

Address

BODIES THAT EMBRACE in order to wrestle, or wrestle in order to embrace; bodies that with every fiber listen to, or play, invisible or visible music; bodies that fall asleep due to sadness, drunkenness, or serenity; bodies that strip themselves; bodies that swim through various media; bodies that mingle their tears with those of the sea—such are the phenomena that the pages your gaze has just begun to notice advance to meet. A shared restlessness inhabits and moves across their diversity—the sort of joyous restlessness that pushes our feet forward, and causes our eyes to rise again and our hearts to beat. The fact that the body alone witnesses to the spirit, and endlessly sends us letters of credence, or of apostasy and repudiation, is enough to guarantee the inexhaustible character of the spirit's manifestations and to keep us awake to them. These manifestations call forth speech, which gathers up meaning from them to translate itself there and catch its breath, incessantly.

At issue here will be these manifestations, treated in antiphonic, which is to say alternating, fashion, according to the response or rather the responses that the silently speaking hands of painters and the secretly lucid voices of poets give them, delivering or transmitting these manifestations to us, through and within this very response. A photographic foray aside, the studies that follow are in fact devoted to painting and, to a lesser extent, poetry. Yet, the point here is neither art history nor esthetics, but rather a dialogue with the works and with what they look upon. In responding by a manual act of presence (drawing, painting, writing—which in Greek are the same word, *graphein*)

to bodily acts of presence, in delivering over to verbal or plastic form that of the spirit which comes to attest to itself in them, poetry and painting do not procure for us new objects to consider, but rather a new source of restlessness.

Their response in turn calls for us to respond, so that the burn of the visible that aroused that response might not go out in us or heal over. Here in this book, this response is written: there will be no images, no "reproductions"—the intention being not to take the place of the works, but to issue from them and to address them. It is given manually, without there being a final touch, any more than there is a first touch. This is why the antipenultimate study leaves off from staying close to the works in order to attempt, in a more historical mode, a genealogy of the notion of *creator*, insofar as it has come to be applied to the artist. This decision of transferal was a serious one, and the consequences continue to affect us. Perhaps this decision involves a forgetting of the hand, and of its dignity. If yours continues to hold this book, you will have understood that this is hardly a preface or an introduction, but simply an address, a directive for continuing along the way, itself in transit. It passes on, and so do you. May you find the light favorable!

Paris, September 1996

Hand to Hand

