

In Defense of Medusavenus?

In cartoonist R. Crumb's "A Bitchin' Body" Mr. Natural gifts a robust headless woman to loser Flakey Foont to use as he pleases, but the scowling image of Devil Girl's face haunts Foont during his domination of the passive body until he returns it to Mr. Natural after anxious guilt becomes unbearable. The body's proper head is restored when a cap is removed from its neck, revealing the body's owner to be none other than the outraged Devil Girl after all.

It seems possible to be in love with only a woman's body, to disregard all else – personality, biography, morality – when lust declares, "I favor this coherence of flesh, regardless of what it thinks, does or says." This mustn't be conflated with one-night stands' greedy impulsivity, because strangers in the night don't desire graduation past acquaintance or the amorous, arduous labor of spousal partnership, the "in sickness and in health" sickness, the Long Haul's drudge.

Fascinated by a body's particulars and having romantic fidelity to *it* rather than *her*, ones risks demonization as objectifier or fetishist – despite body-only love's rapture, and it follows from that that even the face can be secondary to below-neck parts, in spite of the mass scorn such aesthetic beheading inspires: the body can be said to grow *from* the head, inverting the common impression that heads sprout from bodies and faces outshine "lower" torsos, limbs, appendages, pelvises, rumps.

"Butterfaces" needn't be derogatory, for loving the body regardless of the head liberates the Medusavenus (Venus body/Medusa head), whose face repels but whose body unreels all jaws, fills men and women alike with undeniable awe, and eclipses the locus-of-identity face – turns inclined cocks and clits to stone?

It follows from *that* that the head can be dispensed with altogether, disinterest taken to the extreme point of *absence*: thrilling at the possession of a literally mindless body existing only for ravishment and erotic experiment, for limitless experiment – or boiled down to the nitty-gritty by the vulgar, brutal Fleshlight®.

A hyperbodied creature would apotheosize, say, Egon Schiele's torso-only females, headless Buddhist Chinnamunda or headless Hindu Chinnamasta (Google them), R. Crumb's robust automaton, or the obscured owner of the archetypal breast, belly, thighs, asscrack and tufty minge of Gustave Courbet's *Origin of the World*.

Redhead Joanna Hiffernan, *Origin of the World*'s model, also posed as both of James Whistler's White Girls, which raises the question: Could one love Joanna *sans* darling noggin, even reduced to only her genitals – or are her riverine hair and cherubic face requisite for pleasurable fulfilment, as the prioritized, indispensable heads of Charles Dana Gibson's finely illustrated Gibson Girls?

Chinnamunda, Chinnamasta, Courbet's Joanna, Whistler's Joanna: dare we radically anonymize/dehumanize White Girls, but risk Devil Girl's reheading, the return of the repressed?

No, *King Kong's* Denham, Beauty didn't kill the beast.
Beauty *is* the beast.