Encyclopaedia Acephalica

Comprising the

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(Edited by Georges Bataille)

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Absolute:

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It is undeniable that man invented God so that his wretchedness might be forbidden by somebody greater than himself: God is the dialectical opposite of human imperfections. Ideal entities serve as compensations for wretchedness; that is why the qualities ascribed to the gods delineate by contradiction the failings and servilities of their creators.

The absolute is the sum of the compensations for human wretchedness. To create so perfect a notion, man has been obliged to renounce his peculiarity and miserable content. The absolute is powerful because perfectly empty: it is thanks to this characteristic that it represents the perfection of truth. Nothing can be demonstrated by the absolute: the absolute is precisely that supreme truth which remains indemonstrable. Only the details, the interludes can be demonstrated. Yet it is precisely this impossibility of proving the absolute which makes it irrefutable. It is impossible to shatter a lie which, having no object, cannot be related to anything: the lie, in effect, can be proven only if an object, which is readily and at first glance observed, does not seem consistent; which amounts to saying, in instances without importance. The lie limited by an object can be proven, but never the artifice of a construction, because that excludes the object. It is in this way that works of art are indemonstrable, on account of their being separate, like the absolute, from the object.

The absolute is the greatest expenditure of energy made by man; he then seeks to recoup the energy expended by means of prayer: from which it is evident that man is unable to

endure his own energies, being obliged to separate himself from them in order to find equilibrium. It should be added that man, above all, is afraid of himself and of his own creations, imaginary entities he has separated from himself. It is thus that he has done everything to forget his dreams, because he fears his wandering soul. I believe that man has less to fear, faced with the Universe, than faced with himself, because he does not know the world, but only a little corner of it.

The absolute has been man's greatest exploit: it is thanks to that exploit that he outgrown the mythological state. But it was at the same time his greatest defeat, because he invented something greater than himself. Man has created his own servitude. That absolute is identical with the void and with that which has no object. It is thus that man dies by the absolute which is at the same time his means of freedom. Man dies, killed by his fetishes, whose existence is more or less situated in the absolute.

It would appear that philosophy is the degeneration of the mythological state: in fact, in the epoch of philosophy, the absolute is so enfeebled that it needs to be demonstrated. Things – whose frailty is such that, after having accepted them without due consideration, one must still demonstrate them – are called facts of science or of knowledge.

The absolute gods were, to begin with, the ancestors of governing classes, who deified themselves to enhance servitude and fear. Like money, the neutral absolute is a means of power; each may be changed into anything

whatever, since they do not possess precise qualities. The absolute belongs to leaders, priests, madmen, to animals and to plants. On the one hand to the mighty and to kings, on the other to those without any power, entirely separate from objects and that very fact from their poverty.

The power of the absolute shows itself in its identity with the unconditional. The absolute has been identified with the essence and with being itself, and it is by means of the absolute that one is immortalised. What a fear of death! People must begin by seeing words through death, and it is thus that they become immortal spirits like the latter. Words, created by man, become his nightmares, and notions are the padded cells of the logicians; it is by means of notions that duration is conned.

The absolute belongs to the tectonic-ecstatics; the contemporary "contortionist" believes only in his own banal and obsequious "I": in this way he has discovered the most obnoxious form of the absolute and a freedom which, after one has forgotten death, has ceased to be limited by "taboos" and is no longer anything other than abject and ugly.

Aesthete:

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It being perfectly obvious that nobody now adopts such a denomination, it must nevertheless be recognised that this word has seen a development to the same degree and in the same way as *artist* and *poet*. ("That man is an Artist," or again "I respect Poets," and above all, "the delightful rigour Aesthetes bring to their intentions...") In the last analysis, words have every right to overturn things and to inspire disgust: after fifteen years you find a dead woman's slipper in the back of a cupboard; you take it to the dustbin. There is a cynical pleasure in thinking about words which drag something of us along with them into the dustbin.

On the other hand, the automatic protest against a debased mental form is itself already pretty well threadbare. The wretch who asserts that art no longer functions, because, that way, one distances oneself from the "dangers of action," has already made a declaration which really must be considered like the dead woman's slipper. In fact, though it may be a fairly disgusting spectacle, the ageing process is the same for a cliché as for a system of carburization. Everything that, in the category of the emotions, responds to an admissible need is fated to suffer an *improvement* which, on the other hand, one is obliged to regard with the same uneasy (or cynical) curiosity as some sort or other of Chinese torture.

Angel 1.

The Angels:

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"The garments of angels are real garments, visible and palpable; they even change them, not on account of their wearing out, but because angels change in station, and the Lord dresses them according to their present manner of being. I have myself a thousand times seen them in garments different from those in which I had seen them previously...

"The angels live among themselves as men live on earth; they have lodgings and houses, more or less magnificent according to the rank of each. I have sometimes conversed with angels concerning this; they told me they were greatly surprised that those who gave themselves out as being learned, and were reputed as such in the Church and the world were as ignorant as they are concerning this matter, after having heard from Jesus Christ himself that in his Father's house there are many mansions.

"I know from my own experience what I have called angels' dwellings, for every time I have spoken with them, I have done so in their quarters and I have found these similar to the habitations of men on earth: but nevertheless far more beautiful. In them are seen porticoes, courtyards, vestibules, antechambers, bedrooms, living-rooms, halls, flower beds, gardens,

orchards and fields." (Emmanuel Swedenborg, *The Marvels of Heaven and Hell*)

"Note. – The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's Party without knowing it." (William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.)

Angel 2. The Angel Gabriel:

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"GABRIEL (from a Hebrew word which strictly means the *man of God*), archangel who came to the Virgin to announce that she was going to be the mother of Jesus Christ (Luke, 1. 26ff.). - Occult sciences and astrology. Genius of the Moon, presiding over the ninth circle of light in the hermetic hierarchy." (*Nouvelle Larousse Illustré*.) Scripture cites the archangels Gabriel, Michael and Raphaël as chiefs of the heavenly hosts that vanquished Lucifer and the rebel angels. In the *Sepher Henoch*, ch. XX, we read: "Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who presides over Ikisat, over Paradise and the Cherubim..."

According to the *Sepher Henoch*, ch. LXIX, one of the guilty angels was likewise called Gabriel. "It is he who revealed to the sons of men how to kill; it was he who seduced Eve and taught the sons of men deadly wounds, the breastplate, the buckler, the sword, and all things that can kill or avoid death. He formed the inhabitants of the arid element down to the consummation of the centuries."

With Michaël and Samaël, Gabriel is the angel who presides over Monday. His residence is in the Little Bear.

Architecture:

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Architecture is the expression of the true nature of societies, as physiognomy is the expression of the nature of individuals. However, this comparison is applicable, above all, to the physiognomy of officials (prelates, magistrates, admirals). In fact, only society's ideal nature – that of authoritative command and prohibition – expresses itself in actual architectural constructions. Thus great monuments rise up like dams, opposing a logic of majesty and authority to all unquiet elements; it is in the form of cathedrals and palaces that Church and State speak to and impose silence upon the crowds. Indeed, monuments obviously inspire good social behaviour and often even genuine fear. The fall of the Bastille is symbolic of this state of things. This mass movement is difficult to explain otherwise than by popular hostility towards monuments which are their veritable masters.

For that matter, whenever we find *architectural construction* elsewhere than in monuments, whether it be in physiognomy, dress, music or painting, we can infer a prevailing taste for human or divine *authority*. The large-scale compositions of certain painters express the will to constrain the spirit within an official ideal. The disappearance of academic pictorial composition, on the other hand, opens the path to the expression (and thereby exaltation) of psychological processes distinctly at odds with social stability. This, in large part, explains the strong reaction elicited, for over half a century, by the progressive transformation of painting, hitherto

characterised by a sort of concealed architectural skeleton.

It is clear, in any case, that mathematical order imposed upon stone is really the culmination of the evolution of earthly forms, whose direction is indicated within the biological order by the passage from the simian to the human form, the latter already displaying all the elements of architecture. Man would seem to represent merely an intermediary stage within the morphological development between monkey and building. Forms have become increasingly static, increasingly dominant. From the very outset, in any case, the human and architectural orders make common cause, the latter being only the development of the former. Therefore an attack on architecture, whose monumental productions now truly dominate the whole earth, grouping the servile multitudes under their shadow, imposing admiration and wonder, order and constraint, is necessarily, as it were, an attack on man. Currently, an entire earthly activity, and undoubtedly the most intellectually outstanding, tends, through the denunciation of human dominance, in this direction. Hence, however strange this may seem when a creature as elegant as the human being is involved, a path traced by painters – opens up toward bestial monstrosity, as if there were no other way of escaping the architectural straitjacket.

Benga (Féral):

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The young Senegalese dancer Féral Benga, who is at present starring in the revue at the Folies-Bergère, was born in Dakar in 1906. He made his debut in 1925 among the extras at the Folies-Bergère, then drew attention to himself in 1926 in a parody of Josephine Baker whom he interpreted with Dorville, to music by G.H. Rivière. With all due deference to paleface chauvinism, it is interesting to note that, at least in the domain of show-business, the deficiency of the white race stands confirmed. After Habib Benglia, of whom nobody today contests that he is one of our best actors, here is Féral Benga who has recently been revivifying our all but dead music-hall after the departure of the great black troupe, the Black Birds, whose presence last summer, sadly too brief, disturbed our torpor. Before Louisiana, the American Negro operetta which will probably soon be staged at the Porte Saint-Martin (with Louis Douglas as manger and Strappy Jones in the leading role), and the film Hallelujah, which, it is to be hoped will soon be screened in public, it is to Féral Benga that the responsibility falls to represent his admirable race before the Parisian public. He is more than worthy of this, as much for his remarkable beauty as for his talent as a dancer.

Black Birds. [1]:

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Pointless to seek any longer an explanation for coloured people suddenly breaking, with an incongruous extravagance, an absurd stutterers' silence: we are rotting away with neurasthenia under our roofs, a cemetery and common grave of so much pathetic rubbish; while the blacks who (in America or elsewhere) are civilised along with us and who, today, dance and cry out, are marshy emanations of the decomposition who are set aflame above this immense cemetery: so, in a vaguely lunar Negro night, we are witnessing an intoxicating dementia of dubious and charming will-o'-the-wisps, writhing and yelling like bursts of laughter. This definition will spare us any discussion.

[1] The article concerns the Negro revue "Lew leslie's Black Birds," at the Moulin Rouge, June-September 1929.

Bonjour Brothers:

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These two 18th-century ecclesiastics made themselves "commendable by the severity of their morals, by their piety, their charity, and above all their talent for the pulpit," and founded the flagellant sect of the Fareinists, which disappeared in the Revolution.

After their installation at Fareins, "there was talk in the region thereabouts of miracles: a little knife with a red handle of a peculiar construction, of the sort of those described in *La Magie blanche dévoilée* acquired a singular celebrity. The curé had thrust it up to the hilt into the leg of a young girl, not only without causing her any harm, but he had cured her of a pain in that place. Some time afterwards a young girl requested the good curé to crucify her... just as Jesus Christ had been.

"This execution took place in the chapel of the Virgin attached to the church at Farreins, one Friday at three in the afternoon, in the presence of the two *curés*, the v*icaire* Furlay, of Father Caffe, Dominican, and ten or twelve persons of both sexes who numbered among the adepts. These miracles produced the desired effect: they drew to the Bonjour brothers a great number of proselytes, above all girls and women; they would assemble in a barn during the night, without any light, and the priest would gain access by a window. There he would wield the discipline to right and left, without rhyme or reason, and the penitents, far from uttering cries of pain, expressed their satisfaction in cries of joy, calling their fustigator "my little father." Individually, indeed, these fanatics would pursue him into the fields, supplicating him to deal them blows with a stick. They were happy only when their little father had given them a good thrashing, and they avidly sought every occasion for these.

These disorders were interrupted following upon the sudden death of a man who protested against these practices and was found stabbed with a needle. The two priests and the *vicaire* Furlay were locked up or sent into exile. The younger one having meanwhile succeeded in escaping, he took refuge in Paris; the crucified girl and another prophetess came there to rejoin him. He sent the former away in the month of January, barefoot, with five nails driven into each heel; she had spent an entire Lent eating only a round of toast spread with human dung each morning."

(After F. Ozanam, from the *Biographie Universelle* of Michaud and Poujoulat, vol. V, pp. 14-15.)

Camel:

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"The camel, which seems grotesque to an inhabitant of Paris, is in its place in the desert: it is the denizen of those singular localities, so much so that it pines away if transported anywhere; it belongs there by virtue of its form, its colour, its bearing. The Orientals call it the ship of the desert. Launched across oceans of sand, it traverses them at regular and silent pace as a ship ploughs through the waves of the sea. What would our lovely women say of those oriental poems in which the harmonious movements of the betrothed are compared to the measured pace of a she-camel?"

Contrary to the opinion of Eugène Delacroix (*Etudes esthétiques*, Paris, 1923, p.40), among the forms symptomatic of stupidity, that of the camel, probably the most monumental, seems also the most disastrous. The aspect of the camel reveals, at the same time as the profound absurdity of animal nature, the cataclysmic and fallen nature of that absurdity and stupidity. One might, indeed, believe that the camel is something that is at the most critical point of all life, where futility is at its most distressing.

Crustaceans:

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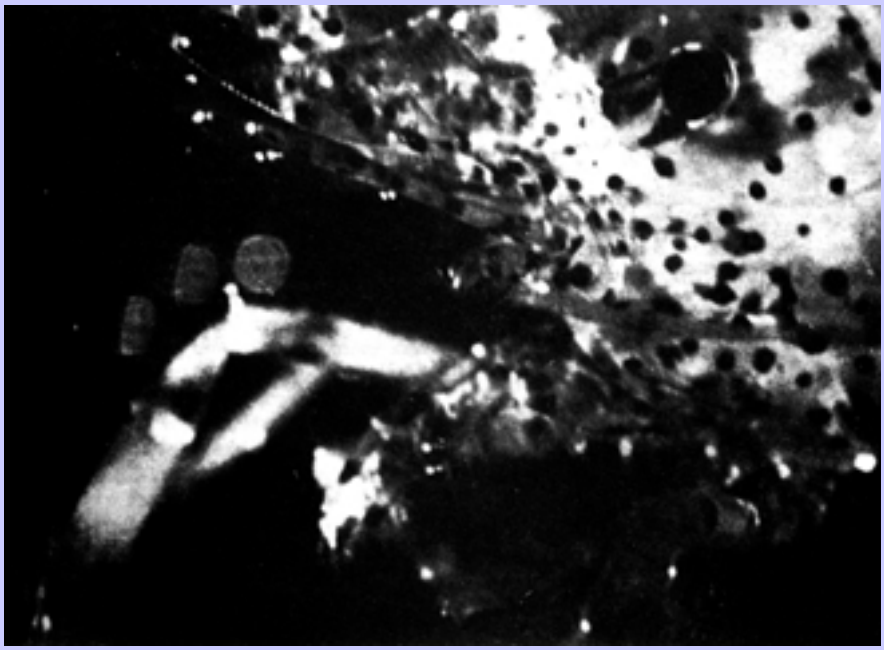

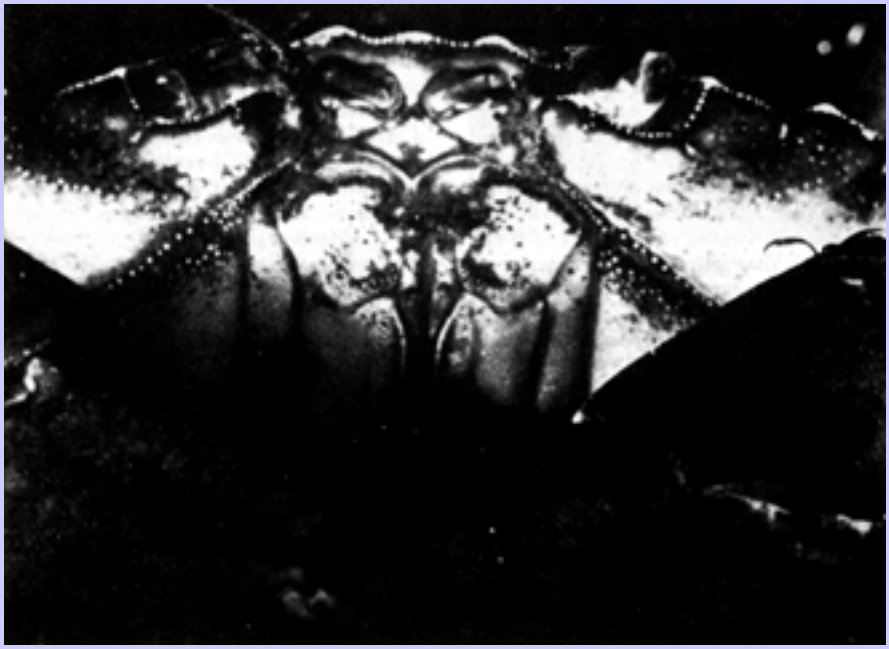

One day, Gérard de Nerval went for a stroll in the gardens of the Palais-Royal with a living lobster on a leash. The idlers crowded round him, flabbergasted and roaring with laughter at the strange retinue. One of his friends having asked him why he was making such a fool of himself, Nerval replied: "But what are you laughing at? You people go about readily enough with dogs, cats and other noisy and dirty domestic animals. My lobster is a gentle animal, affable and clean, and he is at least familiar with the wonders of the deeps!"

A painter friend of mine said one day that if a grasshopper were the size of a lion it would be the most beautiful animal in the world. How true that would be of the giant crayfish, a crab enormous as a house, and a shrimp as tall as a tree! Crustaceans, fabulous creatures that amaze children plying on beaches, submarine vampires nourished on corpses and refuse. Heavy and light, ironic and grotesque, animals made of silence and of weight.

Of all the ridiculous actions men take upon themselves, none is more so than shrimping. Everybody has seen that elderly gentlemen, bearded and red-

faced, a white *piqué* hat on his head, wearing an alpaca jacket, his trousers rolled up to his thighs, a wicker basket on his belly, his shrimping net at the ready, hunting shrimps in a rock-pool for his dinner. Woe betide the poor shrimp that lets itself be caught! In desperation she wriggles, she slides, she flutters in the triumphant fingers. Elastic animal flower, graceful and lively as mercury, petal separated from the great bouquet of the waves. She is also a woman. Who has not heard of *La Môme Crevette* ?

Among crustaceans, the crab known as the "sleeper," the image of eternal sleep, is the most mysterious, the most deceitful, the shiftiest. It hides under rocks and its mobile eyes watch for passing prey with a cruel malice. It walks sideways. It combines every fault. There are men who resemble it.

The crayfish and the lobster are nobles. They are cultivated like oysters and tulips. They are present at all human ceremonies: political banquets, wedding breakfasts and wakes.

All these beasts change their carapaces, grow old, harden, make love and die. We do not know whether they suffer or if

they have ideas concerning ethics and the organisation of societies. According to Jarry it would appear that a lobster fell in love with a can of corned beef... [1]

Crustaceans are boiled alive to conserve the succulence of their flesh.

[1] In ch. 26 of *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, ŒPataphysician*.

Cults:

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Los Angeles, 6th October. – Police carrying out a search of the cellar of a house in which was practised one of the mysterious cults so widespread in the city discovered the body in a hermetically sealed chest, alongside the bodies of seven small dogs.

Mrs Willa Rhoades, "princess" of the cult and adoptive mother of the victim, would appear to have acknowledged that the woman whose body was discovered died while following a course of medical treatment prescribed by the cult.

The body had been preserved in ice for more than one year, in the hope of a resurrection.

The presence of the small dogs was supposed to facilitate that resurrection.

The headquarters of the cult was discovered as a result of the arrest of Mrs Blackborn, "queen of the order," and of her daughter, Mrs Angling Wieland, both accused of fraud. (Report in *The New York Herald*.)

Debacle:

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The phenomena of nature are a vast alphabet of symbols upon which we draw to forge many of our expressions. Who is not aware of the *coup de foudre* [love at first sight], the *déjeuner de soleil* [flash in the pan], the "brainstorm," and the "avalanche of compliments"?

Worn-out as most of these images may be, there is none the less one which remains moving, because of its brutal and implacable concision, a word quite precisely "thrown together" [*bâclé*], with that very haste that characterises disasters – I mean the word *débâcle*.

Employed regarding the war of 1870 by Zola, in a work which bears it as its title, and popularised above all to designate collapses in monetary value and financial crashes, this expression is still today very powerful, al the more powerful, indeed, since, given present circumstances, it could pass as prophetic. In effect life today finds itself caught fast and frozen into the thick industrial ice that could turn us all into corpses. The rivers of truly human relations are immobile and dead, the cold is setting in, the air is freezing and, just as in that winter of 1870-71, which the most frightful of old men love to

recall, when the solidified Seine offered its back, it spine of frozen water, to the passage of carriages, pedestrians and wagons, the rivers of our sentiments are being transformed into arteries filled with a frozen congealing blood, boulevards for the tenacious animalculae of a state of affairs in which nothing has any r*aison d'être* other than an economic one, social relations are mean and filthy as lice, more difficult to support on our spinal columns than whole wagon-loads of market-garden produce or omnibuses chock-full of men of necessarily ignoble countenance. Prisoners of this cold, as mummies are of their rigid bandages, in the grimacing poses of shameful paralytics, we make no move, we remain inert, we feel ourselves more, so to speak, like *lumps of wood*, and yet we hope for nothing so much as for the *debacle*...

If the river thawed, that would be the end of this traffic that confines us, this grotesque circulation of petty self-interest that bends us to the yoke and reduces us to worse than domestics. To escape from this dust-filled lumber-room in which we are mouldering, we and our tarnished cast-offs – rusty as the old sabre of a Reichsoffen cuirassier – it is necessary that

our hearts, our muscles, our skin resume their natural state, at the same time find more their original violence, that of the times of deluges, of ice-age cataclysms and tidal waves, to smash and break the banks, centuries-old dams, and expand over every land, be they uncultivated wastes, fields, towns, hamlets, drowning in their passage everything that is lacking in humanity, and in the end evaporate so that this resurrection transforms itself forthwith into defeat and, in short, has as its final result – after first smashed what was hostile and alien to it, and then itself being changed into a chimerical vapour – that of annihilating *absolutely everything*.

Dust:

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The storytellers have not realised that the Sleeping Beauty would have awoken in a thick layer of dust; nor have they envisaged the sinister spider's webs that would have been torn apart at the first movement of her red tresses. Meanwhile dismal sheets of dust constantly invade earthly habitations and uniformly defile them: as if it were a matter of making ready attics and old rooms for the immanent occupation of the obsessions, phantoms, spectres that the decayed odour of old dust nourishes and intoxicates.

When plump young girls, Œmaids of all work,' arm themselves each morning with a large feather-duster or even a vacuum cleaner, they are perhaps not completely aware that they are contributing every bit as much as the most positivist of scientists to dispelling the injurious phantoms that cleanliness and logic abhor. One day or another, it is true, dust, supposing it persists, will probably begin to gain the upper hand over domestics, invading the immense ruins of abandoned buildings, deserted dockyards; and, at that

distant epoch, nothing will remain to ward off night-terrors, for lack of which we have become such great book-keepers...

Eye 1.

Image of the Eye:

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Because of its poetic virtues, for centuries the eye has served for lyrical comparisons and for allegories. One cannot, even summarily, compile a list of the writers who have found an analogy between it and the stars. In metallurgy it tends to be regarded as a cavity, a hole: the eye of a crankshaft, eyelet (of a shoe). Then, by extension to the technique of the arts, people have spoken of *l'oeil d'une oeuvre* [the eye, thus the look, of a work] in the sense of appearance. Hence the expression *tu en as un oeil*, you're looking good. Argot, that poetic language, rich in poetic imagery, and accursed, has naturally made much use of the organ of sight: le quart d'oeil (commissariat of police) derives – and in the process outdoes it – from the classical proverb *ne dormir que d'un oeil*, comme le gendarme [to sleep with one eye open, like a policeman]. *Coco bel oeil*, which has passed from slang into polite usage, with a certain old-fashioned military whiff about it, alludes less to the organ of sight than to one of its functions, *l'oeillade*, the amorous glance or ogle. The eye's fragility quickly led to its being made a term of comparison with something precious: *j'y tiens comme à la prunelle de mon oeil*, I treasure it/him/her like the apple of my eye; then again, by extension, as a sensitive spot not to be touched without good reason, as it emerges

from the very formula of lynch law, *oeil pour oeil*, an eye for an eye. One could hold forth as lengthily on the numerous obscene senses of the word, brought about by its analogy with the private parts: *mon oeil*, *crever l'oeil*, and the famous *mettre le doigt dans l'oeil* [to poke one's finger in one's eye], which, taken initially in a figurative sense to express a concrete action, has been taken up again in the proper sense to express an abstract state (to be mistaken, to make a blunder) admirable ideo-material property of the senses.

The expression *à l'oeil*, free, gratis, is the paraphrase of a medieval story in which a poor wretch who having eaten the smell of a roast, pays with the sound of his money; hearing, by way of cash, having been replaced by sight.

Pour vos beaux yeux, for your beautiful eyes, was originally a knightly expression. It was rightly estimated that the quality of beautiful eyes was enough to pursue dangerous adventures. It is the debasement of the ethics of love in connection with the evolution of customs which makes it possible today – when "dispassionate" people (in both the exact and the figurate sense) consider love to be a trifle – to confuse cause with effect, to be of the opinion the *mourir pour beaux yeux*, to die for beautiful eyes, is not

an enviable fate.

Ouvrir L'oeil et le bon, literally to open one's best eye, meaning to be on the look-out, to keep a weather eye open, takes us back to the vocabulary of the gendarme. It nonetheless has a scientific justification, since it is rare for a man to have the same acuity of vision in each eye. However there is no doubt an allusion here to the need for a marksman who wishes to aim straight to shut one of his eyes. So it would surely be better to say *fermer l'oeil et le mauvais* [close your worst eye].

Finally we shift the whole to the part, and the words *prunelles*, pupils, *cils*, lashes, *orbites*, sockets, *paupières*, eyelids, have entered ordinary language and enriched the figurative vocabulary: *froncer les sourcils*, to knit the brows, to frown, *jeter un cil* [flick an eyelash], to have a peep, *se mirer dans des prunelles*, to gaze into someone's eyes, etc., before themselves falling into popular usage.

Eye. 2.

Cannibal Delicacy:

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It is obvious that civilised man is characterised by a frequently inexplicable acuity of horrors. The fear of insects is doubtless one of the most singular and fully developed of these horrors, among which one of the most surprising is the fear of the eye. It seems impossible, in fact, to describe the eye without employing the word seductive, nothing it seems, being more attractive in the bodies of animals and men. But this extreme seductiveness is probably at the very edge of horror.

In this respect, one might relate the eye to the edge of a blade whose appearance provokes both intense and contradictory reactions: this is what the makers of *Un Chien Andalou* [1] must have hideously and obscurely experienced when they decided to make the bloody love affair between these two beings among the earliest images of the film. That a razor might slice open the dazzling eye of a young and charming woman, this is precisely what he would admired to the point of madness, this young man observed by a small cat, who is by chance holding in his hand a coffee spoon (should he suddenly hanker to place an eye in it).

This is obviously a strange desire on the part of whiteman, from whom the eyes of the cows, sheep, and pigs that he eats have always been hidden. For although the eye, to employ Stevenson's exquisite phrase, is a *cannibal delicacy*, it is also for us the object of such anxiety that we will never bite into it. The eye has the same high rank in horror, since among other things it is the *eye of conscience*. Victor Hugo's poem is sufficiently well known; the

obsessive and lugubrious eye, the living eye, the eye of the hideous nightmare experienced just before his death [2]: the criminal "dreams that he has just struck down a man in a dark wood... Human blood has been spilled and, following an expression that presents a ferocious image to the mind's eye, *he made an oak sweat*.[3] In fact, it is not a man, but a tree trunk... bleeding... who seeks to defend himself... under the murderous weapon. The hands of the victim are raised in supplication, but in vain. Blood continues to flow." An then an enormous eye appears in the black sky, pursuing the criminal through space and to the bottom of the sea, where it devours him after assuming the form of a fish. Innumerable eyes nevertheless multiply beneath the waves.

Concerning these, Grandville writes: "Are these the thousand eyes of the crowd attracted by the rumour of an immanent spectacle of torture?" But why would these absurd eyes be attracted, like a cloud of flies, to something so repugnant? Equally, why on the masthead of a perfectly sadistic illustrated weekly, published in Paris between 1907 and 1924, does an eye regularly appear against a red background, above various bloody spectacles? Why does not the *Eye of the Police* resemble the eye of human justice in Grandville's nightmare, perhaps in the end just the expression of a blind thirst for blood? Similar also to the eye of Crampon, condemned to death and approached by the chaplain an instant before the blade's descent: he dismissed the clergyman by enucleating himself and presenting him with the merry gift of his torn-out eye, *because this eye was made of glass*.

[1] This extraordinary film is the work of two

young Catalans: the painter Salvador Dali, and the director Luis Buñuel. See the excellent stills published by *Cahiers d'Art* (July 1929, p. 230), by *Bifur* (August 1929, p.105) and by *Variétés* (July 1929, p. 209). This film can be distinguished from the banal productions of the avant-garde, with which one might have been tempted to confuse it, by the importance given to the screenplay. Several very explicit facts follow one upon the other, without logical connection it is true, but penetrating so deeply into horror that the spectators are caught up as directly as they are in an adventure film. More precisely, they are caught by the throat, and without artifice: do they know, in fact, how far the authors of this film, or people like them will go? If Buñuel himself, after filming the slitting open of the eye, was ill for a week (and he then had had to film the scene of the asses cadavers in a pestilential atmosphere), how can one not appreciate the extent of horror's fascination, and that it alone is sufficient to hatter everything that stifles us?

[2] Victor Hugo, a reader of *Le Magazin pittoresque*, borrowed from both the admirable dream narrative *Crime and Expiation* and from the unprecedented drawing of Grandville, both published in 1847 (pp. 211-14), the story of the pursuit of a criminal by an obstinate eye: it is scarcely useful to observe, however, that only an obscure and sinister obsession, and not a cold memory, can explain this resemblance. We owe to Pierre d'Espezel's erudition and generosity our awareness of this curious document, probably the most beautiful of Grandville's extravagant compositions.

[3] *Faire suer un chêne* has this literal meaning, but it is also argot for killing someone (i.e. the oak fears being made into a coffin).

Eye 3.

Evil Eye:

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The eye, be it strange, vague, or simply beautiful, has always been, and still is, among the civilised as among the primitives, the doorway for evil influences. Hypnotism is the culminating point of a phenomenon which has leeser degrees, such as the gaze of desire, the curious gaze, or simply the vague gaze that settles on nothing.

In all these degrees, the primitive fears it, and we might say that for him every eye is evil. He fears the eyes of all animals, above all those that are round and fixed, he is in still greater terror of the human eye.

These ancient beliefs have survived in our civilisations. They have crept into our ordinary language. We speak of "piercing eyes," or "eyes like pistols," of Œdevouring with one's eyes." It would be easy to compile a dictionary of expressions concerned with the magic of the eyes, the stereotyped phraseology of our run-of-the-mill novels and our best poems.

To look at an object with desire is to appropriate it, to enjoy it. To desire is to pollute; to desire is to take, and the primitive who has noticed a gaze on a possesion of his immediately makes a gift of it, as if it were dangerous for him to keep it any longer, as if the gaze had deposited in the object a force ready to come into play aginst any stranger.

This gift, this abandonment, is above all prophylatic: it banishes a cause of misfortune, and it is to some extent thus that we must explain the majority of gifts made by indigenous peoples.

The power of the eye is so strong that it is dangerous even when mere curiosity animates it: as a result of being stared at by a number of soldiers, Antoine D'Abadie (*Douze ans dans Haute Ethiopie*, p.205), had a woman who loved him rush to him and cover him with her robe, crying: "Your accursed eyes will pierce me before seeing him." Yet the soldiers' curiosity was benevolent.

By ascertaining the power of an eye without evil intent, one can gain an idea of the power it wields when it expresses an evil desire. One is not surprised that it "eats the hearts of humans and the insides of cucmbers" (*Mignes, Sciences occultes*, II, 879), that it dries up cows udders and kills little children.

It is essential, then, to defend oneself and, for this, men have found many techniques. The commonest consits of an amulet worn round the neck, representing one of two eyes. Magical formulae, written *medicines* – in magic, the utterance or the putting into words of a formula is itself efficacious – surround the figure; they form, as it were a solvent containing the evil – a vaccine compounded with the dead bacillus – and wearing this remedy amounts to innoculating oneself with

the evil influence, thus giving immunity.

Another means employed in the majority of African countries is the bucrane. This in effect, is the symbol of a powerful defence: it recalls the halting of the animal by a wild beast dropping on its head from a branch.

A bucrane stuck on a post in a field, in a tree heavy with fruit, on a millstone – our scarecrows have not been conceived only for sparrows, which disregard them – or set above a threshold – the idea of making it a decorative motif came later – is the best fluid-conductor. Its whiteness, the result of vermin and the sun, will at first sight draw the eye of the passer-by or the visitor. It will capture this gaze, the first being the most dangerous – and here it seems right and proper to conjure up all the magic of *the first time* – it will suck in through the two holes of the empty sockets, leaving the eye, that stone-shattering lighting, like a flat battery.

One might, I believe, class under the same heading a "para-eye" I have observed on the shores of the Red Sea, at Port Sudan. It consits of the skeleton of a fish, probably of an acanthopterous or shiny species, its head impaled on a cane switch thrust into a palisade. In the living creature there is sort of horn over each eye. On the other hand, its vaguely phallic appearance has not, perhaps, been without influence in determining the choice; the phallus, in fact plays a considerable role in the phrophylaxis of

the evil eye (Otto Jahn, *Böse Blick*). But this is naother question, far too extensive to expound upon here.

Eye 4.

The Eye at the *Académie Française* :

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The *Académie*, presided over by M. Abel Hermant, has carried out revisions upon the expressions: *mauvais oeil*, evil eye, *oeil de perdix*, soft corn between the toes, *oeil pour oeil*, an eye for an eye, *tape à l'oeil*, to ogle, to wink.

Factory Chimney:

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When I review my own memories, it seems that for our generation, out of all the world's various objects glimpsed in early childhood, the most fear-inspiring architectural form was by no means the church, however monstrous, but rather large factory chimneys, true channels of communication between the ominously dull, threatening sky and the muddy, stinking earth surrounding the textile and dye factories.

Today, when the truly wretched aesthete, at a loss for objects of admiration, has invented the contemptible "beauty" of the factory, the dire filth of those enormous tentacles appears all the more revolting; the rain puddles at their feet, the empty lots, the black smoke half-beaten down by the wind, the piles of slag and dross are the sole true attributes of those gods of a sewer Olympus. I was not hallucinating when, as a terrified child, I discerned in those giant scarecrows, which both excited me to the point of anguish and made me run sometimes for my life, the presence of a fearful rage. That rage would, I sensed, later become my own, giving meaning to everything spoiling within my own head and to all that which, in civilised states, looms up like carrion in a nightmare. I am, of course, not unaware that for most people the factory chimney is merely the sign of mankind's labour, and never the terrible projection of that nightmare

which develops obscurely, like a cancer, within mankind. Obviously one does not, as a rule, continue to focus on that which is seen as the revelation of a state of violence for which one bears some responsibility. These childish or untutored way of seeing is replaced by a knowing vision which allows one to take a factory chimney for a stone construction forming a pipe for the evacuation of smoke high into the air – which is to say, for an abstraction. Now, the only possible reason for the present dictionary is precisely to demonstrate the error of that sort of definition.

It should be stressed, for example, that a chimney is only very tentatively of a wholly mechanical order. Hardly has it risen towards the first covering cloud, hardly has the smoke coiled round within its throat, than it has already become the oracle of all that is most violent in our present-day-world, and this for the same reason, really, as each grimace of the pavement's mud or of the human face, as each part of an immense unrest whose order is that of a dream, or as the hairy, inexplicable muzzle of a dog. That is why, when placing it in a dictionary, it is more logical to call upon the little boy, the terrified witness of the birth of that image of the immense and sinister convulsions in which his whole life will unfold, rather than the technician, who is necessarily blind.

Formless:

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A dictionary would begin as of the moment when it no longer provided the meanings of words but their tasks. In this way *formless* is not only an adjective having such and such a meaning, but a term serving to declassify, requiring in general that every thing should have a form. What it designates does not, in any sense whatever, possess rights, and everywhere gets crushed like a spider or an earthworm. For academics to be satisfied, it would be necessary, in effect, for the universe to take on a form. The whole of philosophy has no other aim; it is a question of fitting what exists into a frock-coat, a mathematical frock-coat. To affirm on the contrary that the universe resembles nothing at all and is only *formless*, amounts to saying that the universe is something akin to a spider or a gob of spittle.

Hygiene:

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The man who rubs his skin with a friction-glove until it is a vivid red, cleans his teeth with an American product, or indeed takes a cold shower after some physical exercise, imagines he is acting with the sole aim of keeping himself in good health, thanks to a properly understood hygiene, the admirable benefit of this century of reason. "*Mens sana in corpore sano*," say those in favour of Latin tags. Should one prefer the simpler wisdom of railway stations: "He who weighs himself frequently, knows himself well. He who knows himself well, keeps well." He hardly suspects, that clean-shaven man with his neatly combed hair, that he is accomplishing a magical rite, fit to allow him to appear, mace or lance in hand, next to primitive men.

It has long been believed that many of the prescriptions concerning taboos were no more than rules of hygiene in disguise. "Be thou circumcised," "Abstain from eating beans," "Wash your hands with sand" [1]: so many commandments that passed for having been invented by wise legislators, anxious to maintain their people in good health. However it seems today that things might be quite the contrary and that our modern hygiene might be a species of taboo, more or less rationalised.

Primitive man, who was not forever washing, was none the worse for that.

Cleanliness has no *raison d'être* outside of very limited circumstances, prior to carrying out certain rites, being itself no more than a rite of purification, a wholly moral purification, addressing itself to exclusively mystical forces.

What clearly demonstrates the ritual, and consequently moral, nature of our practices of cleanliness is the contempt clean people have for dirty people. A man who does not wash is taken by the former for a genuinely inferior being, if not immoral. There is something essentially religious in cleanliness and, in the last analysis, the disdain of the bourgeois for the worker rests, even more than on the difference in culture, on the difference in cleanliness. A *coarse mind, coarse language*, means a *dirty mind, dirty language*. On the scale of metaphysical values, matter is situated lower than mind, solely because it is dirtier. And the disgust at dirtiness can be explained in no other way than by the antique and magical notion of impurity. Evil odours attract evil spirits. One protects oneself from these by breathing in the incense of temples and churches; by avoiding, on the other hand, contact with those who eat garlic-sausage or have smelly feet...

In our time, now that religious values find themselves on the decline, religions, to save themselves, are increasingly tending to merge with hygiene. The Salvation Army, temperance societies, the leagues

against public immorality, the benevolent societies, so many organisations of a religious origin whose real aim is to create a *mystique of hygiene*. That's how the fast-one gets pulled: the worker's sole ambition is now to have a bathroom; those who are clean can go on believing they are the pure in heart, and the world goes on turning. And since there are no crimes, errors or weaknesses other than against sacrosanct hygiene (to kill a man, is that not, in the gravest way, to violate his "hygiene"?), everybody will soon be moral, thanks to Cadum soap, self-aware, thanks to Pink Pills, the enemies of pallor, powerful and strong because their ancestors of genius have invented antiseptics, medicinal mint-spirit and mains-drainage... [1] The followers of Pythagoras were forbidden (among other things) to eat beans. Islam enjoins ablution before prayer; in the absence of water, sand may be used.

Ju-Ju:

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Europeans have a marked predilection for striking and compressed turns of phrase and expression who convenience does not trouble their habits of thought.

Thus the first Portuguese who were fortunate enough to travel around the coastline of Africa, finding themselves confronted with the immense problems of beliefs, mysteries, forces, gods, and evil sprits, resolved them immediately, and with a single word; *Djoudjou*.

By the application of the law of least effort, the successors of the Portuguese took up the term; and the successors of the successors were most careful to leave well alone. After a while the Africans themselves made no bones about understanding it. Likewise the little clan of informed aesthetes, who inscribe it in their catalogues in the form ju-ju -–which is fairly ugly when pronounced by an average Parisian, ignorant of phonetic conventions.

The word *djoudjou* denotes, in the broadest terms, the gods, beneficent and maleficent, dispensers of justice or decent fellows, of a certain number of African peoples it is pointless to enumerate here if the reader really means to take the trouble to finish reading this article.

From the point of view of ethnography, *djoudjou* is a ridiculous word, but very elegant if we put it in its place, that is to say if we consider it as being no more than a term of African pidgin, or of exhibition-catalogue pidgin.

Kali:

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The wife of *Shiva* appears in the Hindu imagination under various names and aspects, such as *Devi* (the goddess), *Durga* (the difficult-of-access), Kali (the black one) etc. In *L'Inde avec les Anglais* (trans. Théo Varlet, pp. 12-18), Katherine Mayo [1] recounts her visit to the great temple of Kali in Calcutta, with the avowed intention of disgusting her readers with an ignoble barbarity. The statue of the goddess in that temple is consistent with the popular image reproduced here. "She is black-faced and sticks out an enormous tongue, filthy with blood. Of her four hands, one holds a human head, dripping with blood, the second a knife, the third, extended, pours out blood, the forth, raised in menace, is empty."

In this temple alone the sacrifices to the goddess reach a figure of a hundred and fifty to two hundred goats daily. The animals are decapitated by the priests with a single blow from a cutlass. "The blood flows over the flagstones," Katherine Mayo relates, "the drums and gongs before the goddess ring out in a frenzy. ŒKali, Kali, Kali,' cry the priests and suppliants in a chorus, and some prostrate themselves face down on the flagstones of the temple. A woman rushes forward and, on all fours, laps up the blood with her tongue... Half a dozen hairless and mangy dogs, horribly disfigured by nameless diseases, plunge their avid muzzles into the spreading tide of

blood."

In Nepal the orgies of blood are, moreover, incomparably more horrible than in the peninsulas. At the beginning of the 19th century, two men of high rank were still immolated every twelve years: they were made drunk, their heads were sliced off and the jet of blood directed onto the idols (cf. Sylvain Lévi, *Le Népaul*, vol.II, p.38). Today they still slit the throats of a great many buffaloes, whose sacrifice is according to Sylvain Lévi, "an unforgettable nightmare." It consists of making skilful and complicated incisions in such a way as to "allow a torrent of blood to escape, which gushes towards the idol."

The figure quoted for the number of buffaloes immolated in the nine days of the Durgapuja festival in the middle of the 19th century is nine thousand (*op. cit.*, pp. 38-39).

The ancient texts speak not only of the sacrifices of human beings and various domestic animals, but of sacrifices of crocodiles, tigers and lions.

Kali is the goddess of terror, of destruction, of night and of chaos. She is the patroness of cholera, of cemeteries, of thieves and prostitutes. She is represented adorned with a necklace of severed human heads, her belt consists of a fringe of human

forearms. She dances on the corpse of her husband Shiva and her tongue, from which the blood of the giant she has just decapitated drips, hangs completely out of her mouth because she is horrified at having lacked respect for the dead giant. Legend tells how her joy at having vanquished the giants raised her to such a degree of exaltation that her dance set the earth shaking and trembling. Attracted by the din, Shiva came running, but since his wife had drunk the blood of the giants, her intoxication prevented her from seeing him: she knocked him off his feet, trod him underfoot, and danced on his corpse.

Rich believers offer her silver forearms, tongues and eyes of gold. Under the title *Hindu-Mythologie* und *Kastrations-Komplex* a psychoanalyst homonymous with the creator of the *Jeu lugubre* (the painter S. Dali) has devoted a lengthy study to the goddess Kali; this study written in English, appeared in German in *Imago* (1927, pp. 160-98).

[1] American journalist (1868-1940). The book was first published in Britain in 1927 as Mother India. Its sensationalism provoked the indignation of Indian nationalists and British anti-imperialists.

Keaton (Buster):

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It is curious to observe, in our civilised societies, men retaining their childhood names. First-communion photographs, those showing us in the form of a baby, flat on our belly among furs, or indeed as well-behaved little boys, placed in the proximity (or not) of a pier-table or a column, make it clear to us that the only unity we truly possess is perhaps that of the name. Was Buster Keaton, as a child, really a phlegmatic individual, such as today we imagine him?

It seems to me that a portrait, even if it dates only from the previous year, is always a mockery. It is never more than a species of cadaver and constitutes, of itself alone, by the very fact of its existence, a bewitchment. To drag one's old portraits along in one's wake is to become, as it were, a serpent entangled in its old skins. Better, as often as one can, to change one's name, appearance, occupations, wife, ideas, friends: that is no doubt the only course that permits us, without shame, to tolerate the sight of a photograph showing us as a child, unless we possess – like the Buster Keaton of the films – an inviolable *sang-froid* such that, stiffened like a stake by the sword of humour and, never laughing, we become an axis about which the nonsensical trivialities of shifting events gravitate...

Man (1):

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"An eminent English chemist, Dr. Charles Henry Maye, set out to establish in a precise manner what man is made of and what is its chemical value. This is the result of his learned researches:

" The bodily fat of a normally constituted man would suffice to manufacture seven cakes of toilet-soap. Enough iron is found in the organism to make a medium sized nail, and sugar to sweeten a cup of coffee. The phosphorus would provide 2,200 matches. The magnesium would furnish the light needed to take a photograph. In addition, a little potassium and sulphur, but in an unusable quantity.

These different raw materials, costed at current prices, represent an approximate sum of 25 francs." (*Journal des Débats*, 13 August 1929.)

Man (2):

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Sir William Earnshaw Cooper, in a book entitled *La Culpabilité sanguinaire de la Chrétienté* (translated by J. Charpentier, Paris, M. Carpenter) [1], gives prominence to the well-known fact that not one of the millions of animals man massacres every year is necessary for his nourishment. In seeking to characterise the *red and hideous bloodstain* on the face of man, he expresses himself thus:

"If, taking the animals put to death in a single day in all the slaughterhouses of the Christian countries, we set them walking head to tail, with only sufficient space between them that they do not tread on one another, they would stretch in Indian file for 1322 miles – more than thirteen hundred miles of warm, palpitating living bodies, dragged each day, as the years go by, to the Christians' bloody slaughterhouses, so that they might quench their thirst for blood at the red fountain gushing from the veins of their murdered victims...

"A calculation based on very modest figures shows the quantity of blood shed each year in the slaughterhouses of Chicago is more than sufficient to float five transatlantic liners..."

[1] The English Original, *The Blood-Guiltiness of Christendom (May We Slay For Food?),* was published in 1922 by *The Order of the Golden Age*, which seems to have been a group of militant nationalist vegetarians. Other works include: The Murder of Agriculture, Socialism and its Perils, Britain for the Briton and Spiritual Science, Here and Hereafter. The quotation is from page 33.

Materialism:

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Most materialists, despite wanting to eliminate all spiritual entities, ended up describing an order of things whose hierarchical relations mark it out as specifically idealist. They have situated dead matter at the summit of a conventional hierarchy of diverse types of facts, without realising that in this way they have submitted to an obsession with an *ideal* form of matter, with a form which approaches closer than any other to that which matter *should be*. Dead matter, the pure idea, and God, all in fact answer a question in the same way – perfectly, and as flatly as a docile student in a classroom – a question that can perhaps only be posed by *idealist* philosophers, the question of the essence of things, in other words of exactly the *idea* by means of which things become intelligible. The classical materialists did not really even substitute causation for the must be (the *quare* for the *quamobrem*, that is to say, determinism for destiny, the past for the future...). Due to the functional role they unconsciously attributed to the idea of science, their need for external authority in fact placed the *must be* on all appearance. If the principle of things they defined constitutes precisely the stable element that permitted science to acquire an apparently unshakeable position, a veritable divine eternity, this choice cannot be attributed to chance. Most materialists have simply substituted the conformity of dead matter to the idea of science for the

religious relations earlier established between the divinity and his creatures, the one being the *idea* of the others.

Materialism can be seen as a senile idealism to the extent that it is not immediately founded upon psychological or social facts and not upon abstractions, such as artificially isolated phenomena. Thus it is from Freud, among others – rather from long dead physicists whose ideas today are remote from their causation – that a representation of matter must be taken. It matters little that the fear of psychological complication (a fear that bears a unique witness to intellectual debility) cause timid souls to see this attitude as an obscure detour or as a return to spiritual values. The time has come, when employing the word materialism, to assign to it the meaning of a direct interpretation, *excluding all idealism*, of raw phenomena, and not of a system founded on the fragmentary elements of an ideological analysis elaborated under the sign of religious relations.

Metamorphosis 1. Abyssinian Games:

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Wild animals play a leading role in African folklore. The cycle of the hyena is by far the most important in the oral literature. This animal has gathered to itself all the horror of the pitch-black nights which it fills with its sinister plaints, painstakingly enumerated by the people shut up in their thatched houses, and interrupted in popular divination.

The personification of witchcraft or of the evil eye, the incarnation or the mount of the sorcerer, it is also, on the high plateau of Ethiopia, the bogey man of young and old alike. A game among the Wollo consists of imitating its howls and slowly inserting oneself into doorways, body bent forwards in such a way as to mimic the creature's curious gait – forelegs very long, hindquarters almost scraping the ground – and covered in a white toga fixed to the head by two knots taking the place of the ears.

When, on the contrary, one wishes to make the children and the women laugh, one borrows the form of a good-natured bird whose misadventures are the stuff of legend: the guinea-fowl. To this end one wears a toga, hands joined on a stick, and with one's wrists bound. In this way one obtains a diamond-shaped head, set on a long neck; one's arms, together with the rest of one's body, covered by the cloth. The player goes down all fours, supported on his elbows, his head pulled in between his shoulders. He lowers and raises his forearms, thus, to a wonderful degree,

conveying the two-and-fro movement of a pecking guinea-fowl.

Metamorphosis 2. Out of the Self:

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Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and Apuleius' novel *The Golden Ass or Metamorphoses* will always number among the most poetic conceptions of the human mind, by reason of their very basis – that is to say, metamorphosis.

I feel sorry for those who have not, at least once in their lives, dreamt of turning into one or other of the nondescript objects that surround them: a table, a chair, an animal, a tree-trunk, a sheet of paper... They have no desire to get out of their skins, and this peaceable contentment, untroubled by any curiosity, is a tangible sign of the insupportable bumptiousness that is the most obvious prerogative of the majority of mankind.

To remain at ease with oneself, like wine in a wineskin, is an attitude contrary to all passion, and consequently to everything that is really worthwhile. No doubt that is of a nature to satisfy lovers of stagnant bogs, but in no way those consumed by a higher ambition.

Not to mention the magical artifices that would *really* permit the accomplishment (albeit for a more less lengthy period) of this metamorphosis, it is certain that nothing counts short of that which is capable of rendering a man genuinely *out of himself*, be it material ingredients or everything in life which, in one way or another, is liable to create a shattering and violent paroxysm.

Metamorphosis. 3.

Wild Animals:

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Man's equivocal attitude towards the wild animal is more than usually absurd. Human dignity does exist (it is, apparently, above all suspicion), but not on one's visits to the zoo – as when, for instance, the animals watch the approaching crowds of children tailed by papa-men and mama-women. Man, despite appearances, must know that when he talks of human dignity in the presence of animals, he lies *like a dog*. For in the presence of illegal and essentially free beings (the only real *outlaws*) the stupid feeling of practical superiority gives way to a most uneasy envy; in savages, it takes the form of the totem, and it lurks in comic disguise within our grandmothers feathered hats. There are so many animals in this world, and so much that we have lost! The innocent cruelty; the opaque monstrosity of eyes scarcely distinguishable from the little bubbles that form on the surface of mud; the horror as integral to life as light is to a tree. These remain the office, the identity card, an existence of bitter servitude, and yet, that shrill madness which, in certain deviant states, borders on metamorphosis.

The obsession with *metamorphosis* can be defined as a violent need – *identical, furthermore, with all our animal needs* – that suddenly impels us to cast off the gestures and attitudes requisite to human nature. A man is an apartment, for example, an animal thus imprisoned, like a galley

slave, and there is a gate, and if we open the gate, the animal will rush out, like the slave finding his way to escape. The man falls dead, and the beast acts as a beast, with no care for the poetic wonder of the dead man. Thus man is seen as a prison of bureaucratic aspect.

Metaphor:

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(From the Greek *metaphora*, a transfer) is "a figure by which the mind applies the name of one object to another, because of a shared characteristic that allows them to be set beside one another and compared." (Darmesteter). Nevertheless, it is hard to know where metaphor begins and ends. An abstract word is formed by the sublimation of a concrete word. A concrete word, which designates an object only by one of its qualities, is itself hardly more than a metaphor, or at the very least a figurative expression. Moreover, to designate an object by an expression to which it corresponds, not figuratively but actually would necessitate knowing the very essence of that object, which is impossible, since we can only know phenomena, not things in themselves.

Not only language, but the whole of intellectual life is based of transpositions, of symbols, which can be described as metaphorical. On the other hand, knowledge always proceeds by comparison, which connects all known objects to one another in relations of interdependency. Given any two among them, it is impossible to determine which is designated by the name proper to it and is not a metaphor of the other, and vice versa. A man is a moving tree, just as much as a tree is a man who has put down roots. In the same way, the sky is a rarefied earth, the earth a denser sky. And if I see a dog running, it is just as much the *run that is dogging*. Even this article is metaphorical.

Misfortune:

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It is beyond doubt that everything has been said, written, printed, cried out or moaned regarding misfortune, only with this reserve, that it is never misfortune itself that speaks but some fortunate prattler in the name of misfortune; which would allow one, furthermore, to make the ignoble accusation that he is speaking of misfortune in the same fashion as if he were speaking of good manners (one would have the dim awareness of being a pompous ass). It would be a matter of speaking, writing, printing, crying out, groaning that vice is a terrifying misfortune, that vice is an underhand and presumptuous abuse of one's wretched person, that vice, in a red robe, is a magistrate or a cardinal, a police officer rather than a murderer, at all events something that assumes all the sinister and ambiguous trappings of misfortune; which also of course means that misfortune is everything that is hypocritical and mute. Moreover, the streets one likes have an air of misfortune about them, and one only walks along them with the look of mangy dog. Further on, nobody would be able to say where, or indeed when, anything at all would certainly be possible, that is to say that the enigma posed by misfortune (which does so, all unknowing, to the inspector of police) would find itself subsumed under the form of vice. That is why we so often say: let's not speak of misfortune...

It is of no importance whether or not this be taken for a circumlocution: that fact is that a certain Crépin, one-time Don Juan and a handsome fellow, who after having killed his mistress and his rival sought to kill himself with a third blast from his shotgun, lost his nose and his mouth (he moreover lost the power of speech), found himself rebuked by a magistrate for having eaten chocolate *mouth-to-mouth* with Madame Delarche, she whom he was to kill one fine day when he saw

red. One is lost in conjecture as to how this infamous phrase from the Assize Court, applied in this context, so faithfully reconstructs the image of vice.

Mouth:

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The mouth is the beginning or, if one prefers, the prow of animals; in the most characteristic cases, it is the most living part, in other words, the most terrifying for neighbouring animals. But man does not have a simple architecture like the beasts, and it is not even possible to say where he begins. In a strict sense, he starts at the top of the skull, but the top of the skull is an insignificant part, incapable of attracting attention and it is the eyes or the forehead the play the significatory role of an animal's jaws.

Among civilised men, the mouth has even lost the relatively prominent character that it still has among primitive men. However, the violent meaning of the mouth is conserved in a latent state: it suddenly regains the upper hand with a literally cannibalistic expression such as *mouth of fire*, applied to the cannons men employ to kill each other. And on important occasions human life is still bestially concentrated in the mouth: fury makes men grind their teeth, terror and atrocious suffering transform the mouth into the organ of rending screams. On this subject it is easy to observe that the overwhelmed individual throws back his head while frenetically stretching his neck so that the mouth becomes, as far as possible, a prolongation of the spinal column, *in other words, it assumes the position in normally occupies in the constitution of animals*. As if explosive impulses were to spurt directly out of the body through the mouth, in the form of screams. This fact simultaneously highlights the importance of the mouth in animal physiology or even psychology, and the general importance of the superior or anterior extremity of the body, the orifice of profound physical impulses: equally one sees that a man is able to liberate these impulses in at least two different ways, in the brain or in the mouth, but that as soon as these impulses become violent, he is obliged to resort to the bestial method of liberation. Whence the narrow constipation of a strictly human attitude, the magisterial look of the face with a *closed mouth*, as beautiful as a safe.

Museum:

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According to the *Grande Encyclopédie*, the first museum in the modern sense of the word (that is to say the first public collection) would seem to have been founded on 27 July 1793, in France, by the Convention. The origin of the modern museum would thus be linked to the development of the guillotine. However, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, founded at the end of the 17th century, was already a public collection belonging to the University.

The development of museums has plainly surpassed even the most optimistic hopes of the founders. Not only does the totality of the world's museums today represent a colossal accumulation of riches but, above all, the totality of visitors without any doubt represents the most grandiose spectacle of a humanity freed from material cares and dedicated to contemplation.

We must take into account the fact that the galleries and the objects of art are no more than a container, the contents of which is formed by the visitors: it is the contents which distinguish a museum from a private collection. A museum is comparable to the lung of a great city: every Sunday the throng flows into the museum, like blood, and leaves it fresh and purified. The pictures are only dead surfaces and it is within the crowd that the play, the flashes, the shimmerings of light technically described by the authorised critics takes place. On Sundays, at five o'clock, at the exit door of the Louvre, it is interesting to admire the torrent of visitors, visibly animated with a desire to be in all things at one with the celestial apparitions with which their eyes are still ravished.

Grandville has schematised the relations between the container and the contained in museums by exaggerating (at the very least, on the face of it) the bonds that are temporarily established between the visited and the visitors. In the same way, when a native of the Ivory Coast places polished stone axes of the Neolithic period in a container filled with water, bathes in the container, and sacrifices chickens to what he believes to be t*hunder stones* (fallen from heaven in a thunderclap), he is doing no more than prefiguring the attitude of enthusiasm and profound communion with objects which characterises the visitor to a modern museum.

The museum is a colossal mirror in which man contemplates himself, in short, in all his aspects, finds himself literally admirable and abandons himself to the ecstasy expressed in all the art journals.

Nightingale:

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Save in exceptional cases, no reference to a bird is intended. The nightingale is generally, a platitude, a narcotic, indolent, stupid. With words we designate vague opinions rather than objects; we use words as adornments for our own persons. Words are, for the most part, petrifications which elicit mechanical reactions in us. They are means to power proposed by the wily and the drunken. The nightingale can be classed among the paraphrases of the absolute; it is the senior element among all those techniques of classical seduction in which we resort to the charm of the small. Nobody thinks the nightingale wild or excessively erotic. The nightingale is an eternal prop, star of lyric repertory, adultery's high point, the good courtesan's comfort: it is the sign of an eternal optimism.

Nightingale can be replaced: a) by rose, b) by breasts, but never by legs, because the nightingale's role is precisely to avoid designating them. The nightingale belongs to the repertory of bourgeois diversions, by which we try to suggest the indecent while skirting it. The nightingale can also be the sign of an erotic fatigue; belonging, in any case, like most words, to the paraphrase, this animal helps to ward off disagreeable elements. The nightingale is an allegory; it is hide-and-seek.

The nightingale is to be classed among those ideals devoid of meaning; it is considered a means of concealment, a moral phenomenon. It is a cheap utopia that obscures misery. The nightingale is to be relegated among classical still-lifes of lyricism.

It's cowardice that prevents people from using themselves in allegory. Allegory is, in fact, a form of assassination because it disposes of the object, robbing it of its literal meaning. It is defenceless animals, plants, and trees that get used; the weak like to juggle with the whole cosmos and get drunk on stars. Imprecision is the soul's façade, while precision is the sign of threatening and hallucinatory processes against which we defend ourselves with a superstructure of knowledge.

The nightingale helps to avoid thinking and psychic disquiet. It is a means of diversion, an ornamental motif. One attributes to animals, to plants, etc., a moral perfection with which one adorns oneself. Allegories and surrogates must hide the failure and ugliness of man: thus the human soul is made of stars, roses, twilights, etc. – that is to say, one schematises the defenceless world and projects one's idealised ego onto a Chihuahua. One weeps with the nightingale in hope of a

good day at the stock exchange. Such is the American's winning sentimentality.

The nightingale outlives the gods, because it is merely allegorical, committing to nothing. Symbols die, but in degenerating, as allegory they pass into eternity. Thus what we call the soul is for the most a museum of meaningless signs. These signs are hidden behind the façade of actuality.

Poets – those gallivanters and embroiderers – transform the nightingale into turbines, baseball, Buddhism, Taoism, Tschou period, etc.

Mention must be made of the political nightingales, who take their coffee decaffeinated and practise, through Hegel and double-entry book-keeping, a politics of the absolute, gracefully avoiding every danger through manifestos. Song replaces action.

Let us also note that the nightingale sings best after having devoured a weakling.

The nightingale's music conforms to steady and classical taste; it seeks a guaranteed success. Its cadences are eclectic compilations: only the nuance changes. It even renders slightly daring sounds in a routine harmony, because the nightingale

even uses sadness, like pastry. Let us now cite some highly successful nightingales: Mr Shaw, the nightingale of socialism, of common sense and evolution, for whom drama is a compilation of feature articles; Anatole France, the nightingale of Hellenism and saccharine scepticism. And we'll add to the list the scholarly nightingales who engagingly combine the remains of metaphysics with an optimistic biology. The nightingale plays all the flutes of all time; it is more eternal than Apollo, but it cannot master the saxophone.

Pensum: [1]

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Most forms of activity impose themselves on man as pensums, even in the case of activities he appears to have chosen freely. Few painters produce pictures other than by way of pensums, works imposed on them by an alien, and often hateful, hand. How many writers harness themselves to their novel and voluntarily reduce themselves to the rank of plough-horses, or asses, loaded, now with cereals, now with relics. How many people, likewise, enjoy themselves not to enjoy themselves but in order to perform a species of rite...

Everything is hateful when it is done as a pensum. All white-men are failures, for not one of them (or as near as may be not one of them) is really capable of enjoying himself. Leaving aside children who set fire to haystacks, derail trains or dream up great massacres of animals, I know scarcely any but sinister pedants who, chewing on their pen holders, sweat blood and water so as to write out to the bitter end their calamitous pensums...

[1] Pensum, according to the OED: "A charge, duty. Or allotted task; a school-task or lesson to be prepared; also (U.S.) a lesson or piece of work imposed as a punishment, a school Œimposition.'"

Pottery:

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Archaeologists and aesthetes are interested in the container and not in what it contains, in the pastoral scenes, the animals on the circumference and not in the milk falling directly from the udder; in the colour of the terracotta and not in the odour it can impart to that milk, the odour of aromatic plants, of smoke, or cow-dung, at random according to the cultures of fresh or rancid butter. They will admire the form of a handle, but they will studiously avoid studying the attitude of the drinking man and asking themselves why, among many peoples, it is shameful to drink while standing up.

Better still, they do not seek to know whether the man who kept the pot empty or filling it, leaving it open or carefully closing it.

They will say that these things are transient and that their reconstruction belongs to the domain of the imagination. But they will deny that they make ample use of the imagination when, in a sketch, they extrapolate the feet or neck of a vase of which they have only the bulbous part?

And, moreover, the supposedly preponderant part of that intemperate faculty could be greatly reduced if we were inclined to take the trouble to look around us. There is an infinite field of observation open to the reasonable mind; present-day

humanity, whose beliefs, and even techniques regarding pottery have, on the whole, evolved so little since the world began.

For, after all, how many millions of men still believe in omens drawn from pots smashed before marriages or after drinking, empty pots, or those appearing in dreams? Solomon confined genies in vases, the Golden Legend contains stories of demons imprisoned in pots. How numerous are the spirits of Arab magic, still today called *Banu Qamãqim*, the "children of bottles"? How many beautiful jars of red clay, filled with inexhaustible and miracle-working water, do the monks of perpetual adoration see refilled day and night in a certain rite of Christian Africa? And each of them, for its defence, has no less than a dragon, a troop of real serpents, and a forest of century-old trees whose fearsome spirits do not permit even the breaking of a branch.

Reptiles:

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A white serpent emerging from the right eye-socket of a skull and re-entering by the left eye-socket – or vice-versa – in such a way that its head or the end of its tail are always, one or the other, inside the skull, symbolises for some the eternal destiny of things, the Great Year of the Pythagoreans [1], the general rhythm of the world with its alternations of dispersion and concentration. One is aware, on the other hand, of the role of the tempter in Genesis and the phallic significance everywhere attached to the serpent.

In Cairo, in the form of the wooden lizard (or crocodiles?) that many prostitutes hang over their doors by way of an immutable sign, I have perhaps seen the trace of the crocodile sacred to the Egyptians.

The wriggling of serpents, in the depths of swamps and in dungeons, their strange intertwinings, their combats with fangs, knots or venom will always be the exact image of human existence shot through from top to bottom by death and love.

[1] The Platonic, Great, or Perfect year (Annus Magnus), was estimated by early Greek astronomers at about 26, 000 years, at the end of which all the heavenly bodies are imagined to have returned to the places they occupied at the creation.

Skyscraper:

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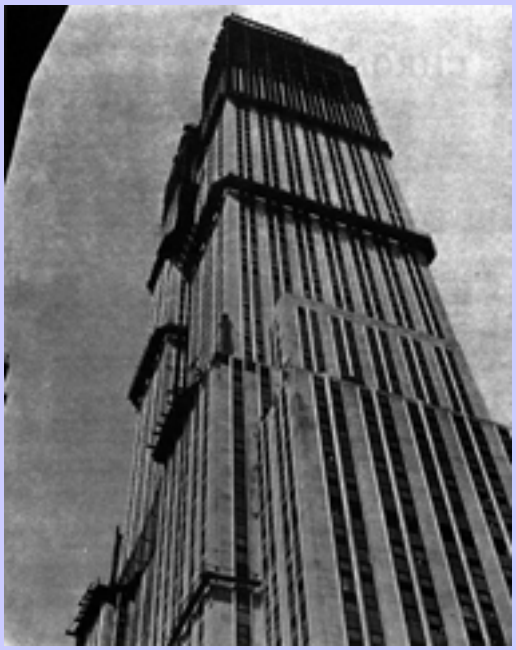

Like everything which has about it a prestige of exoticism, the tall buildings of America lend themselves, with an insolent ease, to the tempting amusement of comparisons. The most immediate is, beyond doubt, that which transforms these edifices into modern *towers of Babel*. But trivial though such a comparison may be, it is nevertheless of interest (by the very reason of its immediacy) in confirming the psychoanalytic content of the expression "skyscraper."

One of the innumerable versions of the story of the struggle between father and son is the Biblical narrative concerning the erection of the Tower of Babel. As in the myth of the Titans, we find here the attempt to climb up to the sky – that its to say, to dethrone the father, to possess oneself of his virility – followed by the destruction of the rebels: castration of the son by his father, whose rival he is. Furthermore, the coupling, rash though it may be, of these two words, the verb "scrape" on the one hand, and, on the other, the substantive "sky," immediately evokes an erotic image in which the building, which scrapes, is a phallus even more explicit than the Tower of Babel, and the sky which is scraped – the object of the desire of the said phallus – is the incestuously desired mother, as she is in all attempts at the spoilation of the paternal virility.

To that degree, skyscrapers, the

grandiose ornament of North American cities and the instruments of a luxury and comfort as yet unknown in Europe, are marvellous and modern symbols – as much by their name as their form – of one of the most important human constants: that which was the cause of Laius' murder by his son, of the final disaster of Phaeton, indeed of certain social upheavals and a fair number of inventions, the *Oedipus* complex which is, without possible contradiction, one of the most powerful factors in evolution or, if one believes in it, of "progress," since it implies a desire no less for substitution than for joyful demolition. [1]

[1] Laius was Oedipus's father. Phaeton, the son of Helios (the sun-god), sought to drive his father's chariot, came a cropper and thereby turned Libya into a parched desert and blackened the inhabitants of Africa; Zeus saved the world from being fire by shooting him down.

Slaughterhouse:

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The slaughterhouse is linked to religion in so far as the temples of bygone eras (not to mention those of the Hindus in our own day) served two purposes: they were used both for prayer and for killing. The result (and this judgement is confirmed by the chaotic aspect of present-day slaughterhouses) was certainly a disturbing convergence of the mysteries of myth and the ominous grandeur typical of those places in which blood flows. In America, curiously enough, W. B. Seabrook [1] has expressed an intense regret; observing that the orgiastic life has survived, but that the sacrificial blood is not part of the cocktail mix, he finds present custom insipid. In our time, nevertheless, the slaughterhouse is cursed and quarantined like a plague-ridden ship. Now, the victims of this curse are neither butchers nor beasts, but those same good folk who countenance, by now, only their own unseemliness, an unseemliness commensurate with an unhealthy need of cleanliness, with irascible meanness, and boredom. The curse (terrifying only to those who utter it) leads them to vegetate as far as possible from the slaughterhouse, to exile themselves, out of propriety, to a flabby world in which nothing

fearful remains and in which, subject to the ineradicable obsession of shame, they are reduced to eating cheese.

[1] In *The Magic Island*.

Space 1.

Questions of Propriety:

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It is not surprising that the mere utterance of the word *space* should introduce philosophical protocol. Philosophers, being the masters of ceremony of the abstract universe, have pointed out how space should behave under all circumstances.

Unfortunately space remains a lout, and it is difficult to enumerate what it engenders. It is as discontinuous as it is devious, to the utter despair of its philosopher-papa. I should, moreover, prefer not to refresh the memory of persons who interest themselves, professionally or for the want of something better to do, out of confusion or for a laugh, in the behaviour of that scallywag at odds with society: to wit, how is it that, under our modestly averted eyes, space breaks all obligatory continuity. Without one's being able to say why, it seems that an ape dressed as a woman is no more than a division of space. In reality, the dignity of space is so well established and associated with that of the stars, that it is incongruous to assert that space might become a fish swallowing another. Space will still more frightfully disappointing when it said that it takes the ignoble initiation rite practised by some Negroes, desperately absurd,

etc...

Space would of course be far better off *doing its duty* and fabricating the philosophical idea in professors' apartments! Obviously it will never enter anybody's head to lock the professors up in prison to teach *them what space is* (the day, for example, the walls collapse before the bars of their dungeons).

Space 2.

Fundamentals of the Duality of Space:

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There is no notion more worthy of being cherished than that of space. For that reason it has twice been betrayed: the first time by those who have delivered space over to the geometers, thus reducing it to an abstraction; the second time by the inventors of concrete time, romantics and Bergsonians [1] who, subordinating space to time, under the cover of creative evolution, have initiated the most slipshod spiritualism yet seen.

It is to be hoped that Monsieur Meyerson [2] has definitively put paid to the evolutionist botch-up. We are aware that intelligence proceeds to two distinct operations. Bergson himself said that "our intelligence, as it emerges from the hands of nature, has for its principal object the unorganised solid... For the present manipulation, it is above all necessary for us to take the real object, or the real elements into which we have resolved it, as provisionally definitive and to treat them as so many unities?" On the other hand (the second stage of the intellectual operation), he admitted that "space... a homogeneous and empty medium, infinite and infinitely divisible," is never perceived, "it is only conceived... it is a purely theoretical view." It is by a utilitarian principle that Bergson explains the transition from the first notion of space: solid, discontinuous and concrete, to the second: continuous

and abstract extension. If, now, following the opinion of Monsieur Meyerson, we abandon the Bergsonian belief in the primacy of *homo faber* over *homo sapiens*, the two aspects of space appear as profoundly different, one from the other. The first implies an adhesion to a thing, concrete and limited, the reality of the diverse, of the discontinuous, of transitive action by the contact or impact; the second, which is nothing other than Cartesian extension, supposes on the contrary the rationality of the real, the logical and icy monism of scientists. The fundamental distinction between these two aspects is strongly demonstrated, not only by epistemology but by the clinical observation of psychiatry. In one of the most important pages of his book, *Schizophrenia*, Dr. Eugène Minkowski [3] sets out in parallel the terminal states of the general paralytic and the schizophrenic. The former, in whom the intelligence is ruined, has nevertheless retained the notion of the *I-here-now*, he has retained in an essential form, albeit reduced, some contact with the real. The second, who on the contrary has in no way lost the notion of Cartesian space, who on the contrary is afflicted with a morbid geometrism, has lost the affective notion of the *here-now*, of that concrete and specific present where as Ward very rightly says, the *here* appears to dominate and condition the now.

Thus, *on the one hand*, we conceive rational space as a pure deduction. Cartesian extension could just as easily be called mathematical time. There is no difference in nature between them, but only, perhaps, a different degree of abstraction. If the time, or better, the space-time of mathematicians, appeared historically only after pure spatial infinity, this is only because between concrete duration and abstract time, the sense of touch does not throw across the fragile and perhaps illusory bridge it imposes between the I-here-now and abstract extension. *On the other hand* we find ourselves in the presence of a concrete space, anterior to any intellectual datum, and the notion of which survives the ruin of the intelligence. Consulting the observations of Dr Minkowski, and comparing them in particular with Meyersonian theories, we become aware that this purely irrational space is nothing other than individual contact with nature, which science itself, much against its will, by the way, cannot refuse without suicide. At once *syntonic* and *causal*, this concrete space serves equally well as a basis for purely affective pleasure as for purely scientific hypothesis. It introduces the positive notion of an irrational and anti-spiritual reality. But, above all, it can only be imagined as an impact like that of Hume's two marbles: it is the only possible expression of the

instantaneous, of the simultaneous, the very idea of which, outside of itself, remains inadmissible. It is the pure violence which escapes time, over which it thus affirms its primacy.

[1] Henri Bergson (1859-1941). Philosopher, the titles of whose main works, Creative Evolution, and Matter and Memory, give some idea of the general idealist direction of his thought.

[2] Emile Meyerson (1859-1933) Philosopher of science, opposed to the positivist and empiricist vies of many of his colleagues, holding that hypothesis is necessarily prior to research.

[3] Eugène Minkowski (1885-1972). Psychiatrist: his work on schizophrenia and "le temps vécu," lived time, (the inspiration for which derives from Bergson) follows in the philosophical tradition of French psychiatry.

Spittle 1.

Spittle-Soul :

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One can be hit full in the face by a truncheon or an automatic pistol without incurring any dishonour; one can similarly be disfigured by a bowl of vitriol. But one can't accept spittle without shame, whether voluntarily or involuntarily dispatched. This is not, as one might think, a commentary on the kabyl code [1], but a straightforward rendering of our way of seeing.

For spittle is more than the product of a gland. It must possess a magical nature because, if it bestows ignominy, it is also a miracle-maker: Christ's saliva opened the eyes of the blind, and a mother's "heart's balm" heals the bumps of small children.

Spittle accompanies breath, which can exit the mouth only when permeated with it. Now, breath is soul, so much so that certain peoples have the notion of "the soul before the face," which ceases where breath can no longer be felt. And we say, "to breathe one's last," and "pneumatic" really signifies "full of soul."

As in a hive, where the entrance hole glistens from the wax inside, the mouth – magically the body's chief aperture – is humid from the to-and-fro of the soul, which comes and goes in the form of breath.

Saliva is the deposit of the soul; spittle is the soul in movement. We

use it to strengthen an action, for protection, to impress one's will on an object, to "sign" a contract, to give life.

Thus, Mohammed himself [2] feared the witches' saliva as they breathed on knots and spat a little to work some evil spells. In Great Russia and elsewhere, to seal an oath, one spits. Just about everywhere, the kiss, this exchange of saliva, is a guarantee of peace (to seal with a kiss). In Oriental Africa, when opening a door that has been long closed, one spits in order to cast out the demon of the empty house [3]. Finally – and this is a startling demonstration of the theory of the spittle-soul – in Occidental Africa, to confer spirit on the child, the grandfather spits into the mouth of his grandchild several days after his birth.

To summarise: from evil will to good will, from insult to miracle, spittle behaves like the soul – balm or filth.

[1] Hanoteaux & Letourneux, *Kabylie*, III, p.193.

[2] *Koran*, Sura 113.

[3] Marcel Griaule, *Le Livre de recettes d'un dabtara abyssin*, Insitut d'ethnologie de Paris.

Spittle

2. Mouth Water:

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We are so accustomed to the sight of our fellow creatures that we are rarely notice what is monstrous in each of our structural elements. Eroticism releases, ever so slightly, great lightning flashes that, on occasion, reveal to us the true nature of a given organ, suddenly restoring both its whole reality and its hallucinatory force, while simultaneously installing as sovereign goddess the abolition of hierarchies – those hierarchies within which we habitually grade, for better or for better or for worse, the different parts of the body. Some we place at the top, others at the bottom (according to the value we attach to the different activities controlled by them): eyes at the summit – because they would seem to be admirable lanterns – but the organs of excretion as far down as possible, below any waterline, in the humid vaults of a sea stagnant with distress, poisoned by a million sewers...

Just below the eyes, the mouth occupies a privileged position because it is both the locus of speech and respiratory orifice. It is considered the cave where the pact of the kiss is sealed rather than the oily factory of mastication. One the one hand, it requires love to restore to the mouth the mythological function (the mouth is merely a moist and warm grotto garnished nonetheless with the hard stalactites of teeth, and, lurking within its inner

reaches, the tongue, that guardian of Lord knows what treasures!) Spittle, on the other hand, casts the mouth in one fell swoop down to the last rung of the organic ladder, lending it a function of ejection even more repugnant than its role as gate through which one stuffs food.

Spittle bears closely on erotic manifestations, because like love, it plays havoc with the classification of organs. Like the sexual act carried out in broad daylight, it is scandal itself, for it lowers the mouth – which is the visible sign of intelligence – to the level of the most shameful organs, and, subsequently, man in general to the state of those primitive animals which, possessing only one aperture for all their needs – and thereby exempt from that elementary separation between the noble and the ignoble) – are still completely plunged in sort of diabolical and inextricable chaos. For this reason, spittle represents the height of sacrilege. The divinity of the mouth is daily sullied by it. Indeed, what value can we attach to reason, or for that matter to speech, and consequently to man's presumed dignity, when we consider that, given the identical source of language and spittle, any philosophical discourse can legitimately be figured by the incongruous image of a spluttering orator?

Spittle is finally, through its

inconsistency, it definite contours, the relative imprecision of its colour, and its humidity, the very symbol of the formless, of the unverifiable, of the non-heirarchised. It is the limp and sticky stumbling block shattering more efficiently than any stone all undertakings that presuppose man to be something – something other than a flabby, bald animal, something other than the spittle of a raving demiurge, splitting his sides at having expectorated such a concentrated larva: a comical tadpole puffing itself up into meat insufflated by a demigod.

Sun:

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A form of solar cult in the Hautes-Alps at the beginning of the 19th century. – A very singular custom existed, around 1803, in a hamlet in the Hautes-Alpes called Andrieux, situated on the banks of the Severaire, in the arrondissement of Gap, commune of Guillaume-Perouse. To the south, the high mountains form a sort of barrier which blocks off the sun for a hundred days, between 1 November and 9 February.

In the local language this position on the northern slope of the mountain is called Ubac, as opposed to the Adret, the position on the southern side, continuously exposed to the sun. [1]

In this locality the difference between winter and summer is extremely pronounced. An immense and immobile shadow hangs heavily over the village for the entire winter. The historical festivals, introduced like that of Christmas, by Christianity, festivals about which, under normal circumstances all popular practices gravitate, fade into the background in Andrieux before the more grandiose spectacle imposed by the vagaries of nature.

Here is Ladoucette's description of the festival [2]:

"As soon as the night of 9 February is over and dawn breaks over the summits of the mountains, four shepherds of the hamlet announce the festival to the sound of fifes and trumpets; after having perambulated

about the village, they make their way to the house of the oldest inhabitant, who presides over the ceremony and who, in this circumstance, bears the name of the Œvenerable;' they take his orders and renew their fanfares, giving all the inhabitants notice to prepare an omelette.

"Everyone then hastens to carry out the orders of the venerable. At ten, everybody, armed with an omelette, makes their way to the square and a deputation, preceded by the shepherds who begin to play on their rustic instruments, goes to the venerable to tell him that all is ready to begin the festival. Accompanied by the shepherds, the venerable leaves for the meeting-place where he is received with many acclamations by all the inhabitants.

"The venerable takes place in their midst and after his having announced the object of the festival, they form a chain and execute a farandole about him, their plates of omelette in their hands.

"The venerable gives the signal to depart. The shepherds, who take the lead, again play on their instruments and they set off, in an admirably orderly manner, to make their way to a stone bridge situated at the entry to the village. Arriving there, each deposits his omelette on the parapets of the bridge and they proceed to a nearby meadow where farandoles are danced until the arrival of the sun.

"As soon as the first rays of sunlight begin to shine, the dancing finishes and each goes to reclaim his omelette, which he

offers to the day-star. The old man raises it aloft, bareheaded.

"The venerable immediately announces the departure. They return in the same order as that in which they came; they accompany the venerable to his home, after which each goes back to his family, where they eat the omelette.

The festival lasts all day, and even extends into the night. They come together again towards the evening, and many families join together to celebrate."

The role of the shepherds demonstrates the link between this festival and the seasonal life of society [3]. The first rays of the sun indicate the moment they should bring their herds out of the cattle-sheds. The beginning of the summer period also changes the inhabitants' way of living. This festival thus fall into the category of seasonal celebrations; it is distinguished only by the ritual consecrated to the return of the sun, inspired by the particular geographical situation.

The whole ceremony pivots around the ritual of the omelette, Laid on the parapets of the bridge, being the image of the sun, it attracts its likeness while the inhabitants dance in the nearby meadow.

This ritual is completely specific by reason of the latent presence of the notion of the sacred. We recognise here a Christian influence. The sun, and consequently the omelette, are not sacred in the habitual sense. But the venerable raises the

omelette aloft *bare-headed*, the sign of a religious act.

The dance too has an efficacious action. They dance only until such time as the sun's rays light up the village.

Then everything resumes it s orderly course. The sun has set; all that remains is to feast to one's heart's content. The consumption of the omelette is also a ritual act for, it must not be forgotten, the omelette having been exposed on the parapets of the bridge at the entry to the village, it possesses a portion of the essence of the sun.

The role of the venerable demonstrates the unity of the entire hamlet during the ceremony. The festival of the return of the sun is a public ceremony in which the community participates as a unit.

[1] Marcelle Vessereau, "*L'Adret et L'Ubac dans les Alpes occidentales*." *Annales de Géographie*, 15 Sept. !921 (XXXe Année, no. 167), pp. 321-3. For the same phenomenon in the Swiss Alps: Ch. Biermann, *Le Val de Conches-en-Valais. Essai sur la vie dans une haute vallée des Alpes suisses sous l'influence de l'altitude, du climat et du relief*, Lausanne, 1907, 8vo.

[2] J. Ch. F. Baron de Ladoucette: *Histoire, antiquités, usages des Hautes-Alpes, précédés d'un essai sur la topographie de ce département*, Paris, Fantin, 1820, 8vo., CLX, 208pp.

[3] See an essay on the relationship between festivals and the seasonal life of Eskimos: Hubert & Mauss, Année Sociologique, old series. Their results are applied in a study of the popular festival that preceded Christmas, Arch. De Religion suisse, 1916.

Talkie [1]:

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After a certain number of sound movies – at least one of which, *Our Dancing Daughters*, will certainly mark an important date in the history of cinema, not so much for technical reasons as because it signals the appearance of a totally new form of sentimentality in films, with the charm of an easy life, unspoiled by any concern other than to show the protagonists of a sparkling youth and grace – here at last we have a real talkie, with retorts rebounding back and forth that sometimes add a sort of vocal close-up to the visual close-up.

The English language is the language of *love*, such is the great lesson of *Weary River*, and this is enough to make us forget a scenario of imbecile puritanism, illuminated only by great gleams of passion now and then pouring out their marvellous reds.

The narrow-minded have not failed in their grubby task with respect to talkies, warning of disaster, like they always do, in this case the end of cinema. Such a film gives the lie to them peremptorily despite its weaknesses, since what saves it is not so much a visual image here or there as the role-played by the voices in it. Which shows why talkies are interesting.

Thanks, then, to these talking films, from which we should expect everything (as *Weary River* has demonstrated), we can at last allow ourselves to be possessed body and soul by scenes of ardent sensuality, cast

adrift on the raft of voices while everything collapses around us in sensuality, cast adrift on the raft of voices while everything collapses around us except perhaps, a troubling movement of lip or throat, a trembling of fingertips, an oracular speech issuing from the mouth of an amorous woman, with the heart-rending accent of the mountains, the sea, dimly lit taverns and prison bars at midnight, a beautiful voice, at once harsh and sweet, which has travelled every road, every furrow, every path, in a region where perhaps we know no more about the sun than about the moving barriers of rain.

[1] Apropos of *Weary River*, showing at the Clichy-Palace cinema, September 1929.

Threshold:

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The threshold is the node which separates two opposing worlds, the interior and the open air, the cold and the warm, the light and the shade. To cross a threshold is thus to traverse a zone of danger where invisible but real battles are fought out.

As long as the door is closed, all is well. To open it is a serious matter: it is to unleash two hordes, one against the other, it is to risk being caught up in the fray. Far from being a convenience, the door is a terrible instrument which must be made use of only knowingly and according to the proper rites, and which must be surrounded by every magical protection.

These precautions are innumerable: a horse-shoe, a consecrated sprig of box-tree, a painting of Saint Sebastian surrounded with formulae, an animal sacrificed on the threshold, corpses of enemies buried standing erect...

In east Africa the most dangerous moment of the day is the opening of the door in the morning. In effect, all night the house has been closed; it has been, as it were, isolated from the world, from the open air, from the cold, from the light. The door has been the thoroughly watertight lock-gate that has dammed up the threshold. One will therefore open it with an infinity of precautions, slowly, keeping behind it, above all

avoiding displacing air. When it is fully open, one will spit into the gaping opening, at the same time pronouncing words of appeasement, and finally, with the greatest calm, one will cross the threshold, looking before oneself.

The same movements are observed by the visitor when he presents himself to the household in the early morning. However he will avoid any complications by not arriving until very late, when the door will already have been opened and contact established.

In superior civilisations the doormat has not been created solely to slow the crossing of the threshold and permit the visitor to collect his thoughts. It plays a far more important role; when the tradesman's representative presents himself at the door of an important client, he wipes his feet all the more ostentatiously on the mat at the door if the house be imposing, and that even in dry weather. Conversely, in muddy weather, it is properly polite to say to an honoured visitor who is endeavouring to remove the mud from his boots: "Oh, I say, please don't bother." The assiduity one employs in freeing the stranger from this obligation is in direct ratio to the respect one has for him.

This goes to show that the threshold, that is to say the doormat, of which it

is the visible sign, is indeed a thing of dread, because there one must manifest or cast aside one's qualities, because there it is necessary to register, forcibly or with levity, the rank one occupies in society.

Work:

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"I have no idea what the meaning of work is in our epoch, but I believe virtuosity is an infirmity, knowledge a dangerous asset, and I am well content to have some genius and no talent, which allows me not to work, and to play like a child: Work is an ostentatious thing, ugly and bogus as Justice." – K. Van Dongen. [1]

[1] *Bulletin de L'Art ancien et moderne*, Sept.-Oct. 1929, p. 338. Dongen (1877-1968) was a painter, originally associated with the anarchistic satirical review *L'Assiette au Beurre* around the turn of the century. Later an associate of Picasso, he then became a somewhat celebrated "society" portrait painter.

List of Contributors:

For Biographical details:

Bataille, Georges

Baron, Jacques

Dandieu, Arnauld

Desnos, Robert

Einstein, Carl

Griaulle, Marcel

Leiris, Michel

Reich, Zdenko

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Home

Georges Bataille (1897-1962)

Georges Bataille was born in Billom, a small medieval town east of Clermont-Ferrand, the second son of a syphilitic father who had gone blind and was to become paralysed. He left the Auvergne at an early age, when his family moved to Reims in 1900. He was a dreadful student at the *lycée* in that town, the *lycée* where some years later the founding members of the *Grand Jeu* group came together (Daumal, Gilbert-Lecomte, Vailland). In 1914, Mme Bataille left her husband when the town was threatened with bombardment by German artillery, and fled with her son to her remaining family at Rion-ès-Montagnes. The father died alone the following year. In 1916 Bataille was called up, but his illness caused him to be definitively rejected by the army. He thought of taking up an ecclesiastical career and in 1917 enrolled at the Saint-Flour seminary where he spent one year. He then published the first text bearing his name: a six page pamphlet entitled *Notre-Dame de Rheims*. But he gave up the seminary, and moved to Paris where he entered the Ecole des Chartes, the school for the study of ancient documents. In 1920 he spent some time in London, where he met the philosopher Henri Bergson, and a visit to Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight put an end to any idea of a religious vocation. He left the Ecole with a brilliant thesis, and became an archivist/palaeographer at the Bibliothèque nationale in 1922. In the same year he was sent to Madrid to the Ecole des hautes études hispaniques, and fell in love with bull-fighting.

From 1923 to 1925, he was close to Leon Chestov and worked with him on the translation into French of his book *The Idea of Goodness in Tolstoy and Nietzsche*. The Russian philosopher had a profound influence on Bataille; this being the period when Bataille discovered the works of Nietzsche and Freud. He took a lively interest in the problems of translating into French the concepts of psychoanalysis. At this time he also started lifelong friendships, first with the ethnologist Alfred Métraux, then with Michel Leiris, André Masson the painter, and Theodore Fraenkel. His meeting with André Breton resulted in mutual hostility. Apart from one single anonymous contribution to *La Révolution surréalist* (a transcription into modern French of fatrasies, absurd medieval poems), he kept apart from the surrealist movement.

In 1926 Bataille underwent an analysis with Doctor Adrien Borel: it was brief, as was the practice of those days. After the analysis, he could at last write. First a text entitled WC, whose manuscript he destroyed, then L'anus solaire, which was published in 1931 with illustrations by André Masson, and L'Histoire de l'oeil, published in 1928 under the pseudonym of Lord Auch – an abbreviation for *Aux Chiottes…*! [on the shit-hole]. Alongside this black erotic writing, Bataille was active as a numismatist, writing articles for scholarly reviews such as Aréthuse, or

La République des lettres, des Sciences et des Arts. In 1929 he was one of the founders of the review Documents in which he attempted the impossible: to put official science up against texts that radically questioned it. The review was closed down by its owner at the beginning of 1931. The editorial board brought together Georges Bataille and a number of dissident Surrealists; they further collaborated in publishing *Un cadavre*, a pamphlet directed against André Breton.

In 1928 Bataille married Sylvia Maklès who became a famous actress (she was directed by Jean Renoir in *Une Partie de Campagne*, and Georges Bataille appears as an extra in the film dressed as a priest!) They had one daughter, Laurence, born in 1930, who became a highly-regarded psychoanalyst. In 1934 Bataille separated from his wife, though they were not divorced until 1946. Sylvia then married psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and Georges married Diane Kotchoubey de Beauharnais, with whom he had a daughter, Julie. The two couples continued friendly relations based on mutual esteem: Lacan invited Bataille in the late fifties to contribute to the seminar he held at the Hôpital Saint-Anne.

In 1931, Bataille was a member of Boris Souvarine's *Cercle Communiste Démocratique*, and contributed to the revue *La Critique Sociale* where he published important articles including *La notion de dépense* and, with Raymond Queneau, *Critique des fondements de la dialectique hégélienne*. From 1934 he followed Alexandre Kojève's famous lectures on Hegel. That year, he started a liaison with Colette Peignot who was then the companion of Souvarine. He reacted with implacable hatred towards Bataille which he maintained up until his last writings (in 1984) where he inveighs against him as a "sexual lunatic," and an "acephalous writer fixated on an apparently cosmic anus."

In the mid-thirties, Bataille began an activity imposed by the danger of fascism: he created the Contre-Attaque movement which was joined by Breton and his friends, but dissolved in 1936. The following year he founded the secret society called Acéphale, took part in the creation and organisation of the *Societé de psychologie collective* which included both anthropologists and psychoanalysts, and with Leiris and Callois set up the College of Sociology which assembled some remarkable minds, among them Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin (whose manuscripts were hidden by Bataille in the Bibliothèque nationale during the war).

Colette Peignot's death in 1938 shook him for some time. He wrote *Le Coupable*, *L'Expérience intérieure* and *Madame Edwarda* which was published in 1940 under the pseudonym of Pierre Angélique. He met Maurice Blanchôt "to whom he was bound immediately with admiration and agreement." He became ill and left the Bibliothèque nationale in 1942, then moved out of Paris to Vezelay. That year he published *Le Petit* under the pseudonym of Louis Trente.

In 1946 he founded the review Critique which is still in existence and he published in its pages numerous critical articles which were collected in several of his books such as *La Part maudite* or *Le Literature et le mal*. In 1958 Bataille made one last attempt to start a review: he put together a contents list for *Genèse* with the help of Patrick Waldberg, but the publisher Maurice Girodias cancelled the project. In the course of the fifties several works appeared which had been written earlier, such as *L'Abbé C*, *Le Bleu du ciel*, and also *Lascaux ou la naissance de l'art*, and *Manet*.

Bataille run out of money and was forced to take up employment again: in 1949 he became librarian at Carpentras, in Provence, then in 1951 at Orléans which he left in 1962 for a job at the Bibliothèque nationale, which, however, his illness and then death prevented him from taking up. Suffering increasingly badly from arteriosclerosis, he had managed to finish *Les Larmes d'Eros* (1961) the last book published in his lifetime. He had planned to re-work *La Part maudite*, but died in Paris on 8 July 1962, he is buried in Vezelay. Two further books appeared posthumously: *Ma Mère*, which was its author's first commercial success, and *Le Mort*.

Jacques Baron (1905-1986)

Baron started early as a poet: he published his first poems in 1921 in *Aventure* and participated in the Dada movement. In 1921 he met Breton and joined the Surrealists. He broke with Breton in 1929, became one of the editors of *Documents* and joined the *Cercle Communiste Démocratique*; Boris Souvraine said of him: "he was at the origin of my relations with André Breton and his entourage." To earn a living Baron became a merchant sailor, then a radio journalist. He published many collections of poems, among them *L'Allure poétique*, and a novel, *Charbon de mer*, some memoirs, *L'An 1 du Surréalisme*, and collaborated on such reviews as *Le Voyage en Grèce*, *La Critique sociale* and *Minotaure*.

Arnaud Dandieu. (1897-1933)

Dandieu initially studied law and became a solicitor¹s clerk before taking up a post at the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1925. There he met Bataille, with whom he had many discussions: deeply Catholic, interested in philosophy, psychopathology, epistemology and sociology, Dandieu contributed to many reviews: *Documents*, but also *Europe*, *Mouvements*, *Esprit*, *La Revue Mondiale*, *La Revue d¹Allemagne*. In 1930, with Robert Aron, he founded the movement *Ordre Nouveau*, which denounced the vulgar materialism at work in liberal societies. The two men published a book-length manifesto entitled *Le Cancer américain*; a second followed, *La Révolution nécessaire* (1933) to which Bataille contributed anonymously. Dandieu also published a collection of poems and an essay on Proust. He died prematurely, of complications following a minor operation.

Robert Desnos (1900-1945)

Primarily a poet, his first works appeared in 1917, two years before he met Benjamin Péret, who introduced him to the Paris Dada group and to André Breton. He was an active member of the Surrealist group while remaining a journalist on *Paris-Soir*. After splitting with the Surrealists, he joined Bataille and Documents and was one of the authors of *Un cadavre* which attacked "le boeuf Breton." His career in radio began in 1932, and he became friendly with Artaud, Picasso, and also Hemmingway and John Dos Pasos. A lover of music, especially jazz, and of cinema, he wrote many critical texts on film as well as numerous scenarios. He was active in the resistance during the war, and was arrested in 1944 and deported to Buchenwald, then Térézine, where he died of exhaustion following typhus a few weeks after the camp's liberation. He wrote for many reviews, including *Littérature*, *La Révolution surréaliste*, and *Variétés*. His principle publications include various poetry collections and three novels, the first two being available in English from Atlas Press: *Deuil pour deuil* (1924), *La Liberté ou l'amour!* (1917) and *Le vin est tiré* (1943).

Carl Einstein (1885-1940)

One of the most important writers and art/literary theorists of his time. His "cubist" novel *Bebuquin*, published in 1912, was highly influential for Dada and illuminated his call for an end to the realistic psychological novel. He published one of his first monographs on African art, *Negro Sculpture* (1915), and his *Art of the 20th Century* (1926) was equally important. In 1919 he co-edited two of the most political of the Dada journals with Grosz, periodicals that fiercely attacked the spirit of the Weimar republic, which he abandoned for France in 1928. In Paris, apart from co-editing *Documents*, he collaborated on Jolas' *Transition*, wrote a major book on Braque and the screenplay to Jean Renoir's *Toni*. In 1936 he left for Spain where he fought with the legendary anarchist Durutti Column. He was arrested for his part in the civil war on returning to Paris and committed suicide in 1940 when he realised he would be unable to escape from Fascist persecution after the German invasion.

Marcel Griaule (1898-1956)

A linguist by training, turned ethnologist, between 1928 and 1929 Griaule conducted fieldwork in Ethiopia, whence he returned with a curious and magnificent book, *Silhouettes et graffitis abyssins*, published in 1933 with an introduction by Marcel Mauss. On his return he joined the *Documents* team as sub-editor (at the same time as Michel Leiris) and, backed by Rivet and Rivière, organised the ethnographic expedition which, starting in 1931, he led from Dakar to Djibouti, the aim of which, in addition to gathering ethnographic data, was to augment the collections of the Musée du Trocadéro. Michel Leiris accompanied the expedition as secretary-archivist. In the course of the mission Griaule encountered the Dogon of the Bandiagara cliff-faces, a people that become the chief object of his researches. In 1942 he was elected to the first chair of general ethnology at the Sorbonne. Among other writings he published *Les Masques Dogons* (1938), *Dieu d'eau, entretien avec Ogotemméli* (1948), and finally, *Renard pâle, ethnologie des Dogons*, in collaboration with Germaine Dieterlen.

Michel Leiris (1901-1990)

Having taken his *baccalauréat* in philosophy in 1918, Leiris made half-hearted beginnings in the study of chemistry but showed more interest in jazz, which he was discovering at the time. Between 1921 and 1924 there came a series of decisive meetings: Max Jacob, Georges-Henri Rivière, Jean Dubuffet, André Masson, Robert Desnos, Georges Bataille. A Surrealist in 1924, he broke with Breton in 1929. Meanwhile he had married Louise Godon, step-daughter of Picasso's dealer Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler, travelled in Egypt and Greece, and written his first book, *Aurora*. He joined the *Documents* team as sub-editor, and left in 1930 to become the secretary-archivist in the ethnographic mission Marcel Griaule led from Dakar to Djibouti. This experience furnished material for the unclassifiable *Afrique fantôme* (1934), a book which brought about the definitive break with Griaule and which was pulped in 1941 on the orders of the Vichy government. In November 1937, in response to the current international situation, he decided Bataille and Roger Caillois, to found the *Collège de Sociologie*. He took part, in 1945, in an important mission to the Ivory Coast which led, as a result of the report it submitted to parliament, to the suppression of forced labour in the French African colonies. Along with his activities as a research worker with the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique*, he was a member with Sartre, of the editorial committee of *Les Temps modernes* and was involved in various political struggles, notably against the war in Algeria. In 1966 Leiris became friendly with Francis Bacon, on whose painting he published numerous texts. His powerfully original work partakes, on the one hand, of literature – albeit "considered as a bullfight," and it takes in autobiography, as in *L'Age d'Homme*, *La Règle du jeu*, art criticism, as in *Au Verso des images* or *Francis Bacon face et profil*, and music criticism, as in *Operratiques*. Equally it incorporates science, as in *La Langue secrète des Dogons de Saga* or *Race et civilisation*.

Zdenko Reich

Biographical details remain few: before publishing in *Documents* he was part of the *Grand Jeu* group centred around the magazine edited by René Daumal, Roger Vailland and Roger Gilbert-Lecomte.

All related texts are by Georges Bataille and were first published in *Documents*.

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Big Toe

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Big Toe:

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The big toe is the most *human* part of the human body, in the sense that no other element of this body is so differentiated from the corresponding element of the anthropoid ape (chimpanzee, gorilla, orang-utan, or gibbon). This is due to the fact that the ape is tree-dwelling, whereas man moves over the ground without clinging to branches, having become a tree himself, in other words he has raised himself erect in the air like a tree, and is all the more beautiful for the correctness of his erection. Also, the function of the human foot consists in giving a firm foundation to the erection of which man is so proud (the big toe, losing its function as a prehensile hook for gripping branches, flattens itself upon the ground in the same plane as the other toes). But whatever the role the foot plays in his erection, man, who has a light head, a head raised to the heavens and heavenly things, regards it as spit, on the pretext that he has this foot in the mud.

Although within the body blood flows in equal quantities from high to low and from low to high, there is a preference in favour of that which elevates itself, and human life is erroneously seen as an elevation. The division of the universe into subterranean hell and a perfectly pure heaven is an indelible conception, mud and darkness being the *principles* of evil as light and celestial space are the *principles* of good: with their feet in the mud but their heads somewhat approaching the light, men obstinately imagine a tide that will elevate them, never to return, into pure space. Human life requires, in fact, this rage of seeing oneself as a back and forth movement from ordure to the ideal, and from ideal to ordure, a rage that is easily directed against an organ as *base* as the foot.

The human foot is commonly subjected to grotesque tortures that deform it and make it rachitic. It is stupidly consecrated to corns, calluses, and bunions, and if one takes into account turns of phrase that are only now disappearing, to the most loathsome filthiness: the peasant expression "her hands are as dirty as feet," is no longer as true of the entire human collectivity as it was in the seventeenth century.

The secret terror inspired in man by his foot is one of the explanations for the tendency to conceal, as far as possible, its length and form. Heels of greater or lesser height, according to the sex, alter the low and flat characteristics of the foot.

Furthermore, this disquiet is often confused with sexual uneasiness; this is especially striking among the Chinese, who, having atrophied the feet of women, situate them at the most excessive point of deviance. Even the husband must never see the naked feet of his wife, and it is generally considered incorrect and immoral to look at women's feet. Catholic confessors, adapting themselves to this aberration, ask of their Chinese penitents "if they have not looked at women's feet."

The same aberration is to be found among the Turks (Volga Turks, Turks of Central Asia), who consider

it immoral to show their naked feet and even go to bed in stockings.

Nothing similar can be cited from classical antiquity (except for the use of very high soles in tragedies). The most prudish Roman matrons constantly allowed their naked toes to be seen. On the other hand, modesty concerning the feet became excessively developed in modern times and only began to disappear in the nineteenth century. Salomon Reinach's article *Modest Feet* [1], presents a detailed study of this development, stressing the role of Spain, where women's feet have been the object of the most distressing anguish and were thus the cause of crimes. Simply allowing for the shod foot to be seen, jutting from beneath a skirt, was considered indecent. Under no circumstances was it possible to touch a woman's foot, this familiarity being, with one exception, more grave than any other. Naturally enough, the foot of the queen was the object of the most terrifying prohibition. Thus, according to Mme D'Aulnoy, the Count of Villamediana, being in love with Queen Elizabeth, had the idea of starting a fire in order to have the pleasure of carrying her in his arms: "The whole house, worth 100,00 écus, was more or loss destroyed, but he was consoled by the fact that, profiting from so favourable an occasion, he took the sovereign in his arms and carried her down a small staircase. There he partially disrobed her and made free of her favours, and i. A young page saw it and reported it to the king, who took his revenge by killing the count with a pistol shot."

It is possible to see in these obsessions, like M. Reinach, a progressive refinement of modesty that little by little has been able to descend to the calf, the ankle and the foot. This explanation, in part well founded, is not however sufficient if one wants to account for the hilarity commonly produced by simply imagining i. The play of obsessions and fears, of human necessities and aberrations, is in fact such that fingers have come to signify useful action and firm character, the toes stupefaction and base idiocy. The vicissitudes of organs, the pullulation of stomachs, larynxes, and brains traversing animal species and individuals without number, drags the imagination into its ebb and flow, a path it follows with reluctance due to its hatred of that frenzy to which it is painfully susceptible: of the bloody palpitations of the body. Man is fond of imagining himself to be like the god Neptune, majestically imposing silence upon his own waves: yet the clamorous waves of his viscera, in more or less constant inflation and upheaval, brusquely put an end to his dignity. Blind, yet tranquil and strangely despising his obscure baseness, ready to call to mind the grandeurs of human history, for example when his glance falls upon a monument testifying to the grandeur of his nation, his elation is suddenly pulled up by an atrocious pain in his big toe because, though the most noble of animals, he nevertheless has corns on his feet; in other words he has feet, and these feet lead an ignoble life, completely independently from him.

Corns on the feet differ from headaches and toothaches by their baseness, and they are invisible because of an ignominy explicable by the mud in which the feet are found. Since by its physical attitude the human race distances itself as much as it can from terrestrial mud, but, on the other hand, a spasmodic laugh reaches its highest pitch whenever its outburst results in man's own arrogance ending up sprawled in the mud, one can imagine that a toe, always more or less tainted or humiliating, is psychologically analogous to the sudden fall of a man, another way of talking of death. The hideously cadaverous and at the same time loud and defiant appearance of the big toe corresponds to this derision and gives shrill expression to the disorder of the human body, that product of the violent discord of its organs.

The form of the big toe is not, however, specifically monstrous: in this it is different from other parts of the body, the inside of a gaping mouth, for example. Only secondary (but common) deformations have been able to give its ignominy an exceptionally ludicrous value. Now it is most frequently by considering extreme seductiveness that one can account for the ludicrous. But we are led here to distinguish categorically two radically opposed forms of seduction (whose habitual confusion entails the most absurd misunderstandings of language).

If there is a seductive element to be found in the big toe, it is evidently not sufficient to satisfy any exalted aspirations such as, for example, the perfectly unconsidered taste that, in most cases, leads one to prefer elegant and correct forms. On the contrary, if one considers, for example, the case of the Count of Villamediana, one can affirm that the pleasure he had from touching the queen's foot was in direct proportion to the ugliness and infection represented by the *baseness* of the foot, in practice by the most deformed feet. Thus, supposing that the queen's foot was perfectly pretty, his pleasure would have still derived its sacrilegious charm from deformed and muddy feet. Since a queen is *a priori* an i being, more ethereal than any other, it was human to the point of laceration to touch what in fact was not very different from the stinking foot of an old tramp. Here one submits to a seduction that is radically opposed to that caused by light and ideal beauty: the two orders of seduction are often confused because one constantly moves from one to the other, and given this back and forth movement, whether it finds its goal in one direction or the other, seduction is all the more vivid when the movement is more brutal.

As for the big toe, classic foot fetishism leading to the licking of toes categorically indicates that it is base form of seduction, which accounts for the ludicrous value that is more or less always attached to the pleasures condemned by the pure and the superficial.

The meaning of this article lies in its insistence on a direct and explicit questioning of i, without taking into account poetic concoctions that are, ultimately, nothing but a diversion (most human beings are naturally feeble and can only abandon themselves to their instincts when in a poetic haze). A return to reality implies no new acceptances, but indicates that one is seduced basely, without transpositions and to the point of screaming, eyes wide open; open at the prospect of a big toe.

[1] In *L'Anthropologie*, 1903, pp. 733-6; reprinted in *Cultes, mythes et religions*, 1905, vol. I, pp. 105-10.

Civilisation:

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For all that one may dislike proposing metaphors as explanations, civilisation may perhaps be compared not too inaccurately to the thin greenish layer – composed of living magma and miscellaneous detritus – that forms on the surface of calm water and occasionally solidifies into a crust, until broken up by some eddy. All our moral habits and our polite customs, that delightfully coloured cloak that veils the coarseness of our dangerous instincts, all those attractive forms of culture of which we are so proud – since it is thanks to them that we are able to regard ourselves as "civilised" – are ready to disappear at the slightest turbulence, to shatter at the least impact (like the insubstantial mirror of a fingernail whose polish cracks or becomes scratched), allowing our horrifying *savageness* to appear in the interstices, revealed in these fissures just as hell might be in the chasms opened by earthquakes, whose revolutions in the cosmic order sunder the fragile skin of the earth's circumference and momentarily bare the fire at its centre, which melts stone itself in its wicked and violent heat. Not a day passes when we don't notice some premonitory sign of just such a catastrophe, so that although we are not dancing or standing on a volcano nevertheless we can say that our whole life, our very breathing, is in touch with lava flows, craters, geysers, and everything else to do with volcanoes, and, as a consequence, if we hold up to it a mirror with a suitably thick silvering and sufficiently sensitive surface, it must be capable of tracing vigorous sulphur-coloured lines upon it.

A woman's fingernail, red and pointed as a ruby dagger (surprisingly the blood has remained in the middle and not run to the tip), along with those wounds cut in precious stones by ingenious, hard tools that murder minerals and reduce them to a constellation of angles, murderous in their turn; a bodily attitude that abruptly relaxes; a fleeting gesture as touching as the sudden swell of a sail on a rising sea; these are precious signs that help us understand our closeness to savages, our diverse finery of dark or brilliant fabrics being no different from skin and feather ornaments partially concealing tattoos that depict various mysterious adventures on the body, like writing in the stars (which offers an aerial forecast of human events...)

We're bored of those utterly insipid theatrical performances uninflated by any potential or actual revolt against that holy Œpoliteness," be it the politeness of the arts, known as "taste"; that of the brain, referred to as "intelligence"; that of everyday life, which we designate by a word that smells as dusty as the bottom of an old drawer: "morality." It would be a mistake to characterise us as *blasé*, but the fact that we're sick of plots that are always the same, derived from our living habits, everyday more discredited, and it is no longer adequate for us to act in ways that are identical, for example, to the behaviour of certain savages who think the best possible use for a telegraph pole is to turn it into a poison arrow (because is that not, more or less, what we do when we transform a mask or a statue – originally made for complicated and precise ritual purposes – into a vulgar art object: an infinitely deadlier insult than that made to European inventions by the afore-mentioned savages, since it attacks a fateful and serious mystical theology and not just mere telegraphy, fruit of a science that can never

receive too much scorn?). We have had it with all of that, which is why we would so much like to get closer to our primitive ancestry, why we have so little respect for anything that does annihilate the succession of centuries in one stroke and put us, stripped naked, in a more immediate and newer world.

For many years the signs of this rebellion in literature and painting have been all too obvious, likewise in the other arts, but so far theatre has hardly been capable of giving us such unadulterated satisfaction, as demonstrated by the following explanatory note, which appears in the programme of a show everyone will recognise as soon as they read it:

PORGY

The subject of the scene is as follows:

"In the Southern States, the land is at sea level and when a Negro dies, if he not rich enough to be buried in the mountains, he is buried in the swamps where his body floats to the surface again. When a poor Negro dies, all the other Negroes in the village gather round his coffin and their singing creates a sort of hysteria that inspires the men to theft and the women to sell themselves to whites, so as to raise enough money to bury the deceased. The action is set in a barn."

Pedants are habitually disdainful of everything to do with American negro jazz and art, seeing in their current popularity nothing but a fad, a passing infatuation with certain exotic forms similar to that of yesteryear for gypsy musicians; in short, simply a case of snobbery. Others, more sentimental and lachrymose romantics, speak only of slavery, nostalgia, primitive violence, stammer vaguely about the terrestrial Paradise, or the melancholy of big cities resembling the vast sugar cane plantations with their stands of pipes and chimneys. But now, having seen the *Black Birds* show, we have done with all this nonsense.

What is beautiful about art is not its exotic aspect nor even its highly modern content (this modernism is simply coincidental), but the fact that it doesn't really constitute an Art at all. Actually, it seems quite absurd to inflict upon these lucid and spontaneous productions a frightful capitalised word that one should only write with a pen filled with spiders' webs. Obviously, jazz and its derivatives follow their own rules and their own logic, but that doesn't mean we can talk about "Art," about Great Art, as though we were referring to some particular work by an individual who knew (or believed) he was inspired... Revues like the *Black Birds* take us to a point on the other side of art, to a point of human development at which that bastard son of the illegitimate love of magic and free play, has not yet been hypertrophied.

Furthermore, all this is as remote as it could be from gypsy sentimentality. Negro music does not sing about "the eternal regrets that lacerate our hearts," as they say; in fact quite the opposite, listening to it, we feel a terrible regret, a regret for our painful inability to achieve this sort of simple and beautiful expression, regret for our mediocrity, for living such a mediocre life, so dull and ugly in comparison with these creatures, who are as touching as the trees.

Thus this music an these dances do not linger on the surface, they plunge deep organic roots into us, roots whose thousand ramifications penetrate us; a painful surgery that nevertheless quickens our blood.

What we may deplore in such shows is that, however powerfully they move us, they still fail to overcome our spinelessness and create hysteria as intense as that described in "Porgy," a hysteria of such intensity that it would immediately induce the audience to commit sordid acts or indulge in extravagant debauches. For this reason it seems the sculptor Giacometti was entirely correct when he remarked one day that the only possible Theatre piece would be this: the curtain rises, a fireman comes on stage and shouts "Fire!" the curtain falls, total panic, and the theatre empties in wild disorder.

Some circus acts, like the unforgettable scene in the Gleitch Circus when a whole crowd of acrobats performed high above us, perhaps go a little further than other spectacles, because here something real is happening and, just as on the spot where a murder has been committed or in the vicinity of a slaughterhouse, we breath in the sickening odour of our death, that threat of danger suspended above our passive spectators' heads. Really, we are not so far from the Stone Age, and the thick blood of the ancient mammoths killed by grandfathers often rushes to our heads again in billows of dark malice.

The following passage taken from the *Journal* of 15 August 1929 provides a simple confirmation:

THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

"Mlle Claryse (Diavolina), the new attraction in the Zoological Gardens' free circus, will make her debut today, 15 August, at 4pm. Her leap from one springboard to another will be 8 metres long and 4 metres high.

"Diavolina will perform her death-leap again at 10 p.m. She has been engaged by the Gardens until the end of August, *so that all of Paris will be able to admire this beautiful young woman as she risks her life in each performance of the free circus*, which take place every day at 4 p.m. and 10 p.m."

And so we enjoy seeing other people take the risks as we sit comfortably back in our chairs and give ourselves up to the maddening intoxication of danger, while never actually exposing ourselves to the slightest hazard likely to disintegrate our flesh, so much do we wallow in our lazy tranquillity. This is perhaps the only difference between our times and those of the cavemen: today we hire dozens of scapegoats whose task it is to perform for us everything we are too cowardly to perform for ourselves. This, I suppose, is the precise reason murderers are so popular: a beautiful crime is no doubt terrible, but at the same time it is unconsciously satisfying to everyone, and the murderer becomes a kind of sorcerer who has ritually performed the most horrific of sacrifices.

The second quarter of the twentieth century in which we live, is evidently a long way from living up to the hopes of the naïve optimists. Boredom is everywhere, despite these few glimmers of frenzy. The worst misfortune is that, despite being surrounded by magic, we are no longer open enough to the mystical to have the option, each day, to sign the pact with the devil!

Gunshot:

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The European public, so great and yet so small, has for some time now taken an interest in the productions of the great "primitive" public which it has come to know through auctions at the Hotel Drouot, through private exhibitions, and a few dealers. Some have also been exhibited in national museums. Asia, America, the South Seas, and Africa have been condensed into a few orderly window displays which satisfy this public's imagination.

Inversely.

The great "primitive" public is interested in so-called i cotton fabrics, in the sixteen-litre oil drums, cheap alcohol, and high-quality weapons generously provided by us. Large stocks of these exist in museums not constructed by this public, in those outposts or "exotic" centres where white deign to dwell. All of which is none too flattering for Europe, beautiful old Europe with her thousand and one arts, literatures, and industries of high and low price. But that is quite another matter.

From a more elevated viewpoint, the question is whether the naïveté of the black in his indignation over a leaky drum exceeds the white's absurdity in declaring a battle drum impure under the pretext that it's decorated with a man bearing a rifle. The black is certainly naïve in thinking that anything could ever stop a white colonial from selling him a faulty drum. The height of absurdity is reached, however, when the other party refuses the African the right to "make art" with a European motif, claiming first that it is European – a somewhat amusingly self-castrating remark – and, secondly, that it looks "modern."

One could say that a gun is not a decorative motif. Fine, but such is not the view of the serviceman who outfit trophy rooms, nor that of the neo-Byzantine Ethiopian painters whose fondness for European weapons leads them to adorn King Solomon's honourable warriors with them. And if it took a mere rifle to spoil a work of art, how many paintings and sculptures would one have to destroy? This would not, of course, be tragic, but what an effort!

Furthermore, if a black cannot without debasing himself use an *exotic* element, namely a European one familiar to him, what is one to make of our blind borrowings from an exotic world one of colour about which we must be in self-defence declare we know nothing? Shouldn't we then be pulling up the Queen of Sheba, born by a Negro, from the north portal of Chartes Cathedral, or – in a demonstration of methodical rigour – Deir el Bahari's bas-reliefs of Queen Hat-Shep-Sut's expedition to the land of Punt? Wouldn't we also burn the work of Ludolfus, known as Ludolf, who, according to an Ethiopian, drew an exotic sheep while hauling his own cock along in a two-wheeled cart? Shouldn't one, likewise, deny value to the superb spearheads from the Djibouti market, under the pretext that they were made from fish plates filched from the Franco-Ethiopian railway? And what are we to say of the artistic efforts of

the little Galla boys who run alongside trains to snatch up empty Chianti bottles to embellish the pottery rooftops of their houses?

As for the argument of antiquity, only a cellarman could give it any value whatsoever, confusing the part with the whole, antiquity with ethnography.

Boring though it may be to repeat it, *ethnography* is interested in both *beauty* and *ugliness*, in the European sense of these absurd words. It is, however, inclined to be suspicious of the beautiful – a rare, and consequently, a freakish event within a civilisation. It is also self-doubting (because it is a white science, and therefore tainted with prejudice) and will not deny an object aesthetic value because it is neither ordinary or mass-produced. Ethnography goes so far as to think that the excessive use of oak in the halls of the Sorbonne signals a peculiar conception of the aesthetic of wood. It considers the pottery of the average bourgeois to be the result of a choice determined by social deformations over thousands of years, as the result of much prior consideration and negotiations with the bourgeois wife revealing concerns with art that are simple yet honest and, in any case, real.

An informed contradictor might say that I am confusing ethnography with folklore. What of It! I call folklore the ethnography of pretentious peoples, of those colourless peoples whose habitat lies north of a sea of low tides and weak storms, the Mediterranean; the ethnography of those who fear both words and things, who refuse to be called *natives*, and whose dictionaries offer Latin explications of unseemly things, so as to reserve small shameful pleasures for their élites.

Human Face:

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Owing to our presumably insufficient data, we can cite but a single era within which the human form stands out as a senile mockery of everything intense and large conceived by man. He mere sight (in photography) of our predecessors in the occupation of this country now produces, for varying reasons, a burst of loud and raucous laughter; that sight, however, is nonetheless hideous. Upon emerging (as if from the maternal womb) from the dreary chambers in which every last details, including their rank and musty odour, had been provided for by those vain ghosts, we seem to have spent the greater part of our time in obliterating all traces, even the smallest, of that shameful ancestry. In other places, the souls of the dead pursue isolated country-dwellers, assuming the wretched aspect of decomposing corpse (and if, in the cannibal isles of the South Seas, they go after the living, it is for food). Here, however, the unhappy youth who is consigned to mental solitude confronts at every unexpected moment of rapture the images of his predecessors looming up in tiresome absurdity. Upon our visions of seduction they intrude their contaminating senility, in their comic black mass they submit to the exhibition our glimpses of paradise, with Satan cast as stage policeman and the maniac[1]s scream replacing the dancer's *entrechat*.

In this deeply depressing, ghostly clash, every feeling, every desire is implicated, in appearances that are somewhat misleading and with no possibility of simplification. The very fact that one is haunted by ghosts so lacking in savagery trivialises these terrors and this anger. Those seeking a way out have, consequently, always transposed their difficulties somewhat. No decision on these grounds can really suit those who persist in their conception of an order excluding total complicity with all that has gone before, with its extremities of absurdity and vulgarity.

If on the contrary, we acknowledge the *presence* of an acute perturbation in, let us say, the state of the human mind represented by the sort of provincial wedding photographed twenty-five years ago, then we place ourselves outside established rules in so far as a real negation of the existence of *human nature* is herein implied. Belief in the existence of this nature presupposes the permanence of certain salient qualities, and, in general, of a way of being, in relation to which the group represented in these photographs is monstrous, not aberrant.

Were this a matter of some pathological deterioration – that is to say, an accident that could or should be mitigated – then the human principle would be saved. If however, in accord with our statement, we regard this group as representing the very principle of mental activity at its most civilised and most violent, and the bridal pair as, let us say, the symbolic parents of a wild and apocalyptic rebellion, then a juxtaposition of monsters breeding incompatibles would replace the supposed continuity of *our* nature.

It is, furthermore, pointless to exaggerate the importance of this odd decline of reality. It is no more surprising than any other, since the attribution of a *real* character to our surroundings is, as always, a

mere indication of that vulgar intellectual voracity to which we owe both Thomist thought and present-day science. We would do well to restrict the sense of this negation, which expresses in particular two non-relations: the disproportion, the absence of common measure among various human entities which is, in a way, one aspect of the general disproportion obtaining between man and nature. This last disproportion has already found some expression in the abstract. It is understood that a presence as irreducible as that of the *self* has no place in an intelligible universe, and that, conversely, this external universe has no place within my self except through the aid of metaphor. But we attribute greater importance to concrete expression of this absence relation. If, indeed, we consider a character chosen at random from the ghosts here presented, then its apparition during the discontinuous series expressed by the notion of the scientific universe (or even, more simply put, at a given point of the infinite space and time of common sense) remains perfectly shocking to the mind; it is as shocking as the appearance of the *self* within the metaphysical whole, or, to return to the concrete, as that of a fly on an orator's nose.

The concrete forms of these dispositions can never be overstressed. It is all too easy to reduce the abstract antinomy of the self and the non-self, the Hegelian dialectic having been expressly conceived for this sort of sleight of hand. It is time that we take note that rebellion at its most open has been subjected to propositions as superficial as that which claims the absence of relation to be another form of relation [1]. This paradox, borrowed from Hegel, was aimed at making nature enter into the order of the rational; if every contradictory appearance were given as logically deducible, then reason would, by and large, have nothing more shocking to conceive. Disproportions would merely be the expression of a logical being which precedes, in its unfolding, by contradiction. We must recognise the merit of contemporary science in this respect, when it presents the world¹s original state (and all successive and consequent states) as essentially not subject to proof. The notion of that which is not subject to proof is irreducibly opposed to that of logical contradiction. Its is impossible to reduce the appearance of the fly on the orator¹s nose to the supposed contradiction between the self and the metaphysical whole (for Hegel this fortuitous appearance was simply to be classed as an "imperfection of nature"). If, however, we attribute general value to the undemonstrable character of the universe of science, we may proceed to an operation contrary to that of Hegel and reduce the appearance of the self to that of the fly.

Even admitting the arbitrary character of this last move, which may pass for a merely logical trivialisation of its converse operation, it is nonetheless true that the expression given the human self toward the end of the last century strangely fits the conception this advanced. This hallucinating meaning is subjective, no doubt – it appears thus to our eyes – but it requires only that we acknowledge our own interpretation as simply clearer than that of the other time. Human beings of that time, living as Europeans have, in a way that is, of course, obscure, come to assume this madly improbable aspect (the physical transformation was obviously related to conscious decision). This transformation carries with it , nonetheless, the meaning now clear to us. And it is the specific nature, only, of this dated human aspect that is here in question. Certain people encountered today can be seen in exactly this way, but we are dealing in those cases with facts common to all times. It was only until the first years of the nineteenth century that the extravagance of involuntary contradiction and of the senile paradox had free rein; since then white men and woman, have, as we know, tenaciously persisted in their efforts to regain, at last, a *human face*. Those wasp-waisted corsets scattered throughout provincial attics are now the prey of moths and flies, the hunting grounds of spiders. As to the tiny cushions which long served to

emphasise those forms of extreme plumpness, they now haunt only the ghastly brains of those greybeards, expiring daily beneath their weird grey bowlers, who still dream of flabby torsos strangled in the obsessive play of lace and whalebone. And within the image of the earth[1]s flabby torsos strangled in the obsessive play of lace and whalebone. And within the image of the earth[1]s globe seen trampled underfoot by a dazzling American film star in a bathing suit, we may catch the sound, muffled but heady nonetheless, of a cock[1]s crow.

And why blush at the sudden fascination? Why not admit that our few remaining heady dreams are traced by the swift bodies of young American girls? Thus if anything can still draw sobs for all that has just vanished, it is no longer a great singer[1]s beauty, but mere perversity, sordid and deluded. To us, so many strange, merely half-monstrous individuals seem to persist in empty animation, like the jingle of the music box, in innocent vice, libidinous heat, lyrical fumes. So that despite all antithetical obsession, there is absolutely no thought of dispensing with this hateful ugliness, and we will yet catch ourselves some day, eyes suddenly dimmed and brimming with inadmissible tears, running absurdly towards some provincial haunted house, nastier than flies, more vicious, more rank than a hairdresser[1]s shop.

[1] By 1921, when Tristan Tzara acknowledged that the absence of system is still a system, but of the most sympathetic sort, "this concession to insignificant objections still apparently remained inconsequential; the introduction of Hegelianism soon to follow, however, could then be expected. The step from this admission to Hegel[1]s panlogism is an easy one, since it is consistent with the principle of the identity of contradictory terms. We may even suppose that once this treachery was committed, there was no way of avoiding this panlogism and its glaring consequences, by which I mean the sordid thirst for completeness in all things, a blind hypocrisy, and, ultimately, the need to serve anything that is determinate. Despite the fact that these vulgar inclinations have in compromise with a diametrically opposed impulse, most felicitously exacerbated certain agreed-upon difficulties, there is, from this point on, no further reason not to reconsider the futile betrayal expressed by Tristan Tzara. It is impossible, really, to see what can be systematic in the savage opposition to all system, unless a pun is involved, and the word systematic is understood in the common sense of mechanical obstination. But this is no matter for joking, and this pun betrays, for once, a fundamental, wretched senility. There is really no difference between humility, of the slightest degree, before the SYSTEM – which is to say, before the Idea – and the fear of God. Moreover, this lamentable statement seems – and with reason – literally to have throttled Tzara, who has since displayed a complete sluggishness. This statement appeared as an epigraph in a book by Louis Aragon (*Anicet*, Paris, 1921).

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The Head of Georges Bataille:

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If the texts in the *Critical Dictionary* (and the *Da Costa*), and the objects and concepts which they define, have a definitively *heterogeneous* character, this is far from being accidental. To appreciate why the apparently random form of the *Dictionary* was so apposite a representation of Bataille's preoccupations, it is necessary to take a more detailed look at some of them. However this is not the place for a comprehensive survey of Bataille's thought [1] and I have tried to limit this section of the introduction to that part of it which relates directly to the present book, and to present it as simply as possible, despite the possibility of misrepresentation.

Bataille's ideas are grouped around a set of interrelating notions, many taking the form of more or less unfortunate dualities (profane/sacred, homogeneity/heterogeneity, accumulation/expenditure, thought/eroticism) that are connected principally by the fact that the second portion of each term – which approximates to what he calls "the accursed share" – corresponds to values and necessities that are excluded from the predominant forms of "civilised" culture. However Bataille's ideas do not exactly form a coherent philosophical system (nor for that matter a religious, political or ethical one) in the accepted sense, since he acknowledges to as inherent to it both contradictions, and absolute limits beyond which he cannot pass, and when these limits are approached he tends to use images, poetry, even fiction to convey his meaning. Furthermore the texts published here are not straightforward illustrations of one or two of his ideas, but often cover numerous aspects of the totality of his thought, in this respect one might almost look at them as a conflation of philosophical speculation and prose poetry (for example, Factory Chimney and Slaughterhouse).

Unlike many of his contemporaries, including many of the Surrealists, Bataille considers the moral, ethical and political issues affecting the individual within a social context. From considerations of what it is to be human, he proceeds to social groups, to whole societies. Bataille synthesised his ideas on social structures in his three volume work *The Accursed Share*; his other large collection [2]; i, [3] a more inward-looking work, explores the position of the individual in another three volumes, which although written were never collected together in a single work. It is principally the former, which Bataille considered his most important work [4], and related texts, that are more relevant here. *The Accursed Share* bears the subtitle "An Essay on General Economy" but unlike every other book on economics, it devotes itself to the problem of abundance rather than that of scarcity, and gives as its aim the demonstration that "the sexual act is in time what the tiger is in space." Written between 1945 and 1949, it was prefigured by his essay i (1933), itself an expansion of Bataille's somewhat controversial interpretation of Marcel Mauss' essay on *potlatch*, the gift system of the North American Indians. [5]

The central thread of *The Accursed Share* is an exploration – beginning in pre-history and moving through the various cultures: Aztec, "primitive" and "Indian," and early European to the present day – of

the means by which different societies have dealt with excess wealth. These means include sacrifice, festivals and *potlatch*, (Egouts): transcribed rituals of waste, destruction and euphoric social dissolution. According to Bataille the gradual appearance of capitalism created a profound imbalance in social structures by creating an economy based on scarcity. For the first time the excess wealth produced by the whole of society was hoarded and accumulated so as to benefit that part of it which controlled the productive process: the emerging bourgeoisie. Among the results of this imbalance he numbers war, alienation, slavery and the destruction of community on the social scale, and loss of communication and intimacy on the level of the individual. Industrial society followed the earlier merchant capitalism, systematising and extending the process (Factory Chimney).

The world of accumulation is associated in Bataille's system with profanity, homogeneity and stasis. Monetary economy reduces all men and all that is essentially human to the status of objects of exchange, to things, to economic slavery, and to the economically useful (Debacle, Man (1), Evaluation) [6]. Yet a world in which the sacred, myth, the heterogeneous and sovereignty are accorded their proper due is one in which relations are not based on the useful, but on expenditure and freedom; a world in which codes of immoderation, sacrifice and excess maintain a social structure which accords value to being rather than utility (Excès). Its expression is found in "unproductive expenditure: luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity..." This *expenditure* is the portion of the economy that opposes forces of production and accumulation. In earlier societies the sacred established social cohesion, but in a society based on accumulation it can only represent its subversion. [7]

The forces of accumulation – in our day, of capitalism – are engaged in a struggle to increase their share of the economy, of life. They impose an order based on work alone – in which means become ends in themselves (i.e. work) – which is enforced by the imposition of a strict *homogeneity* upon social relations and activities. The attempt is made to exclude all aspects of the "useless" from existence, activities are valued not for themselves, but for their accumulative worth, conventionally measured by monetary value alone. "According to the judgement of *homogeneous* society, each man is worth what he produces; in other words, he stops being an existence *for itself*: he is no more than a function, arranged within measurable limits, of collective production (which makes him an existence *for something other than itself*)." [8] Bataille associates the forces of homogeneity with the Marxist conception of bourgeois class "whenever the State is shown to be at the service of a threatened homogeneity." [9] The invocation of Marx allows the entrance of the proletariat, stage left, beneath the grimy banners of the heterogeneous. Indeed, the bourgeois consider the worker no more than filth: "Outside the factory, a labourer is, with regard to a homogenous person (boss, bureaucrat, etc.), a stranger, a man of another nature, of a non-reduced, non-subjugated nature." [10] Thus the proletariat can perform its traditional Marxian role, and democracy being the platitude inherent to homogenous society, a means of assimilation and pacification, only the revolutionary function remains open to it. Unfortunately, one might think, the rallies of heterogeneous political action turn about a quite desperate ferocity; "Without a profound complicity with natural forces such as violent death, gushing blood, sudden catastrophes and the horrible cries of pain that accompany them, terrifying ruptures of sadistic understanding of an incontestably thundering and torrential nature, there could be no revolutionaries, there could only be a revolting utopian sentimentality." [11] Later Bataille referred to a "politics of the impossible": because

the heterogeneous eschews completion, stasis, the enslaving of the present to the future, a conventional political programme constitutes a servile submission to the possible. Nevertheless, his "refusal to be ruled" allowed common cause with the Surrealists' attacks on the more obvious repressive social institutions of Religion (Escrocs, Existence, Extasiée) state (Emancipation, Etat, Expiation), Army (Emulation), Education and Philosophy (Education, Evidence, Essence, Explication), not to mention the niceties of bourgeois existence (Edifiant, Elegie, Eloge).

The *heterogeneous*, as it name implies, includes a wide variety of phenomena, processes, and characteristics, united by opposition to homogeneity, or an exclusion from its rule. It does even fall within the field of investigation, which of necessity is a method whose very purpose is assimilation: "scientific knowledge by definition is only applicable to homogeneous elements. Above all, heterology is opposed to any homogenous representation of the world, in other words, to any philosophical system."[13] In fact, Bataille's project is impossible in terms of the conventional idea of what philosophy is, and here Bataille underlines an absolute limit to *thought*. However, all is not lost, and a possible way out of this philosophical impasse is offered by Durkheim's definition of the sacred as *that which is not profane*. Bataille proposes a methodology based upon negation: "The specific character of faecal matter or of the spectre, as well as unlimited time or space, can only be the object of a series of negations, such as the absence of any possible common denominator, irrationality, etc. It must be added that there is no way of placing such elements in the immediate objective human domain, in the sense that the pure and simple objectification of their specific character would lead to their incorporation in a homogeneous intellectual system, in other words, to a hypocritical cancellation of excremental character." [14] Homogeneous comprehension only destroys what it wishes to seize, the heterogeneous is unassimilable, it crumbles when exposed to the exhalations of the frock coated" professors. And how should one respond to their efforts? By "the excretion of unassimilable elements, which is another way of stating vulgarly that a burst of laughter is the only imaginable and definitively terminal result..." [15] The fly on the orator's nose in Human Face.

For these reasons, any attempt at compiling an *Encyclopaedia of Heterology* is a farcical contradiction, and the *Critical Dictionary* is not such an attempt, as Bataille makes clear in *Formless*. The text constitutes the core of the *Critical Dictionary*, being a critique of the dictionary itself. A dictionary's sole purpose is the impossible of form and homology, definition fixes objects in thought, extracts them from the world and pins them to page. A dictionary is never critical, any element of subjectivity would allow in the formless, that heterological gob of spittle. Formless declassifies and is the negation of definition. [16]

Negation is one approach, but in the introduction to *The Accursed Share* Bataille offers the possibility of defining "a way of thinking whose movement corresponds to the concrete character of the totality that is offered for selection." One can sense his unease with such a tenuous and arbitrary method which, in fact, is either absent from the book or tautological. In many of his other works, including those here, he employs altogether more successful means. An image, a poetic invective, often takes the place of the term in a discourse (like the spider or spit that suddenly end Formless), something alien to philosophy, and the photographs in the *Dictionary* perform this same function in a more literal fashion. Finally, Bataille "notoriously" had recourse to that most physically immediate aspect of literature – its extreme

heterogeneous form in fact – for which he is still best-known in the English-speaking world, namely: pornography (Erotin). No wonder then, that Bataille's works must be unclassifiable...

Bataille gave many instances of heterogeneous phenomena: he recognises it as everything other or incommensurate, "a force or a shock that presents itself as a charge..." [17] It is characterised by violence, excess, delirium, and he lists "the waste products of the human body and certain analogous matter (trash, vermin, etc.); the parts of the body; persons, words, or acts having a suggestive erotic value; the various unconscious processes such as dreams or neuroses; the numerous elements or social forms that homogeneous society is powerless to assimilate: mobs, the warrior, aristocratic and impoverished classes, different types of violent individuals or at least those who refuse the rule (madmen, leaders, poets, etc.)" [18] This list can be expanded almost endlessly because actually the power of homogeneity is altogether precarious and its opposition lurks in the most unlikely places (for example, within the scientific method itself, Explication, in the basic assumptions of physical reality, Space, and of Mathematics: Euclid, or language: Eye (1), [20] Metaphor). In fact many of the texts in the Critical Dictionary in particular are devoted to tracing this leaking of the sacred back into the profane, the pollution of homogeneity, often by considering some topic from the point of view of "primitive" cultures, before pointing out the same features in that of the European (e.g. Hygiene, Threshold, Museum, Gunshot). [21]

The worlds of homogeneity and heterogeneity are simultaneously linked but separated, for example "men who at home are only peaceful and obliging peasants who bounce their children up and down on their knees, in wars are capable of burning, pillaging, killing and torturing." [22] Without the congruence of these worlds no totality of existence is possibility: eroticism must coexist with thought, yet homology opposes this coexistence. The sacred, ultimately, manifests itself as "a life of communication, not isolation," [23] its aim being the recovery of a lost intimacy. Homology desires the opposite, the reduction of man to its tool, and a further aspect of its method is a retreat from the animal origins of man, from nature itself (Hygiene, Slaughterhouse). The more "civilised" a society, the "cleaner" it is, history itself being simply a record of the progressive negations of all givens, and the primary given for man is nature. (Even its buildings are a repressive imposition of form on nature: Architecture.) Children must be taught a horror of filth and excrement [24]; moral and social status is associated with cleanliness, both metaphorically and actually. The church associates eroticism with impurity and filth, it being the "useless," non-productive aspect of sexuality, just as it denies death and the present moment, or pleasure, with a bizarre but expedient notion: that of an immortal life to come. For Bataille all deferment is a submission to the future, a loss of the absolute freedom in the moment that he defined as sovereignty. "Life *beyond utility* is the domain of sovereignty (...) it is *servile* to consider duration first, to employ the *present time* for the sake of the *future*, which is what we do when we work." (Economie) [25] And at the weekend, why not visit one of those temples of accumulation, a Museum, where the heterogeneous is crucified before a crowd whose only ecstasies are the pale effusions of art critics? Meanwhile, exiled to some less salubrious neighbourhood, real rites of sacred horror occur daily, albeit cursed, and shameful: Slaughterhouse.

Civilisation erects barriers between man and what remains of his animal nature (Metamorphosis): "The polluted philosophies of Christianity tried hard to separate Life from the activity of the endocrine glands;

but they are no worse than the secular philosophies, which separate man from his, let us say, excremental activities. This makes us think of these sublime architects who nonetheless forget that in a kitchen it sometimes happens that water boils..." The meaning of these taboos, etiquette, hygiene, and repulsions, is simply a fear of death. "What then is the essential meaning of our horror of nature? Not wanting to depend on anything, abandoning the place of our carnal birth, revolting intimately against the fact of dying, generally mistrusting the body, that is having a deep distrust of what is accidental, natural, perishable – this appears to be for each one of us the sense of the movement that leads us to represent man independently of filth, of the sexual functions and of death." [26] Man cannot escape his body and its constant remainder of his basic condition (Eye, Mouth, Big Toe, Human Face, etc.), that conditions which separates human from animal: knowledge of death.

Excrement, death and eroticism are thus intimately connected and fenced in by prohibitions which are, however, intended to be transgressed during celebrations of heterology such as festivals and sacrifice. For Bataille sacrifice is the supreme expression of expenditure – which is why it is often associated with the most prodigal expender of energy, the Sun – the victim is taken from the real world into a sacred and sovereign realm where death is "the great affirmer, the wonder-struck cry of life" and where what is important is "to pass from a for duration, to the violence of an unconditional consumption; what is important is to leave the world of real things, whose reality derives from a long term operation and never resides in the moment – a world that creates and preserves (that creates for the benefit of a lasting reality). Sacrifice is the antithesis of production, which is accomplished with a view to the future; it is consumption that is concerned with only the moment. This is the sense in which it is gift and relinquishment, but what is given cannot be an object of preservation for the receiver: the gift of an offering makes it pas precisely into the world of abrupt consumption." [27] In a society in which the sacred has its share, the purpose of sacrifice is "to give destruction its due, to save the rest from a mortal of contagion. All those who have to do with sacrifice are in danger, but its limited ritual form regularly has the effect of protecting those who offer it (...) It does not destroy as fire does; only the tie connecting the offering to the world of profitable activity is severed (...) it liberates violence while marking off the domain in which violence reigns absolutely." [28] The alternative: Man (2), Slaughterhouse.

As I mentioned earlier, some of the texts in the *Dictionary* so perfectly condense the totality of Bataille's preoccupations that they almost qualify as prose poems. Factory Chimney combines a number of his favourite themes: a horror of industrialisation, that machine of accumulation, is here embodied in an impure version of the obelisk (impure because both *functional* and excremental). A factory chimney is nothing but an organ of defecation, the final part of a process of *production* which devours the products of the earth and literally shits them into the sky, blocking out the sun. The obelisk is a symbol of permanence, [29] and the photograph accompanying the texts acts as potent representation of Bataille's vision: the *detumescent* crashing into the mud of the repressive and inhuman order of the *useful*.

[1] For such a survey in English see Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille*, Routledge, 1994.

[2] According to Métraux, in *Hommage à Georges Bataille* [ed. Barthes, Deguy, Foucault], special issue of *Critique*, 195-6, August/September 1963, reprinted 1991, p.680.

[3] Bataille, Georges, The Accursed Share, Zone Books, Vol.1, 1988; Vols. II and III, 1993.

[4] Inner Experience, trans. Leslie A. Boldt, State University of New York Press, 1988; Guilty, trans. Bruce Boone, Lapis Press, Los Angeles, 1988; On Nietzsche, trans. Bruce Boone, Athlone Press, 1992.

[5] First published in 1925, in Marcel Mauss, The Gift, Forms and Function of Exchange in Archaic Societies, trans. I Cunnison, Cohen and West, 1954. The Notion of Expenditure is included in Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939, ed. Allan Stoeckl, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. Bataille and Mauss both saw economic exchange in moral rather than in rational terms, i.e. primarily intended to maintain relationships, but Mauss attributed to potlatch an obligatory aspect that Bataille ignored in his interpretation of it.

[6] According to Bataille, Marx's project was the reverse, "to reduce things to the condition of man" but in practical terms Communism could not achieve this (Accursed Share, I, pp.135,141). Likewise religion, in its Christian guise, simply administers, polices, and regulates expenditure, rather than satisfying it.

[7] *The Notion of Expenditure* in *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoeckl, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p.118.

[8] *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books, 1994, p.107.

[9] *The Psychological Structure of Fascism* in *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoeckl, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p.138. Cf. "Free" market policies of Thatcherism, Reaganism etc.

[10] *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoeckl, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p.139.

[11] *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoeckl, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p.138.

[12] *The Use Value of DAF de Sade* in *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books, 1994, p.101.. Bataille soon modified this opinion, believing that in practice, Communism was bureaucratic and repressive.

[13] For example in Bataille, Georges, *Oeuvres complètes*, Gallimard (12 volumes published between 1970 and 1988), vol.III, p.520.

[14] *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books,

1994, p.97.

[15] *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books, 1994, p.98.

[16] T*he Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books, 1994, p.99.

[17] It is precisely the exclusive and definitive quality of dictionaries that have made them of interest to various writers and there are a number of obvious precursors of the *Critical Dictionary* which have exploited these qualities by subversion. More or less successful examples include Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary*, Eluard and Breton's *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*. Two of the contributors to the *Critical Dictionary* had also written dictionaries of their own. In Leiris' *Glossaire: j'y serre mes gloses* (which first appeared inside words, suggested by their phonetics, attached to the original, but sufficiently fluid to admit the subjective, and are thus infected with emotion, penetrated by the formless. Artaud commented: "Yes, from now on language has only one use – as a means for madness, for the elimination of thought, for rupture, a labyrinth of irrationality, not a DICTIONARY where certain pedants in the neighbourhood of the Seine channel their spriritual strictures." Einstein's Encyclopaedia Bittanica, subtitled a Handbook of Art Knowledge, put forward less radical defintions: SCULPTURE. – Take a bit of this and a bit of that, position in space and make assertions. If lacking in courage, enter the Collection of Drainpipes, head held high, and discourse upon historical continuity. MERDE. – Value judgement of a sensitive idealist anticipating a private paradise.

[18] *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books, 1994, p.143.

[19] *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books, 1994, p.142.

[20] Where the heterogeneous appears as the image of "an ape dressed as a woman"!

[21] ...Argot being the heterogeneous aspect of language, which the *Académie* attempts to supress: Eye (4).

[22] Likewise Bataille demonstrates the existence of potlach in Europe, as exemplified by champagne, which he rather coyly describes as "animated by the movement of general exuberance and clearly symbolic of overflowing energy." In Bataille, Georges, *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, Vol.1, 1988; Vols. II and III, 1993, vol. II, p.41.

[23] See Bataille, Georges, *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, Vol.1, 1988; Vols. II and III, 1993, vol.II, p.22. The traditional Christian messengers between these two domains being Angels.

[24] C.f.Sacrifice. See *Violent Silence, Celebrating Georges Bataille*, ed Paul Buck, London, 1984.

[25] Although Bataille notes "I imagine that our disgust for excrement... is because of something other than its objective reality. But my impression is contrary to the one that generally prevails, and I don't feel obliged to be convincing on this point."! In *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, New York, Vol. I, 1988; vols. II & III, vol. II, p. 72.

[26] It did not escape him that writing a book was precisely such an employment: In *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, New York, Vol. I, 1988; vols. II & III, vol. II, p. 198.

[27] Thus, Bataille continues: "The line of development from taboos on incest or menstrual blood to the religions of purity and of the soul's immortality are clear." In *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, New York, Vol. I, 1988; vols. II & III, vol. II, p. 91.

[28] *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley, Zone Books, NY, 1989.

[29] In *The Accursed Share*, Zone Books, New York, Vol. I, 1988; vols. II & III, vol. I, pp 58-9.

[30] "The obelisk is without a doubt the purest image of the head and of the heavens... And even today, wherever its rigid image stands out against the sky, it seems that sovereign permanence is maintained across the unfortunate vicissitudes of civilisations." In *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoeckl, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p.215.

Preamble:

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In his *Autobiographical Note*, dating from around 1958, Georges Bataille wrote about himself as follows: "from 1914 onwards, he is convinced that his concern in this world is with writing and, in particular, with the formulation of a paradoxical philosophy." This was something of an understatement: paradox is present at every level of Bataille's thought, not least because he was convinced that thought, *by its very nature*, was unable to cast even a dim light upon those essential problems of life that he wished to explore. Despite these reservations he evolved a system (or rather an anti-system) of ideas of immense subtlety and complexity, which developed over many years. His basic notions remained remarkably consistent, however, since they derived from a small group of interests that were in position from an early point on in his career (evident in his texts in this collection which are among his earliest published works), after which he embarked on a large opus of elaboration. Apart from the consistency of his ideas, what is also remarkable in Bataille is his consistency in tone; everything he wrote is vehement, impassioned, and moves forward into disturbing realms of human life with teeth gritted. The texts in this anthology share these characteristics, also present in many of the texts not written by Bataille: an indication of the powerful influence he exerted upon his contemporaries.

Before considering Bataille's basic ideas in relation to the texts here, some historical documentation seems desirable, since both sets of texts arose from particular circumstances and events: principally the rise, and then the defeat, of Fascism, and the periods of upheaval that preceded and followed the Second World War and the Nazi occupation of France. This book also gives the first account of the inception of the *Da Costa Encyclopédique*. Until now there has been virtually no information about the circumstances surrounding its publication, its editors, authors, or intentions (and no doubt this first account contains both errors and omissions). I have confined myself in this introduction to a description of the background to, and aims of, the texts that follow, and to a fairly brief survey of some of Bataille's ideas as they relate to them; biographies of the various participants can be found on pp. 158-163.

Documents and the Critical Dictionary:

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Documents was founded in 1929 by Bataille and Pierre d'Espezel, both of whom worked in the Cabinet des Médailles at the Bibliothèque Nationale [1]. Its editorial committee consisted of two main factions who formed, almost from the start, a rather uneasy conception about the direction the magazine should take. The first, centred around Bataille, consisted of writers, many of whom were ex-Surrealists or had been associated with Paris Dada and the Grand Jeu groups. The second faction was more academic, a selection of museum curators, professors of psychiatry and art history and, despite the fact that the chief editorial input was Bataille's, this faction included the magazine's financial backer, Georges Wildenstein, proprietor of the celebrated *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. Each issue was something of a compromise.

Luckily a third group was able to mediate between the two sets of protagonists. The appearance of *Documents* coincided with the birth of modern ethnography in France, and the magazine numbered many of its most important figures on its editorial panel. One of the magazine's founders, Georges-Henri Rivière, had taken charge of reorganising the chaotic artefact collections of the Trocadéro museum, and in 1938 founded the most important museum of anthropology in France, the Musée de l'Homme. He outlined the framework of its methodology in *Documents*, and Michel Leiris, a friend of Bataille's and his collaborator both on *Documents* and in later ventures, was to work in the museum for many years. Another member of the editorial board, Paul Rivet, was the founder with Marcel Mauss and others of the Institute d'Ethnologie, which laid down the ground-rules for field-work which became the basis for all future ethnographic research. Marcel Griaule, a contributor to the *Critical Dictionary*, was to become one of its most celebrated practitioners. Between 1931 and 1933, Griaule led the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, the largest ethnographic expedition undertaken to date, with Leiris as its official secretary.

D'Espezel and his more conservative colleagues were, from the first issue, opposed to the heteroclitic elements which disrupted the articles on ancient and modern art and ethnography to which they imagined the magazine was devoted. An article by Bataille in issue number one – *Le Cheval académique*, which drew typically outrageous conclusions from the deformations of horses on ancient coins – so infuriated D'Espezel that he called for the magazine's suppression. When Carl Einstein suggested a compromise, the creation of a separate section in the magazine specifically to contain these elements, Bataille realised he would be able use it not only as the platform from which to present his more outré ideas, but also to criticise aspects of the main part of the magazine. Thus the *Dictionary*, a magazine within a magazine, came into being from the second issue onwards, its dictionary format no doubt being Bataille's idea, and for a while Wildenstein tolerated and even enjoyed it. Soon, however, essays which would have been more at home there began escaping into the main part of the review (the *Related Texts* printed here), and eventually he withdrew his backing; the magazine folded after two years and 15 issues, its failure to make a profit being an additional factor. In many ways the Dictionary is the essence of the whole magazine, its mixture of insight, playfulness, erudition and shock indicate what the magazine could have been had Bataille not been constrained by his collaborators.

[1] Much of this account of documents derives from the excellent article by Dominique Lecoq. [4]

[2] *L'Etude des Civilisations matérielles; ethnographie, archéologie, préhistoire* [5]

[3] His team's work on the Dogon people of West Africa spanned five decades.

[4] Lecoq, Dominique, *Documents, Acéphale, Critique: Bataille autour des revues*, in *Georges Bataille, Actes du colloque d'Amsterdam*, June 1985, Jan Versteeg [ed.], pp. 117-130.

[5] *Documents*, (reprinted in two volumes), Jean-Michel Place, 1991, vol. I, pp.130-34.

Not Art But Evidence:

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The combination of ethnology, aesthetics, philosophy and writing in Documents was crucial for Georges Bataille, whose aims were not literary in any ordinary, or even extraordinary, sense of the word. Later he described the magazine as "... an art review offset by an anomalous (hétéroclite) section edited by Bataille under the somewhat remote supervision of Carl Einstein." It is obvious here that he saw the function of the *Dictionary* as offsetting the aesthetic preoccupations of an art magazine, and Bataille's one line dismissal of the undertaking rather suggests that in retrospect he may have considered it to have failed, since *Documents* was established to be the exact opposite of an art review, and articles on the arts rarely overshadowed the other contents.

Documents' covers bore the banner: *Doctrines* (or *Variétés*), *Archéologie*, *Beaux-Arts*, *Ethnographie*, and from the start it was actively anti-aesthetic. Ethnology gave the lead: it was not concerned with the beautiful, as Griaule stressed in Gunshot: "Boring though it may be to repeat it, *ethnography* is interested in both *beauty* and *ugliness*, in the European sense of these absurd words. It is however inclined to be suspicious of the beautiful – a rare, and consequently a freakish, event in civilisation." Just as the new ethnography aimed to show all of man, *Documents* took evidence from all aspects of his culture, and made connections appear where they were least expected. It attempted a de-coding of European culture on a par with the emerging disciplines devoted to understanding "primitive" social structures. No distinction was made between high and low culture; only their usefulness to understanding was significant. Many of the writers in *Documents* took this vigorous relativism to extremes on occasion, often in the service of satire and derision, and this certainly heightened editorial tensions between the various factions.

The very nature of the magazine implied an examination of the given: not art but evidence, not writing but *documents*. In this context the importance of the photographs accompanying the texts becomes self-evident, for they provide another layer of information or ironic comment and yet avoid completely the "art" photography later promoted in, say, *Minotaure* (although, according to Leiris, their inclusion was often simply meant to be provocative). Even if, in retrospect, Bataille felt he had not succeeded in making of *Documents* what he wanted, yet, according to Dominique Lecoq: "The failure of Documents, indicated as if by well-placed beacons by photographs of the Big Toe, was also the success of a way of writing capable of overturning the code of branches of knowledge, etc. Bataille called upon philosophy, ethnology, economics, psychoanalysis, not to borrow their results but to open up the notions they defined in new, illegitimate, unacceptable directions: if logic masks the gaping inadequacies of the logos, Bataille, in impelling Documents to expose all the contradictions, chose both to uphold logic and to remove the mask."

[1] *Autobiographical Note* [4] Not only did Bataille edit this section on his own but he may also have

rewritten some of the articles in it (Einstein for example did not write French), and it seems likely he also suggested subjects, and their possible treatment, to other contributors.

[2] One can only assume that the anti-Bataille faction had not envisaged this emancipation extending to their own milieu.

[3] Lecoq, *Dominique, Documents, Acéphale, Critique: Bataille autour des revues*, in *Georges Bataille, Actes du colloque d'Amsterdam*, June 1985, Jan Versteeg [ed.], p.125

[4] Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes* (12 volumes published between 1970 and 1988) Vol. VII, p.460.

The Related Texts:

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The related texts bear an obvious relation to those of the dictionary. They differ from the other essays and contemporary reviews published in *Documents* by the definitional form in which they are cast and this alone seemed to justify their inclusion in this anthology [1]. As I have already noted, this fact did not escape Wildenstein et al., and their inclusion (in particular Big Toe, and *especially* its accompanying photographs) in the main part of the review, having escaped the region of the *Critical Dictionary* in which the heterogeneous was supposed to be contained, led to serious editorial arguments and was one of the reasons for the eventual closure of the magazine [2].

[1] Two other essays by Bataille could possibly have been included: *Le Langage des fleurs* (Series I, 3) and *L'Esprit moderne et le jeu des transpositions* (Series II, 8), but they did not seem entirely to embody the spirit of the dictionary.

[2] As Michel Leiris has made clear, none of this was accidental [3]: "In issue 3 (of *Documents*) Bataille gave a rough first outline of the aggressively anti-idealist philosophy he was to embrace... Yet it was not until issue 4 that Bataille – the obstinate peasant, who could appear as though he were not up to anything, yet not let go of his idea – decided to put his cards on the table. Illustrated with photographs, one of which, taken in 1905, shows a lower-middle-class wedding with impossible embellishments, the others theatre people and other characters dating from the turn of the century at the very latest, but with incredibly antiquated clothing, poses, or physiognomies, Human Face is a real outrage that Bataille, in presenting this clownish gallery of creatures with Œmadly improbable' appearances, actually men and women who could be our fathers and mothers, is perpetrating against the reassuring idea of a human nature whose continuity would imply Œthe permanence of certain conspicuous qualities' and against the very idea of Œinserting nature into the order of reason.' Soon after came Big Toe, with which Bataille took a firm stand (so to speak): full-page reproductions of friendly big toes and a commentary setting out to argue that if the foot is laden with taboos and is an object of erotic fetishism, this is because it reminds man, whose feet are planted in the mud and whose head is raised toward heaven, that his life is no more than a Œback and forth movement from ordure to ideal and ideal back to ordure.'" (Translation by Lydia Davis.)

[3] Leiris, Michel, *From the Impossible Bataille to the Impossible Documents*, in *Brisées: Broken Branches*, trans. Lydia Davis, North Point Press, San Francisco, 1989 (first published in *Critique*) [4]

[4] Various, *Hommage à Georges Bataille* [ed. Barthes, Deguy, Foucault], special issue of *Critique*, 195-6, August/September 1963, reprinted 1991.

Bataille and the Surrealists:

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Many past Surrealists contributed to *Documents*, and they formed the nucleus of an anti-Breton group whose most famous attack on their ex-leader was the manifesto *A Corpse*, which featured a photo of Breton crowned with thorns. Bataille, despite later protestations to the contrary, was the main instigator of this document. The hostility was reciprocal since Breton had attacked them with equal vim in the second Surrealist manifesto. Between the collapse of *Documents* and 1935, however, both Breton and Bataille had followed similarly dispiriting paths in leftist political organisations and their mutual disillusion, and dismay at the rise of Fascism, allowed them to bury their differences with the founding of *Contre-Attaque*, intended as an anti-fascist movement outside of Stalinist influence. Although unsuccessful – it lasted only 18 months – Breton and Bataille remained on good terms, despite disagreements on some issues, from this point onwards.

Bataille now turned his attention away from direct political action to concentrate on two connected projects: Acéphale and the College of Sociology. Acéphale was both an esoteric "secret society" and a publicly available magazine, and it functioned in the years between the appearances of the two sets of texts printed here. Nevertheless, what we know of its aims point to it as the focus for what the texts published here were intended to facilitate.

The College of Sociology continued the theoretical counterpoint of Acéphale. Between 1937 and 1939, its fortnightly lectures were delivered by members or by invited speakers: Bataille, Callois. Leiris, Kojève, Klossowski, among others, and were attended by many of the leading intellectuals of the time, including Jean Paulhan, Jean-Paul Sartre, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Hans Meyer and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Its area of study was contiguous with Bataille's thought in almost all respects, but this is not the place to discuss it and since Denis Hollier's book reprints all the available material in English, the reader is referred to that. The College examined all areas of social community, an immediate political task being to define possible structures not based on individualism, totalitarianism or the feeble cohesion of democracies. Callois in particular contributed lectures on the theory of the secret society, which he saw a sort of sacred ideological virus intended to infect the profane social body. Acéphale was intended to embody these principles in a conspiratorial association.

[1] He describes its inception in *Un Cadavre* [5]

[2] Or three if one includes Bataille's vice-presidency of the *Societé de psychologie collective*. I am grateful for Dominique Lecoq for pointing out a general omission in this introduction, namely the importance of psychoanalysis in Bataille's work and especially in the dictionary, which proceeds in an associative manner deriving from analysis and based upon Œthe tasks of words' (Formless)

[3] Hollier, Denis [ed.], *The College of Sociology*, University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

[4] *Brotherhoods, Orders, Secret societies, Churches* [6] The appendices to this book also contain an important letter from Bataille to Callois about the *Acéphale* project, p.356-359

[5] The *Ascence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, ed. & trans. Michael Richardson, Verso Books, 1994.

[6] pp.145-158 of Hollier, Denis [ed.], *The College of Sociology*, University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Acephal:

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a. and sb. Obs. Rare; also asephal [a. Fr. *acéphale*, ad. L. *acephal-us*: see ACEPHALL] A. adj. Having no head or chief; =ACEPHALOUS. (Oxford English Dictionary.)

The Figure of the Acéphale:

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The drawing of the Acéphale, a potent expression of the totality of Bataille's thought, embodies his reversed hermeticism in the form of a parody or anti-idealist version of renaissance depictions of the harmonic arrangement of the human body (Leonardo, Fludd etc.) [1] The celebrated aphorism of hermetic philosophy "As above, so below' situated man in a universe designed by God in which the structure of the microcosm reflected that of the macrocosm, Bataille exactly reversed this formula, for him – a heretic exalting the base over the spiritual in a universe in which "man can set aside the thought that it is he or God who keeps the rest of things from being absurd" [2] – the body is projected onto the world: *as below, so above*. The body as trope for society and other structures recurs throughout his writing (e.g. Architecture) in particular with regard to the sexual act and orgasm, from which he derived his concept of *expenditure*. To some extent all his writing is a doomed attempt to encompass the tumult of the sexual act (see the final section of this introduction).

The Acéphal is headless, not only man escaping his thoughts, but a headless organisation, one abjuring hierarchy (Bataille criticised the Surrealists as hierarchical, and hierarchy is of course the hall-mark of the fascist organisation). André Masson made the drawing: "I saw him immediately as headless, as becomes him, but what to do with this cumbersome and doubting head? – Irresistibly it finds itself displaced to the sex, which it masks with a Œdeath's head.' Now the arms? Automatically one hand (the left!) flourishes a dagger; while the other kneads a blazing heart (a heart that does not belong to the Crucified, but to our master Dionysus). (...) The pectorals starred according to whim. Well, fine so far, but what to make of the stomach? The empty container will be the receptacle for the Labyrinth that elsewhere had become our rallying sign. This drawing, made on the spot, under the eyes of Georges Bataille, had the good luck to please him. Absolutely." [3]

The drawing inspired Bataille's text *The Sacred Conspiracy*, where he described it in these terms: "Man has escaped from his head just as the condemned man has escaped from his prison, he has found beyond himself not God, who is prohibition against crime, but a being who is unaware of prohibition. Beyond what I am, I meet a being who makes me laugh because he is headless; this fills me with dread because he is made of innocence and crime; he holds a steel weapon in his left hand, flames like those of a Sacred heart in his right. He is not a man. He is not a God either. He is not me but he is more than me: his stomach is the labyrinth in which he has lost himself, loses me with him, and in which I discover myself as him, in other words as a monster."

[1] Leiris wrote a study of two such diagrams in *Documents* (reprinted in two volumes), Jean Michel Place, 1991, I, pp. 48-52.

[2] The Sacred Conspiracy, in *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Alan Stoeckl, UK:

Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p.180.

[3] From *Le Soc de la charrue*, in Various, *Hommage à Georges Bataille* [ed. Barthes, Deguy, Foucault], special issue of Critique, 195-6, August/September 1963, reprinted 1991.

The Secret Society of Acéphale:

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Published Information about Acéphale is exceptionally scarce, usually ambiguous, and often deliberately inaccurate. Bataille's own few comments appear in his *Autobiographical Note*: [1] "With *Contre-Attaque* dissolved, Bataille immediately decided to form, together with those of his friends who were former members (among them Georges Ambrosino, Pierre Klossowski, Patrick Waldberg), a Œsecret society' which, turning its back on politics, would pursue goals that would be solely religious (but anti-Christian, essentially Nietzschean). This society was formed. Its intentions are in part expressed in the journal *Acéphale*, four issues of which appeared between 1936 and 1939 [2]. The *Collège de Sociologie*, founded in March 1936, constituted to some extent the exterior aspect of this Œsecret society' (...) Of the Œsecret society,' it is difficult to speak, but it seems that some of its members at least have returned an impression of a Œvoyage out of the world.' Short-lived, of necessity, essentially unviable; in September 1939, all of its members withdrew."

The actual activities and membership of Acéphale are still shrouded in mystery since no member of the group has ever published an account of his involvement [3]. We know something of its aims from other sources, for example, Bataille's invitation to Patrick Waldberg "announced the constitution of a secret society involving a ceremony of initiation, rites, and the acceptance of a changed way of life destined to separate adepts, although nothing would be externally visible, from a world that would be henceforth considered as profane." [4]

Two texts by Bataille give some clues as to his intentions. *The Sacred Conspiracy*, which prefaced the first issue of *Acéphale*, contained an appeal *to go beyond the world*: "It is time to abandon the world of the civilised and its light. It is too late to be reasonable and educated, which has led to a life without appeal." Furthermore: "A world that cannot be loved to the point of death, in the same way that a man loves a woman, represents only self-interest and the obligation to work. If it is compared to worlds gone by, it is hideous, and appears as the most failed of all." Acéphale is, he states, "*ferociously religious*," yet this religion is atheological: "The *acephalic man* mythologically expresses sovereignty committed to destruction and the death of God, and in this the identification with the headless man merges and melds with the identification with the superhuman, which is entirely Œthe death of God.'" (Absolute, Enthousiasme). God is the enemy of community, or a creator of false community, associated with tranquillity, absence of movement, the finished, time made finite: a prison. [5]

The second text constitutes the 11 point program given to new members. It was not published until 1970, and a few excerpts are sufficient to convey its apocalyptic message. Following the creation of a community, this programme asserts various aims, including the need to "Lift the curse of those feelings of guilt which oppress men, force them into wars they do not want, and consign them to work from whose fruits they never benefit (...) Realise the universal fulfilment of the individual being within the

ironical world of animals through the revelation of an acephalous universe, a universe which exists in a state of play rather than one of obligation. (...) Assume within oneself perversion and crime, not as exclusive values, but as a prelude to their integration into the totality of humanity. (...) Participate in the destruction of the world as it presently exists, with eyes open wide to the world which is yet to be."

[6] The accomplishment of such a programme seems problematic to say the least and nothing is known of what occurred at Acéphale's meetings, although Bataille's written instructions for getting them allow one to assess their tone: "Do not acknowledge anybody, do not speak to anybody, and take a seat at some distance from other travellers. Get off the train at Saint-Nom, exit the station in the direction of the train and turn left. Follow the instructions of those who will meet you on the road, asking no questions, walk in groups of two or three at the most, without talking, until you reach the path that leads the road, when you should walk in Indian file, a few metres apart. On nearing the meeting-place, stop and wait to be conducted to it one at a time. Then remain motionless and silent until the end... [the return journey was similarly regimented, and afterwards:] All discussions of the meeting is forbidden, under whatever pretext."

Bataille then describes the meeting site: "On a marshy soil, in the centre of a forest, where turmoil seems to have intervened in the usual order of things, stands a tree struck by lightening. One can recognise in this tree the mute presence of that which has assumed the name of Acéphale, expressed here by these arms without a head. It is a willingness to seek out and to confront a presence that swamps our life of reason which gives to these steps a sense that opposes them to those of others. This ENCOUNTER that is undergone in the forest will be of real value only to the extent to which death makes its presence felt. To go before this presence, is to decide to part the veil with which our own death is shrouded." [7]

Acéphale had other privileged places, including the Place de la Concorde, where Louis XVI was acephalised by the guillotine, but we know nothing of its rites. The most lurid speculations centre on Bataille's interest in performing a human sacrifice. Callois confirmed this project while recalling his refusal to participate: "The (willing) victim was found, only the executioner was lacking... Bataille asked me to undertake the task perhaps because while I was at college, I had written a panegyric to Saint Just, and so he imagined that I possessed the necessary severity of character." [8]

Patrick Waldberg attended the last meeting: "The war had burst upon us, Acéphale vacillated, undermined by internal dissentions, its conscience shattered perhaps by its obvious incongruity in the face of world-wide disaster. At the last meeting in the heart of the forest, there were only four of us and Bataille solemnly requested whether one of the other three others would assent to being put to death, since this sacrifice would be the foundation of a myth, and ensure the survival of the community. This favour was refused him. Some months later the war was unleashed in earnest, sweeping away what hope remained." [9]

Bataille in fact, had been deeply affected by the death of his lover, Laure, in November 1938, and seriously ill with a lung infection, he spent the war absorbed in an internal exploration which resulted in the *Summa Atheologica*.

The group dispersed, some travelling to New York, others to the southern unoccupied zone of France, and yet it possessed an internal cohesion, and with the exception of Callois (by then living in Argentina), it reformed after the war, albeit in a more exoteric fashion, around the review *Critique* and now it appears, the *Da Costa*. Other contributors to *Documents* were among the founders of the Resistance; the Musée de L'Homme became one of its principal centres in Paris, the staff forming one of the first organised cells, and the underground magazine *Résistance* was printed in the museum's basement. Early in 1941 the group was betrayed, its female members were sent to concentration camps, and most of the men shot (although Rivet and Rivière escaped this fate).

The exiled Acéphales, ex-members of the College of Sociology and Surrealists met frequently in New York, although their activities were constrained by their situation. Georges Duthuit supervised the publication of a selection of texts relating to the College of Sociology and Acéphale in Eugene Jolas' anthology *Vertical* (1941), and the Surrealists organised a group exhibition *The First Papers of Surrealism*, the first to take myth as its theme, and founded a new review *VVV* (four issues, June 1942 to February 1944).

Meanwhile Patrick Waldberg's work in the Office of War Information had taken him to Algeria, Ireland and London. During his isolation from the New York group he pondered past events and communicated them in a long letter to his wife Isabelle (dated 19 September 1943) [10]. An edited version of it, together with response by Georges Duthuit and Robert Lebel, appeared in the last issue of VVV (no. 4, 1944), under the title Vers un nouveau mythe? *Prémonitions et défiances*.

Waldberg expressed a complete disillusion with Acéphale's attempts to create a community around a new myth, which he concluded could only arise, and not be constructed. The literary and arbitrary nature of its images and rites, its lack of rigour, its Nietzschean bias, precluded its success and yet despite its mistakes he did not quite condemn Bataille, who led him through what he was now saw as a pointless labyrinth. Duthuit for his part defended Bataille's appropriation of Nietzsche and Dionysius, but refused to defend Acéphale, not having been a member. Lebel's (another non-member) response was more interesting; he viewed the problem from the perspective of promoting group action, collective activity which, he says, seems to be militated against by some general principle. Acéphale was valid if only because it succeeded in combating this principle for a while, and anyway Bataille had foreseen its failure in his essay *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. [11] He concludes by proposing that humour, systematically exploited, could provide the cohesion for renewed group action.

Paris was liberated in August 1944, and the foreign exiles began returning, among them Isabelle Waldberg in November '45, Duchamp in May '46, Breton the same month. They returned to a capital in economic and political chaos, in which polemic and accusation reached new heights, even for Paris. Against the background of the *épuration* numerous factions exchanged abuse, formed alliances and fell out again with alarming rapidity. Sartre and the existentialists attacked both Surrealism and the Communist; the Party replied in kind, refusing to recognise either movement as "engaged" for differing reasons, ideological and pragmatic. Old fellow-travellers attacked Surrealism: Aragon, Tzara, Vailland. The Surrealist group and the revue *La Main à plume*, who had remained in Paris during the war,

assumed a pro-Moscow position against Breton's group, and suffered rebuffs from all quarters. New movements, such as Isou's Lettrism, arose and attacked everyone, and Maurice Nadeu even published a *History of Surrealism*, by implication consigning it to Trotsky's famous dustbin. [12]

Both the groups originally centred around Bataille and Breton lacked a review in which to publish. The Surrealists' *Minotaure* had folded at the beginning of the war, as had VVV in 1944. The next official magazine of the group was *Néon* which did not appear until 1948. An even longer hiatus existed for the Acéphales between the closure of *Acéphale* in 1939 and the founding of Critique in 1946. This gap was partially filled by the *Da Costa*, particularly since *Critique* was devoted solely to critical writing.

[1] Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, Gallimard (12 volumes published between 1970 and 1988), Vol.8.

[2] In fact the *College* dates from a year later.

[3] A provisional list of members would include: Georges Bataille, Collette Peignot (Laure), Georges Amrosino, Pierre Andler (pseud. Of Pierrre Dugan), Jacques Chavy, Rene Chenon, George Dussat, Jean Rollin, Pierre or Imre Keleman, Patrick and Isabelle Waldberg, Roger Callois, Pierre Klossowski, Jean Dautry, Henri Dubief and perhaps Jules Monneret. Some of these names are obscure. Dominique Lecoq was able to supply some information: Dubief and Dautry were historians, associated with Souvraine's *Cercle Communiste Démocratique* and later Contre Attaque; Dussat, an unpublished poet; and Keleman a Hungarian refugee and professional translator.

[4] Waldberg, Isabelle & Patrick, *Un Amour Acéhale, Correspondance 1940-1949*, Eds. De la Différence, 1992, p.8.

[5] *Propositions on the Death of God*, *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoeckl, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985; USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, pp.199, 201

[6] Programme, dated 4/4/36, *Documents*, (reprinted in two volumes), Jean-Michel Place, 1991, Vo. 2, p.274

[7] Bataille, Georges, *Instructions pour la recontre en forêt*, Vol. 2, Complete Works, pp.277-8.

[8] Cited in J.P. Le Bouler, *Bataille et Callois, divergences et complicites*. According to Tatsuo Satomi, the suicide of the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima was inspired by Bataille's interest in human sacrifice, ibid, p.55.

[9] *Acephalogramme*, unpublished text quoted in Waldberg, Isabelle & Patrick, Un *Amour Acéhale, Correspondance 1940-1949*, Eds. De la Différence, 1992, p.9.

[10] Waldberg, Isabelle & Patrick, *Un Amour Acéhale, Correspondance 1940-1949*, Eds. De la

Différence, 1992 p.84-89.

[11] Included in *Hommage à Georges Bataille* [ed. Barthes, Deguy, Foucault], special issue of *Critique*, 195-6, August/September 1963, reprinted 1991, pp.12-23.

[12] The best English account of these debates, although from a year or so later, is to be found in the six issues of *Transition* 48 (later 49 and 50). Sartre, Bataille, and Fouchet were all on its editorial board.

Aesthete:

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It being perfectly obvious that nobody now adopts such a denomination, it must nevertheless be recognised that this word has seen a development to the same degree and in the same way as *artist* and *poet*. ("That man is an Artist," or again "I respect Poets," and above all, "the delightful rigour Aesthetes bring to their intentions...") In the last analysis, words have every right to overturn things and to inspire disgust: after fifteen years you find a dead woman's slipper in the back of a cupboard; you take it to the dustbin.There is a cynical pleasure in thinking about words which drag something of us along with them into the dustbin.

On the other hand, the automatic protest against a debased mental form is itself already pretty well threadbare. The wretch who asserts that art no longer functions, because, that way, one distances oneself from the "dangers of action," has already made a declaration which really must be considered like the dead woman's slipper. In fact, though it may be a fairly disgusting spectacle, the ageing process is the same for a cliché as for a system of carburization. Everything that, in the category of the emotions, responds to an admissible need is fated to suffer an *improvement* which, on the other hand, one is obliged to regard with the same uneasy (or cynical) curiosity as some sort or other of Chinese torture.

Architecture:

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Architecture is the expression of the true nature of societies, as physiognomy is the expression of the nature of individuals. However, this comparison is applicable, above all, to the physiognomy of officials (prelates, magistrates, admirals). In fact, only society's ideal nature – that of authoritative command and prohibition – expresses itself in actual architectural constructions. Thus great monuments rise up like dams, opposing a logic of majesty and authority to all unquiet elements; it is in the form of cathedrals and palaces that Church and State speak to and impose silence upon the crowds. Indeed, monuments obviously inspire good social behaviour and often even genuine fear. The fall of the Bastille is symbolic of this state of things. This mass movement is difficult to explain otherwise than by popular hostility towards monuments which are their veritable masters.

For that matter, whenever we find *architectural construction* elsewhere than in monuments, whether it be in physiognomy, dress, music or painting, we can infer a prevailing taste for human or divine *authority*. The large-scale compositions of certain painters express the will to constrain the spirit within an official ideal. The disappearance of academic pictorial composition, on the other hand, opens the path to the expression (and thereby exaltation) of psychological processes distinctly at odds with social stability. This, in large part, explains the strong reaction elicited, for over half a century, by the progressive transformation of

painting, hitherto characterised by a sort of concealed architectural skeleton.

It is clear, in any case, that mathematical order imposed upon stone is really the culmination of the evolution of earthly forms, whose direction is indicated within the biological order by the passage from the simian to the human form, the latter already displaying all the elements of architecture. Man would seem to represent merely an intermediary stage within the morphological development between monkey and building. Forms have become increasingly static, increasingly dominant. From the very outset, in any case, the human and architectural orders make common cause, the latter being only the development of the former. Therefore an attack on architecture, whose monumental productions now truly dominate the whole earth, grouping the servile multitudes under their shadow, imposing admiration and wonder, order and constraint, is necessarily, as it were, an attack on man. Currently, an entire earthly activity, and undoubtedly the most intellectually outstanding, tends, through the denunciation of human dominance, in this direction. Hence, however strange this may seem when a creature as elegant as the human being is involved, a path traced by painters – opens up toward bestial monstrosity, as if there were no other way of escaping the architectural straitjacket.

Black Birds. [1]:

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Pointless to seek any longer an explanation for coloured people suddenly breaking, with an incongruous extravagance, an absurd stutterers' silence: we are rotting away with neurasthenia under our roofs, a cemetery and common grave of so much pathetic rubbish; while the blacks who (in America or elsewhere) are civilised along with us and who, today, dance and cry out, are marshy emanations of the decomposition who are set aflame above this immense cemetery: so, in a vaguely lunar Negro night, we are witnessing an intoxicating dementia of dubious and charming will-o'-the-wisps, writhing and yelling like bursts of laughter. This definition will spare us any discussion.

[1] The article concerns the Negro revue "Lew leslie's Black Birds," at the Moulin Rouge, June-September 1929.

Camel:

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"The camel, which seems grotesque to an inhabitant of Paris, is in its place in the desert: it is the denizen of those singular localities, so much so that it pines away if transported anywhere; it belongs there by virtue of its form, its colour, its bearing. The Orientals call it the ship of the desert. Launched across oceans of sand, it traverses them at regular and silent pace as a ship ploughs through the waves of the sea. What would our lovely women say of those oriental poems in which the harmonious movements of the betrothed are compared to the measured pace of a she-camel?"

Contrary to the opinion of Eugène Delacroix (*Etudes esthétiques*, Paris, 1923, p.40), among the forms symptomatic of stupidity, that of the camel, probably the most monumental, seems also the most disastrous. The aspect of the camel reveals, at the same time as the profound absurdity of animal nature, the cataclysmic and fallen nature of that absurdity and stupidity. One might, indeed, believe that the camel is something that is at the most critical point of all life, where futility is at its most distressing.

Dust:

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The storytellers have not realised that the Sleeping Beauty would have awoken in a thick layer of dust; nor have they envisaged the sinister spider's webs that would have been torn apart at the first movement of her red tresses. Meanwhile dismal sheets of dust constantly invade earthly habitations and uniformly defile them: as if it were a matter of making ready attics and old rooms for the immanent occupation of the obsessions, phantoms, spectres that the decayed odour of old dust nourishes and intoxicates.

When plump young girls, Œmaids of all work,' arm themselves each morning with a large feather-duster or even a vacuum cleaner, they are perhaps not completely aware that they are contributing every bit as much as the most positivist of scientists to dispelling the injurious phantoms that cleanliness and logic abhor. One day or another, it is true, dust, supposing it persists, will probably begin to gain the upper hand over domestics, invading the immense ruins of abandoned buildings, deserted dockyards; and, at that distant epoch, nothing will remain to ward off night-terrors, for lack of which we have become such great book-keepers...

Eye. 2.

Cannibal Delicacy:

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It is obvious that civilised man is characterised by a frequently inexplicable acuity of horrors. The fear of insects is doubtless one of the most singular and fully developed of these horrors, among which one of the most surprising is the fear of the eye. It seems impossible, in fact, to describe the eye without employing the word seductive, nothing it seems, being more attractive in the bodies of animals and men. But this extreme seductiveness is probably at the very edge of horror.

In this respect, one might relate the eye to the edge of a blade whose appearance provokes both intense and contradictory reactions: this is what the makers of *Un Chien Andalou* [1] must have hideously and obscurely experienced when they decided to make the bloody love affair between these two beings among the earliest images of the film. That a razor might slice open the dazzling eye of a young and charming woman, this is precisely what he would admired to the point of madness, this young man observed by a small cat, who is by chance holding in his hand a coffee spoon (should he suddenly hanker to place an eye in it).

This is obviously a strange desire on the part of whiteman, from whom the eyes of the cows, sheep, and pigs that he eats have always been

hidden. For although the eye, to employ Stevenson's exquisite phrase, is a *cannibal delicacy*, it is also for us the object of such anxiety that we will never bite into it. The eye has the same high rank in horror, since among other things it is the *eye of conscience*. Victor Hugo's poem is sufficiently well known; the obsessive and lugubrious eye, the living eye, the eye of the hideous nightmare experienced just before his death [2]: the criminal "dreams that he has just struck down a man in a dark wood... Human blood has been spilled and, following an expression that presents a ferocious image to the mind's eye, *he made an oak sweat*.[3] In fact, it is not a man, but a tree trunk... bleeding... who seeks to defend himself... under the murderous weapon. The hands of the victim are raised in supplication, but in vain. Blood continues to flow." An then an enormous eye appears in the black sky, pursuing the criminal through space and to the bottom of the sea, where it devours him after assuming the form of a fish. Innumerable eyes nevertheless multiply beneath the waves.

Concerning these, Grandville writes: "Are these the thousand eyes of the crowd attracted by the rumour of an immanent spectacle of torture?" But why would these absurd eyes be attracted, like a cloud of flies, to something so repugnant? Equally, why on the masthead of a perfectly sadistic illustrated weekly, published in Paris between 1907 and 1924, does an eye regularly appear against

a red background, above various bloody spectacles? Why does not the *Eye of the Police* resemble the eye of human justice in Grandville's nightmare, perhaps in the end just the expression of a blind thirst for blood? Similar also to the eye of Crampon, condemned to death and approached by the chaplain an instant before the blade's descent: he dismissed the clergyman by enucleating himself and presenting him with the merry gift of his torn-out eye, *because this eye was made of glass*.

[1] This extraordinary film is the work of two young Catalans: the painter Salvador Dali, and the director Luis Buñuel. See the excellent stills published by *Cahiers d'Art* (July 1929, p. 230), by *Bifur* (August 1929, p.105) and by *Variétés* (July 1929, p. 209). This film can be distinguished from the banal productions of the avant-garde, with which one might have been tempted to confuse it, by the importance given to the screenplay. Several very explicit facts follow one upon the other, without logical connection it is true, but penetrating so deeply into horror that the spectators are caught up as directly as they are in an adventure film. More precisely, they are caught by the throat, and without artifice: do they know, in fact, how far the authors of this film, or people like them will go? If Buñuel himself, after filming the slitting open of the eye, was ill for a week (and he then had had to film the scene of the asses

cadavers in a pestilential atmosphere), how can one not appreciate the extent of horror's fascination, and that it alone is sufficient to hatter everything that stifles us?

[2] Victor Hugo, a reader of *Le Magazin pittoresque*, borrowed from both the admirable dream narrative *Crime and Expiation* and from the unprecedented drawing of Grandville, both published in 1847 (pp. 211-14), the story of the pursuit of a criminal by an obstinate eye: it is scarcely useful to observe, however, that only an obscure and sinister obsession, and not a cold memory, can explain this resemblance. We owe to Pierre d'Espezel's erudition and generosity our awareness of this curious document, probably the most beautiful of Grandville's extravagant compositions.

[3] *Faire suer un chêne* has this literal meaning, but it is also argot for killing someone (i.e. the oak fears being made into a coffin).

Factory Chimney:

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When I review my own memories, it seems that for our generation, out of all the world's various objects glimpsed in early childhood, the most fear-inspiring architectural form was by no means the church, however monstrous, but rather large factory chimneys, true channels of communication between the ominously dull, threatening sky and the muddy, stinking earth surrounding the textile and dye factories.

Today, when the truly wretched aesthete, at a loss for objects of admiration, has invented the contemptible "beauty" of the factory, the dire filth of those enormous tentacles appears all the more revolting; the rain puddles at their feet, the empty lots, the black smoke half-beaten down by the wind, the piles of slag and dross are the sole true attributes of those gods of a sewer Olympus. I was not hallucinating when, as a terrified child, I discerned in those giant scarecrows, which both excited me to the point of anguish and made me run sometimes for my life, the presence of a fearful rage. That rage would, I sensed, later become my own, giving meaning to everything spoiling within my own head and to all that which, in civilised states, looms up like carrion in a nightmare. I am, of course, not unaware that for most people the factory chimney is merely the sign of mankind's labour, and never the terrible projection of that nightmare which develops

obscurely, like a cancer, within mankind. Obviously one does not, as a rule, continue to focus on that which is seen as the revelation of a state of violence for which one bears some responsibility. These childish or untutored way of seeing is replaced by a knowing vision which allows one to take a factory chimney for a stone construction forming a pipe for the evacuation of smoke high into the air – which is to say, for an abstraction. Now, the only possible reason for the present dictionary is precisely to demonstrate the error of that sort of definition.

It should be stressed, for example, that a chimney is only very tentatively of a wholly mechanical order. Hardly has it risen towards the first covering cloud, hardly has the smoke coiled round within its throat, than it has already become the oracle of all that is most violent in our present-day-world, and this for the same reason, really, as each grimace of the pavement's mud or of the human face, as each part of an immense unrest whose order is that of a dream, or as the hairy, inexplicable muzzle of a dog. That is why, when placing it in a dictionary, it is more logical to call upon the little boy, the terrified witness of the birth of that image of the immense and sinister convulsions in which his whole life will unfold, rather than the technician, who is necessarily blind.

Formless:

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A dictionary would begin as of the moment when it no longer provided the meanings of words but their tasks. In this way *formless* is not only an adjective having such and such a meaning, but a term serving to declassify, requiring in general that every thing should have a form. What it designates does not, in any sense whatever, possess rights, and everywhere gets crushed like a spider or an earthworm. For academics to be satisfied, it would be necessary, in effect, for the universe to take on a form. The whole of philosophy has no other aim; it is a question of fitting what exists into a frock-coat, a mathematical frock-coat. To affirm on the contrary that the universe resembles nothing at all and is only *formless*, amounts to saying that the universe is something akin to a spider or a gob of spittle.

Kali:

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The wife of *Shiva* appears in the Hindu imagination under various names and aspects, such as *Devi* (the goddess), *Durga* (the difficult-of-access), Kali (the black one) etc. In *L'Inde avec les Anglais* (trans. Théo Varlet, pp. 12-18), Katherine Mayo [1] recounts her visit to the great temple of Kali in Calcutta, with the avowed intention of disgusting her readers with an ignoble barbarity. The statue of the goddess in that temple is consistent with the popular image reproduced here. "She is black-faced and sticks out an enormous tongue, filthy with blood. Of her four hands, one holds a human head, dripping with blood, the second a knife, the third, extended, pours out blood, the forth, raised in menace, is empty."

In this temple alone the sacrifices to the goddess reach a figure of a hundred and fifty to two hundred goats daily. The animals are decapitated by the priests with a single blow from a cutlass. "The blood flows over the flagstones," Katherine Mayo relates, "the drums and gongs before the goddess ring out in a frenzy. ŒKali, Kali, Kali,' cry the priests and suppliants in a chorus, and some prostrate themselves face down on the flagstones of the temple. A woman rushes forward and, on all fours, laps up the blood with her tongue... Half a dozen hairless and mangy dogs, horribly disfigured by nameless diseases, plunge their avid muzzles into the spreading tide of blood."

In Nepal the orgies of blood are, moreover, incomparably more horrible than in the peninsulas. At the beginning of the 19th century, two men of high rank were still immolated every twelve years: they were made drunk, their heads were sliced off and the jet of blood directed onto the idols (cf. Sylvain Lévi, *Le Népaul*, vol.II, p.38). Today they still slit the throats of a great many buffaloes, whose sacrifice is according to Sylvain Lévi, "an unforgettable nightmare." It consists of making skilful and complicated incisions in such a way as to "allow a torrent of blood to escape, which gushes towards the idol."

The figure quoted for the number of buffaloes immolated in the nine days of the Durgapuja festival in the middle of the 19th century is nine thousand (*op. cit.*, pp. 38-39).

The ancient texts speak not only of the sacrifices of human beings and various domestic animals, but of sacrifices of crocodiles, tigers and lions.

Kali is the goddess of terror, of destruction, of night and of chaos. She is the patroness of cholera, of cemeteries, of thieves and prostitutes. She is represented adorned with a necklace of severed human heads, her belt consists of a fringe of human forearms. She dances on the corpse of her husband Shiva and her tongue, from which the blood of the giant she has just decapitated drips, hangs completely out of her mouth because

she is horrified at having lacked respect for the dead giant. Legend tells how her joy at having vanquished the giants raised her to such a degree of exaltation that her dance set the earth shaking and trembling. Attracted by the din, Shiva came running, but since his wife had drunk the blood of the giants, her intoxication prevented her from seeing him: she knocked him off his feet, trod him underfoot, and danced on his corpse.

Rich believers offer her silver forearms, tongues and eyes of gold. Under the title *Hindu-Mythologie* und *Kastrations-Komplex* a psychoanalyst homonymous with the creator of the *Jeu lugubre* (the painter S. Dali) has devoted a lengthy study to the goddess Kali; this study written in English, appeared in German in *Imago* (1927, pp. 160-98).

[1] American journalist (1868-1940). The book was first published in Britain in 1927 as Mother India. Its sensationalism provoked the indignation of Indian nationalists and British anti-imperialists.

Materialism:

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Most materialists, despite wanting to eliminate all spiritual entities, ended up describing an order of things whose hierarchical relations mark it out as specifically idealist. They have situated dead matter at the summit of a conventional hierarchy of diverse types of facts, without realising that in this way they have submitted to an obsession with an *ideal* form of matter, with a form which approaches closer than any other to that which matter *should be*. Dead matter, the pure idea, and God, all in fact answer a question in the same way – perfectly, and as flatly as a docile student in a classroom – a question that can perhaps only be posed by *idealist* philosophers, the question of the essence of things, in other words of exactly the *idea* by means of which things become intelligible. The classical materialists did not really even substitute causation for the must be (the *quare* for the *quamobrem*, that is to say, determinism for destiny, the past for the future...). Due to the functional role they unconsciously attributed to the idea of science, their need for external authority in fact placed the *must be* on all appearance. If the principle of things they defined constitutes precisely the stable element that permitted science to acquire an apparently unshakeable position, a veritable divine eternity, this choice cannot be attributed to chance. Most materialists have simply substituted the conformity of dead matter to the idea of science for the religious relations earlier established between the divinity and

his creatures, the one being the *idea* of the others.

Materialism can be seen as a senile idealism to the extent that it is not immediately founded upon psychological or social facts and not upon abstractions, such as artificially isolated phenomena. Thus it is from Freud, among others – rather from long dead physicists whose ideas today are remote from their causation – that a representation of matter must be taken. It matters little that the fear of psychological complication (a fear that bears a unique witness to intellectual debility) cause timid souls to see this attitude as an obscure detour or as a return to spiritual values. The time has come, when employing the word materialism, to assign to it the meaning of a direct interpretation, *excluding all idealism*, of raw phenomena, and not of a system founded on the fragmentary elements of an ideological analysis elaborated under the sign of religious relations.

Metamorphosis. 3.

Wild Animals:

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Man's equivocal attitude towards the wild animal is more than usually absurd. Human dignity does exist (it is, apparently, above all suspicion), but not on one's visits to the zoo – as when, for instance, the animals watch the approaching crowds of children tailed by papa-men and mama-women. Man, despite appearances, must know that when he talks of human dignity in the presence of animals, he lies *like a dog*. For in the presence of illegal and essentially free beings (the only real *outlaws*) the stupid feeling of practical superiority gives way to a most uneasy envy; in savages, it takes the form of the totem, and it lurks in comic disguise within our grandmothers feathered hats. There are so many animals in this world, and so much that we have lost! The innocent cruelty; the opaque monstrosity of eyes scarcely distinguishable from the little bubbles that form on the surface of mud; the horror as integral to life as light is to a tree. These remain the office, the identity card, an existence of bitter servitude, and yet, that shrill madness which, in certain deviant states, borders on metamorphosis.

The obsession with *metamorphosis* can be defined as a violent need – *identical, furthermore, with all our animal needs* – that suddenly impels us to cast off the gestures and attitudes requisite to human nature. A man is an apartment, for example, an animal thus imprisoned, like a galley slave, and there is a gate, and if we open the gate, the animal will rush

out, like the slave finding his way to escape. The man falls dead, and the beast acts as a beast, with no care for the poetic wonder of the dead man. Thus man is seen as a prison of bureaucratic aspect.

Misfortune:

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It is beyond doubt that everything has been said, written, printed, cried out or moaned regarding misfortune, only with this reserve, that it is never misfortune itself that speaks but some fortunate prattler in the name of misfortune; which would allow one, furthermore, to make the ignoble accusation that he is speaking of misfortune in the same fashion as if he were speaking of good manners (one would have the dim awareness of being a pompous ass). It would be a matter of speaking, writing, printing, crying out, groaning that vice is a terrifying misfortune, that vice is an underhand and presumptuous abuse of one's wretched person, that vice, in a red robe, is a magistrate or a cardinal, a police officer rather than a murderer, at all events something that assumes all the sinister and ambiguous trappings of misfortune; which also of course means that misfortune is everything that is hypocritical and mute. Moreover, the streets one likes have an air of misfortune about them, and one only walks along them with the look of mangy dog. Further on, nobody would be able to say where, or indeed when, anything at all would certainly be possible, that is to say that the enigma posed by misfortune (which does so, all unknowing, to the inspector of police) would find itself subsumed under the form of vice. That is why we so often say: let's not speak of misfortune...

It is of no importance whether or not this be taken for a circumlocution: that fact is that a certain Crépin, one-time Don Juan and a handsome fellow, who after having killed his mistress and his rival sought to kill himself with a third blast from his shotgun, lost his nose and his mouth (he moreover lost the power of speech), found himself rebuked by a magistrate for having eaten chocolate *mouth-to-mouth* with Madame Delarche, she whom he was to kill one fine day when he saw red. One is lost in conjecture as to how this infamous phrase from the Assize Court, applied in this context, so faithfully reconstructs the image of vice.

Mouth:

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The mouth is the beginning or, if one prefers, the prow of animals; in the most characteristic cases, it is the most living part, in other words, the most terrifying for neighbouring animals. But man does not have a simple architecture like the beasts, and it is not even possible to say where he begins. In a strict sense, he starts at the top of the skull, but the top of the skull is an insignificant part, incapable of attracting attention and it is the eyes or the forehead the play the significatory role of an animal's jaws.

Among civilised men, the mouth has even lost the relatively prominent character that it still has among primitive men. However, the violent meaning of the mouth is conserved in a latent state: it suddenly regains the upper hand with a literally cannibalistic expression such as *mouth of fire*, applied to the cannons men employ to kill each other. And on important occasions human life is still bestially concentrated in the mouth: fury makes men grind their teeth, terror and atrocious suffering transform the mouth into the organ of rending screams. On this subject it is easy to observe that the overwhelmed individual throws back his head while frenetically stretching his neck so that the mouth becomes, as far as possible, a prolongation of the spinal column, *in other words, it assumes the position in normally occupies in the constitution of animals*. As if explosive impulses were to spurt directly out of the body through the

mouth, in the form of screams. This fact simultaneously highlights the importance of the mouth in animal physiology or even psychology, and the general importance of the superior or anterior extremity of the body, the orifice of profound physical impulses: equally one sees that a man is able to liberate these impulses in at least two different ways, in the brain or in the mouth, but that as soon as these impulses become violent, he is obliged to resort to the bestial method of liberation. Whence the narrow constipation of a strictly human attitude, the magisterial look of the face with a *closed mouth*, as beautiful as a safe.

Museum:

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According to the *Grande Encyclopédie*, the first museum in the modern sense of the word (that is to say the first public collection) would seem to have been founded on 27 July 1793, in France, by the Convention. The origin of the modern museum would thus be linked to the development of the guillotine. However, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, founded at the end of the 17th century, was already a public collection belonging to the University.

The development of museums has plainly surpassed even the most optimistic hopes of the founders. Not only does the totality of the world's museums today represent a colossal accumulation of riches but, above all, the totality of visitors without any doubt represents the most grandiose spectacle of a humanity freed from material cares and dedicated to contemplation.

We must take into account the fact that the galleries and the objects of art are no more than a container, the contents of which is formed by the visitors: it is the contents which distinguish a museum from a private collection. A museum is comparable to the lung of a great city: every Sunday the throng flows into the museum, like blood, and leaves it fresh and purified. The pictures are only dead surfaces and it is within the crowd that the play, the flashes, the shimmerings of light technically described by the authorised critics takes place. On Sundays, at five o'clock, at the exit door of the Louvre,

it is interesting to admire the torrent of visitors, visibly animated with a desire to be in all things at one with the celestial apparitions with which their eyes are still ravished.

Grandville has schematised the relations between the container and the contained in museums by exaggerating (at the very least, on the face of it) the bonds that are temporarily established between the visited and the visitors. In the same way, when a native of the Ivory Coast places polished stone axes of the Neolithic period in a container filled with water, bathes in the container, and sacrifices chickens to what he believes to be t*hunder stones* (fallen from heaven in a thunderclap), he is doing no more than prefiguring the attitude of enthusiasm and profound communion with objects which characterises the visitor to a modern museum.

The museum is a colossal mirror in which man contemplates himself, in short, in all his aspects, finds himself literally admirable and abandons himself to the ecstasy expressed in all the art journals.

Slaughterhouse:

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The slaughterhouse is linked to religion in so far as the temples of bygone eras (not to mention those of the Hindus in our own day) served two purposes: they were used both for prayer and for killing. The result (and this judgement is confirmed by the chaotic aspect of present-day slaughterhouses) was certainly a disturbing convergence of the mysteries of myth and the ominous grandeur typical of those places in which blood flows. In America, curiously enough, W. B. Seabrook [1] has expressed an intense regret; observing that the orgiastic life has survived, but that the sacrificial blood is not part of the cocktail mix, he finds present custom insipid. In our time, nevertheless, the slaughterhouse is cursed and quarantined like a plague-ridden ship. Now, the victims of this curse are neither butchers nor beasts, but those same good folk who countenance, by now, only their own unseemliness, an unseemliness commensurate with an unhealthy need of cleanliness, with irascible meanness, and boredom. The curse (terrifying only to those who utter it) leads them to vegetate as far as possible from the slaughterhouse, to exile themselves, out of propriety, to a flabby world in which nothing fearful remains and in which, subject to the ineradicable obsession of shame, they are reduced to eating cheese.

[1] In *The Magic Island*.

Space 1.

Questions of Propriety:

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It is not surprising that the mere utterance of the word *space* should introduce philosophical protocol. Philosophers, being the masters of ceremony of the abstract universe, have pointed out how space should behave under all circumstances.

Unfortunately space remains a lout, and it is difficult to enumerate what it engenders. It is as discontinuous as it is devious, to the utter despair of its philosopher-papa. I should, moreover, prefer not to refresh the memory of persons who interest themselves, professionally or for the want of something better to do, out of confusion or for a laugh, in the behaviour of that scallywag at odds with society: to wit, how is it that, under our modestly averted eyes, space breaks all obligatory continuity. Without one's being able to say why, it seems that an ape dressed as a woman is no more than a division of space. In reality, the dignity of space is so well established and associated with that of the stars, that it is incongruous to assert that space might become a fish swallowing another. Space will still more frightfully disappointing when it said that it takes the ignoble initiation rite practised by some Negroes, desperately absurd, etc...

Space would of course be far better off *doing its duty* and fabricating the philosophical idea in professors' apartments! Obviously it will never enter anybody's head to lock the professors up in prison to teach

them what space is (the day, for example, the walls collapse before the bars of their dungeons).

Jacques Baron:

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Crustaceans

Crustaceans:

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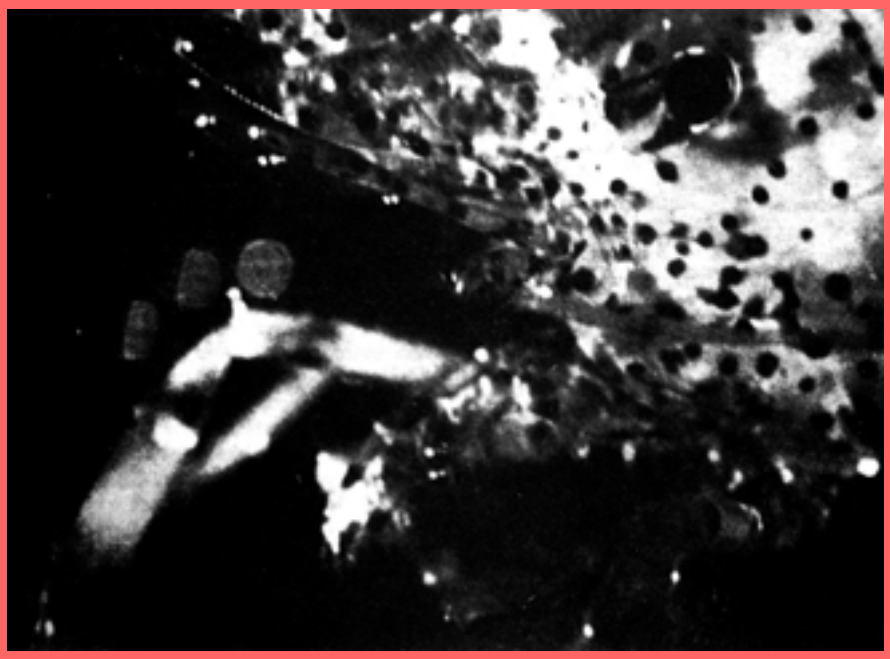

One day, Gérard de Nerval went for a stroll in the gardens of the Palais-Royal with a living lobster on a leash. The idlers crowded round him, flabbergasted and roaring with laughter at the strange retinue. One of his friends having asked him why he was making such a fool of himself, Nerval replied: "But what are you laughing at? You people go about readily enough with dogs, cats and other noisy and dirty domestic animals. My lobster is a gentle animal, affable and clean, and he is at least familiar with the wonders of the deeps!"

A painter friend of mine said one day that if a grasshopper were the size of a lion it would be the most beautiful animal in the world. How true that would be of the giant crayfish, a crab enormous as a house, and a shrimp as tall as a tree! Crustaceans, fabulous creatures that amaze children plying on beaches, submarine vampires nourished on corpses and refuse. Heavy and light, ironic and grotesque, animals made of silence and of weight.

Of all the ridiculous actions men take upon themselves, none is more so than shrimping. Everybody has seen that elderly gentlemen, bearded and red-faced, a white *piqué* hat on his head, wearing an alpaca jacket, his trousers rolled up to his thighs, a wicker basket on his belly, his shrimping net at the ready, hunting shrimps in a rock-pool for his dinner. Woe betide the

poor shrimp that lets itself be caught! In desperation she wriggles, she slides, she flutters in the triumphant fingers. Elastic animal flower, graceful and lively as mercury, petal separated from the great bouquet of the waves. She is also a woman. Who has not heard of *La Môme Crevette* ?

Among crustaceans, the crab known as the "sleeper," the image of eternal sleep, is the most mysterious, the most deceitful, the shiftiest. It hides under rocks and its mobile eyes watch for passing prey with a cruel malice. It walks sideways. It combines every fault. There are men who resemble it.

The crayfish and the lobster are nobles. They are cultivated like oysters and tulips. They are present at all human ceremonies: political banquets, wedding breakfasts and wakes.

All these beasts change their carapaces, grow old, harden, make love and die. We do not know whether they suffer or if they have ideas concerning ethics and the organisation of societies. According to Jarry it would appear that a lobster fell in love with a can of corned beef... [1]

Crustaceans are boiled alive to conserve the succulence of their flesh.

[1] In ch. 26 of *Exploits and*

Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, ŒPataphysician.

Space 2

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Robert Desnos:

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Eye 1

Eye 1.

Image of the Eye:

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Because of its poetic virtues, for centuries the eye has served for lyrical comparisons and for allegories. One cannot, even summarily, compile a list of the writers who have found an analogy between it and the stars. In metallurgy it tends to be regarded as a cavity, a hole: the eye of a crankshaft, eyelet (of a shoe). Then, by extension to the technique of the arts, people have spoken of *l'oeil d'une oeuvre* [the eye, thus the look, of a work] in the sense of appearance. Hence the expression *tu en as un oeil*, you're looking good. Argot, that poetic language, rich in poetic imagery, and accursed, has naturally made much use of the organ of sight: le quart d'oeil (commissariat of police) derives – and in the process outdoes it – from the classical proverb *ne dormir que d'un oeil*, comme le gendarme [to sleep with one eye open, like a policeman]. *Coco bel oeil*, which has passed from slang into polite usage, with a certain old-fashioned military whiff about it, alludes less to the organ of sight than to one of its functions, *l'oeillade*, the amorous glance or ogle. The eye's fragility quickly led to its being made a term of comparison with something precious: *j'y tiens comme à la prunelle de mon oeil*, I treasure it/him/her like the apple of my eye; then again, by extension, as a sensitive spot not to be touched without good reason, as it emerges from the very formula of lynch law, *oeil pour oeil*, an eye for an eye. One could hold forth as lengthily on the numerous obscene senses of the word, brought about by its analogy with the private parts: *mon oeil*, *crever l'oeil*, and the famous *mettre le doigt dans l'oeil* [to poke one's finger in one's eye], which, taken initially in a figurative sense to express a concrete action, has been taken up again in the proper sense to express an abstract state (to be mistaken, to make a blunder) admirable ideo-material property of the senses.

The expression *à l'oeil*, free, gratis, is the paraphrase of a medieval story in which a poor wretch who having eaten the smell of a roast, pays with the

sound of his money; hearing, by way of cash, having been replaced by sight.

Pour vos beaux yeux, for your beautiful eyes, was originally a knightly expression. It was rightly estimated that the quality of beautiful eyes was enough to pursue dangerous adventures. It is the debasement of the ethics of love in connection with the evolution of customs which makes it possible today – when "dispassionate" people (in both the exact and the figurate sense) consider love to be a trifle – to confuse cause with effect, to be of the opinion the *mourir pour beaux yeux*, to die for beautiful eyes, is not an enviable fate.

Ouvrir L'oeil et le bon, literally to open one's best eye, meaning to be on the look-out, to keep a weather eye open, takes us back to the vocabulary of the gendarme. It nonetheless has a scientific justification, since it is rare for a man to have the same acuity of vision in each eye. However there is no doubt an allusion here to the need for a marksman who wishes to aim straight to shut one of his eyes. So it would surely be better to say *fermer l'oeil et le mauvais* [close your worst eye].

Finally we shift the whole to the part, and the words *prunelles*, pupils, *cils*, lashes, *orbites*, sockets, *paupières*, eyelids, have entered ordinary language and enriched the figurative vocabulary: *froncer les sourcils*, to knit the brows, to frown, *jeter un cil* [flick an eyelash], to have a peep, *se mirer dans des prunelles*, to gaze into someone's eyes, etc., before themselves falling into popular usage.

Carl Einstein:

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Absolute

Nightingale

Absolute:

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It is undeniable that man invented God so that his wretchedness might be forbidden by somebody greater than himself: God is the dialectical opposite of human imperfections. Ideal entities serve as compensations for wretchedness; that is why the qualities ascribed to the gods delineate by contradiction the failings and servilities of their creators.

The absolute is the sum of the compensations for human wretchedness. To create so perfect a notion, man has been obliged to renounce his peculiarity and miserable content. The absolute is powerful because perfectly empty: it is thanks to this characteristic that it represents the perfection of truth. Nothing can be demonstrated by the absolute: the absolute is precisely that supreme truth which remains indemonstrable. Only the details, the interludes can be demonstrated. Yet it is precisely this impossibility of proving the absolute which makes it irrefutable. It is impossible to shatter a lie which, having no object, cannot be related to anything: the lie, in effect, can be proven only if an object, which is readily and at first glance observed, does not seem consistent; which amounts to saying, in instances without importance. The lie limited by an object can be proven, but never the artifice of a construction, because that excludes the object. It is in this way that works of art are indemonstrable, on account of their being separate, like the absolute, from the object.

The absolute is the greatest expenditure of energy made by man; he then seeks to recoup the energy expended by means of prayer: from which it is evident that man is unable to endure his own energies, being obliged to separate himself from them in

order to find equilibrium. It should be added that man, above all, is afraid of himself and of his own creations, imaginary entities he has separated from himself. It is thus that he has done everything to forget his dreams, because he fears his wandering soul. I believe that man has less to fear, faced with the Universe, than faced with himself, because he does not know the world, but only a little corner of it.

The absolute has been man's greatest exploit: it is thanks to that exploit that he outgrown the mythological state. But it was at the same time his greatest defeat, because he invented something greater than himself. Man has created his own servitude. That absolute is identical with the void and with that which has no object. It is thus that man dies by the absolute which is at the same time his means of freedom. Man dies, killed by his fetishes, whose existence is more or less situated in the absolute.

It would appear that philosophy is the degeneration of the mythological state: in fact, in the epoch of philosophy, the absolute is so enfeebled that it needs to be demonstrated. Things – whose frailty is such that, after having accepted them without due consideration, one must still demonstrate them – are called facts of science or of knowledge.

The absolute gods were, to begin with, the ancestors of governing classes, who deified themselves to enhance servitude and fear. Like money, the neutral absolute is a means of power; each may be changed into anything whatever, since they do not possess precise qualities. The absolute belongs to leaders, priests, madmen, to animals and to plants. On the one hand to the mighty and to

kings, on the other to those without any power, entirely separate from objects and that very fact from their poverty.

The power of the absolute shows itself in its identity with the unconditional. The absolute has been identified with the essence and with being itself, and it is by means of the absolute that one is immortalised. What a fear of death! People must begin by seeing words through death, and it is thus that they become immortal spirits like the latter. Words, created by man, become his nightmares, and notions are the padded cells of the logicians; it is by means of notions that duration is conned.

The absolute belongs to the tectonic-ecstatics; the contemporary "contortionist" believes only in his own banal and obsequious "I": in this way he has discovered the most obnoxious form of the absolute and a freedom which, after one has forgotten death, has ceased to be limited by "taboos" and is no longer anything other than abject and ugly.

Nightingale:

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Save in exceptional cases, no reference to a bird is intended. The nightingale is generally, a platitude, a narcotic, indolent, stupid. With words we designate vague opinions rather than objects; we use words as adornments for our own persons. Words are, for the most part, petrifications which elicit mechanical reactions in us. They are means to power proposed by the wily and the drunken. The nightingale can be classed among the paraphrases of the absolute; it is the senior element among all those techniques of classical seduction in which we resort to the charm of the small. Nobody thinks the nightingale wild or excessively erotic. The nightingale is an eternal prop, star of lyric repertory, adultery's high point, the good courtesan's comfort: it is the sign of an eternal optimism.

Nightingale can be replaced: a) by rose, b) by breasts, but never by legs, because the nightingale's role is precisely to avoid designating them. The nightingale belongs to the repertory of bourgeois diversions, by which we try to suggest the indecent while skirting it. The nightingale can also be the sign of an erotic fatigue; belonging, in any case, like most words, to the paraphrase, this animal helps to ward off disagreeable elements. The nightingale is an allegory; it is hide-and-seek.

The nightingale is to be classed among those ideals devoid of meaning; it is considered a means of concealment, a moral phenomenon. It is a cheap utopia that obscures misery. The nightingale is to be relegated among classical still-lifes of lyricism.

It's cowardice that prevents people from using themselves in allegory. Allegory is, in fact, a form of assassination because it disposes of the object, robbing it of its literal meaning. It is defenceless animals, plants, and trees that get used; the weak like to juggle with the whole cosmos and get drunk on stars. Imprecision is the soul's façade, while precision is the sign of threatening and hallucinatory processes against which we defend ourselves with a superstructure of knowledge.

The nightingale helps to avoid thinking and psychic disquiet. It is a means of diversion, an ornamental motif. One attributes to animals, to plants, etc., a moral perfection with which one adorns oneself. Allegories and surrogates must hide the failure and ugliness of man: thus the human soul is made of stars, roses, twilights, etc. – that is to say, one schematises the defenceless world and projects one's idealised ego onto a Chihuahua. One weeps with the nightingale in hope of a good day at the stock exchange. Such is the American's winning sentimentality.

The nightingale outlives the gods, because it is merely allegorical, committing to nothing. Symbols die, but in degenerating, as allegory they pass into eternity. Thus what we call the soul is for the most a museum of meaningless signs. These signs are hidden behind the façade of actuality.

Poets – those gallivanters and embroiderers – transform the nightingale into turbines, baseball, Buddhism, Taoism, Tschou period, etc.

Mention must be made of the political

nightingales, who take their coffee decaffeinated and practise, through Hegel and double-entry book-keeping, a politics of the absolute, gracefully avoiding every danger through manifestos. Song replaces action.

Let us also note that the nightingale sings best after having devoured a weakling.

The nightingale's music conforms to steady and classical taste; it seeks a guaranteed success. Its cadences are eclectic compilations: only the nuance changes. It even renders slightly daring sounds in a routine harmony, because the nightingale even uses sadness, like pastry. Let us now cite some highly successful nightingales: Mr Shaw, the nightingale of socialism, of common sense and evolution, for whom drama is a compilation of feature articles; Anatole France, the nightingale of Hellenism and saccharine scepticism. And we'll add to the list the scholarly nightingales who engagingly combine the remains of metaphysics with an optimistic biology. The nightingale plays all the flutes of all time; it is more eternal than Apollo, but it cannot master the saxophone.

Marcel Griaule:

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Eye 3

Ju-Ju

Metamorphosis 1

Pottery

Spittle 1

Threshold

Eye 3.

Evil Eye:

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The eye, be it strange, vague, or simply beautiful, has always been, and still is, among the civilised as among the primitives, the doorway for evil influences. Hypnotism is the culminating point of a phenomenon which has leeser degrees, such as the gaze of desire, the curious gaze, or simply the vague gaze that settles on nothing.

In all these degrees, the primitive fears it, and we might say that for him every eye is evil. He fears the eyes of all animals, above all those that are round and fixed, he is in still greater terror of the human eye.

These ancient beliefs have survived in our civilisations. They have crept into our ordinary language. We speak of "piercing eyes," or "eyes like pistols," of Œdevouring with one's eyes." It would be easy to compile a dictionary of expressions concerned with the magic of the eyes, the stereotyped phraseology of our run-of-the-mill novels and our best poems.

To look at an object with desire is to appropriate it, to enjoy it. To desire is to pollute; to desire is to take, and the primitive who has noticed a gaze on a possesion of his immediately makes a gift of it, as if it were dangerous for him to keep it any longer, as if the gaze had deposited in the object a force ready to come into play aginst any stranger.

This gift, this abandonment, is above all prophylatic: it banishes a cause of misfortune, and it is to some extent thus that we must explain the majority of gifts made by indigenous peoples.

The power of the eye is so strong that it is dangerous even when mere curiosity animates it: as a result of being stared at by a number of

soldiers, Antoine D'Abadie (*Douze ans dans Haute Ethiopie*, p.205), had a woman who loved him rush to him and cover him with her robe, crying: "Your accursed eyes will pierce me before seeing him." Yet the soldiers' curiosity was benevolent.

By ascertaining the power of an eye without evil intent, one can gain an idea of the power it wields when it expresses an evil desire. One is not surprised that it "eats the hearts of humans and the insides of cucmbers" (*Mignes, Sciences occultes*, II, 879), that it dries up cows udders and kills little children.

It is essential, then, to defend oneself and, for this, men have found many techniques. The commonest consits of an amulet worn round the neck, representing one of two eyes. Magical formulae, written *medicines* – in magic, the utterance or the putting into words of a formula is itself efficacious – surround the figure; they form, as it were a solvent containing the evil – a vaccine compounded with the dead bacillus – and wearing this remedy amounts to innoculating oneself with the evil influence, thus giving immunity.

Another means employed in the majority of African countries is the bucrane. This in effect, is the symbol of a powerful defence: it recalls the halting of the animal by a wild beast dropping on its head from a branch.

A bucrane stuck on a post in a field, in a tree heavy with fruit, on a millstone – our scarecrows have not been conceived only for sparrows, which disregard them – or set above a threshold – the idea of making it a decorative motif came later – is the best fluid-conductor. Its whiteness, the result of vermin and the sun, will at first sight draw the eye of the passer-by or the visitor. It will capture this gaze, the first

being the most dangerous – and here it seems right and proper to conjure up all the magic of *the first time* – it will suck in through the two holes of the empty sockets, leaving the eye, that stone-shattering lighting, like a flat battery.

One might, I believe, class under the same heading a "para-eye" I have observed on the shores of the Red Sea, at Port Sudan. It consits of the skeleton of a fish, probably of an acanthopterous or shiny species, its head impaled on a cane switch thrust into a palisade. In the living creature there is sort of horn over each eye. On the other hand, its vaguely phallic appearance has not, perhaps, been without influence in determining the choice; the phallus, in fact plays a considerable role in the phrophylaxis of the evil eye (Otto Jahn, *Böse Blick*). But this is naother question, far too extensive to expound upon here.

Ju-Ju:

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Europeans have a marked predilection for striking and compressed turns of phrase and expression who convenience does not trouble their habits of thought.

Thus the first Portuguese who were fortunate enough to travel around the coastline of Africa, finding themselves confronted with the immense problems of beliefs, mysteries, forces, gods, and evil sprits, resolved them immediately, and with a single word; *Djoudjou*.

By the application of the law of least effort, the successors of the Portuguese took up the term; and the successors of the successors were most careful to leave well alone. After a while the Africans themselves made no bones about understanding it. Likewise the little clan of informed aesthetes, who inscribe it in their catalogues in the form ju-ju -–which is fairly ugly when pronounced by an average Parisian, ignorant of phonetic conventions.

The word *djoudjou* denotes, in the broadest terms, the gods, beneficent and maleficent, dispensers of justice or decent fellows, of a certain number of African peoples it is pointless to enumerate here if the reader really means to take the trouble to finish reading this article.

From the point of view of ethnography, *djoudjou* is a ridiculous word, but very elegant if we put it in its place, that is to say if we consider

it as being no more than a term of African pidgin, or of exhibition-catalogue pidgin.

Metamorphosis 1. Abyssinian Games:

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Wild animals play a leading role in African folklore. The cycle of the hyena is by far the most important in the oral literature. This animal has gathered to itself all the horror of the pitch-black nights which it fills with its sinister plaints, painstakingly enumerated by the people shut up in their thatched houses, and interrupted in popular divination.

The personification of witchcraft or of the evil eye, the incarnation or the mount of the sorcerer, it is also, on the high plateau of Ethiopia, the bogey man of young and old alike. A game among the Wollo consists of imitating its howls and slowly inserting oneself into doorways, body bent forwards in such a way as to mimic the creature's curious gait – forelegs very long, hindquarters almost scraping the ground – and covered in a white toga fixed to the head by two knots taking the place of the ears.

When, on the contrary, one wishes to make the children and the women laugh, one borrows the form of a good-natured bird whose misadventures are the stuff of legend: the guinea-fowl. To this end one wears a toga, hands joined on a stick, and with one's wrists bound. In this way one obtains a diamond-shaped head, set on a long neck; one's arms, together with the rest of one's body, covered by the cloth. The player goes down all fours, supported on his elbows, his head pulled in between his shoulders. He

lowers and raises his forearms, thus, to a wonderful degree, conveying the two-and-fro movement of a pecking guinea-fowl.

Pottery:

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Archaeologists and aesthetes are interested in the container and not in what it contains, in the pastoral scenes, the animals on the circumference and not in the milk falling directly from the udder; in the colour of the terracotta and not in the odour it can impart to that milk, the odour of aromatic plants, of smoke, or cow-dung, at random according to the cultures of fresh or rancid butter. They will admire the form of a handle, but they will studiously avoid studying the attitude of the drinking man and asking themselves why, among many peoples, it is shameful to drink while standing up.

Better still, they do not seek to know whether the man who kept the pot empty or filling it, leaving it open or carefully closing it.

They will say that these things are transient and that their reconstruction belongs to the domain of the imagination. But they will deny that they make ample use of the imagination when, in a sketch, they extrapolate the feet or neck of a vase of which they have only the bulbous part?

And, moreover, the supposedly preponderant part of that intemperate faculty could be greatly reduced if we were inclined to take the trouble to look around us. There is an infinite field of observation open to the reasonable mind; present-day humanity, whose beliefs, and even techniques regarding pottery have, on the whole, evolved so little since the world began.

For, after all, how many millions of men still believe in omens drawn from pots smashed before marriages or after drinking, empty pots, or those appearing in dreams? Solomon confined genies in vases, the Golden Legend contains stories of demons imprisoned in pots. How numerous are the spirits of Arab magic, still today called *Banu Qamãqim*, the "children of bottles"? How many beautiful jars of red clay, filled with inexhaustible and miracle-working water, do the monks of perpetual adoration see refilled day and night in a certain rite of Christian Africa? And each of them, for its defence, has no less than a dragon, a troop of real serpents, and a forest of century-old trees whose fearsome spirits do not permit even the breaking of a branch.

Spittle 1.

Spittle-Soul :

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One can be hit full in the face by a truncheon or an automatic pistol without incurring any dishonour; one can similarly be disfigured by a bowl of vitriol. But one can't accept spittle without shame, whether voluntarily or involuntarily dispatched. This is not, as one might think, a commentary on the kabyl code [1], but a straightforward rendering of our way of seeing.

For spittle is more than the product of a gland. It must possess a magical nature because, if it bestows ignominy, it is also a miracle-maker: Christ's saliva opened the eyes of the blind, and a mother's "heart's balm" heals the bumps of small children.

Spittle accompanies breath, which can exit the mouth only when permeated with it. Now, breath is soul, so much so that certain peoples have the notion of "the soul before the face," which ceases where breath can no longer be felt. And we say, "to breathe one's last," and "pneumatic" really signifies "full of soul."

As in a hive, where the entrance hole glistens from the wax inside, the mouth – magically the body's chief aperture – is humid from the to-and-fro of the soul, which comes and goes in the form of breath.

Saliva is the deposit of the soul; spittle is the soul in movement. We use it to strengthen an action, for protection, to impress one's will on

an object, to "sign" a contract, to give life.

Thus, Mohammed himself [2] feared the witches' saliva as they breathed on knots and spat a little to work some evil spells. In Great Russia and elsewhere, to seal an oath, one spits. Just about everywhere, the kiss, this exchange of saliva, is a guarantee of peace (to seal with a kiss). In Oriental Africa, when opening a door that has been long closed, one spits in order to cast out the demon of the empty house [3]. Finally – and this is a startling demonstration of the theory of the spittle-soul – in Occidental Africa, to confer spirit on the child, the grandfather spits into the mouth of his grandchild several days after his birth.

To summarise: from evil will to good will, from insult to miracle, spittle behaves like the soul – balm or filth.

[1] Hanoteaux & Letourneux, *Kabylie*, III, p.193.

[2] *Koran*, Sura 113.

[3] Marcel Griaule, *Le Livre de recettes d'un dabtara abyssin*, Insitut d'ethnologie de Paris.

Threshold:

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The threshold is the node which separates two opposing worlds, the interior and the open air, the cold and the warm, the light and the shade. To cross a threshold is thus to traverse a zone of danger where invisible but real battles are fought out.

As long as the door is closed, all is well. To open it is a serious matter: it is to unleash two hordes, one against the other, it is to risk being caught up in the fray. Far from being a convenience, the door is a terrible instrument which must be made use of only knowingly and according to the proper rites, and which must be surrounded by every magical protection.

These precautions are innumerable: a horse-shoe, a consecrated sprig of box-tree, a painting of Saint Sebastian surrounded with formulae, an animal sacrificed on the threshold, corpses of enemies buried standing erect...

In east Africa the most dangerous moment of the day is the opening of the door in the morning. In effect, all night the house has been closed; it has been, as it were, isolated from the world, from the open air, from the cold, from the light. The door has been the thoroughly watertight lock-gate that has dammed up the threshold. One will therefore open it with an infinity of precautions, slowly, keeping behind it, above all avoiding displacing air. When it is fully open, one will spit into the gaping opening, at the same time pronouncing words of appeasement, and finally, with the greatest calm, one will cross the

threshold, looking before oneself.

The same movements are observed by the visitor when he presents himself to the household in the early morning. However he will avoid any complications by not arriving until very late, when the door will already have been opened and contact established.

In superior civilisations the doormat has not been created solely to slow the crossing of the threshold and permit the visitor to collect his thoughts. It plays a far more important role; when the tradesman's representative presents himself at the door of an important client, he wipes his feet all the more ostentatiously on the mat at the door if the house be imposing, and that even in dry weather. Conversely, in muddy weather, it is properly polite to say to an honoured visitor who is endeavouring to remove the mud from his boots: "Oh, I say, please don't bother." The assiduity one employs in freeing the stranger from this obligation is in direct ratio to the respect one has for him.

This goes to show that the threshold, that is to say the doormat, of which it is the visible sign, is indeed a thing of dread, because there one must manifest or cast aside one's qualities, because there it is necessary to register, forcibly or with levity, the rank one occupies in society.

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Angel 2.

The Angel Gabriel:

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"GABRIEL (from a Hebrew word which strictly means the *man of God*), archangel who came to the Virgin to announce that she was going to be the mother of Jesus Christ (Luke, 1. 26ff.).

- Occult sciences and astrology. Genius of the Moon, presiding over the ninth circle of light in the hermetic hierarchy." (*Nouvelle Larousse Illustré*.)

Scripture cites the archangels Gabriel, Michael and Raphaël as chiefs of the heavenly hosts that vanquished Lucifer and the rebel angels.

In the *Sepher Henoch*, ch. XX, we read: "Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who presides over Ikisat, over Paradise and the Cherubim..."

According to the *Sepher Henoch*, ch. LXIX, one of the guilty angels was likewise called Gabriel. "It is he who revealed to the sons of men how to kill; it was he who seduced Eve and taught the sons of men deadly wounds, the breastplate, the buckler, the sword, and all things that can kill or avoid death. He formed the inhabitants of the arid element down to the consummation of the centuries."

With Michaël and Samaël, Gabriel is the angel who presides over Monday. His residence is in the Little Bear.

Benga (Féral):

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The young Senegalese dancer Féral Benga, who is at present starring in the revue at the Folies-Bergère, was born in Dakar in 1906. He made his debut in 1925 among the extras at the Folies-Bergère, then drew attention to himself in 1926 in a parody of Josephine Baker whom he interpreted with Dorville, to music by G.H. Rivière. With all due deference to paleface chauvinism, it is interesting to note that, at least in the domain of show-business, the deficiency of the white race stands confirmed. After Habib Benglia, of whom nobody today contests that he is one of our best actors, here is Féral Benga who has recently been revivifying our all but dead music-hall after the departure of the great black troupe, the Black Birds, whose presence last summer, sadly too brief, disturbed our torpor. Before Louisiana, the American Negro operetta which will probably soon be staged at the Porte Saint-Martin (with Louis Douglas as manger and Strappy Jones in the leading role), and the film Hallelujah, which, it is to be hoped will soon be screened in public, it is to Féral Benga that the responsibility falls to represent his admirable race before the Parisian public. He is more than worthy of this, as much for his remarkable beauty as for his talent as a dancer.

Debacle:

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The phenomena of nature are a vast alphabet of symbols upon which we draw to forge many of our expressions. Who is not aware of the *coup de foudre* [love at first sight], the *déjeuner de soleil* [flash in the pan], the "brainstorm," and the "avalanche of compliments"?

Worn-out as most of these images may be, there is none the less one which remains moving, because of its brutal and implacable concision, a word quite precisely "thrown together" [*bâclé*], with that very haste that characterises disasters – I mean the word *débâcle*.

Employed regarding the war of 1870 by Zola, in a work which bears it as its title, and popularised above all to designate collapses in monetary value and financial crashes, this expression is still today very powerful, al the more powerful, indeed, since, given present circumstances, it could pass as prophetic. In effect life today finds itself caught fast and frozen into the thick industrial ice that could turn us all into corpses. The rivers of truly human relations are immobile and dead, the cold is setting in, the air is freezing and, just as in that winter of 1870-71, which the most frightful of old men love to recall, when the solidified Seine offered its back, it spine of frozen water, to the passage of carriages, pedestrians and wagons, the rivers of our sentiments are being transformed into arteries filled with a frozen congealing blood, boulevards for the tenacious animalculae of a state of affairs in which nothing has any r*aison d'être* other than an economic one, social relations are mean and filthy as lice, more difficult to support on our spinal columns

than whole wagon-loads of market-garden produce or omnibuses chock-full of men of necessarily ignoble countenance. Prisoners of this cold, as mummies are of their rigid bandages, in the grimacing poses of shameful paralytics, we make no move, we remain inert, we feel ourselves more, so to speak, like *lumps of wood*, and yet we hope for nothing so much as for the *debacle*...

If the river thawed, that would be the end of this traffic that confines us, this grotesque circulation of petty self-interest that bends us to the yoke and reduces us to worse than domestics. To escape from this dust-filled lumber-room in which we are mouldering, we and our tarnished cast-offs – rusty as the old sabre of a Reichsoffen cuirassier – it is necessary that our hearts, our muscles, our skin resume their natural state, at the same time find more their original violence, that of the times of deluges, of ice-age cataclysms and tidal waves, to smash and break the banks, centuries-old dams, and expand over every land, be they uncultivated wastes, fields, towns, hamlets, drowning in their passage everything that is lacking in humanity, and in the end evaporate so that this resurrection transforms itself forthwith into defeat and, in short, has as its final result – after first smashed what was hostile and alien to it, and then itself being changed into a chimerical vapour – that of annihilating *absolutely everything*.

Hygiene:

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The man who rubs his skin with a friction-glove until it is a vivid red, cleans his teeth with an American product, or indeed takes a cold shower after some physical exercise, imagines he is acting with the sole aim of keeping himself in good health, thanks to a properly understood hygiene, the admirable benefit of this century of reason. "*Mens sana in corpore sano*," say those in favour of Latin tags. Should one prefer the simpler wisdom of railway stations: "He who weighs himself frequently, knows himself well. He who knows himself well, keeps well." He hardly suspects, that clean-shaven man with his neatly combed hair, that he is accomplishing a magical rite, fit to allow him to appear, mace or lance in hand, next to primitive men.

It has long been believed that many of the prescriptions concerning taboos were no more than rules of hygiene in disguise. "Be thou circumcised," "Abstain from eating beans," "Wash your hands with sand" [1]: so many commandments that passed for having been invented by wise legislators, anxious to maintain their people in good health. However it seems today that things might be quite the contrary and that our modern hygiene might be a species of taboo, more or less rationalised.

Primitive man, who was not forever washing, was none the worse for that. Cleanliness has no *raison d'être* outside of very limited circumstances, prior to carrying out certain rites, being itself no more than a rite of purification, a wholly moral purification, addressing itself to exclusively mystical forces.

What clearly demonstrates the ritual, and

consequently moral, nature of our practices of cleanliness is the contempt clean people have for dirty people. A man who does not wash is taken by the former for a genuinely inferior being, if not immoral. There is something essentially religious in cleanliness and, in the last analysis, the disdain of the bourgeois for the worker rests, even more than on the difference in culture, on the difference in cleanliness. A *coarse mind, coarse language*, means a *dirty mind, dirty language*. On the scale of metaphysical values, matter is situated lower than mind, solely because it is dirtier. And the disgust at dirtiness can be explained in no other way than by the antique and magical notion of impurity. Evil odours attract evil spirits. One protects oneself from these by breathing in the incense of temples and churches; by avoiding, on the other hand, contact with those who eat garlic-sausage or have smelly feet...

In our time, now that religious values find themselves on the decline, religions, to save themselves, are increasingly tending to merge with hygiene. The Salvation Army, temperance societies, the leagues against public immorality, the benevolent societies, so many organisations of a religious origin whose real aim is to create a *mystique of hygiene*. That's how the fast-one gets pulled: the worker's sole ambition is now to have a bathroom; those who are clean can go on believing they are the pure in heart, and the world goes on turning. And since there are no crimes, errors or weaknesses other than against sacrosanct hygiene (to kill a man, is that not, in the gravest way, to violate his "hygiene"?), everybody will soon be moral, thanks to Cadum soap, self-aware, thanks to Pink Pills, the enemies of

pallor, powerful and strong because their ancestors of genius have invented antiseptics, medicinal mint-spirit and mains-drainage... [1] The followers of Pythagoras were forbidden (among other things) to eat beans. Islam enjoins ablution before prayer; in the absence of water, sand may be used.

Keaton (Buster):

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It is curious to observe, in our civilised societies, men retaining their childhood names. First-communion photographs, those showing us in the form of a baby, flat on our belly among furs, or indeed as well-behaved little boys, placed in the proximity (or not) of a pier-table or a column, make it clear to us that the only unity we truly possess is perhaps that of the name. Was Buster Keaton, as a child, really a phlegmatic individual, such as today we imagine him?

It seems to me that a portrait, even if it dates only from the previous year, is always a mockery. It is never more than a species of cadaver and constitutes, of itself alone, by the very fact of its existence, a bewitchment. To drag one's old portraits along in one's wake is to become, as it were, a serpent entangled in its old skins. Better, as often as one can, to change one's name, appearance, occupations, wife, ideas, friends: that is no doubt the only course that permits us, without shame, to tolerate the sight of a photograph showing us as a child, unless we possess – like the Buster Keaton of the films – an inviolable *sang-froid* such that, stiffened like a stake by the sword of humour and, never laughing, we become an axis about which the nonsensical trivialities of shifting events gravitate...

Metamorphosis 2. Out of the Self:

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Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and Apuleius' novel *The Golden Ass or Metamorphoses* will always number among the most poetic conceptions of the human mind, by reason of their very basis – that is to say, metamorphosis.

I feel sorry for those who have not, at least once in their lives, dreamt of turning into one or other of the nondescript objects that surround them: a table, a chair, an animal, a tree-trunk, a sheet of paper... They have no desire to get out of their skins, and this peaceable contentment, untroubled by any curiosity, is a tangible sign of the insupportable bumptiousness that is the most obvious prerogative of the majority of mankind.

To remain at ease with oneself, like wine in a wineskin, is an attitude contrary to all passion, and consequently to everything that is really worthwhile. No doubt that is of a nature to satisfy lovers of stagnant bogs, but in no way those consumed by a higher ambition.

Not to mention the magical artifices that would *really* permit the accomplishment (albeit for a more less lengthy period) of this metamorphosis, it is certain that nothing counts short of that which is capable of rendering a man genuinely *out of himself*, be it material ingredients or everything in life which, in one way or another, is liable to create a shattering and violent paroxysm.

Metaphor:

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(From the Greek *metaphora*, a transfer) is "a figure by which the mind applies the name of one object to another, because of a shared characteristic that allows them to be set beside one another and compared." (Darmesteter). Nevertheless, it is hard to know where metaphor begins and ends. An abstract word is formed by the sublimation of a concrete word. A concrete word, which designates an object only by one of its qualities, is itself hardly more than a metaphor, or at the very least a figurative expression. Moreover, to designate an object by an expression to which it corresponds, not figuratively but actually would necessitate knowing the very essence of that object, which is impossible, since we can only know phenomena, not things in themselves.

Not only language, but the whole of intellectual life is based of transpositions, of symbols, which can be described as metaphorical. On the other hand, knowledge always proceeds by comparison, which connects all known objects to one another in relations of interdependency. Given any two among them, it is impossible to determine which is designated by the name proper to it and is not a metaphor of the other, and vice versa. A man is a moving tree, just as much as a tree is a man who has put down roots. In the same way, the sky is a rarefied earth, the earth a denser sky. And if I see a dog running, it is just as much the *run that is dogging*. Even this article is metaphorical.

Pensum: [1]

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Most forms of activity impose themselves on man as pensums, even in the case of activities he appears to have chosen freely. Few painters produce pictures other than by way of pensums, works imposed on them by an alien, and often hateful, hand. How many writers harness themselves to their novel and voluntarily reduce themselves to the rank of plough-horses, or asses, loaded, now with cereals, now with relics. How many people, likewise, enjoy themselves not to enjoy themselves but in order to perform a species of rite...

Everything is hateful when it is done as a pensum. All white-men are failures, for not one of them (or as near as may be not one of them) is really capable of enjoying himself. Leaving aside children who set fire to haystacks, derail trains or dream up great massacres of animals, I know scarcely any but sinister pedants who, chewing on their pen holders, sweat blood and water so as to write out to the bitter end their calamitous pensums... [1] Pensum, according to the OED: "A charge, duty. Or allotted task; a school-task or lesson to be prepared; also (U.S.) a lesson or piece of work imposed as a punishment, a school Œimposition.'"

Reptiles:

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A white serpent emerging from the right eye-socket of a skull and re-entering by the left eye-socket – or vice-versa – in such a way that its head or the end of its tail are always, one or the other, inside the skull, symbolises for some the eternal destiny of things, the Great Year of the Pythagoreans [1], the general rhythm of the world with its alternations of dispersion and concentration. One is aware, on the other hand, of the role of the tempter in Genesis and the phallic significance everywhere attached to the serpent.

In Cairo, in the form of the wooden lizard (or crocodiles?) that many prostitutes hang over their doors by way of an immutable sign, I have perhaps seen the trace of the crocodile sacred to the Egyptians.

The wriggling of serpents, in the depths of swamps and in dungeons, their strange intertwinings, their combats with fangs, knots or venom will always be the exact image of human existence shot through from top to bottom by death and love.

[1] The Platonic, Great, or Perfect year (Annus Magnus), was estimated by early Greek astronomers at about 26, 000 years, at the end of which all the heavenly bodies are imagined to have returned to the places they occupied at the creation.

Skyscraper:

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Like everything which has about it a prestige of exoticism, the tall buildings of America lend themselves, with an insolent ease, to the tempting amusement of comparisons. The most immediate is, beyond doubt, that which transforms these edifices into modern *towers of Babel*. But trivial though such a comparison may be, it is nevertheless of interest (by the very reason of its immediacy) in confirming the psychoanalytic content of the expression "skyscraper."

One of the innumerable versions of the story of the struggle between father and son is the Biblical narrative concerning the erection of the Tower of Babel. As in the myth of the Titans, we find here the attempt to climb up to the sky – that its to say, to dethrone the father, to possess oneself of his virility – followed by the destruction of the rebels: castration of the son by his father, whose rival he is. Furthermore, the coupling, rash though it may be, of these two words, the verb "scrape" on the one hand, and, on the other, the substantive "sky," immediately evokes an erotic image in which the building, which scrapes, is a phallus even more explicit than the Tower of Babel, and the sky which is scraped – the object of the desire of the said phallus – is the incestuously desired mother, as she is in all attempts at the spoilation of the paternal virility.

To that degree, skyscrapers, the grandiose ornament of North American cities and the instruments of a luxury and comfort as yet unknown in Europe, are marvellous and modern symbols – as much by their name as their form – of one of the most important human constants: that which was the cause of Laius' murder by his son, of the final disaster of Phaeton, indeed of certain social upheavals and a fair number of inventions, the *Oedipus* complex which is, without possible contradiction, one of the most powerful factors in evolution or, if one believes in it, of "progress," since it implies a desire no less for substitution than for joyful demolition.[1]

[1] Laius was Oedipus's father. Phaeton, the son of Helios (the sun-god), sought to drive his father's chariot, came a cropper and thereby turned Libya into a parched desert and blackened the inhabitants of Africa; Zeus saved the world from being fire by shooting him down.

Spittle 2.

Mouth Water:

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We are so accustomed to the sight of our fellow creatures that we are rarely notice what is monstrous in each of our structural elements. Eroticism releases, ever so slightly, great lightning flashes that, on occasion, reveal to us the true nature of a given organ, suddenly restoring both its whole reality and its hallucinatory force, while simultaneously installing as sovereign goddess the abolition of hierarchies – those hierarchies within which we habitually grade, for better or for better or for worse, the different parts of the body. Some we place at the top, others at the bottom (according to the value we attach to the different activities controlled by them): eyes at the summit – because they would seem to be admirable lanterns – but the organs of excretion as far down as possible, below any waterline, in the humid vaults of a sea stagnant with distress, poisoned by a million sewers...

Just below the eyes, the mouth occupies a privileged position because it is both the locus of speech and respiratory orifice. It is considered the cave where the pact of the kiss is sealed rather than the oily factory of mastication. One the one hand, it requires love to restore to the mouth the mythological function (the mouth is merely a moist and warm grotto garnished nonetheless with the hard stalactites of teeth, and, lurking within its inner reaches, the tongue, that guardian of Lord knows what treasures!) Spittle, on the other hand, casts the mouth in one fell swoop down to the last rung of the organic ladder, lending it a function of ejection even more repugnant than its role as gate through which one stuffs food.

Spittle bears closely on erotic manifestations, because like love, it plays havoc with the classification of organs. Like the sexual act carried out in broad daylight, it is scandal itself, for it lowers the mouth – which is the visible sign of intelligence – to the level of the most shameful organs, and, subsequently, man in general to the state of those primitive animals which, possessing only one aperture for all their needs – and thereby exempt from that elementary separation between the noble and the ignoble) – are still completely plunged in sort of diabolical and inextricable chaos. For this reason, spittle represents the height of sacrilege. The divinity of the mouth is daily sullied by it. Indeed, what value can we attach to reason, or for that matter to speech, and consequently to man's presumed dignity, when we consider that, given the identical source of language and spittle, any philosophical discourse can legitimately be figured by the incongruous image of a spluttering orator?

Spittle is finally, through its inconsistency, it definite contours, the relative imprecision of its colour, and its humidity, the very symbol of the formless, of the unverifiable, of the non-heirarchised. It is the limp and sticky stumbling block shattering more efficiently than any stone all undertakings that presuppose man to be something – something other than a flabby, bald animal, something other than the spittle of a raving demiurge, splitting his sides at having expectorated such a concentrated larva: a comical tadpole puffing itself up into meat insufflated by a demigod.

Talkie [1]:

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After a certain number of sound movies – at least one of which, *Our Dancing Daughters*, will certainly mark an important date in the history of cinema, not so much for technical reasons as because it signals the appearance of a totally new form of sentimentality in films, with the charm of an easy life, unspoiled by any concern other than to show the protagonists of a sparkling youth and grace – here at last we have a real talkie, with retorts rebounding back and forth that sometimes add a sort of vocal close-up to the visual close-up.

The English language is the language of *love*, such is the great lesson of *Weary River*, and this is enough to make us forget a scenario of imbecile puritanism, illuminated only by great gleams of passion now and then pouring out their marvellous reds.

The narrow-minded have not failed in their grubby task with respect to talkies, warning of disaster, like they always do, in this case the end of cinema. Such a film gives the lie to them peremptorily despite its weaknesses, since what saves it is not so much a visual image here or there as the role-played by the voices in it. Which shows why talkies are interesting.

Thanks, then, to these talking films, from which we should expect everything (as *Weary River* has demonstrated), we can at last allow ourselves to be possessed body and soul by scenes of ardent sensuality, cast adrift on the raft of voices while everything collapses around us in sensuality, cast adrift on the raft of voices while everything collapses around us except perhaps, a troubling movement of lip or throat, a trembling of fingertips, an oracular speech issuing from the mouth of an amorous woman, with the heart-rending accent of the mountains, the sea, dimly lit taverns and prison bars at midnight, a beautiful voice, at once harsh and sweet, which has

travelled every road, every furrow, every path, in a region where perhaps we know no more about the sun than about the moving barriers of rain.

[1] Apropos of *Weary River*, showing at the Clichy-Palace cinema, September 1929.

Zdenko Reich:

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Sun

Sun:

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A form of solar cult in the Hautes-Alps at the beginning of the 19th century. – A very singular custom existed, around 1803, in a hamlet in the Hautes-Alpes called Andrieux, situated on the banks of the Severaire, in the arrondissement of Gap, commune of Guillaume-Perouse. To the south, the high mountains form a sort of barrier which blocks off the sun for a hundred days, between 1 November and 9 February.

In the local language this position on the northern slope of the mountain is called Ubac, as opposed to the Adret, the position on the southern side, continuously exposed to the sun. [1]

In this locality the difference between winter and summer is extremely pronounced. An immense and immobile shadow hangs heavily over the village for the entire winter. The historical festivals, introduced like that of Christmas, by Christianity, festivals about which, under normal circumstances all popular practices gravitate, fade into the background in Andrieux before the more grandiose spectacle imposed by the vagaries of nature.

Here is Ladoucette's description of the festival [2]:

"As soon as the night of 9 February is over and dawn breaks over the summits of the mountains, four shepherds of the hamlet announce the festival to the sound of fifes and trumpets; after having perambulated about the village, they make their way to the house of the oldest inhabitant, who presides over the ceremony and who, in this circumstance, bears the name of the Œvenerable;' they take his orders and renew their fanfares, giving all the inhabitants notice to prepare an omelette.

"Everyone then hastens to carry out the orders of the venerable. At ten, everybody, armed with an omelette, makes their way to the square and a deputation, preceded by the shepherds who begin to play on their rustic instruments, goes to the venerable to tell him that all is ready to begin the festival. Accompanied by the shepherds, the venerable leaves for the meeting-place where he is

received with many acclamations by all the inhabitants.

"The venerable takes place in their midst and after his having announced the object of the festival, they form a chain and execute a farandole about him, their plates of omelette in their hands.

"The venerable gives the signal to depart. The shepherds, who take the lead, again play on their instruments and they set off, in an admirably orderly manner, to make their way to a stone bridge situated at the entry to the village. Arriving there, each deposits his omelette on the parapets of the bridge and they proceed to a nearby meadow where farandoles are danced until the arrival of the sun.

"As soon as the first rays of sunlight begin to shine, the dancing finishes and each goes to reclaim his omelette, which he offers to the day-star. The old man raises it aloft, bareheaded.

"The venerable immediately announces the departure. They return in the same order as that in which they came; they accompany the venerable to his home, after which each goes back to his family, where they eat the omelette.

The festival lasts all day, and even extends into the night. They come together again towards the evening, and many families join together to celebrate."

The role of the shepherds demonstrates the link between this festival and the seasonal life of society [3]. The first rays of the sun indicate the moment they should bring their herds out of the cattle-sheds. The beginning of the summer period also changes the inhabitants' way of living. This festival thus fall into the category of seasonal celebrations; it is distinguished only by the ritual consecrated to the return of the sun, inspired by the particular geographical situation.

The whole ceremony pivots around the ritual of the omelette, Laid on the parapets of the bridge, being the image of the sun, it attracts its likeness while the

inhabitants dance in the nearby meadow.

This ritual is completely specific by reason of the latent presence of the notion of the sacred. We recognise here a Christian influence. The sun, and consequently the omelette, are not sacred in the habitual sense. But the venerable raises the omelette aloft *bare-headed*, the sign of a religious act.

The dance too has an efficacious action. They dance only until such time as the sun's rays light up the village.

Then everything resumes it s orderly course. The sun has set; all that remains is to feast to one's heart's content. The consumption of the omelette is also a ritual act for, it must not be forgotten, the omelette having been exposed on the parapets of the bridge at the entry to the village, it possesses a portion of the essence of the sun.

The role of the venerable demonstrates the unity of the entire hamlet during the ceremony. The festival of the return of the sun is a public ceremony in which the community participates as a unit.

[1] Marcelle Vessereau, "*L'Adret et L'Ubac dans les Alpes occidentales*." *Annales de Géographie*, 15 Sept. !921 (XXXe Année, no. 167), pp. 321-3. For the same phenomenon in the Swiss Alps: Ch. Biermann, *Le Val de Conches-en-Valais. Essai sur la vie dans une haute vallée des Alpes suisses sous l'influence de l'altitude, du climat et du relief*, Lausanne, 1907, 8vo.

[2] J. Ch. F. Baron de Ladoucette: *Histoire, antiquités, usages des Hautes-Alpes, précédés d'un essai sur la topographie de ce département*, Paris, Fantin, 1820, 8vo., CLX, 208pp.

[3] See an essay on the relationship between festivals and the seasonal life of Eskimos: Hubert & Mauss, Année Sociologique, old series. Their results are applied in a study of the popular festival that preceded Christmas, Arch. De Religion suisse, 1916.

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Bonjour Brothers:

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These two 18th-century ecclesiastics made themselves "commendable by the severity of their morals, by their piety, their charity, and above all their talent for the pulpit," and founded the flagellant sect of the Fareinists, which disappeared in the Revolution.

After their installation at Fareins, "there was talk in the region thereabouts of miracles: a little knife with a red handle of a peculiar construction, of the sort of those described in *La Magie blanche dévoilée* acquired a singular celebrity. The curé had thrust it up to the hilt into the leg of a young girl, not only without causing her any harm, but he had cured her of a pain in that place. Some time afterwards a young girl requested the good curé to crucify her... just as Jesus Christ had been.

"This execution took place in the chapel of the Virgin attached to the church at Farreins, one Friday at three in the afternoon, in the presence of the two *curés*, the v*icaire* Furlay, of Father Caffe, Dominican, and ten or twelve persons of both sexes who numbered among the adepts. These miracles produced the desired effect: they drew to the Bonjour brothers a great number of proselytes, above all girls and women; they would assemble in a barn during the night, without any light, and the priest would gain access by a window. There he would wield the discipline to right and left, without rhyme or reason, and the penitents, far from uttering cries of pain, expressed their satisfaction in cries of joy, calling their fustigator "my little father."

Individually, indeed, these fanatics would pursue him into the fields, supplicating him to deal them blows with a stick. They were happy only when their little father had given them a good thrashing, and they avidly sought every occasion for these.

These disorders were interrupted following upon the sudden death of a man who protested against these practices and was found stabbed with a needle. The two priests and the *vicaire* Furlay were locked up or sent into exile. The younger one having meanwhile succeeded in escaping, he took refuge in Paris; the crucified girl and another prophetess came there to rejoin him. He sent the former away in the month of January, barefoot, with five nails driven into each heel; she had spent an entire Lent eating only a round of toast spread with human dung each morning."

(After F. Ozanam, from the *Biographie Universelle* of Michaud and Poujoulat, vol. V, pp. 14-15.)

Cults:

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Los Angeles, 6th October. – Police carrying out a search of the cellar of a house in which was practised one of the mysterious cults so widespread in the city discovered the body in a hermetically sealed chest, alongside the bodies of seven small dogs.

Mrs Willa Rhoades, "princess" of the cult and adoptive mother of the victim, would appear to have acknowledged that the woman whose body was discovered died while following a course of medical treatment prescribed by the cult.

The body had been preserved in ice for more than one year, in the hope of a resurrection.

The presence of the small dogs was supposed to facilitate that resurrection.

The headquarters of the cult was discovered as a result of the arrest of Mrs Blackborn, "queen of the order," and of her daughter, Mrs Angling Wieland, both accused of fraud. (Report in *The New York Herald*.)

Eye 4.

The Eye at the *Académie Française* :

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The *Académie*, presided over by M. Abel Hermant, has carried out revisions upon the expressions: *mauvais ¦il*, evil eye, *¦il de perdix*, soft corn between the toes, *¦il pour ¦il*, an eye for an eye, *tape à l'¦il*, to ogle, to wink.

Man (1):

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"An eminent English chemist, Dr. Charles Henry Maye, set out to establish in a precise manner what man is made of and what is its chemical value. This is the result of his learned researches:

" The bodily fat of a normally constituted man would suffice to manufacture seven cakes of toilet-soap. Enough iron is found in the organism to make a medium sized nail, and sugar to sweeten a cup of coffee. The phosphorus would provide 2,200 matches. The magnesium would furnish the light needed to take a photograph. In addition, a little potassium and sulphur, but in an unusable quantity.

These different raw materials, costed at current prices, represent an approximate sum of 25 francs." (*Journal des Débats*, 13 August 1929.)

Man (2):

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Sir William Earnshaw Cooper, in a book entitled *La Culpabilité sanguinaire de la Chrétienté* (translated by J. Charpentier, Paris, M. Carpenter) [1], gives prominence to the well-known fact that not one of the millions of animals man massacres every year is necessary for his nourishment. In seeking to characterise the *red and hideous bloodstain* on the face of man, he expresses himself thus:

"If, taking the animals put to death in a single day in all the slaughterhouses of the Christian countries, we set them walking head to tail, with only sufficient space between them that they do not tread on one another, they would stretch in Indian file for 1322 miles – more than thirteen hundred miles of warm, palpitating living bodies, dragged each day, as the years go by, to the Christians' bloody slaughterhouses, so that they might quench their thirst for blood at the red fountain gushing from the veins of their murdered victims...

"A calculation based on very modest figures shows the quantity of blood shed each year in the slaughterhouses of Chicago is more than sufficient to float five transatlantic liners..."

[1] The English Original, *The Blood-Guiltiness of Christendom (May We Slay For Food?),* was published in 1922 by *The Order of the Golden Age*, which seems to have been a group of militant nationalist vegetarians. Other works include: The Murder of Agriculture, Socialism and its Perils,

Britain for the Briton and Spiritual Science, Here and Hereafter. The quotation is from page 33.

Work:

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"I have no idea what the meaning of work is in our epoch, but I believe virtuosity is an infirmity, knowledge a dangerous asset, and I am well content to have some genius and no talent, which allows me not to work, and to play like a child: Work is an ostentatious thing, ugly and bogus as Justice." – K. Van Dongen. [1]

[1] *Bulletin de L'Art ancien et moderne*, Sept.-Oct. 1929, p. 338. Dongen (1877-1968) was a painter, originally associated with the anarchistic satirical review *L'Assiette au Beurre* around the turn of the century. Later an associate of Picasso, he then became a somewhat celebrated "society" portrait painter.

Angel 1.

The Angels:

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"The garments of angels are real garments, visible and palpable; they even change them, not on account of their wearing out, but because angels change in station, and the Lord dresses them according to their present manner of being. I have myself a thousand times seen them in garments different from those in which I had seen them previously...

"The angels live among themselves as men live on earth; they have lodgings and houses, more or less magnificent according to the rank of each. I have sometimes conversed with angels concerning this; they told me they were greatly surprised that those who gave themselves out as being learned, and were reputed as such in the Church and the world were as ignorant as they are concerning this matter, after having heard from Jesus Christ himself that in his Father's house there are many mansions.

"I know from my own experience what I have called angels' dwellings, for every time I have spoken with them, I have done so in their quarters and I have found these similar to the habitations of men on earth: but nevertheless far more beautiful. In them are seen porticoes, courtyards, vestibules, antechambers, bedrooms, living-rooms, halls, flower beds, gardens, orchards and fields." (Emmanuel Swedenborg, *The Marvels of Heaven and Hell*)

"Note. – The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels &

God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's Party without knowing it." (William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.)