BATAILLE K AFF ANSWERS

BATAILLE = CONTRADICTORY

Bataille's incoherent discourse masks his lack of content and the contradictory nature of his logic

Heimonet, 1996 [Jean Michel, Professor of French at the Catholic University of America, Bataille and Sartre: The Modernity of Mysticism, Diacritics 26.2, p. 59-73, The Johns Hopkins University Press, project MUSE, acc. 06.30.2008]

From start to finish Sartre has alway remained a classical writer, one for whom language is not a problem but a simple instrument, accessible and compliant, for the transmission of a message. In this light, Sartre's literary work--his plays and novels--is only the reworking of the philosophical theses it serves to popularize. What is shocking about the form of *Inner Experience* is that it casts doubt onto the reassuring conception of language as instrument. The "slippery sentences" with which Bataille stretches and suspends the meaning of words shatters Sartre's vision of a coherent and intelligible world [see 118]; such sentences, responsible for drawing the reader into the "ineffable" as if into [End Page 60] a trap where reason founders, are the product of a monstrous and, at the least, explosive mix of psychic proceedings. Bataille does not limit himself simply to exalting passion but goes further by wanting to make it live with its opposite, with that which, in the usual economy of speech, is supposed to exclude passion--or at least to extinguish it. As early as the foreword, the author of *Inner Experience* informs his reader of his intention to arrive at "a synthesis of *'rapture'* and *'rigorous intellectual method,'*" of "'emotional knowledge'" and "'rational knowledge'" [177]. Repeating the founding gesture of romanticism, he commits the logical heresy of mixing "poetry" and "philosophy." Again Sartre sees in this only a "circle"--vicious in all its points--where discourse keeps going around and around crazily without coming up with anything positive [179]. It is no less true that this self-sacrifice of language offends his taste for a stable truth, one that is reducible to a concept. In addition one should not misunderstand the meaning of the "praise" at the end of the first part of the article. The magnanimous professor Sartre finishes up by conceding to the pupil Bataille the innovative aspect of his writing. In spite of "a little hollow emphasis and some clumsiness in the handling of abstraction, *Inner Experience* is, according to Sartre, a contribution to the rejuvenation of the art of the essay, the form of which seemed to have been fixed since Voltaire. But what is this appreciation worth in the wake of a critique denouncing the incompetence (the unprofessionalism) and the vacuity of the book? Moreover, Sartre himself is quick to take back what he has just conceded. For, as he says, "form is not everything." Which is a way of saying that form is nothing if not the most superficial, the most playful, and, because of its artifices, the least trustworthy aspect of discourse, the part that is used (by Bataille) to cover up the nothingness of the "content," which finally is the only thing that matters [185].

BATAILLE = CONTRADICTORY

Stripped of its form, Bataille's writing offers little content—his elitist philosophy contradicts his focus on abjection

Heimonet, 1996 [Jean Michel, Professor of French at the Catholic University of America, Bataille and Sartre: The Modernity of Mysticism, Diacritics 26.2, p. 59-73, The Johns Hopkins University Press, project MUSE, acc. 06.30.2008]

The entire second part of Sartre's essay, which concentrates on the examination of this "form," will be to demonstrate the essentially perverse and noxious character of *Inner Experience.* As heir to the Enlightenment, and on his way toward Marxism, Sartre reproaches Bataille for having God survive his own death, and for inventing, by way of a detour through a critical approach pushed to its limits, a new form of religion, independent of dogma, rites of worship, and a church, and all the more impossible to exorcise since it is based, as in Kierkegaard, on lived experience--in the sense in which German phenomenology uses the term *Erlebnis* [see 189]. As rudimentary as it seems, this strategy is not lacking in efficiency. Once the cardinal stakes underlying experience have been uncovered, the issue for Sartre becomes not just removing or invalidating these stakes but, in a much more perfidious manner, turning them back on themselves, in such a way that each thesis, once stripped of the mask of its "form," will appear, with respect to its "content," as the opposite of what it declares. Bataille defines inner experience by opposition to traditional mysticism; the sacred that is revealed is not tied to the attainment of transcendence but results instead from the exercise of the critical faculties, through the infinite questioning of thought and language. To counter this, Sartre will have to prove that Bataille is a "real" mystic, not simply a "devout Christian" but a Christian "ashamed" of being a Christian [183, 217], whose so-called "sacrifice of words," conducted by means of "nonknowledge," is only an ingenious rhetorical effect intended to disguise the "totalitarian" character of his discourse [see 182]. In the same way, Sartre will show that this verbal sacrifice, which results in "de-sacralizing" the subject, bringing it down off its pedestal, reducing its power and its will "to be everything," is in reality nothing but the obverse of erecting the subject as sacred; it is the art of turning an "auto-da-fé" into an "apotheosis" [214]. From the bottom of his abjection Bataille remains above, looking down on common humanity. As an "edifying [End Page 61] narrative," his work is the story of a "second descent": returning from an "unknown region," he "descends again among us" to drag us along in his fall [183]. Finally, Bataille's desire to "lose himself," the exigency of a universal "communication" with the rest of the world, is contradicted by the hierarchical and elitist vision of *Inner Experience.* An adept of "the doctrine of pain" [*dolorisme*] [217], Bataille does not write, as he claims, for an audience of his "equals" but for his "zealots" [*zélateurs*], for the "apprentice mystic" (one might say "sorcerer"), who, as he does, values suffering and torment for their own sake as supreme [181].

BATAILLE = GENDERED TRANSGRESSION

Bataille sets up a gendered transgression to identify total loss in the feminine which is consequently ignored in interpretations

Surkis, 1996 [Judith, doctoral candidate in the History department at Cornell University at time of writing, No Fun and Games Until Someone Loses and Eye: Transgression and Masculinity in Bataille and Foucault, Diacritics 26.2, 18-20, The Johns Hopkins University Press, project MUSE, acc. 07.01.2008]

"Revealed to this eye, which in its pivoting conceals itself for all time, is the being of the limit" [49]. He, in turn, reads transgression and death in Bataille's eye. Foucault consistently effaces Bataille's representation of transgression as a gendered dynamic in order to position Bataille as a figure of/for transgression. He can only repeat Bataille's transgression by obscuring how it is enacted in Bataille's writing. If Foucault were to examine the consistent gendering of transgression, he would have to account for the persistence of the narrator who never completely disappears--who is only proximately rather than totally lost. Foucault turns to "the spectacle of erotic deaths" in Bataille's stories as exemplars of the upturned eye's transgression, metaphorizing Bataille's metaphor by substituting the erotic scene for the ocular figure. This substitution makes explicit what is implicit in the spectacle of the upturned eye--namely, two "perspectives," one gendered as "feminine" and the other as "masculine." However, in his citation of the climactic cemetery scene in *Blue of Noon*, Foucault yet again effaces the woman and concentrates instead on the revolution in Troppmann the narrator's sight, as the ground of the cemetery, twinkling with candles marking each grave, takes on the appearance of the sky, and "the sky above forms a hollow orbit, a death mask in which he recognizes his inevitable end" [47]. He elides how Dorothea's body becomes an initial "image" of absence and death--as she takes on the aspect of a grave--into which the narrator can proceed to fall. As Foucault cites: "The earth under Dorothea's body was open like a tomb, her belly opened itself to me like a fresh grave [*comme une tombe fraiche*]. We were struck with stupor, making love on a starred cemetery. Each light marked a skeleton in a grave and formed a wavering sky as perturbed as our mingled bodies" [47]. The "revolution in sight," the appearance of the "starred cemetery," follows Dorothea's "opening" and self-loss; it is subsequent to her imaging of a tomb/fall (*tombe/tombe*), her representation of the narrator's potential loss. However, Troppmann, as the masculine partner, never entirely dissolves; like Bataille in the introduction to *Erotism*, he remains conscious enough to write. The proximity (rather than completion) of his fall is enacted at the end of the scene. He writes, ". . . we began sliding down the sloping ground. . . . If I hadn't stopped our slide with my foot, we would have fallen into the night, and I might have wondered with amazement if we weren't falling into the void of the sky" [145]. The narrator *stops* the slide, remaining in a limit position in the face of Dorothea's total loss. As Bataille writes: "We approach the void . . . but not to fall into it. We want to become intoxicated with dizziness and the image of the fall is sufficient" [qtd. in Guerlac 105]. In the scene, Dorothea's body provides an image of a tomb/fall into which Troppmann almost but never completely gets lost. By concentrating exclusively on the narrator's revolution in sight, Foucault excludes the process by which the narrator's loss is (almost) enacted. He ignores both the role played by the feminine "image" of the abyss as well as the explicitly partial character of the narrator's loss. [8]

ALT FAILS – GENDERED TRANSGRESSION

Alt fails—Bataille's gendering of transgression belies limitless spending
Surkis, 1996 [Judith, doctoral candidate in the History department at Cornell University at time of writing, No Fun and Games Until Someone Loses and Eye: Transgression and Masculinity in Bataille and Foucault, Diacritics 26.2, 18-20, The Johns Hopkins University Press, project MUSE, acc. 07.01.2008]

In order for Foucault to envision the horizon of his own loss, he consistently positions Bataille (and his narrators) as already lost, as having always already transgressed. In constructing this horizon, he effaces how Bataille remains "discontinuous" throughout his gestures toward losing himself. Foucault's readings collapse the narrator's/Bataille's attempts at loss with the self-annihilation repeatedly imaged by feminine others: a collapse that is never fully possible. While Bataille might desire to lose himself in an "expenditure without reserve," the persistent gendering of transgression belies a limitless spending. The masculine partner always saves up some of himself at the expense of the feminine partner. What, then, are the consequences of Foucault's reading? Both David Carroll and Sherry Simon have critiqued Foucault's discussion of transgression on the grounds that it refuses to articulate the position from which he speaks, a problem often raised by critical attempts to "place" Foucault [Carroll 197-98; Simon 180-81]. In "Preface," Foucault's explicit investment in "losing" or transgressing his own philosophical and discursive position raises this problem most acutely. Carroll writes that, in identifying with and collapsing the distance between himself and his privileged "disruptive discourses" (what I have outlined as Foucault's attempt to lose himself in Bataille's loss), Foucault "lightens his load and frees himself of the more tedious but still necessary task of carrying his own critical weight and assuming the philosophical-political consequences of his critical perspective" [197]. [9] I have seen Foucault's effacement of the writing subject's position as particularly symptomatic of this difficulty. His persistent conflation of narrating witnesses with what they see enacts exactly the total loss of position that he desires to achieve in his own reading of Bataille. I would suggest, like Carroll, that the desired "blindness" of this conflation, entailing as it does a loss of all "critical distance," can have questionable political consequences. Although Foucault is wary of reading all discourse as a direct expression of an (ideological) position, a close examination of the dynamic of transgression reveals that a total loss of position is never fully possible for the subject who continues to write. [10] In focusing upon a self-loss that is perpetually deferred as long as he continues to theorize, Foucault finesses and obscures the position *he* remains in while writing. An analysis of the gendered positions inscribed in Bataille's theory of transgression calls into question the possibility and even viability of the total self-loss that is upheld as its goal. [11] This, it appears to me, is exactly why Foucault consistently effaces the role of gendered partners in eroticism. An account of the gendering of Bataille's transgression demonstrates how it remains within a specular and speculative economy in which the writing subject is always at a certain distance from what he "sees." While he might *desire* to totally lose himself in the loss of another, the writing subject always remains conscious enough of that loss to theorize. Bataille's transgression may thus be read against itself in [End Page 29] order to demonstrate that the "masculine" writing subject always maintains his position vis-à-vis a witnessed "feminine" loss, which explains why Foucault shies away from the consideration of gender. We therefore need to examine how transgression underwrites the theoretical/philosophical subject in the process of purportedly undermining it and hence to account for the writing subject's position rather than deny its continued existence. An interrogation of the gendering operative in transgression then raises a number of further questions concerning the radicality of gestures toward self-loss (a series of questions that, in his attempt to proclaim the disruptiveness of transgression, Foucault cannot afford to address). Does this desire for self-dissolution, which is founded on the "image" of another's loss, in fact strengthen or reinscribe the position of the "masculine" witness rather than radically disable it? An examination of the gendered dynamic of transgression raises the problem of *who* is really lost. Who benefits from the enactment of self-loss? Who witnesses and theorizes about the simultaneous appearance of the limit and its transgression? Who loses an eye?

BATAILLE = OTHERIZATION OF FEMININE

Bataille associates the feminine with a lost and absent Other

Surkis, 1996 [Judith, doctoral candidate in the History department at Cornell University at time of writing, No Fun and Games Until Someone Loses and Eye: Transgression and Masculinity in Bataille and Foucault, Diacritics 26.2, 18-20, The Johns Hopkins University Press, project MUSE, acc. 07.01.2008]

One of two exorbitations in Bataille's *Story*, the spectacle of the death of Granero the toreador--the scene cited in Foucault's conclusion--presents the image of, in Foucault's words, an eye "seen absolutely, but denied the possibility of sight." The denial of sight presented to the exorbitated eye itself is invisible to the spectators. The eye presents an absence: the "image" of the witnesses' blindness to blindness, that is, a *visible* absence. Such "obscene" paradoxical present absences, like those figured in the erotic dynamic by the feminine other who offers a spectacle of her absence to an onlooking partner, are repeatedly presented to the narrator of *Story of the Eye*. The exorbitated eye's loss of vision--its transgression--is explicitly connected with the image of a lost feminine other. Within Bataille's narrative, Marcelle, who "loses herself" by committing suicide, is the privileged figure of/for absence; in the end, *she* is invoked as a representation of the exorbitated eye's loss of vision. Marcelle is, however, notably absented from Foucault's analysis. Foucault instead traces connections between the exorbitated eye, Bataille's experience as a witness, and Bataille's writing. He links Bataille's "being brought back to the reality of his own death" to his experience as a spectator at Granero's death. At the corrida, Bataille saw that "the uprooted eye could give substance to this absence[*rendre présente cette absence*] of which sexuality has never stopped speaking. . . ." Both the spectacle and Bataille's "language of sexuality" render absence present--a connection which Foucault understands as "crucial for his thought [End Page 26] and characteristic of all his language" [51-52; 768]. Foucault can identify with Bataille's spectatorial experience by reading Bataille. The significance of this identification between Foucault as reader and Bataille as witness becomes clear when we consider how Foucault analyzes the spectator's experience. In Foucault's reading, the narrator is conflated with the transgressive act itself. After sketching the scene in which the toreador's eye is exorbitated and Simone "swallows" the bull's testicle, Foucault cites Bataille:

ALT FAILS – INCOMPLETE TRANSGRESSION

Alt fails—Bataille's form of transgression is incomplete and future-oriented, which offers no opportunity for reflection

Surkis, 1996 [Judith, doctoral candidate in the History department at Cornell University at time of writing, No Fun and Games Until Someone Loses and Eye: Transgression and Masculinity in Bataille and Foucault, Diacritics 26.2, 18-20, The Johns Hopkins University Press, project MUSE, acc. 07.01.2008]

Foucault upholds Bataille as an always already "sovereign" figure who marks the limits of (Foucault's) philosophical language. He urges that "the sovereignty of these experiences must surely be recognized some day, and we must try to assimilate them: not to reveal their truth--a ridiculous pretension with respect to words that form our limits--but to serve as a basis for finally liberating our language" [38-39]. In representing and forming the limits of Foucault's discourse, Bataille offers a glimpse of a future "liberation" to Foucault. He insistently positions Bataille beyond himself, figuring him as a horizon to reach toward. In effect, Foucault ignores how, as we have seen in the conclusion to *Erotism*, Bataille remains on the near rather than the far side of the limit. In "Preface," Bataille takes on the character of the convulsed or lost woman's body which appears so frequently in his own writings: "Bataille's language . . . continually breaks down at the center of its space, exposing in his nakedness, a visible and insistent subject who had tried to keep language at arms length, but who now finds himself thrown by it, exhausted upon [End Page 23] [Begin Page 25] the sands of that which he can no longer say" [39]. Foucault's description of the exposed, "naked," and "visible" subject is significant in light of Bataille's own discussions of the role of naked figures in the dynamic of erotic transgression. Bataille's language provides the necessary, visible figure in and through whom Foucault can "witness" the possibility of his own transgression. Bataille's convulsed (figurative) body marks the limit and makes the possibility of its transgression visible to Foucault. David Carroll, in his discussion of "Preface," comments that "there is no doubt in Foucault's mind that the philosophers of transgression have achieved this [sovereign thought], that the liberation of thought and discourse has already occurred" [188]. Carroll argues that, "through this mimetic identification with Bataille and others, Foucault guarantees in advance his own critical power and gathers the spoils of victory from a battle fought by others" [188]. Thus, in Carroll's interpretation, as in my own, Foucault must figure Bataille's transgression as an event that has *already occurred*. I would argue that beyond simply supporting Foucault's discourse, Bataille, as a figure who marks both the limit and its rupture, actually allows Foucault to envision his own (future) transgression. However, although Bataille furnishes the necessary "image" of transgression, he does not complete the project Foucault has in mind; Bataille's transgression--like that of the erotic object--remains incomplete. The form of "the philosophy of eroticism" lies in the future--Bataille's own project notwithstanding. Foucault asserts that "no form of reflection yet developed, no established discourse, can supply its model, its foundation, or even the riches of its vocabulary" [40]. He reiterates Bataille's own hope that the theorization of the subjective experience of eroticism, exemplified by "the language of sexuality," will mark a path toward the transgression of conventional philosophical discourse. Bataille is here positioned as already beyond language and, as a result, in need of Foucault's theoretical elucidation:

BATAILLE = OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

Bataille views women as unfulfilled erotic objects, sites of transgression, and identifies women as subordinate

Surkis, 1996 [Judith, doctoral candidate in the History department at Cornell University at time of writing, No Fun and Games Until Someone Loses and Eye: Transgression and Masculinity in Bataille and Foucault, Diacritics 26.2, 18-20, The Johns Hopkins University Press, project MUSE, acc. 07.01.2008]

For Bataille, the woman, as the marker of difference, becomes the site upon which transgression appears. This is where the gendered erotic object comes into play. Bataille's eroticism posits a distance and difference between partners in order to permit the presentation of an image or "evidence" of transgression. The masculine partner in physical eroticism has difficulty sensing transgression within himself. Bataille posits that "a man cannot usually feel that the law is violated in his own person and that is why he expects a woman to feel confused, even if she only pretends to do so" [134]. Without the woman's confusion, the masculine partner "would not have the consciousness of a violation" [*OC* 133, my translation]. The woman's equivocal "confusion" images both the existence of the taboo and its transgression; her reconciliation of what seems impossible to reconcile makes the transgression appear and "marks [*marquer*]" "that the taboo is not forgotten, that the infringement takes place in spite of the taboo, in full consciousness of the taboo."(134; *OC* 133]. Prior to his own, subsequent self-violation, the man must be *conscious* of her violation. The image of the woman's dissolution is "an announcing sign of crisis" [*OC* 130, my translation]. For Bataille, "a pretty girl stripped naked is sometimes an *image* of eroticism" [*OC* 130, his emphasis, my translation]. He points out, however, that the image presented by the erotic object is not "eroticism itself; it is not eroticism in its completeness, but eroticism working through it [*en passe par lui*]" [130; *OC* 130]. The erotic object, [End Page 21] lacking in itself, is the conduit for masculine self-loss. Bataille writes, "eroticism which is fusion, which shifts interest away from and beyond the person and his limits, is nevertheless *expressed* by an object" [130; my emphasis]. Thus the desired fusion and self-loss rely upon the object's (prior) expression or "image" of transgression. This erotic object is fundamentally paradoxical for Bataille. The woman becomes the condensed site of an apparent contradiction; while she "symbolizes the contrary, the negation of the object, she herself is still an object" [131]. The woman is thus always only a symbol that expresses or denotes transgression to the masculine partner. As Suzanne Guerlac writes, "The woman--the erotic object--is essential to eroticism in order to render it *saisissable*, in order to figure it or present it to consciousness through the mediation of visual form" [104]. [5] In her essay, Guerlac examines the images of women in Bataille's eroticism in order to problematize its use as a model for the transgression of the limits of philosophy. In particular, she questions Derrida's characterization of Bataille's transgressive sovereignty as "an expenditure without reserve" which takes no-thing as its object. She argues that the erotic object *does* introduce a relationship of subordination, "of possession in a nonreciprocal relation," into Bataille's erotic dynamic [102]. Her reading clarifies that, although perhaps desiring an "expenditure without reserve" in the loss of discontinuous self into continuity, sovereignty relies upon the image of another's loss in order to envision the possibility of self-transgression.

TURN – ALT = VIOLENCE

Turn—the alternative leads to violent uprisings and rebelling against the State

Boldt-Irons, 2000 [Leslie Ann, Brock University, Military discipline and revolutionary exaltation: The dismantling of "l'illusion lyrique" in Malraux's L'Espoir and Bataille's Le Bleu Du Ciel, Romanic Review, Vol. 91, Iss. 4, p. 481, proquest, acc. 07.01.2008]

Attracted as he might have been by the risk of death - and it is Malraux's attraction to what Bataille identifies as negativity and catastrophe that interests me relative to his endorsenent of the more constructive value of political commitment - Malraux nevertheless felt that he could play a decisive role in the Republican cause. To that end, he put together a squadron out of a number of Potez 54 bombers, whose effectiveness in battle can only be questioned. Hugh Thomas describes these missions as having only limited success: "Instead, their aviation was spread out, pointless bombing attacks were carried out against non-military targets [...] and such combat flying [...] was marked by bravery and incompetence ... "8 Indeed, the bomber planes of which Malraux's squadron were comprised were "so slow and heavy and required so many people to man [them], that [the squadron] was nicknamed the collective flying coffin" (LI, 43). It is clear once again that the profound sincerity of Malraux's commitment to the Republican cause9 was echoed if not heightened by an equal attraction to the proximity of death and the negativity of catastrophe afforded by the experience of combat. And it is once again in this respect that a link to the values inherent in the works if not in the life of Georges Bataille may be forged. Bataille's only real experience of combat and war is extremely limited. He was enlisted briefly in the First World War in 1916 at the age of 19, but sent home a year later due to health problems. Yet in the 1930's he was a committed writer of tracts and articles proclaiming the need for a proletariat revolution. This revolution, as envisaged by Bataille, would channel the forces of hatred, rage, revolt and violence, but would begin from a fundamental and primordial anguish, without which all revolution loses its impetus: Mais aujourd'hui, si l'affectivite revolutionnaire n'a plus d'autre issue que le malheur de la conscience, elle y revient comme a sa premiere maitresse. Dans le malheur seulement, elle retrouve l'intensite douloureuse sans laquelle la resolution fondamentale de la Revolution, le ni Dieu ni maitres des ouvriers revoltes perd sa brutalite radicale.10 The importance of anguish and its role as founding principle or stimulus of revolutionary activity cannot be overestimated in Bataille's political theory. Only anguish is pervasive and destabilizing enough to set off the series of contagious and destructive actions that mark revolutionary agitation: Si un mouvement reel se produisait naissant d'une aussi grande angoisse, il devrait prendre necessairement le caractere brulant, imprevisible, contagieux a l'extreme, des grands mouvements religieux qui ont deja bouleverse les peuples et leur ont revele la valeur universelle de l'existence [...] l'angoisse de la Terre entiere.11 However, if the revolutionary impulse begins in anguish and is sustained by it, it would have no concrete effect if it were not marked by fury, hatred, revolt and violence. "Seule la `violence du desespoir", writes Bataille, "est assez grande pour fixer l'attention [...] sur le probleme fondamental de l'Etat" (PE, 335). This violence of despair is coupled by "un aveuglement maladif" (PE, 335) both of which are necessary if power is to be seized from the State: "pour s'emparer du pouvoir" "une violence imperative" is necessary.12 For Bataille, power will only ever be exerted by the proletariat if there is realized "une intraitable dictature du peuple arme" (UL, 380). But since this power must remain both organized and explosive, a tricky and almost unattainable balancing act is required. For the Bataille of these early tracts and articles, proletarian violence would remain ineffective if it failed to become a disciplined and organized force. "C'est la creation organique d'une vaste composition de forces, disciplinee, fanatique, capable d'exercer le jour venu one autorite impitoyable" (UL, 380). This composition of forces, though disciplined, must however be wedded to the violence that inspires it: "Une telle composition de forces doit grouper l'ensemble de ceux qui [...] exigent de vivre conformement a la violence immediate d'etre humain (UL, 380)." Indeed, it is the element of violence that distinguishes the discipline of the proletarian revolution from the "servile" discipline required by the fascists: Pour faction - ORGANISEZ-VOUS! Formez les sections DISCIPLINEES qui seront demain le fondement d'une autorite revolutionnaire implacable. A la discipline servile du fascisme, opposez la farouche discipline d'un peuple qui peut faire trembler ceux qui l'oppriment.13

ALT DOESN'T SOLVE THE OTHER

Alt doesn't solve—Bataille's reasoning precludes a concern for the other and the greater community – his focus on private ecstasy prevents solvency

Boldt-Irons, 2000 [Leslie Ann, Brock University, Military discipline and revolutionary exaltation: The dismantling of "l'illusion lyrique" in Malraux's L'Espoir and Bataille's Le Bleu Du Ciel, Romanic Review, Vol. 91, Iss. 4, p. 481, proquest, acc. 07.01.2008]

We have noted the controversy inspired by the fact that Malraux's political affinities appeared to move after the war from an interest in leftist causes and revolutionary activity to a defense of French nationalism and an adherence to the Gaullist right. Hugh Thomas goes so far as to write, for example, that once "illusions of revolutionary elitism were over," Malraux "then withdrew into propaganda [...]" (LI, 44). Bataille's political affinities and interests after the war also underwent a transformation of sorts, and this transformation, as in the case of Malraux, has not been entirely free of criticism. What may be described as a frequent and impassioned invocation to revolutionary action in his early articles is followed by a significant refusal of action in writing produced both during and after the Second World War. The exaltation and access to value which Bataille had wanted the proletariat to discover is replaced in his later writings by a preoccupation with the sovereign inner experience, leading JeanLuc Nancy to observe that Bataille could not reconcile the two alternatives of a private ecstasy on the one hand, and a concern for community on the other: "Bataille himself remained suspended, so to speak, between the two poles of ecstasy and community. [...] [I]t was impossible for him to link the forms of sovereignty - or ecstasy - to the egalitarian community, indeed to community in general."15 Nancy's observations can be reinforced by evidence from statements made by Bataille, such as the following: "I come to this position: inner experience is the opposite of action. Nothing more."16 For Jean-Michel Besnier, it is Nietzsche's influence that explains Bataille's opposition to action during the period in which Inner Experience was written: "Apres 1940, l'auteur de L'Experience interieure se dira nietzscheen d'une autre facon, de telle sorte que (accent sera davantage mis sur le refus oppose par le philosophe A faction (jugee forcement servile) que sur la possibilite de fonder sur lui quelque combat en faveur de l'homme entier."17 What makes Le Bleu du ciel such an important text, is the fact that Bataille wrote it at the same time as he was contributing articles on the need for revolutionary violence to ContreAttaque. The different direction taken by these two types of writing is summarized by Allan Stoekl when he writes, "The confidence exuded by the essays - which hold that Marxism must be identified with explosive sexuality and expenditure - is replaced in Le Bleu du ciel by exhaustion and despair ... "18 Stoekl notes for example that, unlike the angry revolutionary, Henri Troppmann, the protagonist of Le Bleu du ciel, "sinks into a profound sexual and political impotence" (VE, 4). Malraux's L'Espoir, also set in Spain during the Civil War, provides an interesting point of comparison to Bataille's novel Le Bleu du ciel to the extent that certain of the values espoused by Bataille in his early articles - the necessity for passion, exaltation, and organization - appear in Malraux's novel. Thus, as Hewitt notes, L'Espoir features both the exaltation of what Malraux has termed "l'illusion lyrique" - "the belief that personal expressions of courage and brotherhood will somehow bring victory" (AM, 71) and the need for organization, for disciplined action, for "only a collective, tightly disciplined mass can 'organize' the Apocalypse" (AM, 72). Indeed, Malraux's descriptions in L'Espoir provide an account of both the idealism and the practicality necessary for the political fight. The tension between these two values is however highlighted by descriptions that are either hyper-realistic and graphic in their representation of suffering, or surprisingly and consciously theatrical, suggesting a certain detachment from the immediacy of the action described. It is this tendency to both heighten and undermine the graphic effects of both combat and suffering, as well as the recognition of both the exaltation and discipline necessary for the revolutionary cause that permit an alignment of L'Espoir with Le Bleu du ciel. It is to a comparison of the two novels that I now turn, in the interest of determining how "illusion lyrique" is dismantled by each author.

BATAILLE = INACTION

Bataille's alternative leads to inaction due to an inability to overcome systems of value that guide actions like the plan

Johnson, 1999 [Kendall, Haunting transcendence: The strategy of ghosts in Bataille and Breton, Twentieth Century Literature, Fall, Vol. 45, Iss. 3, p. 347, proquest, acc. 07.02.2008]

For Bataille, the ghost is not a symptom but a precondition of enunciation and self-recognition that confounds the quest for authentic identity. Bataille's hesitation between the metaphors of dust and shadow/apparition emphasizes the extent to which the conventional Cartesian subjective is destabilized. Because self-recognition is not a priori but relies on one's supposed function within a system, identity is merely an evanescent ghost, completely contingent on the context that facilitates the process of perception. Bataille does not valorize an ambiguous relationship between self-recognition and existence, but instead characterizes recognition itself as a continual, inescapable deceit with little creative potential. Revolutionary politics become nearly impossible. The compelling value attached to any plan of action or rebellion against the status quo is merely a perpetuation of the subject's misguided confidence in him or herself. Any attempt to transgress is formulated within the restricted economy against which it would revolt, and as each transgression is subsumed into an ever larger and more complex yet still restricted economy, transgressive potential is evacuated of its revolutionary effect. A first step to revolutionary Aufhebung for Bataille would be the cancellation and nullification of the very subjective value that typically empowers the revolution's imperative. Breton's opinions about Georges Bataille were at times contemptuous. Looking over a copy of "W.C." (1926) that Leiris had shown him, Breton rejected the book off-handedly (Hollier 107) and dismissed Bataille as obsessive (Bataille, Visions x). Breton's derisive comments regarding Bataille included calling him an excremental and big-toe philosopher. Near the end of the Second Surrealist Manifesto, Breton analyzes Bataille's obsessiveness: M. Bataille's misfortune is to reason: admittedly, he reasons like someone who 'has a fly on his nose,' which allies him more closely with the dead than with the living, but he does reason. He is trying, with the help of the tiny mechanism in him which is not completely out of order, to share his obsessions: this very fact proves that he cannot claim, no matter what he may say, to be opposed to any system, like an unthinking brute. (Manifestoes 184) Breton's attack designates a fundamental difference between his and Bataille's political ideals. Breton insists on the recuperative logic of every artistic thought and action, and places Bataille's obscenity back into a system of reason and communication. Bataille, however, writes obscenely in a doomed project of trying to rupture, but not transcend, the system. Bataille eventually assumes that his attempt to shock the economy by pushing it to its most horrifying conclusion fails to free him from it and is a definite failure. This reflects a scene in The Blue of Noon (1935) in which Monsieur Melou pursues Troppmann with a political dilemma: "There's no denying that we find ourselves confronted with a minute, disembodied problem whose very substance seems to elude us. . . ." He looked disconsolate. He was racked by some difficulty only he could perceive. His hands initiated a gesture. "But its consequences cannot escape a mind as caustic and restless as your own." I turned toward Lazare and said, "You'll have to excuse me, but would you show me to the toilet?" (64) The moral here is not that politics are not important, but instead that the imperative itself stifles the individual who revolts through the excessive: obscenity, laughter, vomiting. Of "W.C.," Bataille wrote, "it was a shriek of horror (horror at myself, not for my debauchery, but for the philosopher's head) . . ." (Story of the Eye 97). This image of the headless philosopher, presuming failure but revolting nonetheless, prefigures the headless agitation of a personal Nietzscheism. 9

BATAILLE = UNETHICAL

Alt fails—Bataille's alternative rejects ethical systems without proposing a counter-ethic

Itzkowitz, 1999 [Kenneth, To witness spectacles of pain: The hypermorality of Georges Bataille, College Literature, Winter, Vol. 26, Iss. 1, p. 19, proquest, acc. 07.02.2008]

If the only goal of ethics were what is useful or productive in the sense Bataille contrasts it with nonproductive or wasteful squandering, then in dismissing our ordinary moral values on grounds of their utility or productivity, Bataille would be dismissing ethics itself. He would be dismissing the possibility of an ethics- the project for an ethics-of his own. There would be no ethical ground for his dismissal of morality as tied to the productive and useful; there could be no other moral values on which his dismissal of the productive good as the dominant moral value could stand. In other words, there would be no way for us to see him striving to make our lives or anything else better. He would have to be seen as wanting to make everything worse.

ALT = INACTION

The alternative leads to inaction because of Bataille's rejection of the destruction necessary in his idea of ritual sacrifice

Itzkowitz, 1999 [Kenneth, To witness spectacles of pain: The hypermorality of Georges Bataille, College Literature, Winter, Vol. 26, Iss. 1, p. 19, proquest, acc. 07.02.2008]

Still, how far in the direction of praiseworthy cruelty can we really go? Bataille bemoans the decline of the practice of ritual sacrifice, seeing in our cultural and personal excesses of violence the same need at work as in the ritual sacrifice, albeit in a far more destructive fashion. But there can be no clear solution to this problem we face, even assuming it has been correctly under stood and portrayed. Bataille himself admits in discussing Sade that we cannot consent to practices that are overly destructive. On the other hand, only the sacrificial spectacle would seem to be effective in showing us to ourselves, with the prospect of such showing lying at the heart of hypermorality itself. What to do in the face of such a dilemma? It is obviously horrible to exercise cruelty, yet perhaps even worse to do nothing, to find no way to praise and pursue this exercise. Doing nothing, we can have the pleasant ease of remaining ignorant of our situation and dilemma. But as Bataille explains, "Our ignorance only has this incontestable effect: It causes us to undergo what we could bring about in our own way, if we understood" (1988, 23). Piel asks us, in support of Bataille, to consider the only options we have, Will . . . [we] continue to "undergo" what . . . [we] could "bring about," that is, to let the surplus provoke more and more catastrophic explosions instead of voluntarily "consuming" it, of consciously destroying it through ways . . .[we] can choose and " agree to"? (Piel 1995, 104)