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The Theory of Bloom



Tiqqun

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Olympia, January 19, 2010

A version of this text appeared in the first issue of *Tiqqun*, a French journal, in 1999. It was later refined and published in book form as *The Theory Of Bloom* by La Fabrique Editions in 2000. Some of the people arrested in France in 2008 and accused of writing *The Coming Insurrection* were involved in the creation of *Tiqqun*.

Like anything else, you will either find something that resonates with you in this text, or you will not. We have provided an appendix so that some of the connections within it will not remain obscure. We recommend that you read the appendix.

Nothing is simple. Nothing is complex. Nothing is faceless. You will find many labyrinths, dead-ends, portals and ladders in this text. But above all, if you are a discerning reader, you will glimpse Nothing. You cannot give Nothing a face. You cannot articulate what Nothing is. Nor can we.

This text is a pact. This text is a labor of love. This text is a gift, to you.

Letter to the editor

Paris, November 24, 1999

Dear Eric,

You will find enclosed the new version, largely augmented and divided into sections, of *Men-machines, Directions for Use*. Despite its appearance it does not behave like a book, but like an *editorial virus*. The Book is a dead form, in so far as it was holding its reader in the same fraudulent completeness, in the same esoteric arrogance as the classic Subject in front of his peers, no less than the classic figure of "Man".

The end of an institution always perceives itself like the end of an illusion. And indeed, it is also the content of truth that causes this outdated thing to be determined a delusion, which then appears as such. So that beyond their character of ending, the great books have never ceased to be those which succeeded in *creating* a community; in other words, the Book has always had its existence *outside of the self*, an idea which was only completely accepted fairly recently. It even seems that somewhere on the left bank of the Seine there would still camp a certain tribe, a community of the Book, who would find in this doctrine all the elements of a heresy.

You are well placed to ascertain that the end of the Book does not signify its brutal disappearance from the social circulation, but on the contrary, its absolute proliferation. The quantitative abundance of the Book is only one aspect of its present vocation to nothingness, just as its seaside consumption and its demise at the book-pulper are two other aspects of this vocation.

In this phase there are indeed still books, but they are no longer there to shelter the corrosive effects of EDITORIAL VIRUSES. The editorial virus exposes the principle of incompleteness, the fundamental insufficiency that is in the foundation of the published work. With the most explicit mentions, with the most crudely convenient indications – address, contact, etc. – it increases itself in the sense of realizing the community *that it lacks*, the virtual community made up of its real-life readers. It suddenly puts the reader in such a position that his withdrawal may no longer be tenable, a position where the withdrawal of the reader *can no longer be neutral*. It is in this sense that we will hone, sharpen, and clearly define *The Theory Of Bloom*.

[...]

Amicably,

Junius Frey

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Mr. Bloom watched curiously, kindly, the lithe black form. Clean to see: the gloss of her sleek hide, the white button under the butt of her tail, the green flashing eyes. He bent down to her, his hands on his knees.

-Milk for the pussens, he said.

-Mrkgnao! the cat cried.

They call them stupid. They understand what we say better than we understand them.

James Joyce, *Ulysses*

At this hour of night

The grand watchmen of the night are dead.

Without doubt, ONE has killed them.

The feeble light of their solitary stubbornness, impaired by lack of sleep. At least that is what we believe to discern, we who come so late, to the embarrassment that our name still incites at certain moments.

Every living trace of what they did and what they were appears to have been erased by the maniacal will of rancor. Finally, this world has left of them only a handful of dead images that it bathes with the glow of its filthy satisfaction in having vanquished those who were, nevertheless, better than it.

So here we are, orphans of the highest class, abandoned into a world of ice with no fire burning on the horizon. Our ancestors ensure that our questions remain unanswered, then they confess all the same: *“Never was there a darker night for intelligence.”*

Who are you really?

The beautiful snow-covered countryside quickly glides across the length of the window. The distance between V. and R., which was formerly a matter of a week, will now be traveled in less time. For less than an hour we are the occupant of a seat in any one of twenty identical cars of this train running at full speed, as are so many others. The orderly and, without doubt, optimal design of the seats unfolds in the abstract harmony of a dulcifying neon light. The train follows its rails and in this car, so quietly conformed to the idea of order, it seems that human reality itself follows invisible rails. A prudent and polite indifference resides in the space that separates you from the woman in the seat beside you. During the voyage, neither of you will have to feel the superfluous need to speak to the other, much less engage in a discussion. That would disrupt your absent-mindedness and, for your neighbor, the careful study of the feminine periodicals (“how to sleep with a man without him noticing”, “soft-core flirting”, “gifts *that have meaning*”, “is he a good lay?”, “who are you REALLY?”, etc.). When her cell-phone rings, the young woman will not consider it necessary to get up either: *“Hello?...wait, I don’t have reception here!... are you fucking with me or what?... listen, this makes three weekends that I’ve been stuck with the kids, I work all week and I already have trouble finding time to live, so...no, no, and no, I can’t, work it out, its not my problem...we have our own lives, you’ve screwed up mine enough already...how many times do I have to tell you: this weekend I’m going out with Jerome, that’s that...oh yeah, and how will that work? With the kid who’ll be driving me crazy, constantly sniveling ‘where’s daddy?’...*

dammit, because you're her father!... it's not debatable...I don't give a fuck, you're taking them this weekend... tough shit for her, find someone more flexible...I'm warning you, if there's no one there I'm leaving them with the doorman...no, I'm being very reasonable...that's it, bye."

The scene repeats itself in all its banality. It is fresh evidence. It comes like a slap in the face, brutally at first, but we have had to prepare ourselves over the years, by scrupulously becoming perfect strangers to one another: colorless existences, indifferent presences, without depth. At the same time, none of this could be apparent if we were not henceforth *completely intimate in this strangeness*. Then the strangeness may become the mark of our similarity to each other, so that we will be, from every perspective – *of the Bloom*.

If the Bloom also occurs in books, it is primarily because everyone has already met it in the street, and then later in himself or herself. What comes next serves to confirm that.

One day, closer attention is paid than usual to the collective silence of an underground metro, and one allows oneself to be overcome, behind the mutual ruse of contemporary habits, by a shuddering of one's core, a primitive terror, vulnerable to all suspicions.

Last man, man of the street, man of mobs, man of the masses, mass-man, is the ONE we have primarily portrayed as the Bloom: like the sorry product of the time of the multitudes, like the catastrophic son of the industrial era and of the end of all spells. But there also, in these nominations, is the shuddering: ONE shudders before *the infinite mystery of the common man*. Each senses behind the theater of their social conditions a pure power sheltered there, a pure power of which we are all *supposed* to remain ignorant.

Although we believe it to be alleviated, the essential anxiety remains as one and all are required to maintain a stringent neglect of self: the ignorance of that *common* power that became indescribable because of its anonymity. The Bloom is the name of that anonymity.

Kairos ⁽¹⁾

In spite of the extreme confusion that reigns at its surface, and perhaps because of it, our time is by nature *messianic*.

From there it is necessary to understand that the very ancient distinctions fade away, that the divisions several times millennial are divided in their turn.

The epoch principally reduces itself to a unique reality for the *distraction* of this reality. The contemporary non-societies are more and more visible; these imperative fictions are *completely* divvied up between pariahs and social climbers. But the social climbers are themselves nothing but pariahs who *misrepresented* their rank, who would like to live it down at all costs, but it *always* catches up to them in the end. One could very well say that in this time, in accordance with another division, there is no longer anything but slackers and the restless; when all is said and done, the restless were only slackers attempting to *cheat* their essential idleness. The pursuit of “deep sensations”, of “true-life intensity”, which to so many of the hopeless seems the ultimate reason for living, does it ever succeed in distracting them from the fundamental, affective tonality that fills them:

boredom?

The reigning confusion is the planetary display of all these *false antagonisms*, during which our central truth comes to light nevertheless. And that truth is that we are the tenants of an existence that is exiled in a world that is a desert, into which we were *thrown*, without a mission to accomplish, without assigned place or recognizable filiation, in complete neglect. We are at the same time *so little* and ever *too much*.

The true politics, the *ecstatic* politics starts there. With a brutal and enveloping laugh. With a laugh that undoes all the weeping pathos of the so-called problems of “unemployment”, of “immigration”, of “insecurity”, and of “marginalization”.

There is no *social problem* of unemployment, but only a *metaphysical event* of our *idleness*.

There is no *social problem* of immigration, but only a *metaphysical event* of our *strangeness*.

There is no *social question* of insecurity or marginalization, but this existential, inexorable reality that we are all alone, *alone in rendering it before death*,

that we are all, for all eternity,
finished beings.

It is for each to judge whether this is a serious affair or a social distraction.

The epoch that began in 1914, when the *illusion* of “modern times” finished collapsing, while the metaphysical completed *its realization*, sees ontology flowering in a pure state on every level of histo-

ry's surface. Such tectonic uprisings of the truth occur in those rare moments where the lie of civilizations begins to crumble. For example, our era fits in a curious constellation with the decline of the Middle Ages and the first Gnostic⁽²⁾ centuries of the common era. The same *Stimmung* ⁽³⁾ expresses this with the same radicality: finitude, perdition, separation. The "modern times" and the Christian West previously sprang from such flowerings, *in reaction*. Because of this parentage, it is forbidden to hold the affective tonality that will rule the twentieth century to be a simple "malaise in the civilization". At this point, it is not a matter of any subjective state of mind, of any capricious propensity towards despair or deploration: this tonality is, on the contrary, the most evident, fundamental element of our time, that which ONE works without respite to repress at each advance.

It is not that the men would have negatively "lost their bearings", it is that they *positively became of the Bloom*.

THE BLOOM IS THE FINAL EXCRESCENCE OF THE NATIVE

Henceforth, there is no longer anywhere but the Bloom, and *the flight of the Bloom*.

He no longer saw the future before him, and the past, in spite of all his efforts to find it explicable, resembled something of the incomprehensible. Justifications left in pieces, and the feeling of pleasure seemed to exhaust itself more each day. Journeys and long walks, which had formerly given him a mysterious joy, had become strangely horrible for him. [...] He was neither truly without homeland, nor honestly and naturally at home in any place, wherever in the world it might be. He would have liked very much to be an organ player, or a beggar, or a cripple, for to have some reason to invoke the pity and the charity of men, but still more ardently he wished to die. He was not dead, and yet...

Stimmung

The men of Kafka are, in a native sense, the same thing as the world of Kafka.

The comprehension of the *face* of the Bloom does not simply require the renunciation of the classical idea of the subject, which is a little thing; it also requires the abandonment of the modern concept of objectivity.

The term “Bloom” does not serve to satisfy, in an exotic manner, the lack in everyday language of a word designating the classical example of a human, recently appeared on the surface of the planet; a lack which it would prefer to keep.

“Bloom” designates a *Stimmung*, a fundamental tonality of being.

The *Stimmung* does not settle at the side of the subject, like a sort of humor in which perception would bathe; nor at the side of the object, liquefied version of the Spirit of the World: it is rather that thing *in the core of which*, at the classical age, the subject and the object, the world and I, were able to exist like this, that is to say, clearly distinct. Because the *Stimmung* is the “how” by which each being is the way it is; the tonality is not the neurotic, the fugitive, the simp—

...dead, not poor to the point of begging, and yet well and truly a beggar, but he did not beg, even now he still lived with elegance, even now, still bowed down, like a tedious machine, made commentary and felt indignant at it, appalled himself with it. As his own life appeared atrocious to him, his false soul, his poor body dead, the entire world alien, empty the gestures and the events that surrounded him.

Robert Walser, *Short Essays*

ly subjective, but indeed that which, at the heart, gives to each being *consistence* and *possibility*. The Bloom is the *Stimmung* inside which and beginning with which, in the present moment, we understand each other, and without which these words would be nothing but a succession of inane phonetics.

Historically, the Bloom names an uncommon *Stimmung*: that which corresponds with the moment of the retreat of the subject from the world and the world from the subject; at the moment when the self and reality find themselves in a suspended blow, and as such, are abolished. For this reason, the Bloom is the general *Stimmung*, where there may no longer appear anything but *Stimmung*, where what is considered to be the pre-eminence of the *Stimmung* manifests over all other reality.

In so far as it has ever-already impregnated the conceptual tools with which ONE could have purported to grasp it, the *Stimmung*, although perceptible, cannot be boarded and inspected, defined or analyzed “objectively”. The closest we can come to imagining it is as the Face that corresponds to it, the Face that is thought to be *the human power to configure worlds*. That is what is alluded to in this “theory”; it is then very much a *Stimmung*, but through the seizing of a face.

The Bloom therefore *also* names the spectral humanity, stray, unpleasantly vacant, that will never again obtain any content other than the *Stimmung* in which it exists; the crepuscular being for which there is no longer either reality nor the self, but only the *Stim-*

mung.

Mundus est fabula (4)

Because the Bloom is that which can no longer succeed in extricating itself from the immediate context that contains it, it has the appearance of a man *who does not discern*. Completely sinking into its own impression and foundering in the inconsequential flotsam of objective relations where life experiences itself negatively, in the indifference, the impersonality, the lack of quality.

The Bloom lives in the Bloom.

All around us spreads a petrified world, a world of *things* where we play the part of ourselves, with our ego, our gestures and perhaps even our emotions, like things. Nothing can belong to us by right in such a landscape of death. We are more and more like the exile, who is never absolutely sure of understating what goes on around him. In spite of the monumental dispossession, of the inexplicable suspension that henceforth strikes all there is, the universal machinery continues to *function* as if nothing had happened. By putting our isolation firmly behind it.

In this empire of ruins under perpetual renovation, there is nowhere where we may be able to find refuge; and we no longer even have the option of escaping into ourselves. We find ourselves delivered, without any say, to a boundless finitude, as outlined on the entire surface of our being.

The Bloom is therefore that man whom nothing can defend from

the world's triviality any longer. A reasonable mind concluded one day "*In actuality, the Bloom is the alienated man.*" But no: the Bloom is the man who has so completely combined himself with his alienation that it would be absurd to want to separate one from the other.

Empty angels, creatures without creator, mediums without a message, we walk among the abysses. Our path, which could just as easily have ended yesterday or years ago, does not have its reason in itself; it ignores all necessity outside that of its contingency. It is a wandering that carries us to and fro across the footpaths of the Identical: wherever we went, wherever we go, we carry inside ourselves the desert of which we are the hermit. And if certain days we can vow to be "the entire universe", like Agrippa von Nettesheim, or more ingeniously "all things, all men, and all animals", like Cravan, it is that we see in everything only the nothing of which we ourselves are so full.

But that Nothing is the absolute reality before which everything in existence becomes ghostly.

Ως μνη (5)

Nothing is more hermetic to the Bloom than those *men of Ancien Regime* ⁽⁶⁾ who pretend to participate fully and directly in life and who flaunt at every turn the firm conviction of their incarnation, of

their existence and the continuation of that same. For us, wherever we look, we cannot find that massive ego anywhere, that particular substance that ONE so generously lends to us as soon as we pretend to exist.

Just as every harmonious ethicality that could give consistency to the illusion of an “authentic” ego is lacking from then on, likewise, everyone who could make believe in the univocity of life, or in the categorical positivity of the world have disappeared. In truth, our “sense of reality” never remains but a modality restricted to this “sense of the possible that is the faculty with which to think of all that could be ‘as well’, and with which to no longer accord importance to everything which is of that which is not” (Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*). Under commercial employment, the truth that is *the most concrete* over all else is that of its infinite substitutability.

All situations where we find ourselves engaged, carry in their equivalence the infinitely repeated mark of an irrevocable “as if”. We collaborate in the maintenance of a “society” *as if* we were not of it, we conceive the world *as if* we did not occupy a fixed position in it and continue to grow old *as if* we had to stay young forever. In a word: we live *as if* we were already dead.

-- And that is certainly the most painful paradox that exists in the Bloom: its living body, its speaking physiology; it no longer knows to listen to them. Even though ONE wants to make them known each instant, sexually.

Whether it may be a female or male body or even a body with indiscernible form, the flesh of the Bloom is still prisoner to the non-sensual sexuation that permeates it. But that omnipresent and yet

never real-life sexuation is no longer anything but the source of a dull and persistent suffering, like that of amputees for a limb that no longer exists. Thus the essentially spectral character, the sinister aura of mass contemporary pornography: it is never but the presence of an absence. In the entirely semiotic world of the Bloom, a phallus and a vagina are only symbols that refer to other things, to a referent that can no longer be retrieved in a reality that is endlessly vanishing. The flesh of the Bloom is sad and without mystery.

It is not sex that we must reinvent: we already live amongst the rubble of sexuality, and our body itself is a vestige. The Bloom cannot transform the sexual roles that it has *inherited by default* from traditional societies, frozen as it is in an inexorable pre-pubescent phase. Bloom males and Bloom females thus continue the same tired dance of classical sexuations. But their gestures are shattered. Their dance is a labor. They stumble. It is painful to see. --

Things among things, the Bloom holds itself outside of everything in a forsaking identical to that of our universe. It is alone in all company and naked at all events. It is there that it reposes, in the extenuated ignorance of self, of its desires and of the world, where life runs over the rosary of its absence. All the living contents exchange themselves indifferently in it, at the mercy of a sort of existential tourism. We forgot joy as we forgot suffering, we became illiterate of the sphere of emotions, we perceive them only as diffracted echoes. Everything is worn out to our backwards eyes, even misfortune. And perhaps in the end the disaster resides here: finding no one in support of either doubt or certitude.

All that I do and think is only a Specimen of my potential. Man is more general than his life and his acts. He is like a preview for more eventualities than he can know. Mr. Teste says: my potential never abandons me.

Valéry, *Monsieur Teste*

For a being who is attached to life only by such a tenuous bond, liberty takes a sense so gaping and so ultimate that it can no longer provide him shelter. It is that which casts over his becoming a sense of complete spectacular futility, a terminal way in which to be a spectator of the world, himself included. In the eternal Sunday of his existence, the Bloom's interest still lies in never draining out the object, and that is why he himself is the *man without interest*.

In the sense that we do not achieve importance in our own eyes, but also in the sense that the bourgeois category of interest cannot strictly account for any of our acts, *disinterest* is no longer an expression of an individual idealism, but a mass phenomenon.

Assuredly, man is something that has surpassed itself. All those who loved their virtues have perished -- by them.

“Each is most estranged from himself”

The fundamental experience of the Bloom is that of its own transcendence by rapport with itself; but that experience, in spite of its beautiful sound, is primarily that of a powerlessness, of an absolute suffering.

If we keep that view of ourselves, we *are not* subjects, complete, autonomous beings, sovereign to the allegiance.

We evolve in a space that is entirely controlled, entirely *occupied*, by the Spectacle⁽⁷⁾ on one hand and by Biopower⁽⁸⁾ on the other. And what is so terrible about this control, about this occupation that they force us to endure, is that it is not something we might rebel against

in a definitive gesture of rupture, but with which we can only *compose strategically*.

The regime of power under which we live does not at all resemble the mechanisms of restriction, of purely repressive coercion, that could have circulated under the administrative monarchies, the expired concept of which lived until a recent date, even within biopolitical democracies. These mechanisms are the only enemy *recognized* by revolutionary movements.

The contemporary form of domination is, on the contrary, *essentially productive*.

On one hand, it rules all the *manifestations* of our existence – the Spectacle; on the other hand, it manages the *conditions* of the Spectacle – Biopower.

The Spectacle is the power that wants you to talk, that wants you to be *someone*.

Biopower is the benevolent power, full of the solicitude of a shepherd for his flock, the power that wants the salute of its subjects, the power that *wants you to live*. Held in the vice that is simultaneously all-encompassing and individual, ripening in a double constraint that annihilated us in the same act as it brought us into existence, most of us adopt a sort of political and hopeless nature: to feign internal death, and like the Captive before the Grand Inquisitor, keep silent. In subtracting *themselves* from all positivity, these spectres steal from a productive power that very thing upon which it could be exerted: themselves. Their desire not to live is all that gives them strength to oppose a power that claims to *make them live*. In doing so, they remain in the Bloom, usually burying themselves therein.

The Bloom therefore signifies this: that we do not belong to ourselves, that *this* world is not *our* world. That it is not only in its totality that it stands opposite us, but in the fact that it is alien to us even in its most intimate details. This alienness would be pleasant if it could implicate an exteriority of principle between it and us. But it does nothing of the sort. Our alienness to the world is such that the alien *is in us*, so that, in the world of authoritarian merchandise, we will regularly become aliens to ourselves. The ring of situations where we are forced to watch ourselves act, to contemplate the action of an ego in which we do not recognize ourselves, henceforth closes in and besieges us even in what bourgeoisie society still called “intimacy”. The Other *possesses us*: it is this dissociated body, a simple peripheral artifact in the hands of Biopower; it is our brutal desire to survive in the intolerable grid of miniscule subjections, of granulated pressures that constricts us tighter and tighter; it is the entirety of calculations, of humiliations, the petty-mindedness, the entirety of *tactics* we *must* deploy. All of this constitutes the mechanical objective to which we conform internally.

THE OTHER IS THE *ECONOMY* IN US

The Bloom also signifies this: that each knows that he for one *is not* himself. Even if, momentarily, we are able to have the opposite impression in front of something or other, and most often anonymously, we keep in our core the sentiment of an inauthentic existence, of an artificial life. The internal presence of the Other is established at all levels of our conscience: it is a minor and constant loss of being, a progressive draining, a little death continually distributed. In spite of this, we persist in assuming the exterior hypothesis of our identity in ourselves, we *play* at being the subject. A shame attaches to this

rending and grows with it. So, we attempt evasion, we project ourselves ever more violently outside, as far as possible from this dreadful interior tension. It is necessary that none of this shows and to stick to our social “identity”, remain foreign to our foreignness: KEEP UP A GOOD FACE, before the domain of ruins.

This lie is in each of our actions.

That is the essential point.

It is no longer time to make literature with various combinations of disaster.

Up until now, too much has been written and not enough thought about the Bloom.

Ens Realissimum (9)

The Ptoléméen (10), when looking around himself, finds only “two phenomenons: sociology and emptiness”. That is the necessary starting-point, not that which we believe to be – sociology- but that which we intimately experience as *lack*, because that is what is most real, the *ens realissimum*. The Bloom does not signify that we would be failing subjects in regards to the superb sufficiency of the classic subject; instead, it *reveals* that at the base of human existence there is a principle of incompleteness, a radical insufficiency. What we are is precisely *that failure*, which *can*, if it pleases, designate itself the *mask* of the subject.

Indeed, we are nothing, nothing but the nothing around which revolves the movement of our ideas, our experiences, our miseries and our sensations. Indeed, we are the empty axis of that wordless well, an axis that only exists via itself, if not for the reason that every circle possesses a center. But that ongoing deficiency comprehends itself as the ultimate positivity, which expresses itself thus:

I AM THE INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THAT WHICH I AM AND THAT WHICH I AM NOT.

The Bloom is very much this type of intermediary, but it is a *passive* intermediary, the *witness* of its own desubjectivation, of its interminable becoming-other. It regains that original difference of knowing that we are not what we are, that no predicate can exhaust our power.

Incompleteness is the mode of being of all who stay in contact with the power, the form of existence of all who are dedicated to *becoming*.

The most frightening host

Because it is the void of all substantial determination, the Bloom is indeed the most frightening host in man, in that a simple guest is passed off as master of the house.

Once it is lodged in us, we find ourselves saddled with a purely sartorial being. Whatever endeavor we undertake to buy ourselves back a substantiality, it always remains something contingent and inessential, in view of ourselves. The Bloom thus names the new and ageless nudity, the purely human nudity that disappeared under each attri-

bute and yet carried it, the nudity that precedes all form and renders form possible.

The Bloom is the masked Nothing. That is why it would be absurd to celebrate its apparition in history as the birth of a particular type of human: the man without quality *is not* a certain quality of man, but on the contrary *man qua* ⁽¹¹⁾, the final realization of the generic human essence, which is precisely the loss of essence, pure exposition and disposal: *larva*.

The bourgeois republic can boast of having given the first historic translation of scope and, after all, the model of that controlled ecstasy. In which, in a new way, the existence of man as a singular being finds itself *formally separated* from its existence as a member of the community. So, in the bourgeois republic, there where man is a recognized subject, he is truly abstract from all his own quality; he is a face without reality, a “citizen”, and wherever he passes for a real subject, in his own eyes and in the eyes of others, in his everyday existence, he is a face without truth, an “individual”. The classical age has, of the sort, posed principles, the application of which made the man into that which we know: the agregation of a double nothing, that of “consumer”, *untouchable*, and that of “citizen”, a derisive abstraction of powerlessness.

But the more the Spectacle and Biopower perfect themselves, the more the elementary appearance and conditions of our existence acquire autonomy, the more their world detaches itself from men and becomes strange to them, the more the Bloom reenters itself, goes deeper into itself and recognizes its interior sovereignty over ob-

jectivity. It detaches itself in an ever more painless fashion from its social determinations, from its “identity” and affirms itself, beyond efficacy, in pure strength of negation.

The condition of *exile* of men and of their common world in the formless, coincides with the situation of *existential clandestinity* that echoes them in the

The Me has a content that it distinguishes from self, because it is the pure negativity or the movement of splitting: it is conscience. This content is the Me in its difference as well, because it is the movement of destroying itself or is that same pure negativity that is Me.

Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*

Spectacle. It manifests the absolute singularity of each social atom as the absolutely ordinary, and its pure difference as a pure nothing. Assuredly, the Bloom is, as the Spectacle tirelessly repeats, *positively nothing*. In the sense of this “nothing”, only interpretations diverge.

-- Reaching this point, everybody sane will have concluded the constitutive impossibility of such a “Theory Of Bloom”, and will pass, needless to say, their foothpath. The cleverest split themselves with a paralogisme of the nature “the Bloom is nothing, and there is nothing to say about nothing, therefore there is nothing to say about the Bloom, in other words”, and will certainly regret having, for an instant, quitted their captivating “scientific analysis of the french intellectual field”. For those who read further, in spite of the evident absurdity of our intention, they must not at any moment lose sight of the unavoidably flickering character of the Bloom. Dealing with the human positivity of pure nothing leaves no other choice but to expose as quality the most perfect lack of quality, to expose as substance the most radical insubstantiality, at the risk of ending by giving a face to the invisible. Such a discourse, if it does not wish to betray its object, will have to make it emerge to let it, in the next instant, disappear anew, *et sic in infinitum* (12). --

Short chronicle of disaster

Although it may be the fundamental possibility that man never ceases to *contain*, the *real* possibility of possibility, experienced and practised many times in the course of centuries -- more by the Gnostics of the first centuries of our era than by the heretics of the Middle Ages (brothers of the Free-Spirit, kabbalists⁽¹³⁾ or mystics⁽¹⁴⁾ of the Rhineland), more by buddhists than by the Coquillards⁽¹⁵⁾ --, the Bloom does not appear as a dominant figure throughout historical evolution until the moment of metaphysical achievement, in the Spectacle.

The generation who perceived through their storms of steel the face of the Gorgon⁽¹⁶⁾, the generation of expressionism, of futurism, of constructivism, of Dada and then of surrealism, were the first to bear *as a whole* this terrible secret. It experienced there *something* which the radicality, the white calcination, did not find even in the vertigo of some 20 years of *proper* expression. All of the history of the century can be interpreted from then on as a series of *reactions* against what was glimpsed at that point, and *in which* we still keep ourselves. Because since 1914, it is not, as ONE could say, “civilizations” who know that “they are mortal”: it is *the market civilization*, such that it has spread from the Occident to the rest of the world, that knows that *it is going to die*.

In reality, that took more than one century -- summarily : after the symbolic irradiation-- of which the Bloom is the quasi-exclusive “hero” of all literature, from the Sengle of Jarry⁽¹⁷⁾ to the

Plume of Michaux, from Pessoa⁽¹⁸⁾ himself to *The Man Without Qualities*, from *Bartleby*⁽¹⁹⁾ to Kafka, forgetting of course *The Stranger*-of-Camus and the New Roman: that we leave to the holders of the baccalaureate⁽²⁰⁾. Although it had been approached more precociously by the young Lukàcs⁽²¹⁾, it is not until 1927, with the treatise *Being and Time*, that it becomes, strictly speaking, under the transparent rags of *Dasein*⁽²²⁾, the central non-subject of philosophy – besides, one has reason to see the first thought on the exclusive usage of Bloom in the vulgar french existentialism, which imposed itself later and more profoundly than its short vogue allowed it to foresee.

ONE has long been able to ignore the massive evidence of the Bloom in all its manifestations as a *simply literary* phenomenon, as *purely philosophical* exaggeration. Besides, ONE still practices it gladly; it lightens the atmosphere. It is in passing that ONE would very much like to forget that ONE is *politically* contemporary, to forget that the Bloom surges in literature at the same moment where literature as institution dislocates itself; in philosophy at the moment where it, *as regime of truth*, collapses.

In other terms, when Valéry writes: “*I experienced with a bitter and bizarre pleasure the simplicity of our statistical condition. The quantity of individuals absorbed all of my singularity, and I myself became indistinct and indiscernible*”,

He does not add a supplementary object to the venerable contemplation of the Aesthetic: he expresses *politically* what it means to be one body of many in the aggregate of a *population* managed by Biopower.

Uprooting

Each development of the market society demands the destruction of a certain form of immediacy, the lucrative separation by a *rapport* with that which was united. It is in that fission that the merchandise comes afterwards to invest, that it gives media coverage to and makes profitable, elaborating day after day the utopia of a world where each man would be, in all things, exposed to the single market. Marx admirably knew to decry the first phases of this process, albeit with the single solemn point of view of the economy: “*The dissolution of all products and activities into exchange values, he writes in the **Grundrisse**, presupposes the dissolution of all fixed personal (historic) relations of dependence in production, as well as the all-sided dependence of the producers on one another. [...] The reciprocal and all-sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another forms their social connection.*”

It is perfectly absurd to keep the persistent ravaging of all historical attachment, as of all organic community, for an economic vice of the market society that it would hold dear to the goodwill of men, in every reformism, to adapt. The uprooting of all things, the separation of every living totality into sterile fragments, and the autonomization of these within the system of value are the essence of the merchandise, the alpha and the omega of its movement. The highly contagious character of this abstract logic takes, in the homes of men, the form of a veritable “malady of eradication” which wants the eradicated to throw themselves into an occupation always tending

towards uprooting those who are no longer uprooted, or are so only in part, usually by the most violent methods: *who is uprooted uproots*. It returns to our epoch the doubtful prestige of having carried the proliferent feverishness and multitudinity of this “destructive character” to its acme.

Somewhere out of the world

“Be as the passers-by!”

Gospel of Thomas

The Bloom appears inseparably as product and cause of the liquidation of all substantial *ethos*, under the effect of the interruption of merchandise in the ensemble of human relations. It is thus itself *the man without substantiality*, the man who became *really* abstract, so as to have been effectively cut off from every milieu, dispossessed of all membership and then cast into wandering. So we know it as that undifferentiated being “who does not feel at home anywhere”, as that monad who does not belong to any community in a world “which only gives birth to atoms” (Hegel). Naturally, to admit the universality of the status of pariah, of our status as pariah, would be to mourn too many convenient lies, more for those who pretend to integrate themselves into this “society” than for those who integrate themselves into “society” by pretending to criticize it. The famous doctrine of the “new-middle-classes”, or alternatively of “the vast-middle-class”, then corresponds to a half-century of the denial of our bloomitude, of our cross-dressing. ONE would thus like to

seize anew, in terms of social class, *the dissolution of all social classes*. Because the Bloom is also the neo-bourgeoisie of today, which is so pathetically lacking the assurance of its own bourgeoisie that the proletarian no longer has even the vestiges of a proletariat behind it. At worst, it is the global petit-bourgeoisie, the orphan of a class that never existed.

As a matter of fact, just as the individual resulted in the decomposition of the community, so the Bloom results in the decomposition of the individual, or more precisely, of the *fiction* of the individual -- the bourgeois individual only ever existed on the freeways, and there are still accidents --. But one deceived oneself concerning the *human radicality* that represents the Bloom by imagining it to be of the traditional species of the “uprooted”. The suffering which, when experienced, puts all true attachments at risk from that moment on, took proportions so excessive that there is no longer any way to permit the *nostalgia* of an origin. It was necessary for that to be killed as well, in order to survive. So the Bloom is rather *the man without roots*, the man who decided to be at home in exile, who took root in the absence of place, and for whom uprooting no longer evokes banishment but on the contrary an ordinary situation. It is not the world that he lost, but rather the *taste of the world* that he had to leave behind him.

The loss of experience

As constatable Stimmung, as determined affective tonality, the Bloom

A completely new kind of poverty swooped down on men with this colossal technological development [...]. What value does any cultural heritage hold today if we are not connected to any experience? The horrible chaos of styles and views of the world of the last century showed only too clearly how hypocrisy or the abuse of authority leads us to consider it dishonorable to admit our misery. Thus, let us admit it: this poverty of experience is not only of private experiences but of human experiences. Is it not therefore a new kind of barbarism? Indeed it is. We make this declaration in order to introduce a new concept, a positive concept of barbarism. Because where does poverty in experiences lead the barbarian? It leads him...

attaches itself to the extreme abstraction of the conditions of existence that form the Spectacle. The most insane and, simultaneously, the most characteristic concretion of the spectacular *ethos* remains, on a planetary level, the metropolis. That the Bloom is essentially the man of the metropolis does not at all imply that it may be possible for the man to subtract himself from this condition, either by birth or by choice, because the metropolis itself has *no outside*, the territories that its metastatic extension does not occupy are nonetheless polarized by it, that is to say, they are determined *in every aspect* by its absence.

The dominant trait of the spectacular-metropolitan *ethos* is *the loss of experience*, the most eloquent symptom of which is certainly the formation of that category of “experience”, in the limited sense that one *has* “experiences” (sexual, athletic, professional, artistic, sentimental, ludic, etc.). In the Bloom, everything results from this loss, or is synonymous with it. Within the Spectacle, as with the metropolis, men never experience concrete events, only conventions, rules, an entirely symbolic second nature,

... to begin at the beginning, to take back things at the start, to make off with little from there, to build with the little he has and, in so doing, look neither to the right nor the left [...]. We have become poor. We have sacrificed, piece by piece, the heritage of humanity, and we have often pawned it for one hundredth of its value in order to receive in return the loose change of "the actual" [...]. Humanity prepares itself to outlive, if necessary, culture. And the crux is that humanity must do this while laughing. It is extremely possible that here or there this laughter renders a barbaric sound. Very well. Cannot the individual therefore give up, now and then, a bit of humanity to the masses who will return it to him one day with interest in capital and interest in interests?

Walter Benjamin, *Experience and poverty*

entirely constructed. It imposes there a radical schism between the insignificance of everyday life, called “private”, where nothing happens, and the transcendence of a history frozen in a sphere called “public”, to which no one has access.

But all of this falls more and more clearly into the jurisdiction of past history. At numerous points, the separation between the lifeless forms of the Spectacle and the “life without form” of the Bloom, with its monochromatic boredom and the silent thirst for nothing, cedes place to indistinction. The loss of experience has finally attained the degree of generality where it can, in its turn, be interpreted to be original experience, to be *experience of the experience as such*, as clear tendency towards Critical Metaphysics.

Metropolises of separation

Metropolises distinguish themselves from all other grand human formations foremost by having the greatest proximity, and often the greatest promiscuity, there coinciding with the greatest singularity. Never have men been reunited in such great number, but also never have they been separated to such a degree.

In the metropolis, man purely undertakes the trial of his negative condition. Finitude, solitude and display, which are the three fundamental coordinates of that condition, weave the decor of the existence of each within the grand village. Not the fixed decor, but

the moving decor, the combinational decor of the grand village, for which everybody endures the icy stench of their non-places.

The metropolitan *hipster* forms here; quite a remarkable type of Bloom in his intensity no less than in the extension of his legions: the imperialist fraction of the Bloom. The *hipster* is the Bloom who offers himself to the world as a bearable form of life, and in order to do so forces himself into a strict discipline of lies.

Final consumer of existence, struck with a definitive incredulity towards men no less than language, the *hipster* lives in the horizon of an interminable experimentation *on himself*. He has circumscribed the volume of his being and decided never to leave it, unless so doing would assure the self-promotion of his sterility.

So, he has replaced the emptiness of experience with the experience of emptiness, while awaiting the adventure for which he always keeps himself prepared but which never comes: all possible scenarios have already been written. Of ecstasy in deception, the solitary mob of *hipsters* ever-already disappeared, ever-already *forgotten*, follows doggedly their mislaid course, like a raft of suicidal people adrift, lost in a depressionist ocean of images and abstractions. It has nothing to transmit, nothing but the conventional formulas of missing pleasures and a life without purpose in a furnished nothingness.

In addition, the metropolis appears as the homeland of the election of the mimetic rivalry, the desolate yet continual celebration of “fetishism of the miniscule difference”. ONE performs annually the tragi-comedy of the separation: the more people are isolated, the more they resemble each other, the more they resemble each other,

the more they hate each other, the more they hate each other the more they isolate themselves. And there, where men can no longer recognize one another as participating in the edification of a common world, it is a chain reaction, a collective fission that everyone continues to catalyze.

It is exclusively the consideration of the face of the Bloom upon which depends the elucidation of some of the possibilities that our time contains. Its historical eruption determines for "our party" the necessity of a complete restructuring of theory as well as practice.

All analysis and all action that fail to consider this absolutely, condemn themselves to an eternality of the present exile. Because the Bloom, not being an individuality, does not allow itself to be characterized by anything it says, does, or manifests. For the Bloom, each instant is an instant of decision. It possesses not one stable attribute. No habit is likely to be a part of its being, as this would also lead to repetition. Nothing adheres to it and it adheres to nothing of that which...

At which point the loss of experience and the loss of community are one and the same, seen from different angles: the pedagogy of the metropolitan. However, it may be necessary to consider that there was not, and there never was, any community before our epoch, contrary to the nostalgia that a certain romanticism loves to cultivate, until it is among its adversaries. And these two affirmations are not contradictory. In spite of the Bloom, in spite of “the achieved separation”, in spite of the abandon without reserve that is ours, and, therefore, in spite of the perfect destruction of all substantial *ethos*, no community could be anything but a humus of falsities – falsity of membership to a class, to a nation, to a milieu – and a source of limitation. Because community became all of these things, *community has been annihilated*. Only a radical alienation of the Common could cause the innate Common to warp in such a way that solitude, finitude, and display, that is to say the only *true* tie between men, seems like the only *possible* tie between men. Beholding the past, that which ONE today qualifies as “community” has obviously effectively divided that innate Common, but in a way that is rever-

... seems its own; not even to “society”, which would like to lean on it. In order to acquire some lights for our time, we need to consider that there is on one hand the mass of those of the Bloom and on the other hand the mass of acts. All truth follows from this.

sable because it came second to the original. Also, it is to us that the Common returns, creating for the first time the experience of the true community, that which rests *on the assumption of separation, display, and finitude*.

Like the Bloom, the metropolitan materializes the infinite *possibility* of revival of the community, at the same moment as the integral loss of the community.

A geneology of the conscience of the Bloom

Bartleby is a white collar employee.

The diffusion inherent to the Spectacle of a mass intellectual labour, in which the mastery of conventional knowledge may be valued as exclusive competence, maintains an evident rapport with the form of conscience particular to the Bloom. And this is especially the case outside of situations where abstract knowledge predominates over all vital places, outside of the organized sleep of a world entirely produced as sign, the experience of the Bloom never achieves the form of a lived continuum to which it could add itself, but instead assumes the aspect of a series of inassimilable *shocks*.

This is why the Bloom has had to create an organ of protection for itself against the eradication with which the currents and the discordances of their exterior place menace it: instead of reacting with its senses to this eradication, the Bloom essentially reacts with intellect, in which the intensification of the conscience that the same situation

produces assure its physical preponderance. So, the reaction to these phenomena is buried in the least sensitive physical organ, in that which splits the deepest profundities of being. Its pure conscience is then the only thing that the Bloom may succeed in recognizing as its own, but it is a conscience that has become autonomous from life, which no longer nourishes it, but only observes it and, in intervals, dries up.

The Bloom cannot take part in the world in an internal way. It never enters there except in the exception of itself. That is why it presents such a singular tendency towards distraction, déjà-vu, cliché, and above all, an atrophie of the memory which confines it inside an eternal present. And that is why it is so exclusively sensitive to music, which alone can offer it *abstract sensations* -- it would here be necessary to evoke velocity and “friction coefficient”, which are also bloomesque pleasures, but this time it is *abstraction itself* which appears to them *as sensation*.

All that the Bloom lives, does, and feels remains external. And when it dies, it dies like a child, like someone who learned nothing. With the Bloom, the rapport of consumption is understood in the totality of existence, as the totality of existing. In its case, the commercial propaganda triumphed so completely that it actually conceives its world not as the fruit of a long history, but as the primitive conceives the forest: as his natural milieu. Many things illuminate themselves to whomever considers propaganda from this angle. Because the Bloom is indeed a primitive, but an *abstract primitive*. Let it suffice for us to summarize the provisional state in question in a sentence: *the Bloom is the eternal adolescence of humanity*.

The change of the type of worker by the face of the Bloom

The recent mutations of the modes of production within the late stages of capitalism largely worked in the sense of universal bloomification. The period of the *classic wage system*, occurring at the threshold of the 70s, contributed magnificently to this. Statutory and hierarchical wage labor have in effect acted as a substitute for the totality of other forms of social membership, in particular for all ways of living that are traditionally organic. It is there also that the dissociation of the singular man and his social existence began: from then on all power could only be *functional*, that is to say, delegated by anonymity: each "I" that tried to affirm itself could then only ever affirm its anonymity. But although there has only been, in the classic wage system, power without subject and subject without power, the possibility of mobilizing the subjective totality of a large number of men remained, by the development of a relative job stability, and of a certain rigidity of hierarchies.

Beginning in the 70s, the relative safeguard of job stability, which had permitted market society to impose itself in the face of a social formation, the traditional order, whose principal virtue was rightly the safeguarding of stability, lost all necessity with the annihilation of the adversary. It then engaged itself in a process of flexibilization of production, of precarization of the exploited in which we still find ourselves, and which, to this day, has not learned its utmost limits. It will soon have been three decades since the industrial world entered into a phase of automatic involution in which it will itself eventu-

ally dismantle the classic wage-earning classes step by step, *and will then propel itself from that dismantalization*. At that time we are then present for *the abolition of the wage-labor society on the same terrain as the wage-labor society*, that is to say, within the relations of domination that it commands. “Labor here ceases to act as a powerful substitute to an objective ethical fabric, it no longer holds the place of traditional forms of ethicality, having been elsewhere drained and nullified long ago.” (Paolo Virno, *Opportunism, Cynicism and Terror*) All the intermediary screens between the “atomized individual”, owner of his single “work force”, and the market where he must sell it have been liquidated to the point that each individual can finally hold themselves in perfect isolation in the face of the crushing autonomous social totality.

Nothing, from then on, can prevent the forms of production called “postfordist”⁽²³⁾ from generalizing themselves and with them the flexibility, the strained flux, the mobility, the “*management by project*” and the “enriched tasks” for “multi-purpose agencies”. Such an organization of labor, whose efficiency lies in inconstancy, “autonomy” and the opportunism of producers, has the merit of rendering impossible all identification of man with his social function, and would therefore be, in other words, highly productive of Bloom.

Born of the official admission to the general hostility towards wage labor that manifested itself after 68 in all industrialized countries, the present organization of production chose for its basis *that same hostility*. So, while its pioneering-goods -- cultural goods-- are born of an activity foreign to the narrow-minded cadre of the wage sys-

tem, its optimality lies in the cunning of each individual, that is to say on the indifference, or even the repulsion, that men feel towards their activity -- the present utopia of capital is that of a society where the totality of the capital gain stems from a phenomenon of generalized "resourcefulness". It is seen as the alienation of labor which has itself *been put to work*. In this context there appears a *mass marginality*, where "exclusion" is not, as ONE would like to let it be heard, the temporary drop in social standing of a certain fraction of the population, *but the fundamental rapport that each fosters with his own participation in social life*, and foremost the producer with his production. Labor has here ceased to be confounded with man as determination in a particularity. It is no longer perceived by the Bloom as anything but a contingent form of the general social oppression. Unemployment is only the visible concretion of the estrangedness of each from his own existence in the world of authoritarian merchandise.

The Bloom then also appears as the product of the quantitative and qualitative decomposition of wage-labor society. It is the humanity that corresponds to the modalities of production in a society that has become *definitively asocial*, and within which nothing between its members feels at all linked anymore. The lot that makes it so that it must adapt itself without respite to an environment that is in constant upheaval is also the apprenticeship of its exile in this world, in which it is, however, necessary for anybody who lacks the ability to truly participate to *pretend* to participate.

But beyond all its restrictive lies, it comes to understand itself little by little as *the man of non-participation*, as *the creature of non-belong-*

ing.

As the crisis of industrial society is burning, the livid face of the Bloom emerges under the titanic magnitude of the Worker.

The world of authoritarian merchandise

“It is with lashes of the whip that one leads the cattle to pasture.”

Heraclitus

There is for domination --and this term can only be interpreted as the rapport of *complicity* symbolically neurotransmitted between dominants and domineered-- the strategical necessity of new requisitions, of new subjections, in proportion to the autonomy that those of the Bloom acquire through their social *assignation*.

The maintenance of the central mediation of everyone and everything by merchandise requires that larger and larger parts of the human being be put under legal guardianship. In this perspective, we must observe the extreme diligence with which the Spectacle has discharged from the Bloom the cumbersome requirement of being, with what prompt solicitude the Spectacle took charge of its education as well as the definition of the complete panoply of conforming personalities and, finally, how it knew to extend its takeover to the totality of the explicable, the visible, of the codes from which all rapports and all identities are built. The development of Biopower since the eighteenth century, a development whose qualitative leap is marked by the Total Mobilization of 1914, is only understandable

in close relation to that. The minimum fare of man as a living being within biopolitical democracies, the application of the social force of integration, *even to the body*, and the ever-stricter management of the *conditions* of our existence constitute the counter-attack of domination against the *disintegration of individuality*, against the erasing of the subject within the Bloom. With the understanding that domination has *lost its grip*.

The productive character of the power which circulates within the world of authoritarian merchandise distinguishes itself from others by the way in which its control over behaviors in the world *functions*: usually, it is sufficient to bring the layout of public space under control, to arrange decor and the material organization of infrastructures to ensure the maintenance of order, and it is only through the power of coercion that the anonymous mass exerts itself upon *each of the power's elements*, so that it may respect the current abstract norms. In a city street, a metro corridor or a team of *collaborators*, the perfection of the system of surveillance resides precisely *in the absence of surveillance*.

The panoptical control operates all the better for being faceless. In the end, it doesn't care in the least whether its subjects reject or accept it, provided that they *outwardly* submit.

Militarization of disaster, concentration of domination

Since 1914, market domination has not known how to respond to the enormity of its disaster except through Total Mobilization. It is by a state of exception⁽²⁴⁾, sometimes manifest, sometimes latent, but *permanent* in every way, that domination pretends to contain the stream overflowing with its incoherence.

The first of these inconsistencies stems from what its development requires: the ever-extending production of possibilities in the same movement as the general abolition of their actualization. Market domination must then produce, at the same time as an overabundance of means, the overabundance of *terror* necessary for no one to use those means for themselves. The Bloom is the man of that terror, he who scatters it and he who suffers it: *the collaborator*.

The recent period, in the course of which brutal crises of control claimed to make entire existing sections conform to a categorical imperative of transparency and traceability, is marked by a rapid movement of *concentration of domination*.

Only a minority of conforming subjectivities, of which ONE requires a new fusion between life and work, personality and function, finds themselves co-opted into vital posts that intermittently become less numerous. The formation of such a Praetorian guard⁽²⁵⁾ of capital, of which the elements are not interchangeable in the inverse of the grand wage-earning mass, participates in that concentra-

tion of domination which is inseparably militarization of disaster. As the supernumeraries, they essentially work at *keeping one another occupied*, to mutually dispossess each other of their idleness, which indeed requires a genuine effort.

In the era of the general restructuring of domination, the Bloom finds itself hunted everywhere and within each individual, being the unemployed as well as the stranger or the pariah. That is why it must camouflage itself under so much artificiality, *because the Bloom is the face of the civilian in the midst of the universal militarization of disaster.*

Nasty substantiality

“All that you are, you are through me; all that I am, I am only through you.”

Hitler

The Bloom lives in terror, and primarily in the terror of being recognized as Bloom.

Everything happens as if in a mimetic hell where stifling one another has been unanimously judged as preferable to encountering the self.

Biopower arranges itself ever more visibly in an economy run by subjectifications and resubjectifications. There is then a fatality in the feverish enthusiasm of the industrial production of kit personalities,

of disposable identities and other hysterical natures. Rather than consider their central emptiness, men, in their great numbers, shrink before the vertigo of a total absence of *property*, of a radical indetermination, and therefore, at the core, before the abyss of their liberty. They still prefer to be engulfed in unpleasant substantiality, towards which, it is true, everything pushes them. We must then expect that they will come upon, in the course of an unequally latent depression, such and such buried root, such and such spontaneous membership, such and such noncombustible quality. French, excluded, wife, artist, homosexual, Breton, citizen, fireman, Muslim, Buddhist or unemployed, all is acceptable that permits the mooing on one mode or on another, eyes blinking in the face of the infinite, the miraculous “I AM...”

Therefore, any empty and consumable particularity and any social role will do, since it is only a question of conjuring its own nothing. And as all organic life is lacking its pre-chewed forms, they have never had long to wait before quietly reentering the general system of marketable exchange and equivalence, which reflects and guides them.

Nasty substantiality then signifies that ONE has consigned all its substance to the Spectacle, and this makes the *ethos* of the celestial community of spectators function. But, through a cruel ruse, this only accelerates the crumbling process of substantial forms of existence. Under the waltz of dead identities in which man prides himself in nasty substantiability, he inexorably extends their primary irresolution. Here, that which would have to mask a lack of individuality not only fails, but causes an increase in the untrustworthiness of anything that could survive there.

The Bloom triumphs first in those who flee from it.

The Bloom is the positive reality towards which the empire of simulacra beckons

It is vain to claim substantiality in the midst of the spectacle. After all, nothing is less authentic nor more suspect than “authenticity”. All that pride themselves in a *proper name* or claim to live according to itself can only be usurpation or foolishness.

By forcing each singularity to view itself as a private individual, that is to say, from a formal point of view exterior to itself, the Spectacle tears it apart from within and introduces in each singularity an inequality, a difference. It forces the ego to take itself for an object, to reify itself, to apprehend itself *as an other*. For whomever refuses to allow themselves to gain from a deadly peace, to detach themselves from all substance, the conscience finds itself being dragged into an endless escape, in a perpetual separation that spurs the imperative. In the application in all manifestations of life of its tireless work of domination, of anxious reflexivity, the Spectacle extracts the world from its immediacy in a continual spurt. In other words, it both produces and reproduces the Bloom: the *delinquent* who knows herself to be a *delinquent* is no longer a *delinquent*, she is a Bloom who *plays* at being a *delinquent*.

Many of the things that we call by millennial names have long ago ceased to exist. We do not need neologisms to replace these

Man is the indestructable being who can be infinitely destroyed.

Blanchot

The Indestructable is one : it is each man entirely, and all have it in common. It is the inalterable cement that binds men forever.

Kafka

This global night, this empty nothing which contains everything in its abstract simplicity, this form of pure anxiety...

Hegel

ancient terms: it is uniformly “Bloom” with which we must substitute them. There is no longer, for example, that allegedly substantial reality that was named “the family”, there are no longer even any fathers, any mothers, any sons nor sisters: there are only Bloom who play at being family, father, mother, son or sister. One will find little of everything else as well, of our days, of philosophers, of artists, or of writers: there is now almost nothing in these roles of figuration but Bloom who produce cultural merchandise and assume referential poses suited to their position. To cap it all, the peasants themselves have ended up resolving to play at being peasants. Apparently, it would be more profitable.

It is forbidden, under the present regime of *things*, for us to permanently identify with any particular content, but only *with the movement of tearing ourselves out of each of them*.

Sua cuique persona (26)

The question of knowing whom, in this present reality, is a mask and who is not, has no object. It is, quite simply, grotesque to pretend to establish oneself below the level of the Spectacle, below a mode of unmasking in which everything manifests in such a way that its appearance becomes autonomous from it, that is to say, like a *mask*. Its disguise *as disguise* is the truth of the Bloom; that is to say, *that there is nothing behind it*; or rather, that which opens infinitely more care-free horizons, behind which resides *the Nothing*, which is a power.

That the mask constitutes the general form of apparition in the universal comedy, from which only hypocrites still believe themselves to be escaping, does not signify that there was no longer truth in it, but that truth has become something subtle and piquant.

The face of the Bloom finds its highest and at the same time most contemptible expression in the “language of flattery”, and in that ambiguity, there is cause neither to moan nor rejoice, but only to fight.

“Here the Self sees its certainty of self, as such, being the thing the most empty of essence; it sees its pure personality as being the absolute impersonality. The spirit of its gratitude is the feeling of that profound abjection as much as the feeling of the most profound revolt. Then the pure Ego sees itself from outside of self and torn out, rending all that has continuity and universality, that which we call law, good, right, is disintegrated at once and cast into the abyss.”

(Hegel, Phenomenology of the Spirit)

The reign of travesty begins just before the end of a reign. One would be wrong to topple the mask surrounding domination, because it is known to be constantly menaced in part by night, savagery and impersonality *in the very act* that introduces the outbreak of the mask. That which is *nasty* in the Spectacle is rather that the faces may be paralyzed to the point of becoming masks themselves, and that a central authority may erect itself as a *master of metamorphoses*.

The living are those who will know how to give themselves over to

the words of the maniac who proclaimed, trembling: “*Happy is he who’s own disgust for the empty and satisfied faces leads him to cover himself with a mask: he will be the first to rediscover the stormy euphoria of all those who dance to death on the cataract of time.*”

(Hegel, Phenomenology of the spirit)

“Alienation is the alienation of itself as well.”

Hegel

Historically, it is in the face of the Bloom that the alienation of the Common achieves its maximal degree of intensity. It is not so easy to imagine at what point the existence of man as a singular being and his existence as a social being must *in appearance* become strangers to one another so that it becomes possible to talk about “social ties”, that is to say, to understand his being-in-common as something objective, outside of him and facing him.

It is a veritable frontline that runs right through the middle of the Bloom, and which determines its schizoid neutrality. The militarization of disaster sees itself as making a last call to choose its camp: it is necessary for it to take on, in an unconditional way, *any* social role, *any* servitude, or starve to death.

We are here dealing with a measure of urgency that regimes usually adopt in desperation, which only permits the concealment of the Bloom, not its abolition.

But for now, that is sufficient. What is essential is that the eye

which considers the world from a point of view outside the Spectacle may be able to assure that ONE has never heard of anything like it on this side of the Pyrenees -- “what are you saying? a what? a Bloom???” -- that it is nothing but a metaphysician’s chimera, and finds flaws with that. All that matters is that the bad faith is able to clear its conscience, that it can set us opposite its marked implausibilities. Furthermore, how could that which ONE has essentially dispossessed of all appearance ever appear *as such* in the Spectacle? It is the destiny of the Bloom to only be *visible* in the sense that it plays a part in the nasty substantiality, only insofar as it renounces itself as Bloom.

All the radicality of the face of the Bloom is concentrated in the fact that the alternative which the Bloom finds itself permanently placed in front of arranges the best on one side and the worst on the other, without the Bloom having access to the neutral zone between them. It is the neutral nucleus that illuminates the analogous connection between the highest and the lowest points. Its defect of interest can constitute a passage into the *agápē* ⁽²⁷⁾, or the desire to only function, like a cog, in a technocratic enterprise of extermination for example. Similarly, the absence of personality can prefigure the overtaking of the classic petrified personality, and therefore the terminal incoherence of the metropolitan *hipster* as well.

There is the “*me ne frego*” ⁽²⁸⁾ of fascism, and there is the “*me ne frego*” of the insurgent. There is the banality of evil, and there is *the banality of good*. But in the circumstances of domination, the banality of the Bloom always manifests itself as the banality of evil. So, for the

20th century, the Bloom will have been Eichmann⁽²⁹⁾ more than Elser⁽³⁰⁾; Eichmann about whom Hannah Arendt says “it was evident to everyone that he was not a ‘monster’”, whom “one could not help but think of as a *clown*”. It may be said in passing that there was *no* difference of nature between Eichmann, who indentified himself *completely* with his criminal function, and the *hipster* who, being unable to come to terms with either his fundamental non-membership to this world, or the consequences of a situation of exile, throws himself into the frenzied consumption of *signs* of belonging that are so expensive in this society. But the banality of evil prospers in a more general way anywhere ONE talks of “economy”. And it is still that banality which emerges underneath the allegiances of all orders that men elevate to “necessity”, from “musn’t complain” to “that’s the way it is”, no longer claiming “every job is important”.

There begins the extreme misfortune, when all attainments are replaced with that of survival. Attachment appears completely bare. Without any object but itself. Hell.

The internal man

The pure exteriority of the conditions of existence also create the illusion of pure interiority.

The Bloom is that being who regained in itself the emptiness that surrounds it.

Driven from all proper place, it has *itself* become a place.

Banished from the world, it *makes* itself the world.

It is not in vain that Paul, the Gnostics and later the Christian mystics distinguished between the internal man and the external man, because in the Bloom that separation has happened *historically*.

The marginal condition of those who, like the internal man of the Blessed Ruysbroeck, feel themselves “more inclined towards the inside than the outside”, who live “anywhere, and in the company of anyone, in the depths of solitude [...] in the shelter of multiplicity, in the shelter of places, in the shelter of men”, has since become the common condition.

Rare are those, however, who have experienced it positively, who have had the force of wanting it. Pessoa:

“In order to create myself, I destroyed myself; I am so externalized from the inside of myself, that in the interior of myself, I now only exist externally. I am the living scene where pass various actors, playing various parts.”

But for now, if the Bloom resembles that internal man, it is hardly ever in anything but the negative sense. The superfluous compartment of its personality contains hardly anything except the sentiment of finding itself being dragged down by an endless collapse in an underlying space, obscure and enveloping, as if it is ceaselessly plunging into itself, crumbling completely. Drop by drop, in a regular beading, its being oozes, flows, and bleeds. Its interior is less and less a space or a substance, and more and more a *threshold* and its passage.

It is also this that allows the Bloom to be at its core a free *spirit*, because it is an empty spirit.

“Whoever will have thus left himself will be absolutely returned to himself.”

Meister Eckhart⁽³¹⁾

The ecstatic “essence” of the Bloom expresses itself thus:

IN ALL THAT IT IS, THE BLOOM IS OUTSIDE OF SELF.

Under the empire of Biopower and of the autonomous Advertising -- the tyranny of ONE --, the ecstatic structure of human existence begins to manifest under the form of a generalized schizoid state. Each person henceforth distinguishes between his “true self”, pure, detached from all objectifiable manifestation, and the system of his “false self”, social, acted, restricted, inauthentic.

In each of these determinations -- in its body, in its “qualities”, in its gestures, in its language --, the Bloom strongly feels that it is leaving, that it *has left*

CLOWN

One day.

One day soon, maybe.

*One day I will tear out the anchor
That holds my ship far from the seas.*

With the sort of courage

*Necessary to be nothing and nothing but nothing,
I will let go of everything that appeared to be
indissolubly close to me.*

I will slit it, I will reverse it,

I will break from it, I will make it collapse.

*In one blow disgorging my wretched
propriety, my wretched schemes
and chains "one leads to the other".*

*Drained of the abscess of being someone, I will drink
Anew the nourishing space...*

the self. And it *contemplates* that leaving. And it is the wandering amongst these attributes, in that contemplation. Its becoming is a becoming-stranger.

Léon Bloy had, in his time, brought the capitalist and the mystic closer together. *The Blood of the Poor* devotes several pages to a fairly liberal interpretation of the “fetishized character of merchandise”: “*this money that is only the visible face of the blood of Christ circulating in all his limbs*”, “*far from loving it for the material pleasures of which it deprives itself, (the miser) worships it in spirit and in truth, as the Saints worshiped the God who obligated them to penitence and the glory of the martyr. He worships it for those who do not worship it, he suffers in the place of those who do not want to suffer for money. Misers are mystics! All that they do is done in order to please an invisible God, so that the visible and so laboriously researched simulacra will shower them with torture and ignominy*”.

If the capitalist keeps with the mystical through his activity, the Bloom keeps with it through its *passivity*. And in fact, nothing any longer resembles the existential situation of the Bloom except the *detachment* of the mystics. Its reified conscience

*By dint of ridicules, of degenerations
(what is degeneration ?), by
explosion, by emptiness, by a total
dissipation-derision-purgation,
I will expel from myself the form that one
believed to be so well attached, composed,
coordinated, fitting to my entourage
and to my fellow men, so dignified, so dignified
my fellow men.*

*Reduced to a catastrophic humility
to a perfect equalization as after
a severe fright.
Brought down beyond all measure
back to my real rank, to the lowest rank
that some unknown idea-ambition
made me desert.
Annihilated in pride, in
Esteem. ...*

is the result of an unfailing propensity towards contemplation, whereas its indifference corresponds to that “just detachment that is nothing other than the fact that the spirit holds itself immobile in the face of all vicissitudes of love and of suffering, of honor, of shame and of outrage”. To the point of paralysis.

Finally, it is Meister Eckhart’s God that the Bloom must think of, God who is defined as “that which has no name, which is the negation of all names and which has never had a name”, as the pure nothing for whom all things are nothing.

In its perfection, the alienation of the Bloom recovers the original alienation.

Let us share poverty, not misery!

To Meister Eckhart, the poor man is he who: “wants nothing, knows nothing and has nothing”.

Ultimately dispossessed, disqualified of everything, mutely estranged from its world, ignorant of itself as of that which surrounds it, the Bloom realizes at the heart of historical processes, and in its fullness, the

*... Lost in a faraway place
(or even not), without name, without identity.
CLOWN, destroying amidst laughing,
amidst guffawing, amidst the grotesque,
the opinion which, against all evidence
I formed from my importance
I will plunge.
Penniless into the infinite-spirit
subjascent open to everything
open myself to a new
and incredible dew
by the force of being void
and bare...
and ridiculous...*

Henri Michaux, *Paintings*

absolutely metaphysical breadth of the concept of *poverty*.

Certainly, all of the coarse vulgarity of a time when the economy held a metaphysical place was necessary in order to make an economic issue of poverty (now that this time is nearing its end, it becomes newly evident that the opposite of poverty is not wealth, but misery, and that of the three, only poverty has the sense of perfection. Poverty designates the state of he *who can use everything*, having nothing of his own, and misery the state of he *who can use nothing*, being that he has too much, lacks *time* and is without community.)

So, everything that the idea of wealth could carry across history, of bourgeoisie quietude, of *domestic* completeness, of familiar immanence with the perceptible world, is something that the Bloom can appreciate, via nostalgia or simulation, but not live. With it, happiness has become a very old-fashioned idea, and not only in Europe. At the same time that all interest, all *ethos* disappears, even the possibility of a use *value* disappears as well. The Bloom only understands the supernatural language of exchange value. It turns towards the world eyes that

*Look at him, what you have made of him, that putrid, jaundiced man, who must resemble the best of what you think he is by nature: the refuse, the scum, you have succeeded. Well, one is going to say this to you, which would knock you out cold if "the error" could kill: you have allowed him to make himself into the man who is most fulfilled, most confident in his abilities, in the resources of his conscience and of the consequences of his actions, strongest. [...] you play in front of this waste who holds himself upright under your eyes, but it is you who are robbed, fucked to the core. One shows you nothing but boils, sores, grey skulls, leprosy, and you only believe in leprosy. You plunge further and further, **Ja Wohl!**⁽³²⁾, one was right, ...*

see nothing in it, nothing but the nothing of value. Its desires themselves rest only upon absences, abstraction, the least of which is not the YoungGirl's ass. Even when the Bloom desires outwardly, it does not cease to not desire, because it desires emptyly, because it desires emptiness.

That is why wealth became, in the world of authoritarian merchandise, a grotesque and incomprehensible thing, a form encumbered by misery.

Henceforth, wealth is no longer anything but that which possesses you, that by which ONE keeps you.

Agápē

The Bloom is a man in whom everything has been socialized, but only socialized insofar *as he is deprived* of everything. Nothing is exclusively common any longer except that which he calls his “individual happiness”. The Bloom is commonplace even in its desire to make itself conspicuous. In it, all substantial difference it had with other men have been *actually* abolished. There only remains one pure difference without content. And everything aims, in the world of authoritarian merchandise, to maintain that pure

...ja wohl, alles scheisse!⁽³³⁾ *Your conscience is clear. “We were right, just look at them!” You are as mystified as anyone, and by us who lead you after your error. You will not be set straight, be calm, you will be led to the end of your shocking deed. One will allow oneself to bring you to death and there you will see through the eyes of the vermin who dies.*

One does not wait for the liberation of bodies any more than one counts on their resurrection in order to be right. It is now, living and like waste that our reasons triumph. It is true that this is not apparent. But we are all the more right as you have less opportunities to see it for what...

difference, which is a pure separation. Thus the Bloom still responds to a name, but that name no longer means anything.

All of the misunderstandings on the subject of the Bloom are due to the depth of the peephole through which one allows oneself to stare at it. In any case, the award of blindness goes to the *sociologists* who, like Castoriadis, talk of “withdrawal into the private sphere”, without making it clear that this sphere has itself been *entirely socialized*. In the other extreme, we find those who even let themselves go *into* the Bloom. The accounts that they bring back from it all resemble, in one way or another, the experience of the narrator of *Monsieur Teste* discovering the “home” in his character: “*I have never had a stronger impression of the ordinary. It was an ordinary dwelling, without character – similar to the indifferent, characterless nature of theorems, and perhaps also applicable. My host existed in the most common home.*” The Bloom is rather that being that exists “in the most common home”.

It is only in the places and circumstances where the effect of the Spectacle finds itself temporarily suspended that the most intimate truth of the Bloom reveals itself: that it is, at

...it is. Not only reason is with us, but we are the reason pledged by you to an illegal existence. And thus we can never, ever bow before the apparent triumphs. Understand this well: you have made it so that reason turns into conscience. You have remade the unity of man. You have created the irreducible conscience. You can no longer hope to succeed in making us be simultaneously in your place and in your skin, condemning ourselves. No one here will ever become to himself his own SS.

Robert Antelme, *The Human Species*

its core, in the *agápē*. Such a suspension occurs in exemplary fashion during uprisings, but also in the moment when we speak to a stranger in the streets of the metropolis, it being, in the end, everywhere that men must recognize each other, beyond all specification, as men, as separate beings, completed, exposed. It is not rare, then, to see perfect strangers practicing their common humanity towards us, by protecting us from danger, by offering us their pack of cigarettes instead of just the one we requested, or also by losing a quarter of an hour of the time they have so little of in order to lead us all the way to the address we were looking for. Such phenomena are not all subject to an interpretation in classical terms of an ethnology of gift and return-gift, unlike the person within a fixed bistro sociality. No rank is in play here. No glory is sought. This can only be accounted for as that ethic of *infinite gift* known in the Christian, and notably Franciscan tradition, under the name of *agápē*.

The *agápē* is a part of the existential situation of men that *formed* the market society in its final years. And it is at this state that the market society disposed of it by making it a stranger to itself and its desires. In spite of all signs to the contrary, and also worrying that it may be apparent, that society is coming down with a serious infection of volunteerism.

**“Be different, be yourself!”
(underwear advertisement)**

In many respects, the market society cannot do without the Bloom. The comeback of the efficacy of spectacular representation, known as “consumption”, is entirely dependant upon the mimetic concurrence to which the Bloom is compelled by its inner nothing. The tyrannical judgement of ONE would remain an object of universal mockery if “to be” did not mean “be different”, or at least to try to be, in the context of the Spectacle. It is therefore not, as the good Simmel noted, “the accentuation of an individual through a definite act of impersonality”, but rather that the accentuation of impersonality would be impossible without a positive *working* of the individual.

Naturally, that which is strengthened with the originality that ONE lends to the Bloom is never the singularity of the Bloom, but of the One itself, in other words: the nasty substantiality. All recognition *within* the Spectacle is only recognition *of* the Spectacle.

Without the Bloom, therefore, merchandise would no longer be anything but a purely formal principle, deprived of all contact with the future.

I would prefer not to

At the same time, it is certain that the Bloom carries the ruin of the

market society within itself. In it, one is reunited with that character of ambivalence that signifies all of the realities through which *the overtaking of the market society on its own territory* manifests.

In this dissolution, it is not the grand edifices of the superstructure that find themselves attacked first, but on the contrary, the long-deserted foundations. The invisible precedes the visible, and the world fundamentally changes imperceptibly.

The Bloom does not declare the abolition of that to which it brings an end, it just empties it of meaning and reduces it to the simple, residual state, awaiting demolition. In this sense, it is permitted to affirm that the metaphysical upheaval to which it is synonymous is already behind us, but that the bulk of its consequences are yet to come.

With the Bloom, which is lacking the self-intimacy that formed the basis of private property, private property lost all substance: what is there left to *own*? Much less privately? Private property subsists here only in the empirical fashion, as a dead abstraction hovering outside of a reality that ever more visibly escapes it.

The Bloom does not contest the law, it *uses* it. And how, in fact, would the law not find itself definitively outdated by that being who is not a subject, the acts of whom do not relate to any personality, and the behaviors of whom no longer depend upon the bourgeois categories of interest or motivation, but only of passion or responsibility?

Before the Bloom, therefore, the law loses all ability to bring justice --what could very well signify justice for an indifferent being?-- and

ONE can just barely rely on strict police terror. Because in the world of all-alike, one hardly rots in prison anymore except at Club Med: life in that world is identically absent everywhere.

That is why it is so important, for domination, that prisons notoriously become places of extended torture.

But it is the economy itself, and therefore all notion of utility, credit, or instrumental rationality, that the Bloom has above all made into a thing of the past. We do not need to look elsewhere for the reason for the planned and public reconstitution of a *lumpenproletariat* in every late-stage capitalist country: it was necessary, as a last resort, to use that to dissuade the Bloom from giving way to its essential detachment by the abrupt yet formidable threat of hunger. Because from an economic point of view, that “impractical man” (Musil) is a disastrously clumsy producer, and a completely irresponsible consumer. His egoism has degraded itself: it is an *egoism without an ego*.

If the Bloom could not help but ravage classical politics in its principle, it is partly due to lack: there is no

I passed amongst them as a stranger, but no one among them saw that I was one. I lived amongst them as a spy, but no one – not even me – suspected that I was one. Everyone took me for one of their fellows: no one knew that there had been an exchange at my birth. So I was similar to the others without any resemblance, brother to each without being of any family.

I came from prodigious countries, from countrysides more beautiful than life, but I never evoke these countries. My steps through the parks or through the hills were similar to theirs, but my heart was far away, for all it beat very close, fictitious master of an estranged and exiled body...

longer anything to compare it to except the senatorial election at the home of the rats --each rat is by a legal and inalienable title a representative of his space, *primus inter pares*⁽³⁴⁾--, but also partly due to excess, because the Bloom moves spontaneously within the irrerepresentable, which it is itself.

What to think, finally, of the troubles this ungrateful child causes for the Spectacle, he whom all the characters and all the roles glide upon in a murmur that says I would prefer not to?

Tiqqun⁽³⁵⁾

“For the awakened, there is a world one and common, whereas among those who sleep, each turns from it towards their own.”

Heraclitus

Tiqqun gets down to the root of things. As yet, it only traverses purgatory. It manages its business methodically. *Tiqqun* is the only admissible conception of the revolution. Not that which we *must* await, still less for which one *can* prepare: but that which comes *is fulfilled* according to its invisible pulsation in a temporality inside history.

No one really knew me under this mask of similitude, nor even knew that I wore a mask, because no one knew anything but this world of masked beings. No one ever imagined that someone else was always beside me, who was me when all is said and done. One always believed me to be identical to myself.

Bernardo Soares,
The Book of Intranquility

Tiqqun is not an assignable point, more or less short-term, in the future, even if it is also that; but rather the “real movement which abolishes the existing state of things”.

Tiqqun is always already there, that is to say that it is only the *process of the manifestation of what it is*, which also carries along with it the *annulment* of that which it is not.

The fragile positivity of the world rests precisely in the fact that it is nothing, nothing but the *suspension* of *Tiqqun*. This epochal suspension is henceforth perceptible everywhere. Even to the extent that there is no longer anything truly perceptible except that suspension.

The Bloom is part of *Tiqqun*. Precisely because it is the accomplished man of nihilism, its destination is to operate the exit from nihilism, or else perish. The intuition of the proletariat, chez Marx, aims for this, but it curves its trajectory before reaching its target. One thus reads in *The German Ideology*: “*In the face of productive forces stand the majority of individuals from whom these forces have been extracted and who, so deprived of all real substance in their lives, became abstract beings, but who, precisely for that reason, are able to weave connections between them as individuals.*”

But it is exactly in the extent to which *it is not* an individual that the Bloom is able to weave connections with its kind. The individual carries in its deceptive integrity, in an atavistic fashion, the repression of communication, or the necessity of its facticity. Even the ecstatic openness of man and specifically of the Bloom, that I who is a ONE, that ONE who is an I, is what the fiction of the individual was invented to repress.

The Bloom does not experience a particular finitude or a determined separation, but *the* ontological finitude and separation, common to all men. As well, the Bloom is only alone *in appearance*: because it is not alone in being alone, all men have that solitude *in common*. It lives as a foreigner in its own country, non-existent and on the fringe of everything, but all the Bloom *together* inhabit the homeland of Exile. All the Bloom are indistinctly part of a same world, which is forgetting the world. So therefore, the Common is alienated, but it is only so *in appearance*, because it is still alienated *as the Common* – the alienation of the Common only signifies the fact that that which is common between them *appears* to men to be something particular, their own, private.

And this Common originates from the alienation of the Common, and what that forms is none other than the true Common that is unique among men, their original alienation: finitude, solitude, exposition. There, the most intimate merges with the most general, and the most “private” is the best shared.

You saw yourself when you drank?

“One says he is dead to the world because he has no taste for anything terrestrial.”

Meister Eckhart

As ONE easily perceives the Bloom, a *catastrophic* possibility for market domination forms, the actualization of which ONE means to avert by all possible means: that the Bloom *may want* what it is, that it reappropriates its impropriety.

This “society”, that is to say, the ensemble of situations that it authorizes, fears nothing in regards to the Bloom, that “cursed man who has no business, no sentiments, no attachments, no propriety, not even a name that belongs to him.” (Netchaïev) Society must be considered to be, down to its most miserable details, a formidable operation, laid out with the exclusive intent of perpetuating the condition of the Bloom, which is a condition of *suffering*. In its principle, entertainment is nothing other than the *policy* accorded to that end: to perpetuate the condition of the Bloom beginning with its distraction. Then, in a cascade, comes the necessity of containing all manifestations of the general suffering, which presupposes an ever more absolute control over appearance, as well as the necessity of covering up the far-too-visible effects of this suffering, a suffering that Bio-power responds to with an inordinate inflation of itself. Because in the degree of confusion to which things have arrived, the *body* represents, on a generic level, the last spokesperson of human irreducibility in alienation. It is through the maladies and malfunctionings of the body, and only through them, that the requirement of knowl-

edge of self remains an immediate reality for each person. This “society” would not have declared such an all-out war against the suffering of the Bloom if that suffering did not constitute, in itself and in every aspect, an intolerable implication about the empire of positivity; if there had not been, with that suffering, a revocation without delay of all illusion of participation in its blossoming immanence.

To uphold the use of representations and categories long since ineffective in everyday life, to periodically impose ephemeral yet renovated versions of the most toothless *ponts-aux-ânes* ⁽³⁶⁾ of bourgeois morals, and to maintain the sad illusions of “modernity” beyond the redoubled evidence of their falsity and their expiration, just as in hard labor, all demands the perpetuation of the separation between men.

The ONE decides in advance what is comprehensible and what, being incomprehensible, must be rejected. The Bloom and its ecstasy are incomprehensible: they must be rejected. Its poverty also is reputed to be refutable, in the alienated Publicity -- and it is very true that capitalism will have done everything within its power to make poverty in the context of capitalism identical to misery, the propriety of a thing essentially always being *the right to deprive others of its use*. ONE is even ready, in order to keep the Bloom *ashamed* of its poverty, to permit the Bloom to subjectify itself in that shame. The failed cadre of the impoverished will thus find in the panoply of writers a form of identification and reassurance: yes, the abject man is well on his way to becoming an honorable life form. Otherwise, he will be able to turn to Buddhism, that nauseating and sordid marshmallow of spirituality for overburdened salaried professionals, which even

regards the teaching of its amazed and stupid followers the perilous art of wading in their own nullity as an excessive ambition. It is of the utmost importance, in the eyes of domination, that we do not recognize ourselves under the features of the Bloom, that we appear to ourselves and each other as opaque and frightening objects. Just in case, ONE attributes some ideas, desires, and a subjectivity to the Bloom. ONE endows it with everything that is necessary for it to remain that mute man in the mouth of which the Spectacle places the words that it wants to hear. ONE is not adverse to using the Bloom against itself, to turn its own impersonality against it in “society”, “the people” or even “the average citizen”.

All of this converges in an ever more exorbitant social summation to “be oneself”, that is to say, in a strict assignation of residence in one of the identities recognized by the autonomous Publicity. Meanwhile, the processes of subjectivation and of desubjectivation are becoming more and more violent and their control more and more millimetric. And as this control can only function in a strict economy of time, a synchrony, the Bloom sees itself henceforth regularly urged to be “proud” of this or that, proud to be homo or techno, second generation North African, black or delinquent. Whatever happens, the Bloom must be something, anything, rather than nothing.

Mene, Tekel, Upharsin (37)

Adorno speculated, in *Prisms*, that “*men who no longer exist but for others, being the absolute zôon politikon (social animal), will certainly have lost their identity, but they will have simultaneously escaped from the*

stranglehold of the conservation of self, which assures the cohesion of the 'best of worlds', just like that of the old world. This total interchangeability would destroy the substance of domination and promise liberty."

Once, the Spectacle had complete leisure with which to prove the justice of its conjectures, but it had also victoriously applied itself to the failure of fulfillment of that incongruous promise of liberty. Naturally, that could not happen without intensifications, and the world of merchandise had to make itself ever more implacable in the exercising of its dictatorship.

What with "crises" in "recoveries" and "relapses" of depressions, life in the Spectacle has not ceased, since 1914, in becoming ever more oppressive. An air of terror clings thenceforth to all faces, even in the so-called popular jubinations. The planetary call for "transparency" explains the permanent climate of war against the opacity of the Bloom, as well as the sursitary character of the existence stemming from this opacity.

As the first response to this situation, one sees a hatred of *things* spreading among the Bloom, simultaneous with a taste for anonymity and a certain defiance towards visibility. A metaphysical hostility returns concerning the existing threat of exploding at any time, under any circumstance.

At the origin of that instability is a disorder, a disorder that comes from the unemployed force, from a negativity that can not remain eternally without employment, under pain of *physically* destroying whoever lives it. Usually, that negativity remains mute; however, its contention commonly manifests itself through an hysterical formalization of all human relationships.

But already we are reaching the critical zone where the repressed

make their return, a return that is completely excessive. An ever-compacting mass of crimes, *strange acts*, deeds of “violence” and “apparently unmotivated” destructions all attack the everyday life of biopolitical democracies – in a general manner, “violence” is what the Spectacle calls anything against which it intends to use force, anything it wants to be able to manifest all of its arbitrariness against; this category has no validity except within the context of the mode of marketable unmasking, without validity itself, which always deifies the means as compared to the end, the act itself here being what is detrimental to its immanent signification.

Incapable of preventing them and more still of understanding them, market domination claims to be determined to prevent such attempts at social control of behaviors. It then makes its habitual blustering heard, about video-surveillance and “zero tolerance”, repression of “incivilities” and the “feeling of insecurity”; as if surveillance would not cause them to be surveilled, as if the “feeling of insecurity” was not *ontologically* devolving upon the Bloom!

When a socialist fuck high up in the bureaucracy of an ordinary syndicate of Japanese professors studies little Bloom, he worries: “*What makes this phenomenon all the more troubling is that the perpetrators of these acts of violence are often ‘children without history’. We used to be able to spot a problem child. Today, most of them do not rebel, but they have a tendency to flee the school. And, if they are reprimanded, the reaction is disproportionate: they explode.*” (*The World*, Thursday April 16, 1998) A diabolical dialectic is at work here, that wants similar “explosions” to become ever more frequent, fortuitous, and ferocious, as the massive and systematic character of the control that is necessary for their prevention accentuates itself. It is a rarely dis-

puted fact of experience: the violence of detonation increases with excess of confinement.

Domination, who several centuries ago, hoping that commerce would make men soft, predictable, and inoffensive, had thought it good to impose the economy as *morals*, is seeing its project backfire in the Bloom: results would indicate that “*homo oeconomicus*” is also he who, in his perfection, outdates the economy: and outdates it by rendering it perfectly unpredictable, having *deprived it of all substance*.

In the end, it is the man without content who has the most difficulty containing himself.

The unmentionable enemy

In which all Bloom is, as Bloom, an agent of the Imaginary Party.

Before that unknown enemy -- in the sense that one can talk about an Unknown Soldier, that is to say, about a soldier known to all as unknown, singled out as ordinary -- who has neither name, nor face, nor epic poem of his own, who resembles nothing, but remains everywhere camouflaged in the realm of possibility, the anxiety of domination turns more and more clearly into paranoia. This habit it has since acquired of practicing decimation in its own ranks, just in case, is indeed a rather comical spectacle for the detached eye.

There is something *objectively terrifying* in this sad forty-year-old who will have remained, until the moment of carnage, the most nor-

mal, the dullest, the most insignificant of average men. No one has ever heard him declare his hatred of family, of work, or of his petit-bourgeois suburbs, until the early morning when he gets up, washes, eats his breakfast while his wife, daughter, and son are still sleeping, loads his shotgun and discretely blows all three of their brains **out**. Before its judges, as before torture, the Bloom will stay mute as to the motives of its crime. Partly because sovereignty is without reason, but also because it senses that it is really more atrocious that the Bloom could be made to endure that “society”, than to leave it unexplained.

It is thus that the Bloom succeeded in inserting into every spirit the poisoned certitude that slumbering inside each man is an enemy of civilization. Evidently, it has no other end but devastating this world; this is even its destiny, but it will never say so. Because its strategy is to produce the disaster, and around it, *silence*.

“Because what crime and folly objectify is the absence of a transcendental homeland.”

Lukàcs, *Theory of the Roman*

As the tyranny of the desolate forms intensify where the one claims to contain us, some very curious manifestations strike the attention. The amok adapt in the heart of the most advanced societies, under unexpected guises, loaded with a new sense.

In the territories that administer the autonomous Publicity, such

phenomena of disintegration are some of the few things that lay bare the true state of the world, *the pure scandal of things*.

While revealing the lines of force in the kingdom of the inert, they simultaneously demonstrate the nature of the possibility we inhabit.

And that is why they are so familiar to us, even in their distance.

The traces of blood that they leave behind them mark the last steps of a man who was wrong to want to escape *alone* from the gray terror where he was prisoner at such a high price. Our ability to conceive this measures what life remains inside us.

The living are those who understand *for themselves* that at the moment when fear and submission achieve, in the Bloom, their ultimate and *absolute* form as fear and submission, because they are without object. The emancipation from *that* fear and *that* submission proclaims the emancipation from *all* fear and *all* submission. He who vaguely dreads everything cannot, past that point, dread *anything anymore*. There is, beyond the most extreme wastelands of alienation, a clear and peaceful zone where man became incapable of showing any *interest* in his *own* life, nor even a hint of attachment to his place.

All present or future liberty that keeps itself free, in one way or another, from that detachment, of that ataraxia, could hardly do anything but express the principles of a more *modern* servitude.

The maniacs of nothing

“I’m sorry. Like Shakespeare says, *Good wombs hath borne bad sons.*”
Eric Harris, *Littleton*, April 20 1999.

Under the oppression of everything, there is little chance of escape. We extend our arms, but they meet nothing. ONE has taken the world from our grasp, ONE placed it out of our reach. Few between the Bloom succeed in resisting the excessiveness of that pressure. The omnipresence of the troops of the commodity occupation and the rigor of its urgent state quickly condemn most plans for liberty. Also, everywhere where order seems firmly established, negativity prefers to turn against itself, in malady, suffering or in frantic servitude. There are, however, invaluable instances when isolated beings without hope or strategy take initiative to breach the fixed course of the disaster.

The Bloom in them violently rids itself of the *patience* where ONE would like to make it languish forever. And because the only instinct that raises such a howling presence of nothing is one of destruction, the taste of the All Other assumes the aspect of the crime, and experiences itself in the passionate indifference where its culprit succeeded in remaining opposite it.

This manifests itself in the most *spectacular* way by the waxing number of Bloom who, little and big, covet the spell of the simplest surrealist act, for lack of anything better (let us remember: “the simplest surrealist act consists of going down the street, revolver in hand, and shooting into the mob as randomly as possible. Whoever has not, at least once, wanted to finish it in that way with the little system of degradation and cretenisation in force has his designated place

in that mob, stomach at gun-level.” (Breton) Let us also remember that this inclination remained among surrealists, as did many other things, a theory without practice, just as its contemporary practice usually stays without theory.)

For those who have not yet succumbed to cybernetic slumber, these individual eruptions, dedicated to multiplying themselves, constitute so many calls for desertion and fraternity. The liberty that these eruptions affirm is not that of a particular man, self-ordained to a determined end, but that of each, that of humankind: a single man suffices to attest that liberty has not yet disappeared.

The Spectacle cannot metabolize the carrier traits of many poisons. It can produce them, but never entirely strip them of their inexplicable, indescribable nucleus of terror. These are the *Beautiful Gestures* of these times, a form disillusioned of propaganda by the fact that their ideological muteness only increases their troubling and foundering metaphysical character.

Paradoxes of sovereignty

In the Spectacle, power is everywhere; that is to say, that *all* relationships are, in the end, relationships of domination. For this reason, also, nothing in the Spectacle is sovereign. It is an objective world where each must first submit so he may subdue in his turn.

To live conforming to man's fundamental aspiration of sovereignty is impossible within the Spectacle, beyond an instant, beyond a *gesture*.

He who cannot do anything but play with life needs the gesture, so that his life may become more real than a game adjustable in all directions. In the world of merchandise, which is the world of generalized reversibility, where all things blend together and transform into one another, where everything is only ambiguity, transition, ephemerality and blending, only the gesture *settles once and for all*. In the flash of its necessary brutality it cuts out the “after” that is insoluble in its “before”, which the ONE will regretfully have to recognize as *definitive*.

“I am NOTHING”: this parody of affirmation is the last word of the sovereign subjectivity, liberated from the dominion that it wanted to – or that it had to – give itself over things... because I know that I truly am this subjective existence without content.

Georges Bataille, *Sovereignty*

Gesture is *event*. It opens a sore in the chaos of the world, and fixes in its depths its fragment of univocity. For gesture, it is a question of establishing things that are thought to be different so profoundly in their own difference that whoever separated them would never again be able to be inconspicuous.

If there is something that opposes domination in the Bloom, it is really that, even in his nudity, dispossessed of everything, man establishes that he still has an incoercible metaphysical faculty of repudiation at his disposal: that of giving death, to others as to himself. Each time Death occurs, it makes a shameful hole in the biopolitical tissue. Accomplished nihilism, which has accomplished nothing but the dissolution of all otherness in a limitless circulatory immanence, always meets defeat there: in contact with death, life ceases, all at once, to go without saying. The *duty of decision* that sanctions all truly human existence has always been partly tied to the approach of that abyss.

The day before the day in March, 1998, when he will massacre four Bloom-students and a Bloom-teacher, little Mitchell Johnson declares to his incredulous comrades: “*Tomorrow, I will decide who will live, and who will die.*” Here, we are as far from the criminal vanity of a Pierre Rivière⁽³⁸⁾, as from fascist hysteria. Nothing is more startling, in the accounts of the carnages of a Kipland Kinkel⁽³⁹⁾ or of an Alain Oreiller⁽⁴⁰⁾, than their state of cold mastery of self, of vertical detachment from the world. “*I no longer do anything out of sentiment*”, says Alain Oreiller while executing his mother. There is something calmly suicidal in affirmation of a non-participation, of so unilateral an indifference and refusal to suffer.

Often, the Spectacle takes this pretext to talk about “gratuitous” acts -- generic qualifiers by which the Spectacle obscures the finalities that it does not *want* to understand, all benefiting that overly-beautiful occasion to revive one of the favorite false antimonies of bourgeois utilitarianism --, when these gestures are lacking neither hate nor reasons. One has only to watch the five cassettes that the “monsters of Littleton” filmed in anticipation of their operation in order to be convinced of this. Their program appeared there without mystery: “*We are going to launch a revolution, a revolution of the dispossessed.*”

Here, even hatred is indifferent, free of all personality. Death enters the universal even as it leaves the universal, and it is without anger. Our aim is not to lend an ordinary revolutionary significance to such acts, and hardly to confer an exemplary category to them. Instead, we wish to understand the way they express fatality and to seize upon it so as to explore the depths of the Bloom. Whomever follows that view will see that the Bloom is NOTHING, but that this NOTHING is the nothing of sovereignty, the emptiness of pure power.

The contradiction between the isolation, apathy, powerlessness, and insensibility of the Bloom on one side and its brittle need for sovereignty on the other can only bring more of these gestures that are absurd and murderous, yet also necessary and true.

The epoch of perfect culpability

Men are not given the choice not to fight, but only the choice of a camp. The neutrality is nothing neutral; it is certainly the most bloody of all the camps.

Of course, the Bloom, who shoots the bullets and who succumbs to them, is innocent. Is it not true, after all, that it is only an addiction of the national farce? Did it choose to live in this world, participation in which is the act of a socially autonomous totality, that seems more and more extraterrestrial to the Bloom each day? How could it have done otherwise, as a stray Lilliputian confronted with the Leviathan of merchandise, but speak the language of the spectacular occupant, eat from the hand of Biopower and participate, in its way, in the production and reproduction of horror?

This is how the Bloom would wish to be able to understand itself; as stranger, as exterior to oneself. But in its defense, it only admits *that it is itself the fraction of self that ensures the alienation of the rest of its being*.

Which means that the Bloom may not be held responsible for any of its acts: as such, it does not remain less responsible for its irresponsibility, which it is *at each instant* offered the opportunity to declare itself against. Because it consented, at least negatively, to no longer be anything but the predicate of its own existence, it is *objectively* part of domination, and its innocence is itself perfect culpability. The man of accomplished nihilism, man of the “what for?” who is going to rely on the support of the “what’s it to me?”, is very wrong to believe himself a virgin to all sin on the grounds *that he has done nothing* and that many others are in the same situation as he.

That the men of this time equally participate in crime, is constituted without recourse by the Spectacle; it is the Spectacle that suggests this and regularly admits that the murderer was “an ordinary man”, “a student like any other”. But it refuses to recognize it as a *metaphysical act*: as the case of the operators of the Auschwitz gas chambers taught us, fear of responsibility is not only stronger than conscience, it is, in certain circumstances, stronger than the fear of death.

In a world of slaves without masters, in a world of *collaborators*, in a world dominated by a veritable tyranny of servitude, the simplest surrealist act is governed by none other than the ancient duty of tyrannicide.

Homo sacer (41)

“One day or another, the bombs begin to fall so that one may finally believe in that which one refuses to admit, in knowing that words have a metaphysical sense.”

Brice Parain, *The Predicament of Choice*

The maniacs of the nothing *start* by considering the consequences of their condition of Bloom. By this, they expose the vertigo therein: the Bloom is *sacer*, in the sense that Giorgio Agamben intended, that is to say, in the sense of a creature who does not have his place in any right, who can neither be judged nor condemned by men, but whom anyone can kill without having committed a crime. The Bloom is *sacer* to the exact extent in which it is *possessed* by the naked life, to

the extent where, like the Muslim in the camps, it is the simple witness of its own becoming-inhuman.

Insignificance and anonymity, separation and estrangement are not the poetic circumstances that the melancholic inclination of certain subjectivities tends to exaggerate: the impact of the existential situation thus characterized, the Bloom, is *total*, and above all *political*.

Whomever is without community is sacer.

To be nothing, to remain beneath all recognition or to present oneself as the pure non-political ideology suffices to make any man into a being whose disappearance is uninscribable. However inexhaustible the litanies of mercy --eternal regrets, etc.-- may be, such a death occurs in the ridiculous, in the indifferent, in the end only concerning whomever disappears, which is to say, logically, no one. Analogous to its entirely private life, the death of the Bloom is a non-event, such that others can conceal it. That is why the protestations of those who, with a sob in their voices, deplore that the victims of Kipland Kinkel “did not deserve to die” are inadmissible, because they did not deserve to live either: *they were below of the sphere of deserving*. In the degree that they found themselves there, in the hands of Biopower, they were living dead at the mercy of every sovereign decision, that of the State or that of the assassin. Hannah Arendt:

“To no longer be anything but a specimen of an animal species called Man, this is what will happen to those who have lost all distinct political quality and who became human beings and nothing else... The loss of the rights of Man takes place at the moment where one person becomes a human being in general – without profession, without citizenship, without opinion, without acts by which she identifies herself and is distinguished by – and appears different in general, representing noth-

ing but her own and absolutely unique individuality which, in the absence of a common world where she can express herself and in which she may intervene, loses all significance.” (Imperialism)

The exile of the Bloom has a metaphysical status, which is to say that he is active in all domains. He experiences his *real* situation, regarding which his *legal* situation is without truth. That he may be slaughtered like a dog by an unknown person without the slightest justification, or symmetrically, that he may be capable of assassinating some “innocents” without the least remorse is not a reality upon which an ordinary jurisdiction is in a position to retrace. Only the weak and superstitious spirits can indulge in believing that a verdict of life in prison or a formal process suffice to dismiss such deeds into the limbo of nobody and the future-less. At the very most, domination is free to attest to the condition of the Bloom, for example, in declaring a barely masked state of exception, like the United States was able to do in adopting in 1996 a so-called “anti-terrorist” law that permits the detainment of “suspects” without charges or limit of duration, on the basis of secret information. There is a certain physical risk to being metaphysically non-existent. It is without a doubt in anticipation of radiant eventualities that prepares such a nullity that was adopted, on October 15, 1978, at the House of Unesco the very-consistent Universal Declaration of Animal Rights which stipulates, in its article 3: “1 – No animal must be subjected to unpleasant treatment or cruel acts. 2 – If it is necessary to put an animal to death, it must be instantaneous, painless and non causal of anguish. 3 – The dead animal must be treated with decency.”

***“Tu non sei morta, ma se’ismarrita Anima nostra che si
ti lamenti.”***

Dante, *Convivio*

That the kindness of the Bloom still has to express itself through murder here and there signifies that the line is close, but it has not yet been crossed.

In the zones that govern nihilism, which is ending, where the ends are still lacking whereas the means abound, kindness is a mystical possession. There, the desire for an unconditional liberty leans toward unusual wordings and lends to words a value full of paradoxes. Lukàcs: *“Kindness is savage and pitiless, it is blind and adventurous. In the soul of one who is good is something that wears away every psychological content, every cause and every effect. Its soul is a carte blanche upon which destiny writes its absurd commandment. And that commandment is executed blindly, in a reckless and merciless fashion. And that this impossibility may become act, this blindness illumination, that cruelty transforms itself into kindness – that is the miracle, that is grace.”* (Of the Poverty in Spirit)

But at the same time that they are witnessing an impossibility, these eruptions, by their growth, announce the ascent of the course of time. Universal anxiety, which tends to subordinate itself in ever-larger quantities of ever more minute acts brings, even to incan-

descence, the necessity of decision in each man. Already, those for whom this necessity signifies annihilation are talking about the apocalypse, while the majority content themselves with living far from everything in the miry pleasures of the last days. Only those who know the meaning that they will give to the catastrophe retain calmness and precision in their movements. By the type and the proportions of panic to which a spirit allows itself to go, one can tell one's rank. It is a sign that applies not only ethically or metaphysically, but also, in praxis, in time.

et cetera.

But the world we are born into is a world at war in which all the dazzle clings to the sharp truth of its division of friends and enemies. The designation of the front contributes to the crossing of the line, but does not accomplish it. That, only combat can do. Less because this designation incites grandeur than because it is the most profound experience of community, that which forever accompanies annihilation and only pits its strength against the extreme proximity of risk. To live together at the heart of the desert with the same resolution to never reconcile ourselves with it, such is the ordeal, such is light.

et cetera.

.....
The theory is not

of thought

a certain quantity coagulated,

manufactured,

of thought.

The theory

is a *state*

a state of *sudden disaster*.

Theory *of* Bloom

where the Bloom is not the *object* of the theory

where the theory is only the most familiar activity, the *spontaneous*

propensity of an essentially *theoretical* creature,

of a Bloom.

The theory is WITHOUT END.

Hence

the necessity

to PUT IT TO AN END,

decisively.

Lassitude of speech

What is the way out of the Bloom?

The assumption of the Bloom,
for example.

– One does not truly liberate oneself from something except by re-appropriating
that with which one liberates oneself. –

What is the assumption of the Bloom?

The *usage* of the metaphysical situation thus defined, the practical
experience of the self as *trickster*.

Not to merely struggle against the dominant schizoid state, against
our schizoid state, but *to begin there*, in making use of subjectivation
and desubjectivation as pure faculty, as capacity for experimentation.
Break away from the old anguish of “who am I really?” in favor of
the recognition of my situation and the possible *use* of it.

To not only survive in the constant immanence of a miraculous *de-
parture*, to not merely force oneself to believe in the job that one
does, in the lies that one tells, but *to begin from there*, to enter into
contact with other agents of the Invisible Committee – through
Tiqqun, for example – and to coordinate in silence a sabotage of
grand style.

To detach oneself from one's detachment using a conscious, strategic practice of dual self.

FIRST INTERNALLY AT ODDS WITH THE WORLD

The Invisible Committee:

an *openly secret* society

a public conspiracy

an instance of anonymous subjectivation, the name of which is everywhere and the headquarters nowhere,

the revolutionary-experimental polarity of the Imaginary Party.

The Invisible Committee: not only a revolutionary *organization*, but a superior level of reality,

a metaphysical territory of secession that takes on the scope of a world, the *play area* whose positive creation can alone accomplish the grand migration outside the world of economy.

IT IS A FICTION THAT HAS RENDERED REALITY REAL

All the other elsewheres to which we could have fled have been liquidated,

we can only desert within the situation,

by taking back our fundamental non-belonging in the biopolitical tissue with a participation

in a more intimate
and therefore inassignable plan,

the strategic community of the Invisible Committee,
where an infiltration of all echelons of society
is being hatched.

This desertion is

a transfiguration.

The Invisible Committee – the *concrete* space where our assassina-
tion attempts, our writings, our gestures, our words, our resemblanc-
es, our events:

our desertion –

transfigures the totality that we have allowed as compromise,
of that which we have endured as “alienations”,
with a *strategy of infiltration*.

The Other ceases to possess us:

possession even inverts itself,

becomes sweet.

We recover the act

in a rapport

non-prescribed to our power.

A SECOND DEGREE ACCESS TO EXPERIENCE

Experimentation:

practice of freedom,
practice of idleness,
sets itself against the conception of a distinct process of emancipa-
tion
of the existence of men,
returning to their desks all the learned *projects* of liberation.

Contestation,
its authority,
its method
does not differ
from the experiment.

To go all the way to the end of the possible that contains my situation.

Revolutionary experimentation

Collective revolutionary experimentation

Revolutionarily-experimental collectivity

operates on the assumption of finitude, separation and display as ex-
act coordinates of existence.

The life of whom

knows that its appearance and its essence are identical to each other,
but not identical

to it,

cannot be *in* the world without remembering that it is not *of* the
world,

cannot accommodate itself to a community which would be simple

distraction from its solitude before death,

– dancing, precisely, to death
with the time that kills it –

IS EXPERIMENTATION.

Language,
word and gesture,
is the common house

of those who are without place.

The connection of those who cannot reconcile themselves to the lie
of a belonging, of a ground, of a birth.

The sojourn in dispersion and exile.

The communication

that takes note
of our essential separation.

“One time we talked, we kept as close as possible to what we said, so
that everything would not effectively be in the air, the words on one
side, us on the other, and remorse the dividing lines.”

This text is a pact.

The protocol of an experimentation that opens
between deserters.

**Without appearing to,
leave the rank.**

Now

Appendix

1. Kairos (Greek: καιρός, “the right or opportune moment”, “the supreme moment”)

Ancient Greeks had two words for time: *chronos* for quantitative emphasis, and *kairos*, which has a qualitative nature. While the former refers to chronological or sequential time, the latter signifies a time in between, a moment of undetermined time in which something special happens.

2. Gnosticism (Greek: γνώσις, gnōsis, knowledge)

Refers to diverse religious movements that merged around 500 BC. Gnosticism is a unification of various belief systems through the teaching that the cosmos was created by an imperfect god, a demiurge with some of the supreme God’s spirit. Depictions of the demiurge vary from being an embodiment of evil to being merely imperfect and as benevolent as its inadequacy permits.

Gnōsis, the root of the word, is a form of mystic, revealed, esoteric knowledge through which the spiritual elements of humanity are reminded of their true origins within the superior Godhead, being thus permitted to escape materiality.

3. Stimmung

A piece by Karlheinz Stockhausen written in 1968. It is performed by six vocalists singing into six microphones, with different sections being led by either the three female or the three male vocalists. The ‘following’ singers must adopt their pitch, tonality, etc. to that of the ‘leaders’ before they in turn begin to lead the next section. The German word “*Stimmung*”

has several meanings, including “tuning”, “mood”, “emotive state”, “atmosphere”, and “(public) opinion”. The closely related word *Übereinstimmung* means “concord”, or “agreement” (Die Stimme means voice; stimmen means to harmonize, or to be correct). The primary sense of the title “*implies not only the outward tuning of voices or instruments, but also the inward tuning of one’s soul*” (Paul Hillier).

4. **Mundus est fabula** (Latin, “the world is a fable”)

In Jan Weenix’s Portrait of Descartes (1649) the French philosopher, mathematician, physicist, and writer is depicted holding a book bearing this phrase.

5. **ὡς μὴ** (Greek: “smell”)

6. **Ancien Régime**

Refers primarily to the aristocratic, social, and political system established in France from 14th century to 18th century AD. The term is French for “Former Regime,” and was created by the French Revolutionaries to promote a new cause and discredit the existing order.

The *Ancien Régime* developed out of the French monarchy of the Middle Ages, and was swept away centuries later by the French Revolution of 1789. It was very similar to the feudal system that preceded it, but for an even greater concentration of power around the central monarchy.

7. Spectacle

In general, spectacle refers to an event that is memorable for the appearance it creates. Derived in Middle English from c.1340 as “specially prepared or arranged display” it was borrowed from Old French spectacle, itself a reflection of the Latin spectaculum “a show” from spectare “to view, watch” frequentative form of specere “to look at”. This term was borrowed from the Roman practice of staging Circuses, in the rather famous philosophy of the Roman elite of “Bread and Circuses”, used to maintain civil order due to an inability to actually solve underlying social and economic problems.

***The Society of the Spectacle (La Société du spectacle)* is a work of philosophy and critical theory by Situationist and Marxist theorist, Guy Debord. It was first published in 1967 in France. *The Society of the Spectacle* provides an extensive reinterpretation of Marx’s work, and also builds significantly on the work of György Lukács.**

Debord traces the development of a modern society in which authentic social life has been replaced with its representation. He argues that the history of social life can be understood as “the decline of being into having, and having into merely appearing.” This condition, according to Debord, is the “historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life.”

With the term spectacle, Debord defines the system that is a confluence of advanced capitalism, the mass media, and the types of governments who favor those phenomena. The spectacle is the inverted image of society in which relations

between commodities have supplanted relations between people, in which passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity.

In his analysis of the spectacular society, Debord notes that quality of life is impoverished; with such lack of authenticity human perceptions are affected, and a degradation of knowledge coincides with the hindering of critical thought. The spectacle obfuscates the past, melding it with the future into an undifferentiated mass, a type of never ending present; in this way the spectacle prevents individuals from realizing that the society of spectacle is only a moment in history (time), one that can be overturned through revolution.

Debord's aim and proposal, is "to wake up the spectator who has been drugged by spectacular images," "through radical action in the form of the construction of situations," "situations that bring a revolutionary reordering of life, politics, and art". In the situationist view, situations are actively created moments characterized by "a sense of self-consciousness of existence within a particular environment or ambience".

Debord specifically encouraged the use of *détournement*, "which involves using spectacular images and language to disrupt the flow of the spectacle."

The Society of the Spectacle is a series of two hundred and twenty-one short theses divided into nine chapters. Below are select thesis from the first chapter, "The Culmination of Separation", which will hopefully provide illumination with regards to the nature of the Spectacle, and to that of *The The-*

ory of Bloom as well.

“In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation.” Thesis 1.

“The specialization of images of the world evolves into a world of autonomized images where even the deceivers are deceived. The spectacle is a concrete inversion of life, an autonomous movement of the nonliving.” Thesis 2.

“The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is the focal point of all vision and all consciousness. But due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is in reality the domain of delusion and false consciousness: the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of universal separation.” Thesis 3.

“The spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images.” Thesis 4.

“The concept of ‘the spectacle’ interrelates and explains a wide range of seemingly unconnected phenomena. The apparent diversities and contrasts of these phenomena stem from the social organization of appearances, whose essential nature must itself be recognized. Considered in its own terms,

the spectacle is an affirmation of appearances and an identification of all human social life with appearances. But a critique that grasps the spectacle's essential character reveals it to be a visible negation of life — a negation that has taken on a visible form.” Thesis 10.

“In order to describe the spectacle, its formation, its functions, and the forces that work against it, it is necessary to make some artificial distinctions. [...] For the spectacle is both the meaning and the agenda of our particular socio-economic formation. It is the historical moment in which we are caught.” Thesis 11.

“The society based on modern industry is not accidentally or superficially spectacular, it is fundamentally spectaclist. In the spectacle — the visual reflection of the ruling economic order — goals are nothing, development is everything. The spectacle aims at nothing other than itself.” Thesis 14.

“The first stage of the economy's domination of social life brought about an evident degradation of being into having — human fulfillment was no longer equated with what one was, but with what one possessed. The present stage, in which social life has become completely dominated by the accumulated productions of the economy, is bringing about a general shift from having to appearing — all 'having' must now derive its immediate prestige and its ultimate purpose from appearances. At the same time all individual reality has become

social, in the sense that it is shaped by social forces and is directly dependent on them. Individual reality is allowed to appear only if it is not actually real.” Thesis 17.

“Separation is the alpha and omega of the spectacle. [...] Religion justified the cosmic and ontological order that corresponded to the interests of the masters, expounding and embellishing everything their societies could not deliver. In this sense, all separate power has been spectacular. But this earlier universal devotion to a fixed religious imagery was only a shared acknowledgment of loss, an imaginary compensation for the poverty of a concrete social activity that was still generally experienced as a unitary condition. In contrast, the modern spectacle depicts what society could deliver, but in so doing it rigidly separates what is possible from what is permitted. [...] Like a factitious god, it engenders itself and makes its own rules. It reveals itself for what it is: an autonomously developing separate power [...]. In the course of this development, all community and all critical awareness have disintegrated; and the forces that were able to grow by separating from each other have not yet been reunited.” Thesis 25.

“The spectacle’s social function is the concrete manufacture of alienation. Economic expansion consists primarily of the expansion of this particular sector of industrial production. The ‘growth’ generated by an economy developing for its own sake can be nothing other than a growth of the very alienation that was at its origin.” Thesis 32.

“The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point that it becomes images.” Thesis 34.

8. Biopower

Coined by French philosopher Michel Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1976), the term Biopower refers to the technology of power, a science of oppression that can be applied to facilitate the control of a population. Biopower refers specifically to modern states and their management of people through “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations.” Note the specific mention of bodies included here; it is not enough to control the minds and the intellects of a population. Their bodies and their relationship to their bodies must be managed as well.

In order for its domination to be considered ‘rational’, Biopower operates through an emphasis on protecting life rather than bringing death. This is done through the regulation of the human body as well as the production of other technologies of power: the concept of sexuality, for example. This allows for the ‘rational’ justification of whatever means Biopower wishes to use in its quest for complete, continuous domination.

If the alternative to obedience results in the cessation of the protection of life, the probability of Death seems to increase. “If genocide is indeed the dream of modern power, this is not because of the recent return of the ancient right to kill;

it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of the population” (The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge).

9. Ens realissimum (Latin, “the most real being”)

Considered a term for God, ens realissimum reflects the belief that reality, like goodness, exists in degrees, and that therefore a limiting, ultimately real entity must exist. In Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, he uses transcendental logic to demonstrate the necessity of the existence of such a being, but reminds the reader that this supreme being does not necessarily adhere to their concept of God.

10. Ptoléméen

A French word that can refer to either the Ptolemaic Dynasty, a Greek royal family that ruled the Ptolemaic Empire in Egypt, or to Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy) and his theory that the Earth is immobile at the center of the universe.

11. Qua

An English word meaning: as; as being; in the character or capacity of.

12. Et sic in infinitum

Latin: “and thus into infinity”

13. Kabbalah (Hebrew: lit. “receiving”)

A discipline and school of thought concerned with the mystical aspect of Judaism, a set of esoteric teachings meant to explain the relationship between an infinite, eternal and mysterious Creator and the finite and mortal universe of His creation. Kabbalah seeks to define the nature of the universe and the human being, the nature and purpose of existence, and various other ontological questions. It also presents methods to aid understanding of these concepts and thereby attain spiritual realization.

14. Mysticism (Greek: μυστικός, mystikos, an initiate of a mystery religion)

The pursuit of communion with, identity with, or conscious awareness of an ultimate reality, divinity, spiritual truth, or God through direct experience, intuition, instinct or insight. Mysticism usually centers on a practice or practices intended to nurture those experiences or awareness. Mysticism may be dualistic, maintaining a distinction between the self and the divine, or may be nondualistic.

15. Coquillards

The coquillards were originally false pilgrims of Compostela who sold “coquilles Saint-Jacques” (scallops) supposedly brought back from their pilgrimmage.

In the slang of the 15th Century this term primarily designated swindlers, before its adoption by an organized band of brigands who were at large in Burgundy from 1440 to 1455, the date of the trial of fifteen of them in Dijon. It would seem

that the band survived that trial and afterwards scattered to form local mobs. The term “coquillard” now refers to all of these local bands.

Finally, in the 17th Century this term once again designated false pilgrims who abused the hospitality of monasteries and sometimes engaged in theft.

Although all relatively different, these four senses of the term tend to create through conglomeration a stereotyped image of the coquillard, that is usually described as being a false pilgrim brigand of the 15th century. The reality is more complex; for example, the coquillards of Villon were never false pilgrims.

16. Gorgon (Greek: gorgós, dreadful)

In Greek mythology Gorgon commonly refers to any of three sisters who had hair of live venomous snakes and a horrifying gaze that turned any who beheld it to stone. Traditionally, while two of the Gorgons were immortal, their sister Medusa was not and was slain by the mythical hero Perseus.

17. Alfred Jarry (September 8, 1873 – November 1, 1907)

Born Alfred-Henry Jarry, Alfred Jarry was a French writer best known for his absurdist and irreverent play *Ubu Roi* (1896), generally considered as a forerunner of surrealist theatre. He wrote in many styles and genres, exploring absurdism and satire with commonly grotesque results. Particularly with regards to his early work, Jarry is considered to be part of the Symbolist movement, although he, like other Symbolists, fre-

quently ridiculed the movement.

Always a trickster and rarely if ever appearing to take anything very seriously, Jarry constantly scorned his audience, social norms, authority, and himself. He was highly controversial and increasingly erratic. He became a heavy drinker and, upon falling ill, effectively isolated himself from everyone with whom he had previously socialized. He died young and alone in his apartment.

Sengle is the main character from his autobiographical work *Days and Nights: Novel of a Deserter (1897)*, and so is taken to portray Jarry himself. This man is also a writer, and feels strongly that he is but a vessel as his ideas and works seem pour out of him fully formed, without his prior knowledge of their existence.

Alfred Jarry is thought to be a major influence of Absurdism, Dadaism and Surrealism. He was of great interest to Andre Breton, who was originally part of the Dada movement but eventually split with them and went on to found the Surrealist movement, of which Gui Debord was originally an active member.

18. Fernando António Nogueira Pessoa (June 13, 1888 - November 30, 1935)

A highly influential Portuguese poet and writer as well as a literary critic and translator. He wrote under at least 72 heteronyms over the course of his life.

19. Bartleby, the Scrivener: a Story of Wall Street(1853)

A novella by Herman Melville about Bartleby, a scrivener in a lawyer's office on Wall Street who one day decides that he "would prefer not to" complete a task for his boss. Bartleby gradually begins performing fewer and fewer tasks around the office, leading the lawyer to make several attempts to reason with him and to learn something about him, but Bartleby offers nothing but his signature "I would prefer not to." One day, the lawyer discovers that Bartleby has started living at the office, which later results in his imprisonment. Bartleby eventually starves to death, having "preferred not to" eat. The work is said to have been inspired, in part, by Melville's reading of Ralph Waldo Emerson, specifically Emerson's essay "The Transcendentalist".

20. Baccalauréat

An academic qualification taken by French and international students at the end of the lycée (secondary or high school). It is the main diploma required to pursue university studies.

21. György Lukács (April 13, 1885 – June 4, 1971)

A Hungarian Marxist philosopher and literary critic, he is widely considered to be the founder of the tradition of Western Marxism. He contributed the ideas of reification and class consciousness to Marxist philosophy and theory, and was influential in realist thought.

22. Dasein

This term is best known for its appearance in Martin Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time*, but it had been used by several philosophers prior to Heidegger's work. The word is derived from *da-sein*, literal German for being-there or there-being, and is the German vernacular term for existence. Heidegger was adamant that this concept must not be confused with a subject, something definable in terms of a self or consciousness, but seen as a human being comprised of its temporality; a being in time.

“This entity which each of us is himself...we shall denote by the term ‘Dasien’” (*Being in Time*).

23. Post-Fordism

The dominant system of economic production, consumption and associated socio-economic phenomena in most industrialized countries since the late 20th century. It is contrasted with Fordism, the system formulated in Henry Ford's automotive factories, in which workers work on a production line performing specialized tasks repetitively. Definitions of the nature and scope of Post-Fordism vary considerably and are a matter of debate among scholars.

24. State of exception

A state of exception is a concept in the legal theory of Carl Schmitt similar to a state of emergency, but based in the sovereign's ability to transcend the rule of law in the name of the

public good.

A state of emergency is a governmental declaration that may suspend certain normal functions of government, alert citizens to alter their normal behaviors, or order government agencies to implement emergency preparedness plans. It can also be used as a rationale for suspending civil liberties. Such declarations usually come during a time of natural disaster, during periods of civil disorder, or following a declaration of war (in democratic countries, many call this martial law, most with non-critical intent). *Justitium* is its equivalent in Roman law.

In some countries, the state of emergency and its effects on civil liberties and governmental procedure are regulated by the constitution, or a law that limits the powers that may be invoked or rights that may be suspended during an emergency. In many countries, it is illegal to modify the emergency law or constitution during the emergency.

Some political theorists, such as Carl Schmitt, have argued that the power to decide the initiation of the state of emergency defines sovereignty itself. In *State of Exception* (2005), Giorgio Agamben criticized this idea, arguing that the mechanism of the state of emergency deprives certain people of their civil rights, producing his interpretation of *homo sacer*. Agamben's work has been highly influential on ideas of members of *Tiqqun*.

Some clarifying excerpts from Agamben's *State of Exception* (2005), and specifically from the section titled "A Brief History

of the State of Exception”:

“World War One coincided with a permanent state of exception in the majority of the warring countries. [...] in this way the executive power was transformed into a legislative organ in the material sense of the term. In any case, it was during this period that exceptional legislation by executive [governativo] decree (which is now perfectly familiar to us) became a regular practice in the European democracies.

[...] Predictably, the expansion of the executive’s powers into the legislative sphere continued after the end of hostilities, and it is significant that military emergency now ceded its place to economic emergency (with an implicit assimilation between war and economics).

[...]When we study the birth of the so-called dictatorial regimes in Italy and Germany, it is important not to forget this concurrent process that transformed the democratic constitutions between the two world wars. Under the pressure of the paradigm of the state of exception, the entire politico-constitutional life of Western societies began gradually to assume a new form, which has perhaps only today reached its full development.

[...]The place—both logical and pragmatic—of a theory of the state of exception in the American constitution is in the dialectic between the powers of the president and those of Congress. This dialectic has taken shape historically (and in an exemplary way already beginning with the Civil War) as a conflict over supreme authority in an emergency situation; or,

in Schmittian terms (and this is surely significant in a country considered to be the cradle of democracy), as a conflict over sovereign decision.

[...]Because the sovereign power of the president is essentially grounded in the emergency linked to a state of war, over the course of the twentieth century the metaphor of war becomes an integral part of the presidential political vocabulary whenever decisions considered to be of vital importance are being imposed.

[...]President Bush's decision to refer to himself constantly as the "Commander in Chief of the Army" after September 11, 2001, must be considered in the context of this presidential claim to sovereign powers in emergency situations. If, as we have seen, the assumption of this title entails a direct reference to the state of exception, then Bush is attempting to produce a situation in which the emergency becomes the rule, and the very distinction between peace and war (and between foreign and civil war) becomes impossible."

25. Praetorian Guard (Latin: PRÆTORIANI)

A force of bodyguards used by Roman Emperors. The title was first used for the guards of Roman generals.

26. Sua cuique persona (Latin, "to each his own mask")

This phrase is associated with a painting variously called *The Veiled Woman* and *The Nun*, dating from around 1510 and today attributed to Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio.

This unusual portrait includes a painting designed to cover it;

a false panel painted with grotesque reliefs including a flesh-colored mask with tight lips and black, empty eye-holes. An inscription reads *Sua cuique persona*. The painting calls into question the nature of the false identities we create in our social environments, and in portraits specifically.

27. Agape (Classical Greek: *agápē*, Modern Greek: *αγάπη*)
Also called parental love, agape is one of several Greek words translated into English as love. Many have thought that this word represents divine, unconditional, self-sacrificing, active, volitional, and thoughtful love. Paulo Coelho defines it as “the love that consumes,” i.e., the highest and purest form of love, one that surpasses all other types of affection. Greek philosophers at the time of Plato and other ancient authors have used forms of the word to denote love of a spouse or family, or affection for a particular activity.

28. Me ne frego (Italian, lit. “I don’t give a damn”)
A Fascist slogan used by Benito Mussolini’s blackshirts.

29. Otto Adolf Eichmann (March 19, 1906 – May 31, 1962)
A high-ranking German Nazi sometimes referred to as “the architect of the Holocaust”. Because of his organizational talents and ideological reliability, he was charged with the task of facilitating and managing the logistics of mass deportation of Jews to ghettos and extermination camps in German-occupied Eastern Europe.

30. Johann Georg Elser

A German opponent of Nazism who attempted to assassinate Adolf Hitler in 1939.

31. Meister Eckhart

Eckhart von Hochheim (c. 1260–c. 1328) commonly known as Meister Eckhart, was a German theologian, philosopher and mystic. Eckhart was one of the most influential Christian Neoplatonists and wrote on metaphysics as well as spiritual psychology. Many major German philosophers have been influenced by his work.

Eckhart's ideas deviated significantly from the usual scholastic canon, and he was eventually brought up on charges before the local Franciscan-led Inquisition, to be tried as a heretic. According to Eckhart, God is primarily fertile, and it is out of overabundance of love that God gives birth to the Son in all of us. This is from the Neoplatonic concept of "overflow" of the One that cannot contain its abundance of Being.

According to Neoplatonism, the primeval Source of Being is the One and the Infinite, as opposed to the many and the finite. As the most real reality it is the source of all life. Although the origin of Being, the One is beyond all Being, and so cannot be known through reasoning or understanding, since only what is part of Being can be thus known. It has no attributes whatsoever, as these would imply limitation. As active force the One is perpetually producing something else; not through a physical process, but rather through a release of energy.

Since the product only has real existence by virtue of the original existence acting within it, Neoplatonism may be described as a kind of dynamic pantheism: the view that the Universe (Nature) and God are identical, or that the Universe (including Nature on Earth) is the only thing deserving the deepest kind of reverence.

“When I preach, I usually speak of detachment and say that a man should be empty of self and all things [...].”

Eckhart postulated that in order to find meaning, it is necessary to resign, or detach oneself from the world. This detachment results in truth or meaning in the phenomenological sense, as well as creation itself.

“The two eyes of the soul of man, cannot both perform their work at once: but if the soul shall see with the right eye into eternity, then the left eye must close itself and refrain from working, and be as though it were dead. For if the left eye be fulfilling its office toward outward things, that is holding converse with time and the creatures; then must the right eye be hindered in its working; that is, in its contemplation. Therefore, whosoever will have the one must let the other go; for ‘no man can serve two masters.’” (*Theologia Germanica*)

Schopenhauer wrote in *The World as Will and Representation* that Sakyamuni (regarded in most traditions as the Supreme Buddha of our age) and Eckhart taught the same thing, but

“[...] Eckhart is obliged to clothe his [ideas] in the garment of the Christian myth, and to adapt his expressions thereto”.

32. Ja Wohl

German: emphatic “yes”

33. Alles scheisse

German: “everything is shit”

34. Primus inter pares (Latin, the first among equals, or first among peers)

Indicates that a person is the most senior of a group of people sharing the same rank or office.

When not used in reference to a specific title, this phrase may indicate that the person so described is technically equal, but looked upon as an authority of special importance by their peers. In some cases it may also be used to indicate that while the person described appears to be an equal, they actually are the group’s unofficial or hidden leader.

35. Tiqqun

The French rendering of the Hebrew word *Tikkun*, meaning to “perfect”, “repair”, “heal”, or “transform”. In rabbanical school, students study mystical texts that view *tikkun* as the process of restoring a complex divine unity.

A *tikkun kor'im* (readers’ *tikkun*) is a study guide used when preparing to chant the Torah, or to read from the Torah in a Jewish synagogue. People who chant from the Torah must

differs from that written (the *Kethib*) in the scroll.

36. Ponts-aux-ânes (French, “donkeys’-bridge”)

A French proverb describing the predicament of a donkey standing before an upward-curving bridge spanning a river. Since the bridge is higher in the middle, the donkey perceives it to be a wall and so does not attempt to cross; in actuality the bridge is the solution to the true obstacle, the river. The moral is that what you believe to be an obstacle may in fact help you, provided that you don't give up.

37. Mene, Mene, Tekel u-Pharsin (Hebrew)

In the book of Daniel, King Belshazzar of Babylon and his court praise ‘the gods of gold and silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone’. Immediately, the disembodied fingers of a human hand appear and write on the wall of the royal palace the words Mene, Mene, Tekel u-Pharsin, known Aramaic names of measures of currency.

The King sends for Daniel, an exiled Jew, to translate. The meaning that Daniel decrypts from these words is based on passive verbs corresponding to the measure names:

MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

That very night King Belshazzar is slain.

The phrase the writing on the wall has come to signify a por-

tent of doom or the end of an organization or activity.

38. Pierre Rivière

On June 3, 1835, this 20-year-old Normandy peasant went to the house of his mother, who was pregnant, and murdered her with a pruning hook. He then killed his sister and a little brother with the same weapon. Leaving the house, he told a neighbor, "I have just delivered my father from all his tribulations. I know that they will put me to death, but no matter." In the Prosecutor's opinion, Rivière's aberration stemmed from his refusal to accept the discipline that an organic society necessarily imposes on its members: "Solitary, wild, and cruel, that is Pierre Rivière as seen from the moral point of view; he is, so to speak, a being apart, a savage not subject to the ordinary laws of sympathy and sociability."

While the law was taking its course, Rivière wrote his own version of the story. Though his education had been rudimentary, he was able to express himself with a force and clarity that amazed his judges and far surpassed anything said of him by those outside his mental world.

39. Kipland Philip "Kip" Kinkel (born August 30, 1982)

An American teenager who murdered his parents on May 20, 1998, and perpetrated a school shooting the following day that left two students dead and 25 others wounded. He is currently serving a 111-year sentence, without the possibility of parole.

Kinkel's father had told him he would be sent to boarding

school if he did not begin to cooperate. Kinkel shot his father in the back of the head, then waited for his mother to come home. He told her that he loved her and shot her twice in the back of the head, three times in the face, and once in the heart.

Upon arrest, Kinkel lunged at a police officer with his knife, screaming, "Shoot me, kill me!" Kinkel later said that he wanted to trick the officer into shooting him, and that he had wanted to commit suicide after killing his parents but could not bring himself to do so.

40. Alain Oreiller

Called the 'oedipal murderer', twenty-three-year-old Alain shot his father in the back of the head and then attempted to shoot his mother on Father's Day, 1995. When the gun jammed, he decided that his mother would marry him instead, because 'he was now the boss and wanted a wife'. Alain had been complaining to his friends that his parents, with whom he still lived, were trying to make him get a job. Upon his arrest, Alain refused to discuss what he had done, saying that it was all in the past and that talking about it would not bring anyone back.

41. Homo sacer (Latin, "the sacred man", "the accursed man")

An obscure figure of Roman law: a person who is banned and may be killed by anybody, but may not be sacrificed in a religious ritual. The person is excluded from all civil rights, while

his/her life is deemed “holy” in a negative sense.

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes the *homo sacer* as an individual who exists in the law as an exile. There is, he thinks, a paradox. It is only because of the law that society can recognize the individual as *homo sacer*, and so the law that mandates the exclusion is also what gives the individual an identity.

Agamben holds that life exists in two capacities. One is natural biological life (Greek: *Zoë*) and the other is political life (Greek: *bios*). This *zoë* is related by Agamben himself to Hannah Arendt’s description of the refugee’s “naked life” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). The effect of *homo sacer* is, he says, a schism of one’s biological and political lives. As “bare life”, the *homo sacer* finds himself submitted to the sovereign’s state of exception, and, though he has biological life, it has no political significance.



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