

# Black Holes Radiate Lovingly

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Lina Saneh asked me, as well as other artists, to sign one of her body parts. I, who is not only an artist but also a writer and thinker who neither curses nor uses unseemly language, have chosen to sign the phallus implied jointly by her play *Appendix* and her oft-repeated exclamation *ayrî fik* (*I thrust my penis in you/ my penis is inside you*) when addressed to her husband, Rabih Mroué. In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the Cheshire-Cat is "giving in love what she does not have" (Lacan),<sup>1</sup> a grin (Alice: "I didn't know that Cheshire-Cats always grinned; in fact, I didn't know that cats *could* grin"). "We're all mad here. I'm mad..." The Cheshire-Cat is indeed mad. What kind of madness? It is madly in love, refining itself to what it does not have, a grin, which it gives lovingly. "This time it [the Cat] vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone. 'Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin,' thought Alice; 'but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!'" Yes, it is the most curious thing: witnessing someone madly in love. One of the most obvious things a woman does not have is a penis, therefore the love of a woman may entail giving it—in a linguistic or prosthetic form or else creatively. But is she willing to go all the way and give a Phallus, as a gesture of being *madly* in love? For that she has to disappear! What could be a pretext for accomplishing that? Is it—especially if this disappearance takes the form, as in Saneh's play *Appendix*, of losing, organ by organ, all she has, her appendix, gall-bladder, breasts, legs, arms, eyes, etc.—making a body without organs? Not necessarily, since, as Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, "the BwO [Body without Organs] is not at all the opposite of the organs. The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism.... It is true that Artaud wages a struggle against the organs, but at the same time what he is going after, what he has it in for, is the organism: *The body is the body. Alone it stands. And in no need of organs. Organism it never is. Organisms are the enemies of the body.* The BwO is not opposed to the organs; rather, the BwO and its 'true organs,' which must be composed and positioned, are opposed to the organism, the organic organization of the organs."<sup>2</sup> The pretext Lina Saneh gives in her play *Appendix* is the following: "Lina has always wanted to be cremated at her death. But it is prohibited to get oneself cremated in Lebanon, for religious reasons. One day, she heard it said that in hospitals the excised limbs and organs of certain patients were burnt.... She told herself that here was perhaps a solution to her problem. That is, she could be operated on, in several stages, to remove, as she went along, limbs and organs of her body, from the least necessary to the most vital, without for that matter endangering her life. The organs and limbs removed during the operations would then be burnt. She would thus try to gain as much 'ground' as possible at the expense of her own body in comparison with what would remain of it for interring at her death. She would thus get herself burnt as she went along, by means of little fires, until she has encroached on the largest fraction of herself at the expense of her enemies—until perhaps the capitulation of the latter."

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and foreword by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 158.

Lina vanished quite slowly, beginning with the appendix (in her play *Appendix*), and ending with the linguistic penis (implicit in her oft-repeated *Ayri fke*), which remained some time after the rest of her had gone. The phallus is a woman refined to what she most obviously does not have, a penis, which she gives lovingly. Thus while a woman cannot have a becoming-man,<sup>3</sup> she can have a becoming-Phallus. Can one who is madly in love and the jealous type perform this gesture, when it implies the possibility that a thief, an imposter will lay claim to that penis, cathect it perversely in a prosthetic penis attachment? The ambivalence of seeing a woman with a prosthetic penis attachment during a sexual act is not necessarily due to encountering an indiscernability of the female and the male but results from the circumstance that it is not clear whether the woman in question is giving what she does not have while maintaining what she has, or whether she has stolen the phallus of a woman who has been refined to what she does not have and gave that lovingly—many a pervert's prosthetic penis attachment is the stolen phallus of a hysteric who is madly in love. Simultaneously with her play *Appendix*, which was premiered on 21 April 2007, Saneh began the project *Lina Saneh Body Studio*. One reads in the online blog dedicated to this project, and whose first entries are from March and April 2007: "I have always wanted to be cremated after my death, which is forbidden in Lebanon, since all monotheistic religions refuse cremation and practice interring... I have long thought of the best way to evade religious law as ratified by state law. For this, I have been inspired by the work of Piero Manzoni, who signs human bodies or body parts, thus constituting them, in the act of signing and seeing, into artworks. I am inviting you to contribute to my project, which consists in the transformation of my body into a collection of art pieces duly signed by different international artists. But this is only the first part of the project entitled: *Lina Saneh Body Studio*. Later, my body-collection-of-art-pieces will be presented to galleries, museums, and collectors, who might be interested to buy these pieces of art, the only condition being that they will not be receiving these artworks/parts-of-my-body before I die, at which point my body will be cut up and sent to its new owners. They are then free to exhibit the artworks/parts-of-my-body, after my death, or refrain from doing so. They are also free to sell them again [this is possible during my lifetime], however they are contractually bound to preserving them, and, if not, to cremate them." It would seem that Saneh is completely unaware of the likelihood that the preserved organs, as the ancient Egyptians knew all too well, would reveal her secrets, even betray her: "To be said by Osiris N. 'My heart of my mother, my heart of my mother, my breast of my being, rise not against me as witness, oppose me not in the Council. Weigh not heavy against me before the keeper of the balance.... Make not my name to stink in the presence of the Council... Tell no lie against me in the presence of the great god.'" <sup>4</sup> (*The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 30b). <sup>5</sup> *Lina Saneh Body Studio* is not only a needless prosthetic appendix to her play *Appendix*; it is a sort of defense mechanism against, a resistance to her play

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 291-292: "Why are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man? First because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian.... Let us try to say it another way: There is no becoming-man because man is the molar entity par excellence, whereas becomings are molecular.... man constitutes the majority, or rather the standard upon which the majority is based: white, male, adult, 'rational,' etc., in short, the average European, the subject of enunciation."

<sup>4</sup> The body without organs is a body that is no longer betrayed by the organs—though it can be betrayed otherwise. We have to choose what sort of risks and dangers we are to run.

<sup>5</sup> *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: Documents in the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago*, edited by Thomas George Allen (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 115.

*Appendix*, and thus reveals a woman who, while not afraid of representation (the title of one of Lina Saneh's collaborative performances with Rabih Mroué is: *Who's Afraid of Representation*, 2005), is afraid to be madly in love—How Jalal Toufic Wishes that *Lina Saneh Body Studio* is an April Fools' Joke.<sup>6</sup>

In the last scene of Buñuel's *Belle de Jour* (1967), the husband talks, sees, stands and walks away from his wheelchair; this reveals that he was madly in love with his wife, giving her what he did not have: paralysis, blindness, and aphonia—many a hysteric can be viewed as madly in love, giving what she or he does not have organically, what cannot be explained by any physical disorder or known physiological mechanism: paralysis, aphonia, seizures, akinesia, dyskinesia, blindness, anosmia, anesthesia, paresthesia.... The ending is a reasonably happy one: thenceforth he will give her what he has and she will give him what she, previously frigid, did not know that she had, but discovered, in a brothel, as having.

"I give you my body, my voice, my existence": certainly this is a loving declaration, especially if the one who is saying it is dead, therefore one who is giving what he or she does not have. Isn't this the case with the dead Lady Wakasa in Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari*, 1953, who gives the potter Genjuro a body she no longer has as well as the Kutsuki Manor, which would otherwise be a ruin, in an exquisite condition? When they are lovers at all, the dead are mad lovers; it is among them that one encounters many of the greatest lovers. Unfortunately, there's always a priest somewhere to tempt one to get rid of that which is too big for one,<sup>7</sup> for example a great love; indeed a priest tempts Genjuro to interpret what is happening as a case of a dead person, a sort of incubus or vampire, sucking the life of the living. Is this the case in *Ugetsu Monogatari*? No! Is it for that matter the case in all vampire films? No! Only in certain vampire films, for example Murnau's *Nosferatu*, is the vampire to be viewed as sucking from the other his energy and taking his life. But in vampire films that are love stories, for example Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), with its tagline *Love Never Dies*,<sup>8</sup> the vampire's beloved gives him what she has, her blood and life, while he gives her what he does not have, his body, as can be discerned by its non appearance in the mirror; his voice; extra powers, etc. At least some of the instances of the dead coming back changed can be attributed not only or necessarily to their having no mirror image, but also to their continuing love, and hence to giving what they do not have—what becomings one undergoes, lovingly! Can one pettily interpret the potter's encounter with Lady Wakasa as happening solely in his head? Mizoguchi makes it difficult to maintain this interpretation as the potter is seen in the last scene being assisted in his work by his invisible, inexistent, dead wife. While alive, his wife gave him what she had; following her death, she, madly in love with him, gave him what she did not have, assisting him lovingly

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<sup>6</sup> A paraphrase of the title of a 2007 Rabih Mroué performance in which Lina Saneh acts.

<sup>7</sup> "Prophesizing is inseparable from the lament. The prophet is the one who laments, who says: 'Why has God chosen me? What did I do to be chosen by God?' In this sense, he's the opposite of the priest. And then he laments, he laments what happens to him. This means: 'It's too big for me.' There you are, that's the lament: 'What's happening to me is too big for me.'" (*L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* [*Gilles Deleuze's ABC Primer*], with Claire Parnet, directed by Pierre-André Boutang, 1996, trans. Timothy S. Murphy).

<sup>8</sup> For a different interpretation of *Love Never Dies*, see my book *Forthcoming* (Berkeley, CA: Atelos, 2000), p. 30, as well as the revised and expanded edition of my book (*Vampires: An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, (Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2003), p. 284: "Does the subtitle of Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, 'Love Never Dies,' belie that death is an end? It does only if one misses its irony. Judging from Coppola's film, love never crosses the entrancing threshold to labyrinthine death: Dracula cannot meet his wife despite the circumstance that as someone who committed suicide, and as a consequence was withheld burial in consecrated ground, she is herself an undead."

in a pottery-making process that requires the simultaneous complementary efforts of two people. “Why is it one encounters the ghost or the vampire alone? Why is it that when one is with others he or she does not appear? Is it necessarily because he or she is a subjective hallucination of the witness?”<sup>9</sup> No; if the beloved can see the dead lover while others cannot, it is possibly because while the dead lover, a cipher, is naturally giving others nothing, he or she is giving what he or she does not have, a body, a voice, etc., to the one with whom he or she is madly in love, with the result that the dead lover is seen and heard by his or her beloved while others see and hear nothing. “Alas, how is’t with you, / That you do bend your eye on vacancy, / And with th’incorporal air do hold discourse?” [Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, 3.4.109-111]; from these words of Gertrude to her son Hamlet, one can deduce that King Hamlet is madly in love with his son but not with his wife. For many living humans, the love of the dead is a grave problem, because their love for the beloved subsists, melancholically, even after the latter’s death and/or because their lover continues to love them even after his or her death. Therefore, with few exceptions, such as those among them who are madly in love or died before dying, the living have made a calculating attempt to stop this love. For that, it was not enough to limit the dead to a specific territory, the grave—*Here Lies*. It was additionally crucial to change the formula of love, to define it otherwise, so it became to give *solely* what one has—thus it was hoped that the dead would be dissuaded and deterred from maintaining their love by making them believe that they, who, being and having nothing (Dracula to Mina in Coppola’s *Dracula*: “I am nothing, lifeless, soulless...”), can give only what they do not have, cannot love. Basically, marriage’s standard vow, *Till death do us part*, was never primarily addressed to the living to maintain a lifelong love but has always been a directive addressed to the dead to cease their love, to discontinue giving what they do not have to the living, leave the latter alone.

When he exclaimed, “I love you completely; I want all of you. Give me all you have, including your urine, menstrual blood...”, she, disappointed, blurted: “Is that all you want?!”—for did not his words imply, among other things, that he wished her to cease loving him once dead? One can want everything in a woman, ask her to give him everything she has, or else one can want from a woman to give him only or mainly or additionally what she does not have, (im-)possibly a penis—in a linguistic or prosthetic form or else creatively. So that the most irrevocable manner of telling someone that one will not fall in love with him or her is to tell him or her: “I am not interested in what you want to give me whether you have it, or don’t have it and are willing to create it!”<sup>10</sup>

“I do not have it!” “Then give it to me *lovingly!*” If love entails giving what one does not have, then “unrequited” love is both a limit case of love and the exemplary love, and the “unrequited” lover is the exemplary lover: “I am not asking you to love me, but to give me what you do not have, love for me, *lovingly.*”

The term *al-faqîr* (the poor) applies according to Islam to each and every human (“O mankind, you are the poor in your relation to God, and God—He is the Independent [or, the Wealthy], the Praiseworthy”

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<sup>9</sup> Jalal Toufic, (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2003), p. 78. In that book, I give the following variant interpretation: “Rather, it is because the ghost or the vampire belongs to the labyrinthine realm of undeath, a realm where people are lost, including to each other.”

<sup>10</sup> In this sense, love, especially mad love, is to be included among creative activities; only a creator can be truly in love, let alone madly in love.

[35.15]); it is moreover one of the appellations of the Sûfî. Since, according to a *hadîth qudsî*,<sup>11</sup> God created the world out of love, “I was a Hidden Treasure and loved to be known. Therefore I created the Creation that I might be known”; and since in Islam creatures do not have anything in proper, indeed have to be recreated recurrently (Qur’ân’s *renewed creation*) by the One who has necessity of existence, God, since they do not have such a necessity, so that when it seems that they are giving what belongs to them, they are giving what they properly speaking do not have, what actually belongs to God, Islam is basically and radically a religion of love. To fully love God is to be madly in love with God—often exclaiming this love in (Sûfî) extatic utterances (*shatahât*, plural of *shath*)—since while in relation to the Divine Names, one can give what one has, love for them; in relation to the Divine Essence (*al-dhât al-ilâhiyya*), one has to give what one does not have, indeed what one *cannot* have, love for that unknowable essence, lovingly.

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<sup>11</sup> A tradition traced back to Muhammad, but where God is the speaker.