

Email Message

MICHAEL CURRENT (VIA ALAN SONDHEIM)



----- Email message -----

From: Alan Sondheim

Michael Current moderated Deleuze-Guattari, was instrumental in the founding of the Spoons email list collective, began Cybermind with me and helped start fiction-of-philosophy, now Wryting. He sent me this story the day before he died. I send it out yearly around the anniversary of his death. He was brilliant and kind. +++

Let us never forget.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, 20 Jul 1994 01:48:15 -0500 (CDT)

From: Michael Current <mcurrent at picard.infonet.net>

To: ALAN SONDEHEIM <sondheim at panix.com>, sondheim at newschool.edu

Subject: A little something..

I wrote this while sitting at the cafe tonight, much to my surprise. Comments? Please be gentle, this is not something I am used to/comfortable with.

Care of the Body

A stranger writes to me of the body. Of his concern for the body. Answering my email, he tells me he is skeptical of email, concerned about the detachment of thought and affect from the fleshbonesandblood. An ethical matter, a concern that we will abandon our environment, that our being-in-the-world will be replaced by being-in/being-with/being-one-with/becoming-with the machine..

Tracing back through endless stacks of mail headers, we find the stranger at his home, on a quiet street in a Midwestern college town, around midnight. He is reading my message, addressed not to him but to a multiple that includes him, that he intersects. From a beat-up old cassette deck, soft jazz plays in his headphones as he sits reading, naked, in a chair in the corner of his bedroom - books on every side, computer screen propped to the proper height by a pile of books and a couple of dusty old manuscripts.

He is reading, deleting, saving, replying - harvesting the list which grows, in fits and starts, but grows, in its non-organic medium. His hands move on the keyboard, and sometimes, unconsciously, during the reading of a long message, they slip from the keyboard to the pile of books to his left side, books long unread. Sometimes, unconsciously, he caresses the books. Sometimes, too, unconsciously, his hand slips from the stack of books, into his lap, to his semi-erect penis which, from time to time, unconsciously, he also caresses..

Reading my post, he feels concern. He needs to speak to me. He wonders if I cannot see the irony of discussing embodiment by email. He wonders what I look like, what I am doing at that very moment, and what would happen if we were to meet in the flesh.

He must reach out to me, touch me with his concern. His hands linger in his lap as he ponders the words, stroking himself. Then they move to the keyboard and he begins to type, sharing with a disembodied stranger - who has not, in any case, addressed him exactly - his concern about the abandonment of the body. Carefully, he composes clear, direct, generous sentences, filling them with more than he dare say or even acknowledge he is thinking about. We must not abandon the body.

Finishing the message, he hits the key sequence that will send it off to me, feeling satisfied that he has pointed out the danger he sees. Something else, too, has been communicated, something that should not be brought to the level of thought.. He hits a switch and powers down the computer, stands and turns out the lights. A sudden breeze through the window makes him aware, for a moment, of his body, and he muses, absently, for a moment, at how he has managed to become erect during the hour he has spent carefully reading, deleting, filing, replying..

He crawls into bed, mind wandering from the pleasant sensation of cool sheets on his cock, balls, nipples, to vague, tangential thoughts about my message, his reply - for a moment imagining himself speaking to me, his words convincing, compelling - and about Marx, Sartre, Immanuel Wallerstein...thoughts of pleasure and the lack of it rising and receding in Kondratiev waves across the longue durée of his life. At some point, he is asleep, dreaming.

Fifteen, he is on the beach, with Wendy, his hands reaching and reaching for the clasp that holds together her bikini top. A couple of weeks ago,

he is peering out the window for a second and then a third time at the smooth, well-formed chest of the tanned boy who is mowing the lawn, feeling all the different kinds of difference that separate the boy's body from his own. Last night, he is in my bedroom, watching me read the reply he has written, pleased to see that I, too, am at home, alone, naked in my bedroom before my terminal, reading the text of his desire. His mind is touching mine. Dreaming of me, he wakes to find his chest sticky, his hand on his slowly receding erection. He wipes his hand on the sheets and turns over, feeling, for a moment, as he falls back into sleep - something like...concern. "We must not abandon the body," he murmurs.. In the corner, the computer listens for his breathing to steady, then switches itself on and dials, disks spinning with anticipation.

-----Michael J. Current-----
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"AN IMAGE OF THOUGHT CALLED PHILOSOPHY HAS BEEN FORMED HISTORICALLY AND IT
EFFECTIVELY STOPS PEOPLE FROM THINKING."
- GILLES DELEUZE
