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Utopies et Heretopies, Michel Foucault (1966)

Extract: *Le corps utopique (Utopian body)* translation by Lucia Allais of a radio lecture Foucault delivered in 1966. Published in Sensorium, MIT Press, 2006, 229-34

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My body: it is the place without recourse to which I am condemned. And actually I think that it is against this body (as if to erase it) that all these utopias have come into being. The prestige of utopia--to what does utopia owe its beauty, its marvel? Utopia is a place outside all places, but it is a place where I will have a body without body, a body that will be beautiful, limpid, transparent, luminous, speedy, colossal in its power, infinite in its duration. Untethered, invisible, protected--always transfigured. It may very well be that the first utopia, the one most deeply rooted in the hearts of men, is precisely the utopia of an incorporeal body.

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No, really, there is no need for magic, for enchantment. There's no need for a soul, nor a death, for me to be both transparent and opaque, visible and invisible, life and thing. For me to be a utopia, it is enough that I be a body. All those utopias by which I evaded my body--well they had, quite simply, their model and their first application, they had their place of origin, in my body itself, I really was wrong, before, to say that utopias are turned against the body and destined to erase it. They were born from the body itself, and perhaps afterwards they turned against it.

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My body, in fact, is always elsewhere. It is tied to all the elsewheres of the world. And to tell the truth, it is elsewhere than in the world, because it is around it that things are arranged. It is in relation to it--and in relation to it as if in relation to a sovereign--that there is a below, an above, a right, a left, a forward and a backward, a near and a far. The body is the zero point of the world. There, where paths and spaces come to meet, the body is nowhere. It is at the heart of the world, this small utopian kernel from which I dream, I speak, I proceed, I imagine, I perceive things in their place, and I negate them also by the indefinite power of the utopias I imagine. My body is like the City of the Sun. It has no place, but it is from it that all possible places, real or utopian, emerge and radiate.

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Maybe it should also be said that to make love is to feel one's body close in on oneself. It is finally to exist outside of any utopia, with all of one's density, between the hands of the other. Under the other's fingers running over you, all the invisible parts of your body begin to exist. Against the lips of the other, yours become sensitive. In front of his half-closed eyes, your face acquires a certitude. There is a gaze, finally, to see your closed eyelids. Love also, like the mirror and like death--it appeases the utopia of your body, it hushes it, it calms it, it encloses it as if in a box, it shuts and seals it. This is why love is so closely related to the illusion of the mirror and the menace of death. And if, despite these two perilous figures that surround it, we love so much to make love, it is because, in love, the body is here.