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 **L'Intrus**

Jean-Luc Nancy, Susan Hanson
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L'Intrus**Jean-Luc Nancy***Université de Strasbourg*

There is nothing in fact more ignobly
useless and superfluous than the organ
called the heart, which is the vilest means that
one could have invented for pumping
life into me.

—Antonin Artaud¹

[11] THE INTRUDER [*L'INTRUS*] ENTERS BY FORCE, THROUGH SURPRISE OR RUSE, in any case without the right and without having first been admitted.² There must be something of the *intrus* in the stranger; otherwise, the stranger would lose its strangeness: if he already has the right to enter and remain, if he is awaited and received without any part of him being unexpected or unwelcome, he is no longer the *intrus*, nor is he any longer the stranger. It is thus neither logically acceptable, nor ethically admissible, to exclude all intrusion in the coming of the stranger, the foreign.

Once he has arrived, if he remains foreign, and for as long as he does so—rather than simply "becoming naturalized"—his coming will not cease; nor [End Page 1] will it cease being in some respect an intrusion: [12] that is to say, being without right, familiarity, accustomedness, or habit, the stranger's coming will not cease being a disturbance and perturbation of intimacy.

This matter is therefore what requires thought and, consequently, practice—otherwise the strangeness of the stranger is absorbed before he has crossed the threshold, and strangeness is no longer at stake. Receiving the stranger must then also necessarily entail experiencing his intrusion. Most often, one does not wish to admit this: the theme of the *intrus*, in itself, intrudes on our moral correctness (and is even a remarkable example of the *politically correct*). Hence the theme of the *intrus* is inextricable from the truth of the stranger. Since moral correctness [*correction morale*] assumes that one receives the stranger by effacing his strangeness at the threshold, it would thus never have us receive him. But the stranger insists, and breaks in [*fait intrusion*]. This is what is not easy to receive, nor, perhaps, to conceive...

* * *

[13] I have—Who?—this "I" is precisely the question, the old question: what is this enunciating subject? Always foreign to the subject of its own utterance; necessarily intruding upon it, yet ineluctably its motor, shifter, or heart—I, therefore, received the heart of another, now nearly ten years ago. It was a transplant, grafted on. My own heart (as you've gathered, it is entirely a matter of the "proper," of being one, or one's "own"—or else it is not in the least and, properly speaking, there is nothing to understand, no mystery, not even a question: rather, as the doctors prefer to say, there is the simple necessity [*la simple évidence*] of a transplantation)—my own heart in fact was worn out, for reasons that have never been clear. Thus to live, it was necessary to receive another's, another, heart.

[14] (But in this case what other program was to cross or run into my own, physiological, program? Less than twenty years before, transplants were not done, and certainly not with recourse to cyclosporine, which protects against rejection of the grafted organ. Twenty years hence, it is certain to be a matter of another kind of transplant, by other means. Here personal contingency crosses with contingency in the history of technology. Had I [End Page 2] lived earlier, I would be dead; later, I would be surviving in a different

manner. But "I" always finds itself caught in the battlements and gaps of technical possibilities. This is why the debate I saw unfolding, between those who consider this to be a metaphysical adventure and those who would see it as a technical performance, is vain: it is a matter of both, one in the other.)

From the moment that I was told that I must have a heart transplant, every sign could have vacillated, every marker changed: without reflection, of course, and even without identifying the slightest...

L'Intrus

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Translated by Susan Hanson, Drake University

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