bowl, the aesthetics of eating from it, the seduction of the soup, are paramount. To cook it properly, she must first learn to appreciate its sensual and sensuous qualities. "First, caress the surface with the chopstick tips," says the truck driver who offers to help her improve her cooking. "To express affection, apologize to the pork by saying 'see you soon.' Finally, start eating the noodles first and while eating the noodles, eye the pork affectionately." In short, savor every moment. Tampopo must understand that eating, aesthetic appreciation, and sensuousness intermingle. Slurping and sucking the noodles along with the accompanying sounds are an intimate part of enjoying them, even while not showing the tongue. Recall how difficult the masked husband in Abe's novel found feeling the noodles and soup passing through his lips.

The difficulty of separating sensuality from sensuousness, and eating from kissing is further explored in a scene from *Tampopo* in which a Japanese woman unsuccessfully tries to teach a group of young women how to eat spaghetti the Western way: silently, with forks and knives, using small bites, distancing the women emotionally and aesthetically from their food. It does not work, for it requires diners to completely divorce themselves from the sexy aspect of ingesting noodles, and to open wide their mouths to insert a metal tool, the fork, inside.

Throughout *Tampopo*, the audience is teased by witty sexual innuendos that, on the surface, seem conventional. The truck driver, who helps Tampopo research various soup bases and noodle consistencies, is her official taster. As her cooking improves, he offers positive comments with sexual undertones, such as, "The noodles are smooth, but strong," or "They are beginning to have depth, but lack substance," and finally, "These are kissing noodles." Once the kind truck driver has accomplished his goal of enjoying delicious "kissing" noodles in a tasty broth, he rides off into the sunset, the cowboy trucker having done a good deed.

The trucker took the soup and noodle challenge seriously - in the same way that Japanese take the kiss seriously. We should never be subjected to

bad noodle soup, just as we should never be the victims of a superficial or meaningless kiss.

Notes

¹ Takashi Watanabe, "Young Japanese Confront Social Taboos: For Some, Private Feelings Are Coming Out in Public Places," *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, the *Nikkei Weekly* (23 November 1992), p. 25.

² *Ibid.*

³ Miki Tanikawa, "Japan's Young Couples Discover the Kiss," *The New York Times* (Sunday, 28 May 1995), p. 39.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷ Donald Richie, *A Lateral View*, (Berkeley, Cal.: Stone Bridge Press, 1992), pp. 221-222. Also Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), p. 159.

⁸ Hokusai, *Azuma Nishiki Shunga Album #7*, ed. Yoshikazu Hayashi and Richard Lane (Tokyo: Kawade-Shobo, 1996), essay unpaginated.

⁹ Donald Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), p. 245. According to Keene, the complete manuscript was not rediscovered until 1941 and was not published until 1961. "I must duly record," reports Keene, p. 242, "that I have not found one line in the 581 closely printed pages of *The Great Mirror* that seems less than perfectly decorous, a model of good taste."

¹¹ Saikaku Ihara, *The Life of an Amorous Man*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1963), p. 214.

¹² Abe Kobo, *The Face of Another*, (New York: Kodansha International, 1992), p. 99.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 183.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 233-234.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁶ Yukio Mishima, *Patriotism*, (New York: New Directions Bibelot, 1995), p. 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁸ Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo*, p. 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

²⁴ Kawabata Yasunari, *House of Sleeping Beauties*, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, Ltd., 1980), p. 88.

CHAPTER THREE

TRACES OF THE BODY IN SPACE: EMBODIED METAPHOR OF MENUS AND LISTS

BONGRAE SEOK

Introduction

In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes (1984) defines the body as a material substance extended in space.¹ According to him, the body is a bounded, limited, and tangible entity with particular physical dimensions. However, the human body, although spatially bounded and physically tangible, is not just a material substance. It interacts with others things and leaves traces that affect the world and itself in a dialectical process of action and reaction. As many philosophers, psychologists and artists explain, the human body is an intrinsically relational and interactive being that opens up the world through its interactive traces and sensibilities (Gibson 1977, 1979; Le Corbusier 1954/2004; Merleau-Ponty 1962).² I will analyze how people perceive space from the viewpoint of the traces and sensibilities of the body. Specifically, I will explain how the space of menus and lists is organized and used from the perspective of the body and its activities.

The word “menu” in English refers to a list of available items one can order or purchase in a restaurant. It is also used widely outside of its original environment (i.e., restaurants) such as computer user interface, commercial services, library indexes, and web pages. For example, one can run a program or an algorithm in a computational system as one orders food in a restaurant from its menu, but the process of ordering food is very different from the process of running an algorithm or commanding a computer program. The former relies on causal processes but the latter relies on logical/computational processes. Regardless of the difference, people use their computer menus as they order food from restaurant menus. Simply, a menu is a list of items one can access, use, search, order, command, or purchase.

A menu presents a range of items available in a given functionality or capacity but its categorical organization is not fully understood and the relations among the listed items are not fully analyzed. Often, many restaurant menus are organized in seemingly random and haphazard ways. For example, instead of listing menu items following the logic of inclusion-exclusion and similarity-difference, many restaurants tend to list items of general categories (such as sandwich) with items of particular categories (such as wrap sandwich). If one wants to order a wrap sandwich in a restaurant, one needs to check the sandwich section of the menu because “wrap sandwich” is a particular type of “sandwich,” i.e., a *subset* of sandwich. However, this logic of hierarchical inclusion or subsumption (a general category, such as sandwich, includes its subcategories such as wrap sandwich, Reuben sandwich, and tuna sandwich) is not always observed in many restaurant menus. Often, wrap sandwiches are listed in a separate section next to the section of sandwich. That is, “sandwich” and “wrap sandwich” are listed at the same level of hierarchy in some menus. It is as if one says, “there are more boys than people,” instead of saying “there are more boys than girls.” Why do many restaurant menus violate the logic of hierarchical inclusion?

This obvious violation of the logical relation between part and whole can be interpreted from the perspective of business marketing. By creating an independent section of wrap sandwich at the same level with the generic section of sandwich, a sandwich shop can emphasize or reflect its specialty (i.e., its specialty in wrap sandwiches) in its menu. However, the tendency to violate the subsumption principle in restaurant menus is not simply interpreted as a business or marketing tactic (i.e., creating specialty sections in a menu to showcase a restaurant’s culinary specialization). If many computer menus, library indexes (book lists), lists of university departments, and grocery isle lists show the same type of illogical but seemingly effective menu organizations, the illogical organizations of many menus and lists should be interpreted broadly as a peculiar cognitive tendency of the human mind, not as a narrowly specified business or marketing strategy. Of course, business is important. Many grocery stores, in order to show their specialties or to attract more customers, display Mexican food and groceries in a separate isle (i.e., “Mexican food”) not in their international food isles, even though Mexican food, by definition, is international food. However, universities and libraries are not business corporations. For example, biochemistry programs in many universities do not belong to their biology or chemistry departments, even though biochemistry, by definition, is a specialized field that combines biology and chemistry. Science fictions or detective stories are fictions but many