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UNDERCOVER SURREALISM

Georges Bataille and DOCUMENTS

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PREFACE

Few exhibitions in the Hayward Gallery's history have had such a long gestation, or so many working titles, as *Undercover Surrealism*. Its genesis can be traced back almost 30 years, to the time of the 1978 exhibition *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, which has proved to be a landmark show both in terms of the Hayward's exhibition history and for surrealist studies in general. Conceived by the late David Sylvester, who chaired the eminent exhibition committee including the then Hayward Director Joanna Drew, Roland Penrose, John Golding, Alan Bowness, Elizabeth Cowling and Dawn Ades (who was the principle author of the catalogue), this magisterial exhibition presented an unprecedented survey of the – loosely defined – dada and surrealist movements structured around more than 40 of the main magazines and journals brought into being by their prime movers.

The magazine DOCUMENTS only just made the cut in the 1978 exhibition, for reasons explained in the Introduction here; but its impact, and the response it provoked among the more committed of the exhibition's vast audience, was startlingly strong. A sense that DOCUMENTS, and its attendant art and ideas, merited an exhibition to itself has prevailed, in the minds of key players, ever since.

From that moment to this there has been an elliptical progress of exhibition proposals and schemes in this broad and ever-important area, discussed at different times and with different Hayward Directors. In the late 1980s, Christopher Green and Dawn Ades proposed an exhibition on Cubism and Surrealism; this idea was received and explored with interest by the Hayward but was never formally advanced. Meanwhile, Green and Ades developed a more focused proposal centred on the magazine DOCUMENTS, which they put forward to the Hayward in 1995. This proposal was entitled *Cubists, Surrealists and Others: The Dissident Eye of Georges Bataille*.

Their proposal, in essence, was to explore the full range of DOCUMENTS' coverage of and attitude to the visual arts, in one of two possible ways. The first envisaged a focus on magic – a recurrent emphasis in DOCUMENTS taken to be a perverse response to enlightenment philosophy and a challenge to the surrealist notion of 'convulsive beauty'. The second concentrated on the material gathered in the magazine, and imagined an exhibition display that echoed the 'collage' methodology through which it was presented in DOCUMENTS, as a means of contrasting the two distinct approaches to art, archaeology and anthropology advanced by its key protagonists, Georges Bataille and Carl Einstein.

The idea of a project along these lines, dauntingly ambitious though it seemed, appealed to us on a number of counts. Memories of *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, though distant, still fired the imagination; and the Hayward's long-standing relationship with both of the proposers gave us con-

fidence in their ability to realise the project. In part in consequence of this relationship, the Hayward's reputation for mounting popular and critically acclaimed exhibitions in this area was established (for instance, the staging of *L'Amour fou. Photography and Surrealism* in 1985; *André Masson: Line Unleashed* in 1987; *Salvador Dalí: The Early Years* in 1994; *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930–1945* in 1995). The proposal also spoke to the Gallery's keen interest in exhibitions that cast new critical light on the most significant and familiar movements of twentieth-century art, and view the more well-known moments and movements of the past century from a fresh perspective. In addition, the project's scope and its aspiration to bring together diverse disciplines, to investigate areas and figures of intense – and growing – relevance and significance to contemporary art and artists, attracted us. Finally, and not least importantly, the very 'difficulty' of the project, the sheer exhibition-making challenge of juxtaposing, in real space and within one show, such diverse works and objects, words and ideas, and of conveying to the audience the full richness and complexity of the visual and intellectual strategies of DOCUMENTS, was compelling and, we felt, fitting to the Hayward's mission at its most daring.

The Hayward brought the proposed exhibition tentatively into its forward plans; it was not until 2001, however, that the idea was developed further, this time by Dawn Ades, together with Fiona Bradley, then Exhibitions Curator at the Hayward and now Director of The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh. The project received further input in its earlier stages from Christopher Green but the exhibition as it has emerged is, principally, the collective responsibility of the three curators, Dawn Ades, Fiona Bradley and, since 2004, Simon Baker. Baker, lecturer in the Art History Department at the University of Nottingham, brought to the project particular expertise in relation to DOCUMENTS' attitudes to photography and popular culture – the fruits of new research undertaken while Gould Fellow at Princeton University.

The proposal, post-2001, has focused with increased clarity on the key figure of Georges Bataille, and his explicit stance as an 'enemy within' Surrealism, in opposition to André Breton's surrealist orthodoxy (*The Enemy Within* survived as a working title for the exhibition longer than many). The extended period and process of developing the exhibition has involved much new research, and occasioned some remarkable rediscoveries: the anamorphic painting of *Saint Antony of Padua and the Infant Jesus*, the Ethiopian painting of *The Legend of the Queen of Sheba*, and the Notre-Dame-de-Liesse passion bottles, to name just a few.

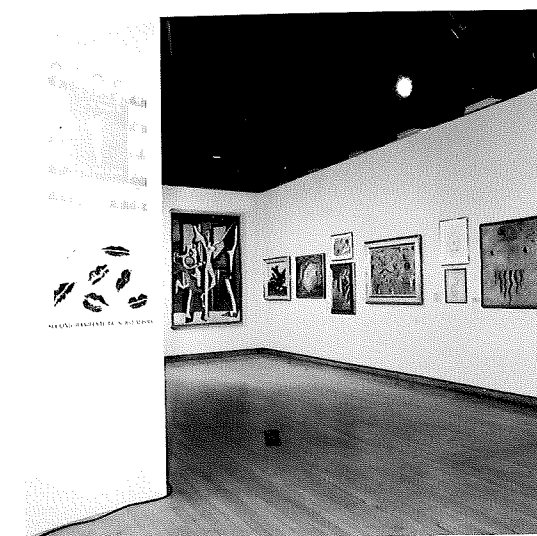
The project has developed with a keen eye to the contemporary urgency and relevance of Bataille's ideas, in particular for visual artists and writers, but periodic notions of extending the territory of the exhibition itself to more recent

times, and even to the present day, have, in the event, not taken hold. Nevertheless, *Undercover Surrealism* proposes itself as an exhibition that breaks new ground, in its research and its mounting, that casts apparently familiar artists and movements in new light, and that remains insistently alive, in the twenty-first century, rather than retiring politely to the shadows of the twentieth.

We are, first and foremost, grateful to the curators, Professor Dawn Ades (University of Essex), Dr Simon Baker (University of Nottingham) and Dr Fiona Bradley, for steering the project to fruition, and in so doing facing down all challenges and potential obstacles with persuasion, passion and zeal. We acknowledge the invaluable support of the University of Nottingham and the University of Essex, in affording research time to Dawn Ades and Simon Baker; and the AHRC Research Centre for Studies of Surrealism and its Legacies for its significant support of this publication.

An ambitious project such as this relies to an extraordinary degree on the understanding and support of those who have lent works, as listed on p. 9. We are enormously indebted to these public and private institutions, and private collectors worldwide, for their generosity and commitment to the exhibition's purpose.

In the course of researching and developing the project over the years we have been aided inestimably by many individuals who have given freely of their time, expertise and ideas, as well as agreeing or helping to expedite loans to the exhibition. We thank in particular: John Alexander, Michel Amandry, Dirk Armstrong, Nigel Arthur, Sylvie Aubenas, Michelle Aubert, Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet, Sarah Bacon, Robin Baker, Anne Baldassari, Julie Bataille, Agnès de la Beaumelle, Françoise Bekus, José Berardo, Brigitte Berg, Eddie Berg, Marie-Laure Bernadac, Ernst Beyeler, Carla Bianchi, Armin Bienger, Hubert Boisselier, Lissant Bolton, Salima Boukris, Jocelyn Bouquillard, Sue Breakell, Alastair Brotchie, Andrew Brown, Stuart Brown, Pierre Buisseret, Loed and Mia van Bussel, Robert Butler, Richard Calvocoressi, Jean-Louis Capitaine, Jim Castner, Nicolas Cendo, Catherine Chauchard, Jake Chapman, Catherine Clement, Monique Cohen, Michel Colardelle, Jill Cook, Antoine Coron, Elizabeth Cowling, Kathy Curry, Susan Davidson, Jan Debbaut, Kurt Delbanco, Lisa Dennison, Delphine Desveaux, Corinne Diserens, Michel Dhenin, Constance de Monbrison, Dominique Dupuis l'Abbé, John Elderfield, Patrick Elliott, Marianne Eve, Guillaume Fau, Evelyne Ferlay, Hermann Forkl, Hal Foster, Jacques Fraenkel, John Friede, Marina Galletti, Bertrand-Pierre Galey, Gallimard, Amanda Geitner, Florence Giry, Krystyna Gmurzynska, Fiona Grisdale, Jan-Lodewijk Grootaers, Stania Guichard, Charles H. Hine III, Denis Hollier, Abdolmajid Hosseini-Rad, Rainer Hüber, Carole Hubert,



Installation shots, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, Hayward Gallery, 1978 (fig. 2)

Julie Hudson, Jean Jamin, Jean-Noël Jeanneney, William Jeffett, Emma Jenkins, Nichola Johnson, Conor Joyce, Peter Junge, Serge Kakou, Adina Kamien, Jonathan King, Susan Kismaric, Rosalind Krauss, Thomas Krens, Jan Krugier and Marie-Anne Krugier-Poniatowski, Christian Klemm, Viola König, Wulf Köpke, Walburga Krupp, André Labarthe, Véronique Landy, Rolf-Dieter Lavier, Brigitte Léal, Yves Le Fur, Nathalie Léman, Anne Leroux de Bretagne, Brigitte Lescure, Jeremy Lewison, Isabelle L'Hoir, Yulla and Jacques Lipchitz Estate, Bill Mackinnon, Neil MacGregor, John Mack, Jean-Pierre Maggi, Jill Maggs, Jean-Hubert Martin, Jacqueline Martinet, Diego and Marguerite Masson, Lili Masson, Marilyn McCully, Jacques Mercier, Ulrike Meyer Stump, Thomas Michel, Charles F. B. Miller, Frances Morris, Jodi Myers, Tanja Narr, Michèle Nicolini, Barbara O'Connor, Stéphanie Odenthal, Didier Ottinger, Nicole Ouvrard, Alfred Pacquement, Payam Parishanzadeh, Douglas M. Parker, Birgit Pauksztat, Julie Pearce, Philippe Peltier, Patrick Périn, Harry Persaud, Yves Peyré, Geoffrey Pickup, Christine Pinault, Pribislav Pitoeff, Jean-Michel Place, Véronique Prat, Catherine Putz, Steven Nash, Mathias Rastorfer, Gérard Régnier, Michael Richardson, Donna Roberts, Eric Robertson, Brigitte Robin-Loiseau, Bénédicte Rolland-Villemot, Vincent Rousseau, Paul Ryan, Sharareh Salehi, Alain Sayag, Markus Schindlbeck, Angela Schneider, Dieter Scholz, Didier Schulmann, Catherine Schwab, Nicholas Serota, Tomas Sharman, Ann Simpson, Janice Slater, Isabel Soares Alves, Sotheby's London, Werner Spies, Christopher Spring, Jonas Storsve, Jeanne-Yvette Sudour, Michael Taylor, Anne Umland, Magali Vène, Marie-Paule Vial, Brigitte Vincens, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, Francesca Volpe, Astrid Von Asten, Leslie Webster, Oliver Wick, Véronique Wiesinger, Ann and Jürgen Wilde, and Calvin Winner.

This publication has been expertly managed by Caroline Wetherilt, assisted by James Dalrymple; we are grateful to them, to Adam Hooper for his sensitive and efficacious design, and to the authors: Dawn Ades, Simon Baker, Fiona Bradley, Neil Cox, Caroline Hancock, Denis Hollier, William Jeffett, CFB Miller, Michael Richardson and Ian Walker. Thanks are due as well to Timothy Adès, Kryszysztof Fijalkowski, Susan de Muth and Michael Richardson for their translations.

The installation at the Hayward has been designed with careful attention to the spirit and detail of the exhibition by Graham Simpson of Cube 3, working with Bob Deakin of Exhibitbuild and in close consultation with the Gallery and the exhibition's curators. The exhibition has been expertly lit by John Johnson of Lightwaves. The exhibition texts have been planned and edited by Helen Luckett (in consultation with the curators) and graphics designed by Adam Hooper.

Assistance, advice and permissions in relation to the film component of the exhibition have been gratefully received from Archives françaises du film, Contemporary Films, London, Eureka Entertainment Ltd, Films sans frontières, Gaumont Pathé Archives, Granada International, Hollywood Classics, Les Documents Cinématographiques, The British Film Institute, The Machine Room, and Warner Brothers Clips Department.

Over the course of the exhibition's development assistance has been given also by Emma Mahony, Clare Carolin, Clare Hennessy, Stephanie Allen, Jacky Klein, Sandra Marilia Marques, Alice Motte, Constance Gounod, Alexandra Antonidou and Samantha Corsi. It has benefited from the active contributions of many of the Hayward Gallery's staff: Pam Griffin in the Archive; Helen Luckett, Sepake Angiama, Katie Arnold, Polly Brannan, Paul Green and Natasha Smith of the Public Programmes team; Alison Cole, Judith Holmes, Eleanor Bryson, Honor Wilson-Fletcher and Helen Faulkner of Press and Marketing; Imogen Winter, Nick Rogers and Alison Maun of the Registrar's Department; Karen Whitehouse, Sarah Sawkins and Susan Murphy of Development; Ben Davies of the Finance Department; and Keith Hardy, Mark King and all the installation team. More widely at the South Bank Centre, the project has enjoyed the enthusiastic support of Michael Lynch, Chief Executive, and Jude Kelly, Artistic Director. In addition to the above-mentioned, I should signal two previous Directors of the Hayward Gallery, Henry Meyric Hughes, who received and encouraged the proposal in 1995, and Susan Ferleger Brades, who formally commissioned it and continued to nurture the project until her departure in 2004.

We would also like to thank all South Bank Centre colleagues from various departments who have significantly contributed to our discussions regarding the ambitious programme of related events to be held during *Undercover Surrealism*, to Jane Quinn and Hannah Barry from Bolton & Quinn who co-ordinated a successful communication campaign, and to media partner *The Guardian* for their interest and involvement.

Finally, I pay tribute to Caroline Hancock and Isabel Finch of the Hayward Gallery's curatorial team, who have co-ordinated and shaped the project over several years, contributing substantially to exhibition research, and to its look and shape overall. This often unsung task, when performed to this level of dedication, belief and flair, is as much a creative as an organisational one, and I extend to them my profound thanks and admiration.

Martin Caiger-Smith

Acting Director, Hayward Gallery

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

France

Bibliothèque des littératures policières (Bilipo), Ville de Paris; Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche du Musée national d'art moderne Centre Pompidou, Paris; Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (Département des Manuscrits, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Réserve des Livres Rares); Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle; Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti, Paris; Les Documents Cinématographiques, Paris; Mairie de Velaux; Musée Cantini, Marseille; Musée de Grenoble; Musée des Antiquités nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye; Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Paris; Musée du Quai Branly, Paris; Musée Picasso, Paris; Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris; Société française d'ethnomusicologie, Musée de l'Homme, Paris

Germany

Arp Museum Bahnhof, Rolandseck; Karl Blossfeldt Archiv, Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich; Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Dauerleihgabe der Stiftung zur Förderung der Hamburgischen Kunstsammlungen; Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum; Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp e.V., Rolandswerth

Iran

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

Portugal

The Berardo Collection – Sintra Museum of Modern Art, Lisbon

Spain

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Switzerland

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel; Galerie Gmurzynska; Galerie Krugier, Ditesheim & Cie, Geneva; Kunstmuseum Winterthur

United Kingdom

British Film Institute; Marlborough International Fine Art; Michael Hoppen Gallery, London; Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, University of East Anglia; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; Tate; The Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex; The British Library; The British Museum

USA

Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Salvador Dalí Museum, Saint Petersburg, Florida; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Private collections

Douglas M. Parker, New York; Marina Picasso Collection; Simon and Alessandra Wilson; and a number of lenders who wish to remain anonymous

DOCUMENTS

**DOCTRINES
ARCHÉOLOGIE
BEAUX-ARTS
ETHNOGRAPHIE**

Magazine illustré
paraissant dix fois par an

1

D^r CONTENAU, L'art sumérien : les conventions de la statuaire. — Paul PELLISOT, Quelques réflexions sur l'art " sibérien " et l'art chinois à propos de bronzes de la collection David-Weill. — Josef STRZYGOWSKI, " Recherches sur les arts plastiques " et " Histoire de l'art ". — Georges BATAILLE, Le cheval académique. — Carl EINSTEIN, Aphorismes méthodiques. — Carl EINSTEIN, Pablo Picasso : quelques tableaux de 1928. — Michel LEIRIS, Notes sur deux figures microcosmiques. — Georges LIMBOUR, Paul Klee. — Georges Henri RIVIERE, Le Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro. — Jean BABELON, L'Évangéliste de Saint-Lupicin. — Hedwig FECHHEIMER, Exposition chinoise à Berlin. — André SCHAEFFNER, Igor Strawinsky.

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INTRODUCTION

Dawn Ades and Fiona Bradley

Georges Bataille (1897–1962) – numismatist, scholar, pornographer, social critic and idiosyncratic philosopher – remains a profoundly influential and controversial thinker and writer. Described by his friend Michel Leiris as 'Bataille the impossible',¹ he represented in the late 1920s an intellectual, internal opposition to André Breton's Surrealism, which attracted many of the best non-conformist poets, artists and writers of the age. Bataille's most visible contribution to contemporary thought was in the form of the review DOCUMENTS, which ran for 15 issues through 1929 and 1930.²

Conceived as a 'war machine against received ideas',³ DOCUMENTS drew in several dissident surrealists such as Michel Leiris, Joan Miró, Robert Desnos and André Masson. Never himself a member of the movement, Bataille later, at the time when Jean-Paul Sartre was leading the post-war attack on Surrealism, expressed a fundamental if critical sympathy with it as 'genuinely virile opposition – nothing conciliatory, nothing divine – to all accepted limits, a rigorous will to insubordination.'⁴ As, in his own words, Surrealism's 'old enemy *from within*',⁵ Bataille was nonetheless uncompromising in his disdain for art as panacea and substitute for human experience, his problem remaining 'the place that Surrealism gave to poetry and painting: it placed the work before being.'⁶

DOCUMENTS' approach to the visual opposed that of Breton at every turn. Breton and the surrealists had proposed various ways of achieving immediacy of expression: through automatic writing and drawing they had tried to circumvent the conscious control of image-making, while Sigmund Freud's theories had provided a symbolic code through which dreams and the workings of the unconscious mind could be noted and interpreted. In the heterogeneous visual material included in DOCUMENTS Bataille and his colleagues Michel Leiris, Robert Desnos and Carl Einstein engaged with and challenged such ideas which, they claimed, far from confronting the base realities of human thought and the violent nature of desire, actually idealised and sublimated them. Instead, DOCUMENTS utilised strategies of de-sublimation, allowing an unblinking stare at violence, sacrifice and seduction through which art was 'brought down' to the level of other kinds of objects.

Although Surrealism is not openly discussed in its pages, the implied critique of Breton's movement, the constant harping on a 'base materialism' as opposed to the elevation of poetic thought, as well as the flagrant play with the surrealist principle of cultural collage, the juxtaposition of 'distant realities', was sufficiently provocative for Breton to react furiously in his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (1929), one of the very rare occasions when he names Bataille, and to whom he devotes several pages of well-aimed invective.

DOCUMENTS encompassed art, ethnography, archaeology, film, photography and popular culture, with discussions of jazz and music hall performances beside the work of major modern artists, and illuminated manuscripts and sacred stone circles alongside an analysis of the big toe. It was also the home of a 'Critical Dictionary', to which Bataille and his closest colleagues contributed short essays on, among other things, 'Absolute', 'Man', 'Abattoir', 'Eye', 'Factory Chimney' and 'Dust'. A dictionary would begin, Bataille wrote in his entry 'Formless', when it provided not the meanings but the tasks of words.⁷ This short text alone has had a remarkable afterlife as a critical tool for the analysis of contemporary art. The exhibition *Informe* at the Centre Pompidou in 1997 attacked the unity of modernist readings of art by proposing a set of alternative and unstable 'operations' by which works were discussed not in terms of meanings but in relation to 'horizontal', 'base materialism', 'pulse' and 'entropy'.⁸

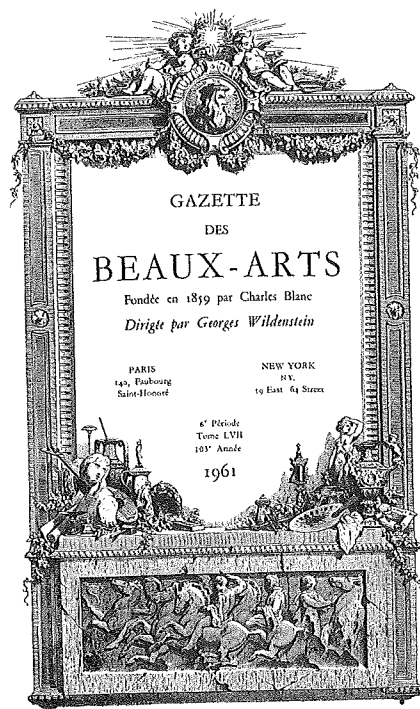
DOCUMENTS' unlikely cradle was the Cabinet des médailles at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where Bataille was following a (promising) career as a numismatist together with the journal's co-founder Pierre d'Espezel (see p. 44). Another colleague, Jean Babelon, was also on the editorial board. The magazine's financial backer was Georges Wildenstein, whose *Gazette des beaux-arts* was one of the longest established art reviews in Paris. The various expectations of the new review on the parts of Wildenstein, the editorial board and Bataille himself did not cohere. Bataille's approach grated with DOCUMENTS' backer and the more conservative members of the board from the very start. What he meant by his title was not what they had expected, and d'Espezel wrote after the first issue:

'The title you have chosen for this review is barely justified only in the sense that it gives us "Documents" on your state of mind. That's a lot, but not quite enough. It's essential to return to the spirit which inspired us in the first project for the review, when you and I talked about it to M. Wildenstein.'⁹

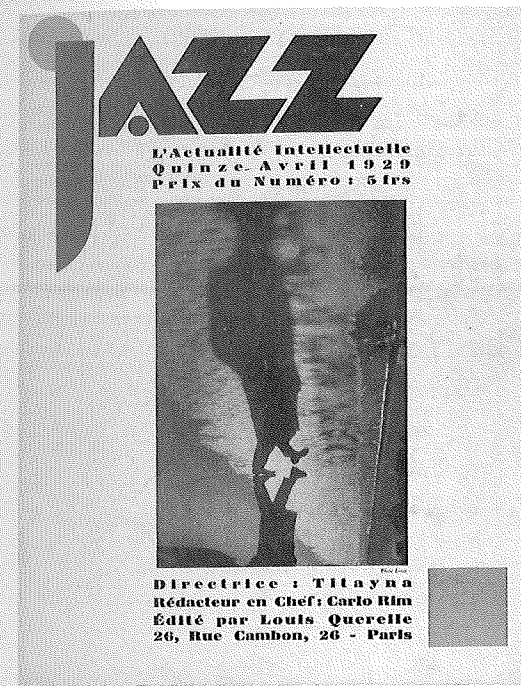
Bataille's essay 'The Academic Horse' had flouted scholarly academic traditions of objectivity and was a foretaste of what was to come.¹⁰ Presumably Wildenstein had expected another luxurious version of the *Gazette des beaux-arts* with the addition of 'primitive art'. However, Bataille's choice of rubric for DOCUMENTS – *Doctrines, Archéologie, Beaux-Arts, Ethnographie* (Doctrines, Archaeology, Fine Arts, Ethnography) – already distanced it from the primitivist aesthetic then fashionable in Paris. 'It announces that DOCUMENTS is not another *Gazette des beaux-arts* and above all not a *Gazette des beaux-arts primitifs*.'¹¹

Three of the subjects on DOCUMENTS' cover remained constant: Archaeology, Fine Arts and Ethnography. For the

A Cover of *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 1962 (design unchanged since 1859) (fig. 3)
B Cover of *Jazz*, 5, 1929 (fig. 4)



A



B

first three issues 'Doctrines' headed the list; from the fourth issue this disappeared to be replaced at the bottom, as on a departure board, by 'Variétés' (Variety). These five subjects define the ostensible coverage of material in the journal. 'Doctrines' was a more unusual term in the context of the avant-garde magazines than 'Documents' itself, and what it signified for Bataille is unclear. Doctrines are defined by and define 'moral communities' and religions, and later Bataille insisted on thus describing Surrealism.¹² Perhaps 'Doctrines' was intended to stand both for those beliefs held by declared religions and for those of more occult communities, such as Surrealism.

For the first five issues of DOCUMENTS an editorial board of 11, including scholars and museum professionals as well as Wildenstein, Carl Einstein and Georges Henri Rivière, was named, with Bataille taking the title of 'general secretary'. Subsequent issues omit the editorial board and credit Bataille alone as general secretary, which indicates a more managerial or administrative position, leaving the absorbing question of editorial control unresolved. However, Bataille later wrote that he 'really edited [DOCUMENTS] in agreement with Georges Henri Rivière ... and against the titular editor, the German poet Carl Einstein.'¹³ Although Einstein continued to contribute to DOCUMENTS until the end, his ambitions to draw in German scholars and in particular to establish a link with the Warburg Institute in Hamburg were only partially realised.¹⁴

DOCUMENTS' title was both camouflage and challenge. It was not, in itself, so out of line with the flush of new journals dealing with art and contemporary culture in Europe at the time. Most spiced their covers with the promise of a range of subjects of contemporary interest. The Belgian *Variétés*, which was regularly advertised in DOCUMENTS, announced '*les images/les documents/les textes de notre temps*' (the images, documents and texts of our times) offering, in other words, 'documents' of the present day. Popular art, pin-ups and celebrity mug shots figured in publications like the German magazine *Der Querschnitt. Cahiers d'Art*, in the late 1920s, covered 'Painting-sculpture-architecture-music-theatre-discs-cinema'. In terms of content the journal closest to DOCUMENTS was *Jazz*, a monthly review dedicated to '*l'actualité intellectuelle*' (current ideas) edited by a remarkable woman explorer, Titayna. Not only did *Jazz* reproduce Eli Lotar's abattoir photos but in its second issue (January 1929) it included a horrific sequence of photos of Chinese executions, including public beheadings and the notorious killing by a 'thousand pieces'.¹⁵

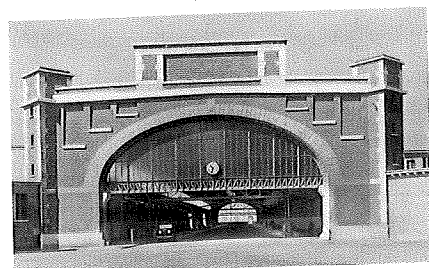
DOCUMENTS, however, did more in its pages than chart the interesting discoveries and materials, modern and ancient, Western and non-Western, considered relevant to contemporary society. It constructed – or deconstructed –

them, and worked them into a series of challenges to those disciplines that were implied by its rubric. DOCUMENTS differed from other magazines of the period in its treatment of its heterogeneous subjects. The interaction between text and image, and between image and image, is complicated and unexpected. Whereas *Variétés* made a game, very simply decoded, of comparing or contrasting pairs of images, especially art and popular culture (Charlie Chaplin beside Jean Crotti's painting-relief *Clown*) sometimes via a title (a Magritte painting beside the fictional detective Nick Carter, under the heading 'Mysteries'), DOCUMENTS' use of 'resemblance' drew visual and thematic parallels, hilarious and shocking, that undermined categories and the search for meaning.

Not infrequently DOCUMENTS picked the same topic as one just discussed in another magazine but wholly subverted the spirit of the original article. Take, for example, Lotar's notorious photographs of the abattoir at La Villette (cat. 99) and Bataille's Critical Dictionary entry on 'Abattoir'.¹⁶ This text links the slaughterhouse to temples of bygone eras and evokes 'the ominous grandeur typical of those places in which blood flows'; photos and text relate to Bataille's interest in sacrifice and suspicion of the modern religion of hygiene, which are consistent concerns within DOCUMENTS. But it cannot be coincidental that *Cahiers d'Art* in 1928 had published as part of its series on modern architecture a sequence of striking photographs of the 1907 abattoirs at Lyon. These 'model edifices', in Christian Zervos's words, 'correspond absolutely to their purpose and fulfil their role according to the most recent requirements of economy and hygiene.'¹⁷ Bataille's reference by contrast to the 'chaotic aspect of present-day slaughterhouses' together with Lotar's repulsive photos of bloody floors and indistinguishable lumps of flesh and skin directly confront the modernist efficiency lauded by *Cahiers d'Art*, whose photographs of the clean structures of the buildings are unpeopled and unsullied.

In the 1978 Hayward Gallery exhibition *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, the section devoted to DOCUMENTS undeniably stood spectacularly apart as an alternative to orthodox Surrealism.¹⁸ The very inclusion of DOCUMENTS in *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* was much debated and finally sealed on the advice of Michel Leiris, one of Bataille's closest collaborators.¹⁹ Leiris, himself previously a member of the surrealist movement and participant in the bitter exchanges between the dissident surrealists gathered round Bataille's DOCUMENTS and the orthodox group led by the founder André Breton, may well have anticipated the ensuing critical revision of Surrealism which has seen the darker counter-currents of Bataille's 'base materialism' as a favoured alternative to Breton's 'idealism'.

Although the 1978 exhibition took the dada and surrealist reviews as its structuring principle, it followed a fairly consistent



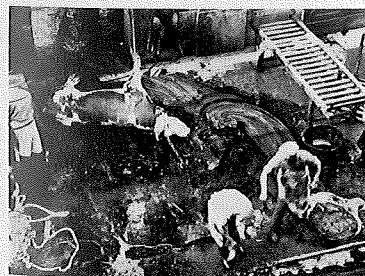
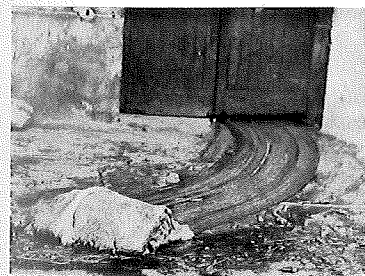
View of Lyon. Abattoir. Ecole de l'hygiène de l'abattoir de la ville.



View of Lyon. Abattoir. Ecole de l'hygiène de l'abattoir de la ville de Lyon sur 28 m. © Bataille.

A

A *Cahiers d'Art*, 8, 1928 (cat. 144)
B DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929



An abattoir de La Villette (cf. p. 329). — Photo: Et. Lotar.

B

tripartite mode of display, separating works of art, chosen objects and documents (journals, books, letters, etc). Here, the aim has been to reflect the visual aesthetic of the review itself, juxtaposing different kinds of objects to cut across conventional hierarchies, grouping paintings, ethnographic objects, films, photographs, sculpture or crime magazines in relation to the key strategies and ideas in DOCUMENTS. The magazine was, itself, a 'playful museum that simultaneously collects and reclassifies its specimens'.²⁰

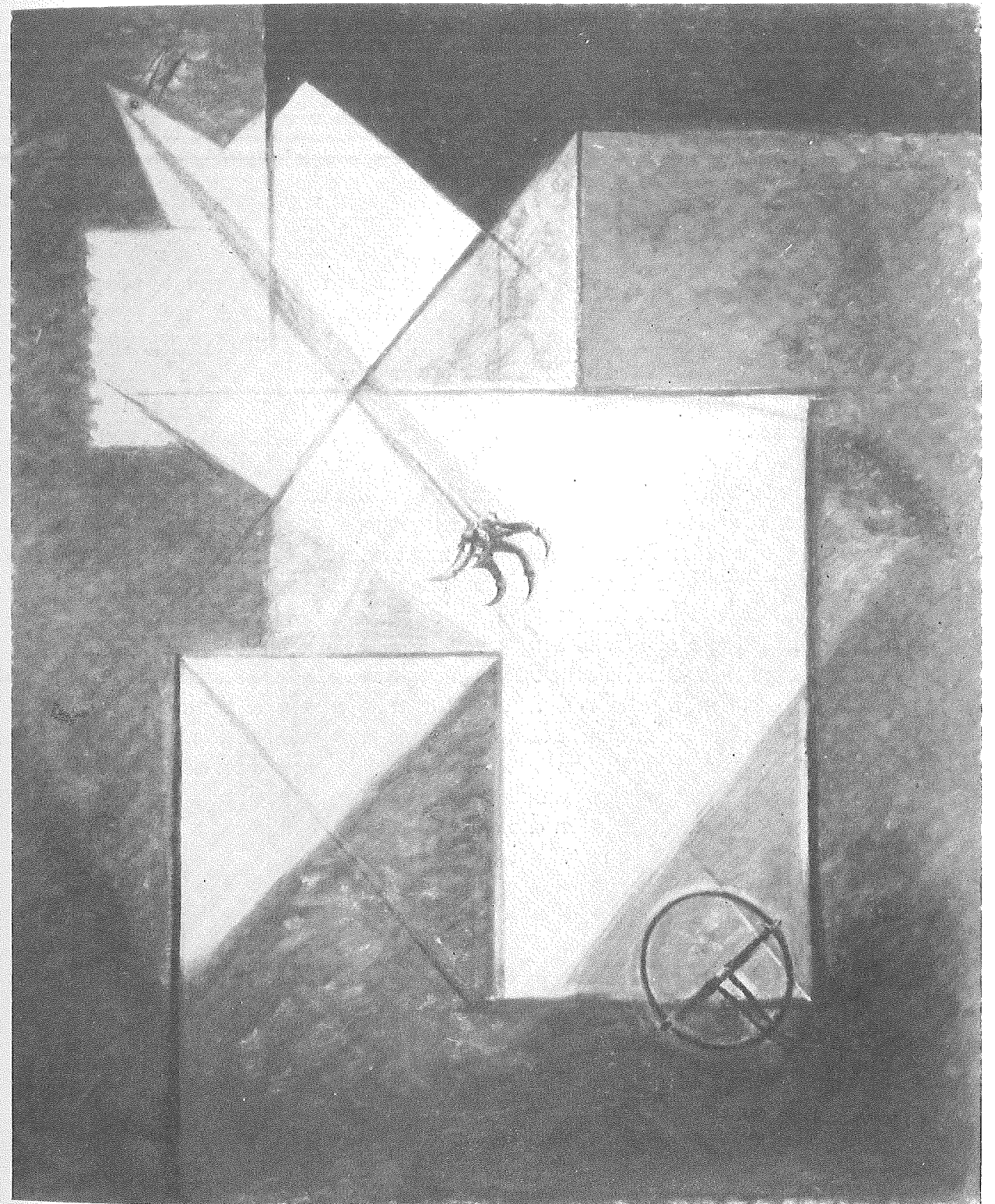
Rather than simply amassing as many as possible of those things, reproduced in the pages of its 15 issues, we want to represent the magazine itself as an active force, relying on its core ideas as a means of presenting the objects they made extraordinary.

Notes

- 1 M. Leiris, 'De Bataille l'impossible à l'impossible 'Documents', in *Critique*, nos 195–196, 1963, p. 685.
- 2 The final issue was actually published in 1931.
- 3 M. Leiris, op. cit., p. 689, p. 1.
- 4 G. Bataille, 'On the Subject of Slumbers', in *Troisième convoi*, no. 2, January 1946; see Michael Richardson's introduction to G. Bataille, *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, p. 49.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid. In Bataille's only contribution to an official surrealist journal (apart from the *Fatrasies*, thirteenth-century nonsense poems in *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 6, March 1926) 'Le Bleu du ciel', in *Minotaure*, no. 8, 1936, he describes the paradox of ecstatic experience for modern man: 'a vertiginous fall in the void of the sky'. The anonymous note to *Fatrasies* was already wholly characteristic of Bataille: 'those [nonsense poems] from which the following extracts are taken escaped the scorn of generations as they escaped the mind of those whom a burst of laughter will one day blind.'
- 7 The term 'Critical' was dropped in issue 4, 1929.
- 8 Y.-A. Bois and R. Krauss, *L'informe: mode d'emploi*, translated as *Formless: A User's Guide* (catalogue of the exhibition *Informe* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, May–August 1996).
- 9 Letter from d'Espezcel to Bataille, 15 April 1929. See D. Hollier, 'La valeur d'usage de l'impossible', preface to DOCUMENTS facsimile. Bataille took the title 'general secretary' but was in effect the editor. See G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, XI, p. 572. It is interesting that in 1930 Babelon and d'Espezcel are named as 'Secretaries' of the *Gazette des beaux-arts*.
- 10 1, 1929, translated in this book.
- 11 D. Hollier, op. cit. p. VIII.
- 12 See for example 'The Surrealist Religion', in G. Bataille, *The Absence of Myth, Writings on Surrealism*, p. 71; 'Surrealism from Day to Day' (surviving chapter of a book Bataille planned on *Surrealist Philosophy and Religion*), *ibid.*, p. 34.
- 13 'Notes on the publication of "Un Cadavre"', in G. Bataille, *ibid.* p. 31.
- 14 See C. Joyce, *Carl Einstein in Documents and his collaboration with Georges Bataille*, Xlibris.com, 2003. Einstein's respect for Warburg's research methodology, expressed in a letter to the Institute's director Fritz Saxl (reprinted in C. Joyce) soliciting contributions to the new journal, opens the intriguing possibility of the influence

of Warburg's *Memory Atlas*, the screens covered with photographs of images from different civilizations constantly rearranged, on DOCUMENTS. G. Didi-Huberman has mentioned connections between Einstein and Warburg in *Devant le temps*. Parallels between German and French cross-cultural studies and their origins in nineteenth-century comparative studies of religion could have an interesting bearing on DOCUMENTS' approach. There is some evidence of rivalry or at least non-co-operation between Einstein and the French group in the following incident: in January 1929 Einstein wrote to Saxl asking for a text on 'man and the Microcosm', which he received in March. The text was too long for publication and Einstein asked for indications about cuts. However, in the first issue of DOCUMENTS, in April 1929, Leiris publishes 'Notes on Two Microcosmic Figures of the 14th and 15th centuries'. Although he acknowledges Saxl's 1927 publication *Verzeichnis astrologischer und mythologischer illustrierter Handschriften des lateinischen Mittelalters* as the source of the two images he discusses, this is clearly not an edited version of Saxl's text.

- 15 Bataille was haunted by a photograph of this horrific scene given to him by his analyst, Adrien Borel, in c.1925.
- 16 6, 1929.
- 17 'Marché aux bestiaux et abattoirs de la mouche à Lyon', in *Cahiers d'Art*, no. 8, 1928, p. 343.
- 18 D. Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*.
- 19 Conversation with the author and David Sylvester, 1977.
- 20 J. Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Surrealism', in *The Predicament of Culture*, 1988, p. 132.



Cliché Galerie Simon

MASSON, LE PIÈGE ET L'OISEAU (1928). N° 41.
COLL. DU D^r REBER, LAUSANNE.



MADemoiselle DE RIGNY.



MADemoiselle CÉCILE SOREL.



Phot. Keystone

Petite fille noire à New York.



Bonne d'enfant à Nouméa (Albums Robin).



MADemoiselle LANGOIX, DE L'ELDORADO.



MADemoiselle BORONI, DANS " LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE ".

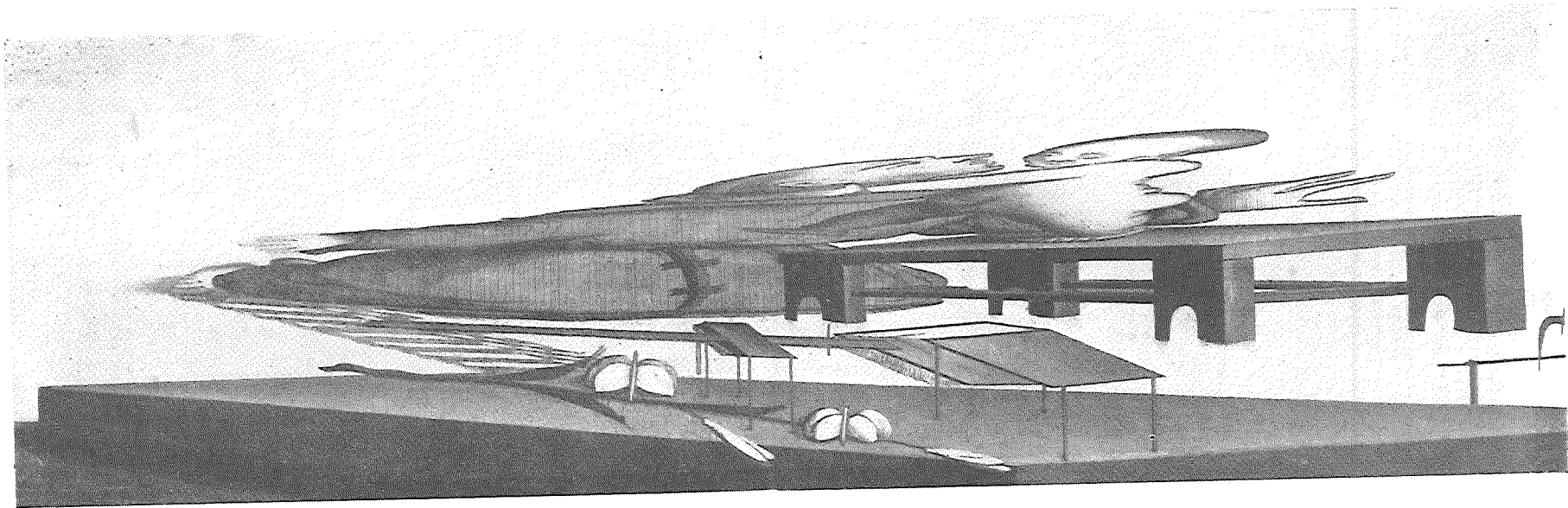


Phot. Nadar

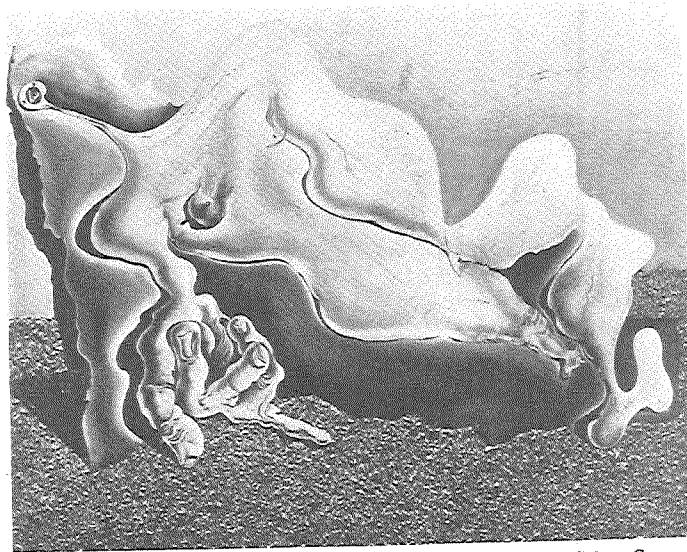
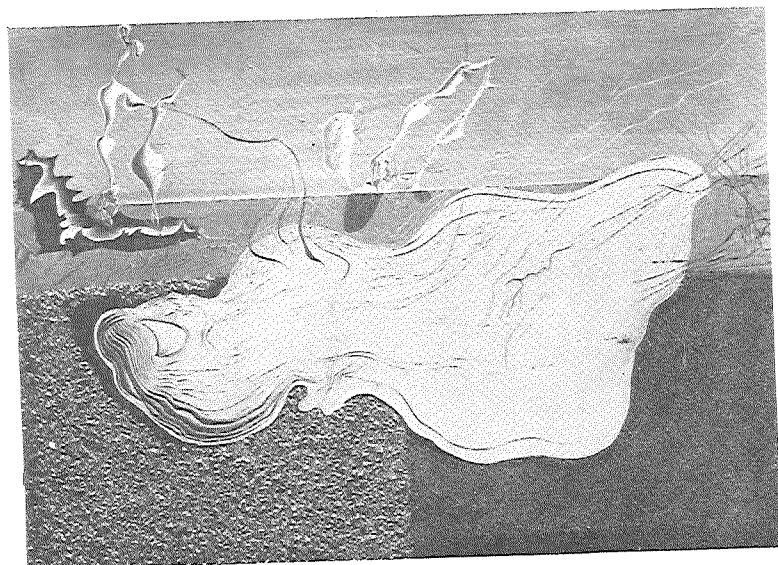
Mademoiselle Lovzeski.



Sandouli, petit chef de Kanala (Albums Robin).

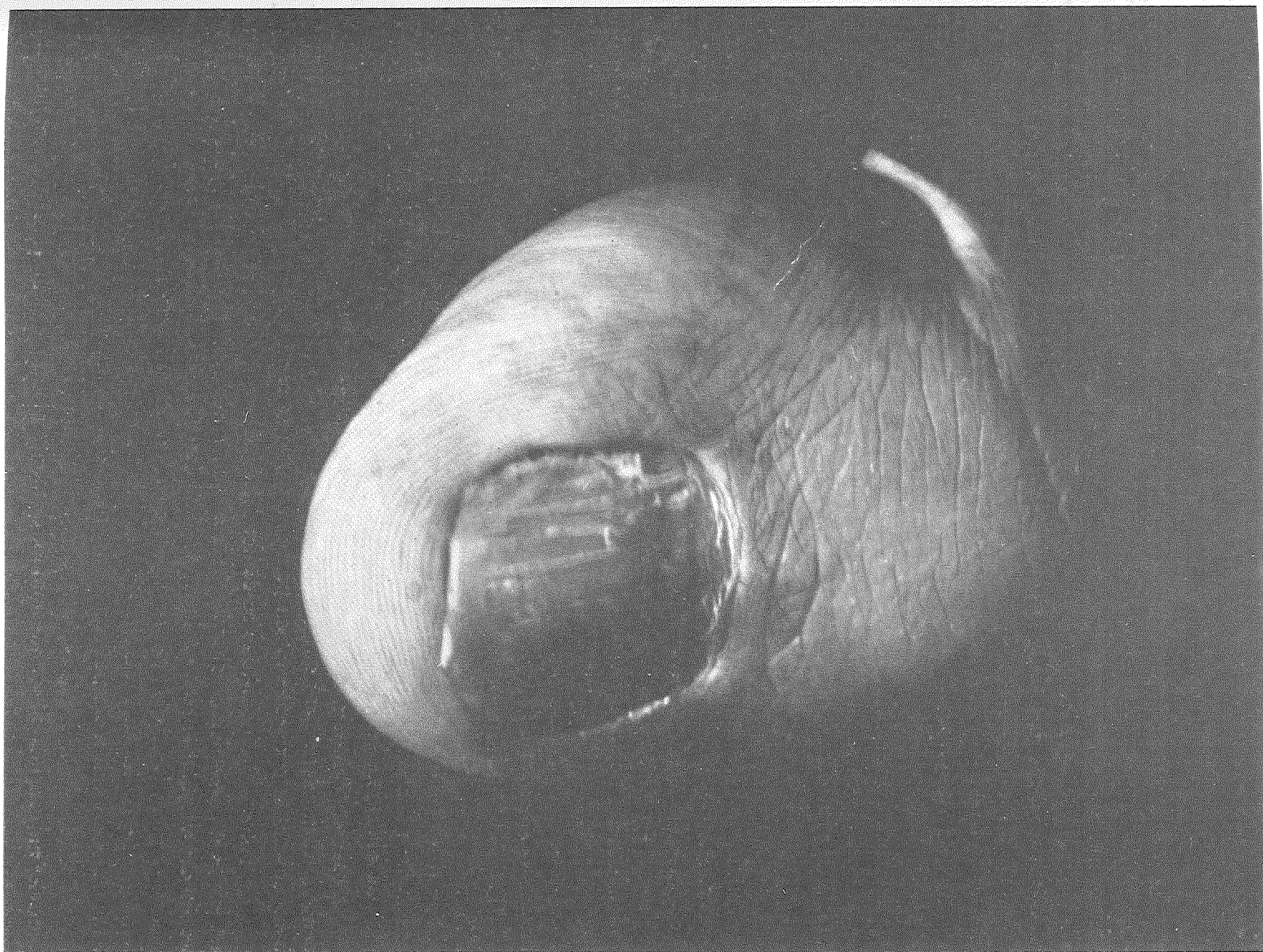


Saint Antoine de Padoue et l'Enfant Jésus. — Coll. Lipchitz.



Phot. Galerie Gammans

Deux tableaux de Salvator Dali, 1. Baigneuses, 2, Nu féminin, qui figureront à l'Exposition d'art abstrait et surréaliste, au Kunsthaus de Zurich.



GROS ORTEL. SUJET MASCULIN. 30 ANS. PHOTO. J.-A. BOIFFARD.

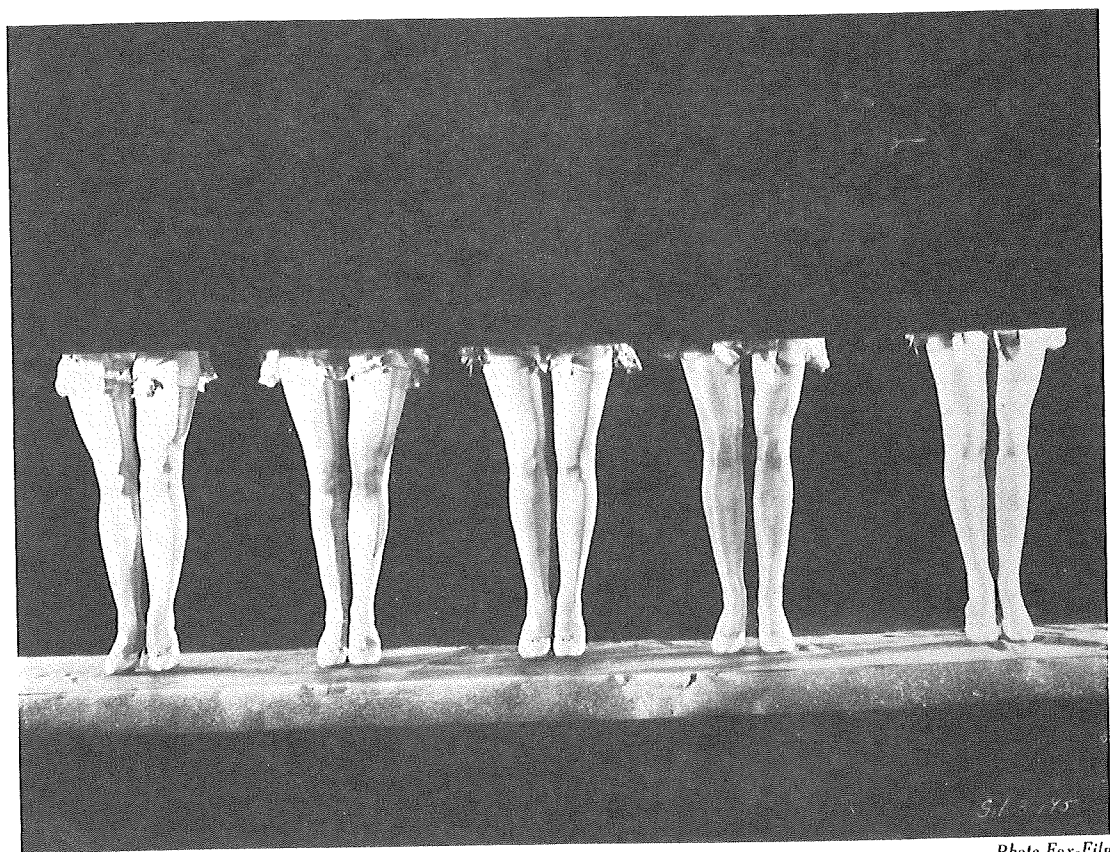
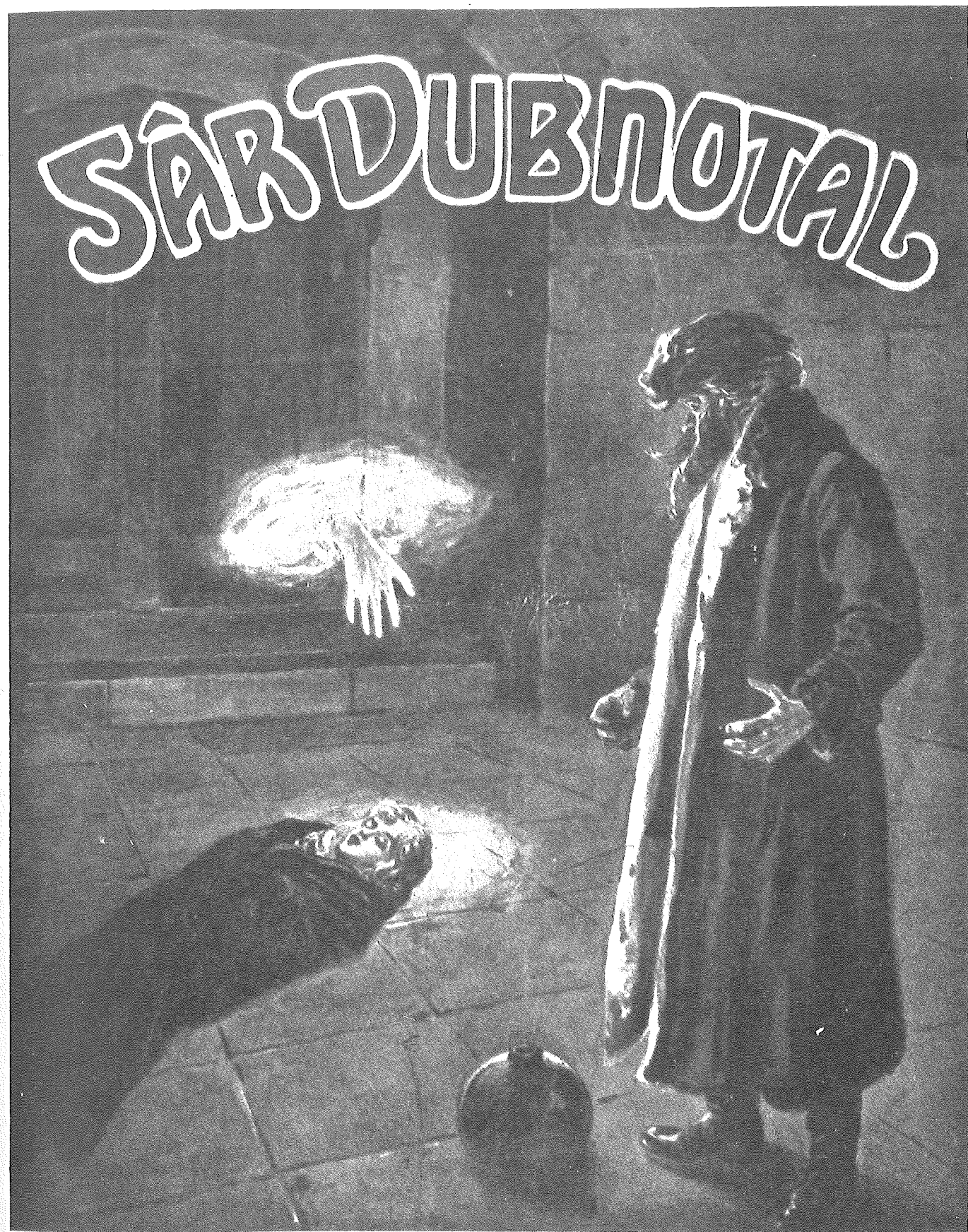


Photo Fox-Film

FOX FOLLIES : le nouveau film parlant qui passera prochainement au Moulin Rouge et dont nous donnerons un compte rendu dans le numéro suivant.



COUVERTURE EN COULEUR DU N° 16 DE SÂR DUBNOTAL, PUBLIÉ VERS 1910 EN FASCICULES HEBDOMADAIRES. — LE TITRE DE CE N° EST L'AFFAIRE AZZEF-POLOUKINE. LA LÉGENDE DE L'ILLUSTRATION : « ET CETTE MAIN FLUIDIQUE, CETTE MAIN PHOSPHORESCENTE QUI FULGURAIT DANS LES TÉNÉBRES DU CAVEAU TERRIFIA LE NIHILISTE. — COLL. JACQUES PREVERT.



La Seine pendant l'hiver 1870-71 (cf. ci-contre).

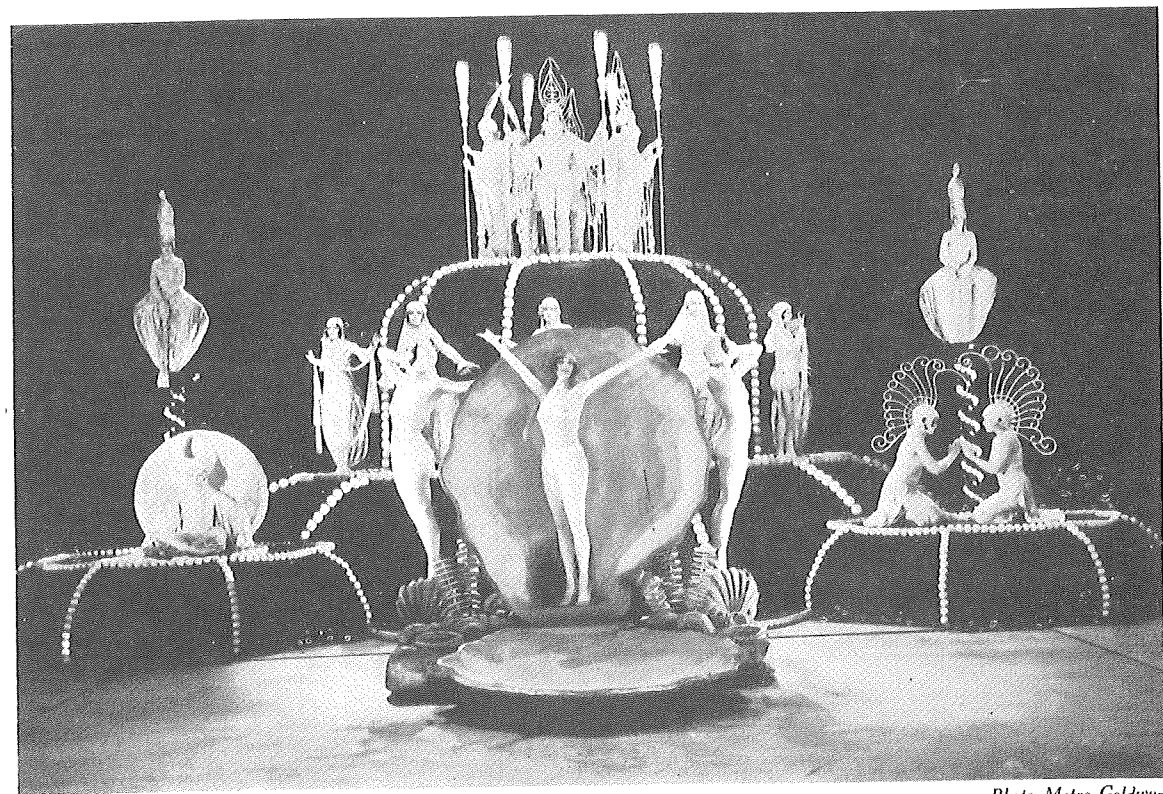


Photo Metro-Goldwyn

Un des tableaux du film parlant "Hollywood review".

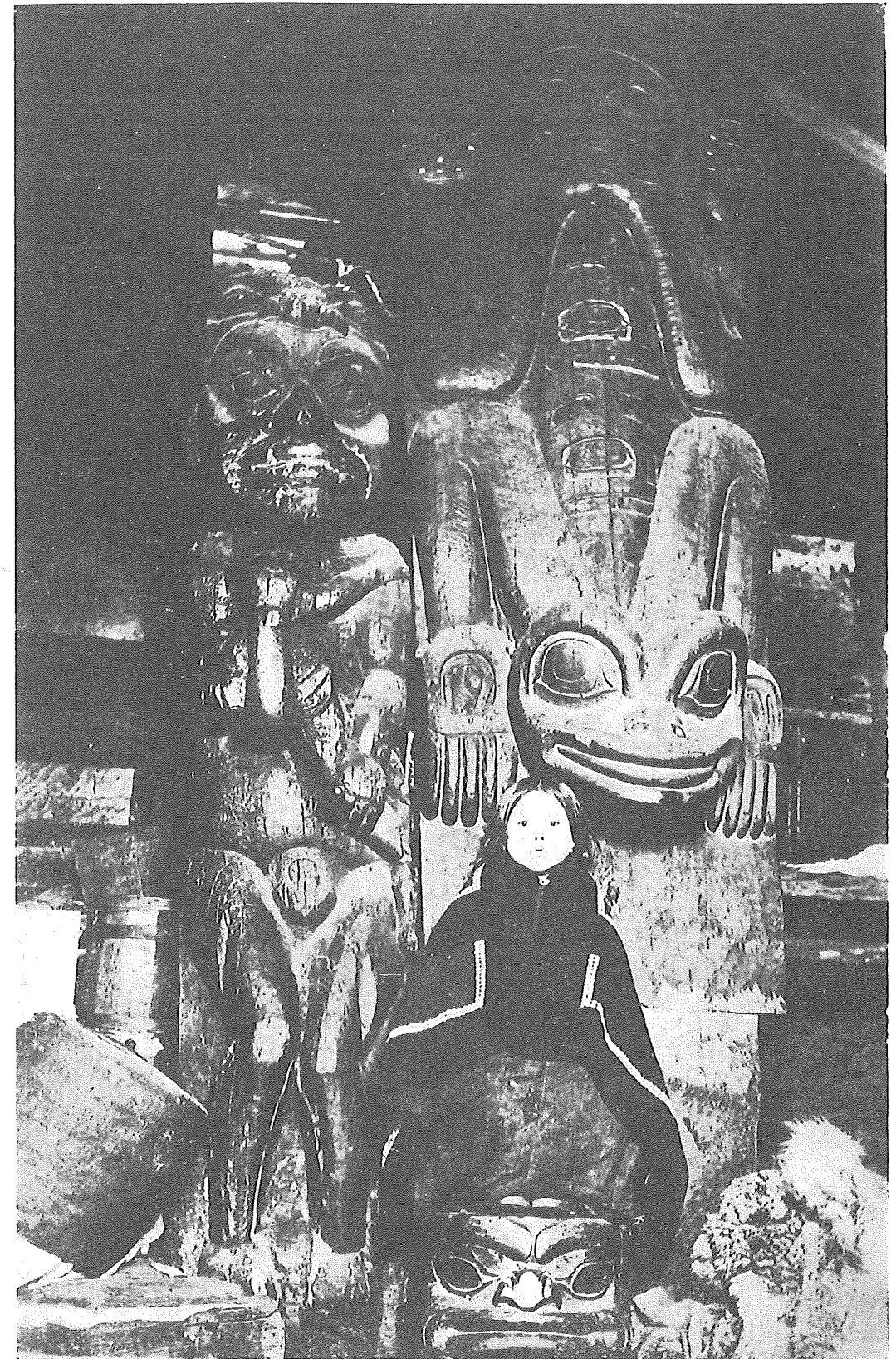
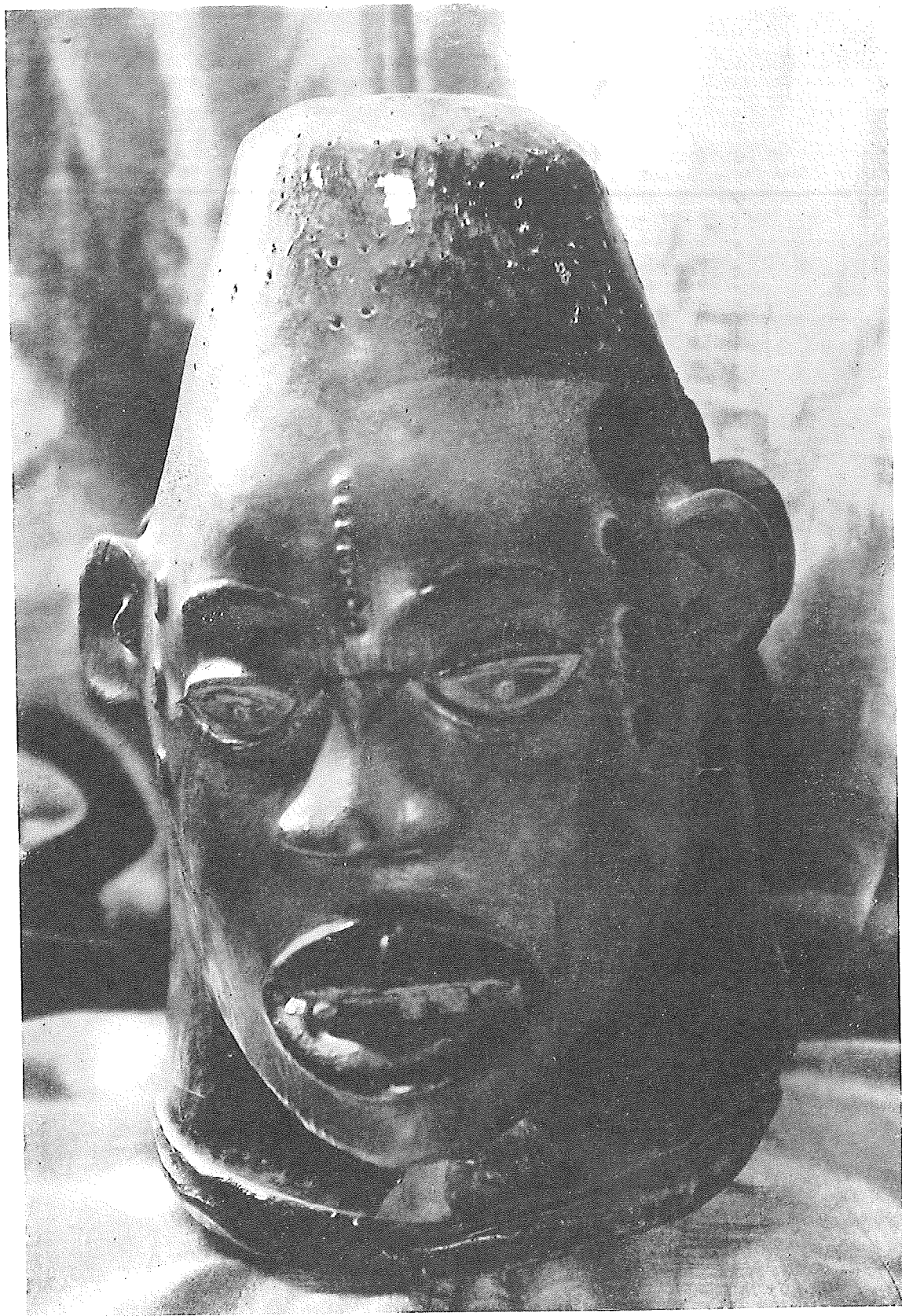


Photo Paul Coze

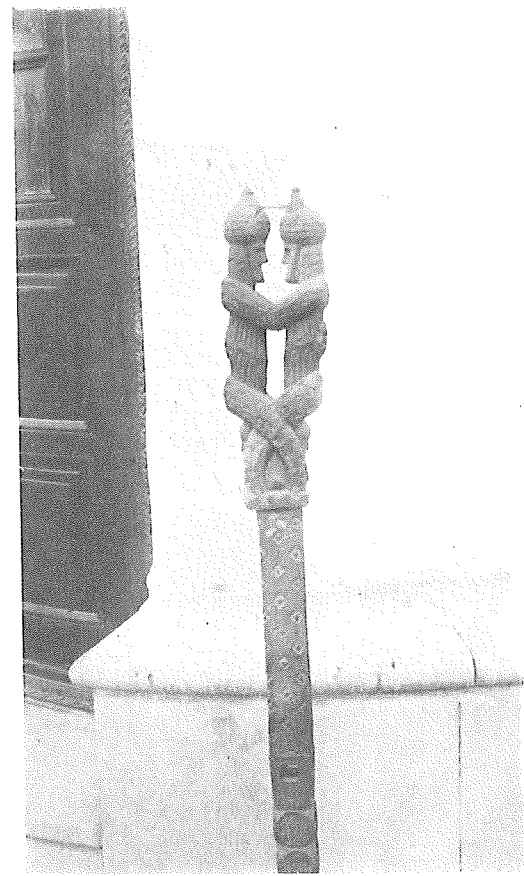
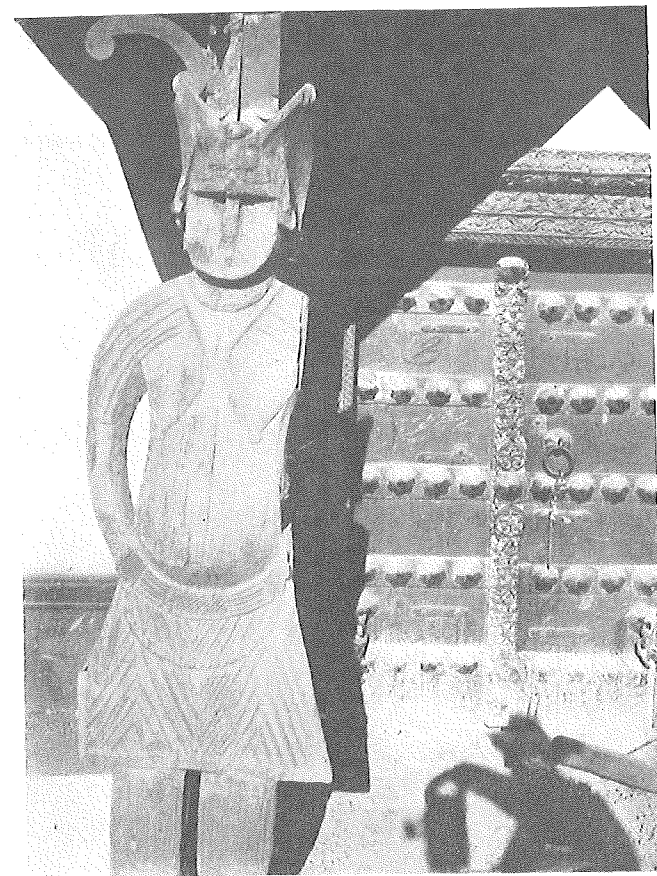
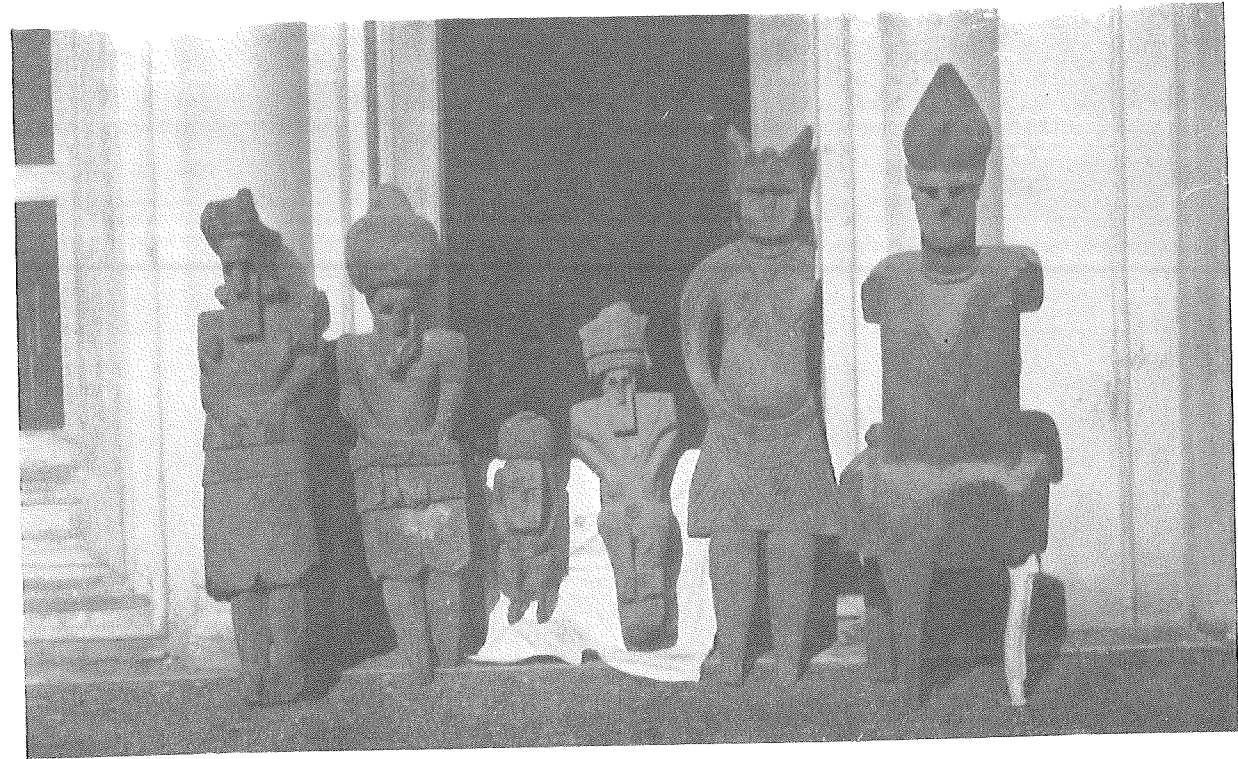
"L'enfant de la grenouille" (cf. p. 396).
Jeune peau-rouge devant les poteaux totémiques de sa famille.



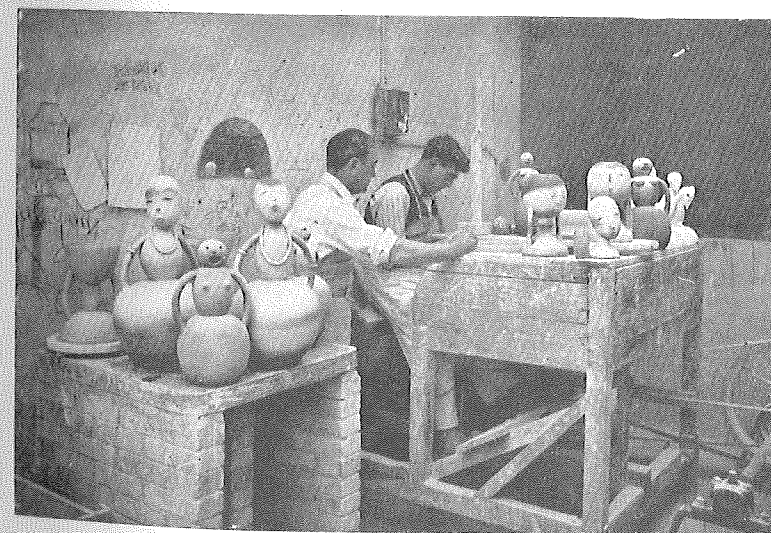
Masque Ekoi (cf. p. 396). - British Museum.



4. Dieu à jambes d'homme, à corps de serpent et à tête de coq. — Empreinte d'intaille gnostique. Hauteur réelle, 14^m 5. — Cabinet des Médailles.



Kâfiristân. Statues d'ancêtres. Bois. — Musée de Kaboul.



De gauche à droite et de bas en haut : 1 et 4. Vases Narza. Civilisation côtière du Pérou. — 2. Vase du Haut-Pérou. Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, n° 3996. Mission Dombey. — 3. Vase de l'Etat d'Oaxaca (Mexique). Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, n° 8085. — 5. Vase de style Louis XIV. Palais de Versailles. — 6. Un maître-potier moderne : M. Jean Besnard (à gauche) dans son atelier. — 7. Types de poteries esthétiques : vases de Jean Besnard. (Cf. article *poterie*, p. 236).

But I was living in a fool's paradise—she loved another. The news came to me as I was eating my breakfast.



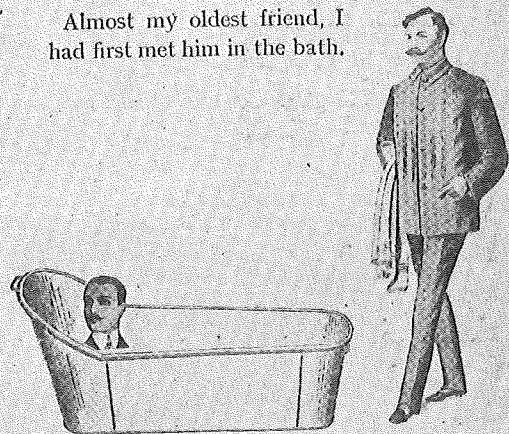
Could it be true? But to whom was she engaged? To Lord Kempton, that cur.

The scene was appalling; human remains strewn the ground.



Fortunately I escaped unhurt, although somewhat badly shaken.

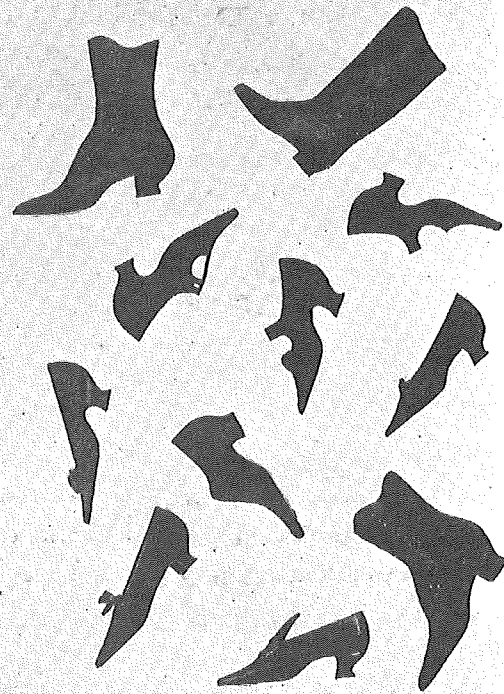
Almost my oldest friend, I had first met him in the bath.



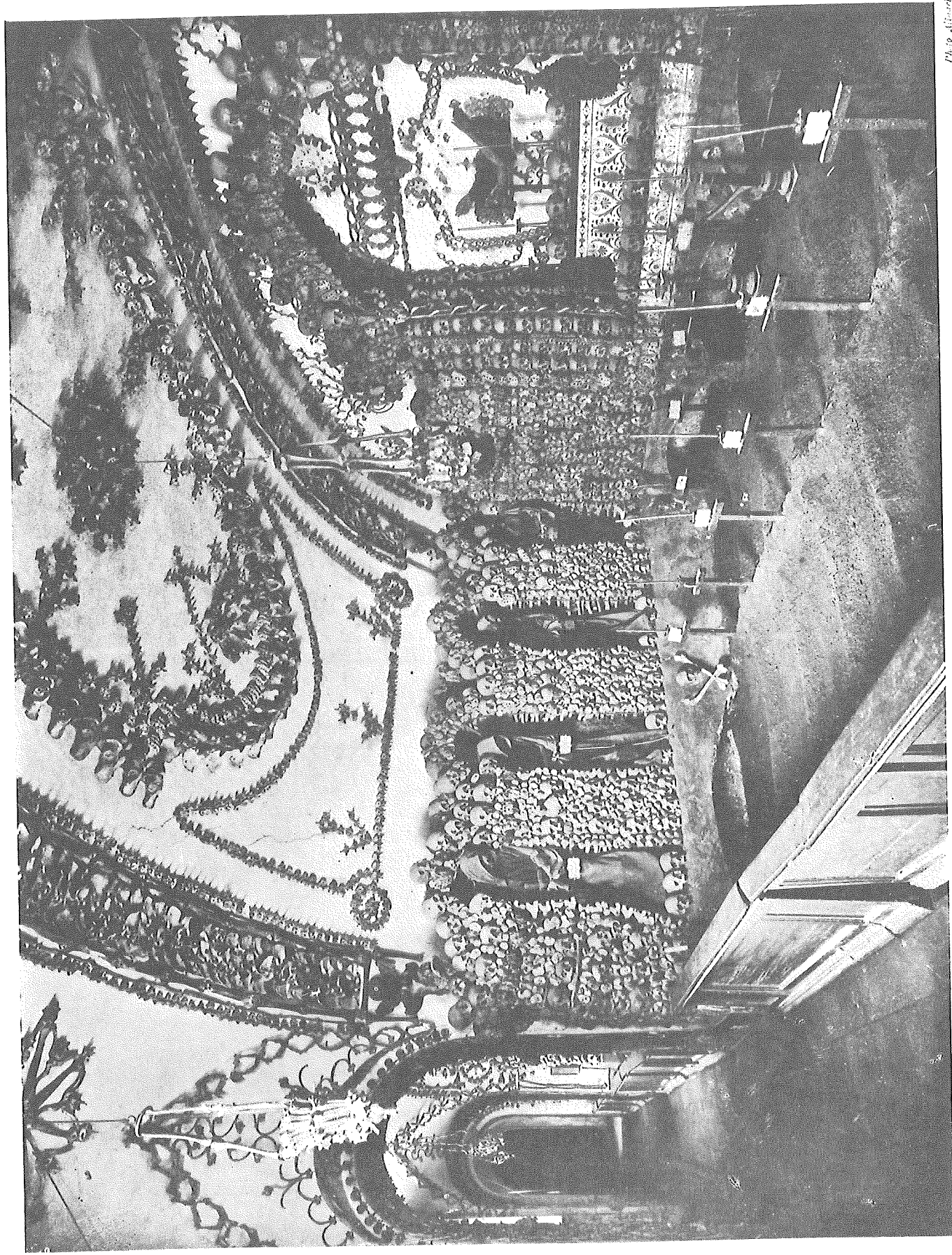
It was a pretty service, and the villagers, whose hearts are wholly ours,



gave us a cordial send-off.



CÔTE D'IVOIRE. — A OUKOUÉ : LE CHEF MOMPO, DIT PAR LES BLANCS LE "CHEF A CASQUE DE POMPIER". LORS DE SON PASSAGE EN CÔTE D'IVOIRE, LA MISSION DAKAR-DJIBOUTI RENDRA VISITE A CE CHEF.



M. B. Allard

ÉGLISE DE SAINTE-MARIE-DE-LA-CONCEPTION A ROME. — UNE DES CHAPELLES MORTUAIRES DÉCORÉE AVEC LES OS DES CAPUCINS QUI Y SONT ENTERRÉS.

DOCTRINES

[The Appearance of Things]

Simon Baker

'It is clear that the world is purely parodic, in other words, that each thing seen is the parody of another, or is the same thing in a deceptive form.'

Georges Bataille¹

The cover of the first issue of *DOCUMENTS* lists four headings: *Doctrines, Archéologie, Beaux-Arts* and *Ethnographie* (Doctrines, Archaeology, Fine Arts and Ethnography). These titles perform a practical task, keeping the academic practice of Archaeology in place in relation to the ill-defined discipline of Ethnography and the modish connoisseurship of Fine Arts. But advertisements for *DOCUMENTS* offered another perspective where 'Doctrines' was an all-encompassing headline, straddling the subjects beneath it. This suggests two possibilities: 'Doctrines' was either to be a methodological frame, the master discourse under which the others would operate, or *DOCUMENTS* would publish 'doctrines' on Archaeology, Ethnography and Fine Arts. From the outset, then, the tasks assigned to these terms seemed uncertain, and after three issues 'Doctrines' was dropped in favour of *Variétés* ('Variety').

The word 'doctrines' had, and has, complex philosophical connotations. It suggests strident opinions, both orthodox and unorthodox. But despite the prominence given to the term, and the fact that *DOCUMENTS* published expertise on a broad range of subjects, an 'analytical table' of its contents in 1929 categorises only four articles as 'doctrines'. The fact that among them is Georges Bataille's essay 'The Language of Flowers' (a subversive meditation on close-up photographs of plants) confirms the radical unorthodoxy of *DOCUMENTS*' doctrine.²

Perhaps because Bataille is renowned as a philosopher, it is understandable that his contributions to the magazine have

often been presented, retrospectively, through a philosophical lens. Take, for example, the importance attributed to 'Formless', a short text written by Bataille for the Critical Dictionary section of *DOCUMENTS*, which it describes as follows: 'a dictionary would begin from the point at which it no longer rendered the meanings of words but rather their tasks.'³ Under the influence of Rosalind Krauss and other key theorists of avant-garde art, 'formless' has come to assume a central role in Bataille's thought. An anti-categorical 'operation' directed against the stability of meaning, 'formless' has fulfilled many tasks in the field of representation, lending its character to abstraction in painting, photography and curatorial strategy. But what emerges in the Critical Dictionary that both contains and is contained by 'formless' (and is obvious in 'The Language of Flowers') is that *DOCUMENTS*' heterogeneous challenge to accepted ideas is most readily apparent in its attitude to (and use of) images.

Although the details of Bataille's role in founding *DOCUMENTS* are well-established, it remains unclear how the magazine actually functioned on a daily basis.⁴ Little is known about how editorial decisions were made, illustrations selected, or layouts conceived and executed, although Robert Desnos apparently played a role in the latter and the notion that *DOCUMENTS* looks the way it does because Bataille and Desnos worked closely together is a tantalising possibility.⁵ What seems most likely, however, is that *DOCUMENTS* was a collaborative endeavour within which it was easier to assert influence or make suggestions than issue orders, and that this way of working particularly suited Bataille.⁶ As 'general secretary' of *DOCUMENTS*, Bataille was the lynchpin of a diverse, even contrary editorial team, but although he may not have been willing or able to assert anything like a consistent editorial line, overseeing the publication meant being able to

agitate the magazine's approach, and particularly its visual component. He could intervene between articles and illustrations, provoking and desiring reaction, defying *DOCUMENTS*' readers to respond to Picasso's paintings with the honesty and urgency of fetishists to shoes.⁷

This is apparent in the magazine itself: for example, in a short note regarding Desnos's essay 'About Abraham the Jew', Georges Henri Rivière makes it clear that the idea for the article came from Michel Leiris, prompting the editors (among whom Rivière counts himself) to commission Robert Desnos to write the text, while the illustrations were chosen by Bataille.⁸ The assertion that Bataille suggested ideas for articles and their illustrations is born out elsewhere in the magazine, not least by the range of the material taken directly from objects, books and manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Bataille, as an employee, was well aware of the treasures and oddities that it contained, and evidently put the resource to good use.⁹

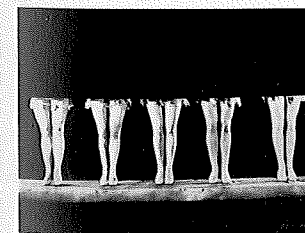
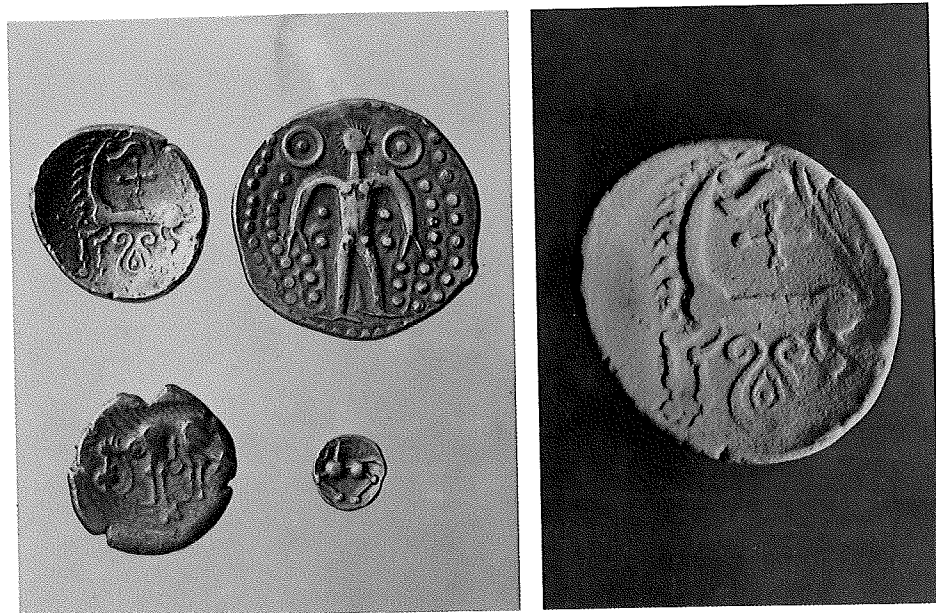
In addition to what is known about selecting illustrations, there is further evidence of Bataille's hands-on approach to the look of the magazine in the archive of his papers.¹⁰ The surviving manuscripts for his *DOCUMENTS* articles, often written on the backs of used readers' request forms from the library, include instructions for the reproduction of images. In one case the original photographs for an essay, 'The Academic Horse', also survive, with Bataille's directions to the photographer on their backs (cat. 10–11).¹¹ The coins seem originally to have been set against a pale background but Bataille indicates specifically that the photographer should switch to a black background and enlarge the scale. This gives a sense of Bataille not only choosing images but being directly involved in determining the aesthetic qualities of their reproduction.

This aspect of Bataille's work for the magazine is of critical

Left to right:

Original photos for the article in *DOCUMENTS*, 1, 1929, 'The Academic Horse', (cat. 11)

3 pages from *DOCUMENTS*, 6, 1929



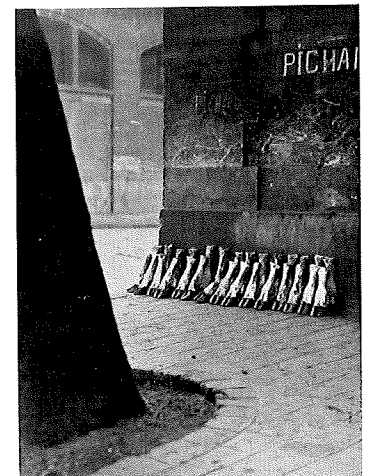
FOUR FOLIES: Le spectacle des pères qui regardent par le haut et par le bas
de leur nez les enfants en soupirant sur le monde et sur eux-mêmes



WILSON B. SCHUBERT, après son voyage en Italie.
La scène de la rue de la République à Venise.



Un acte de la nuit.



Les débris de la Vénus — Plaque II, 1929.

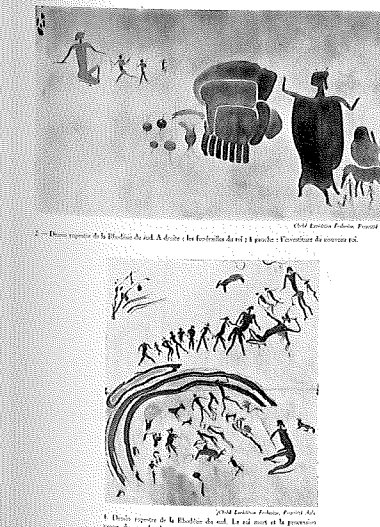
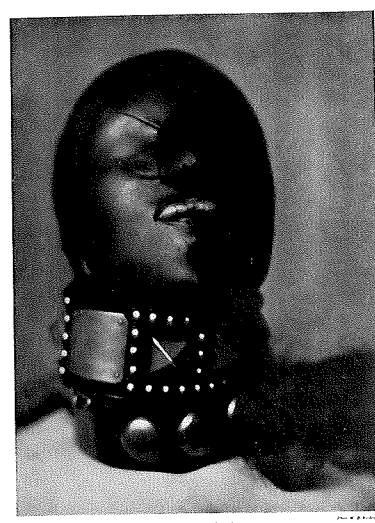
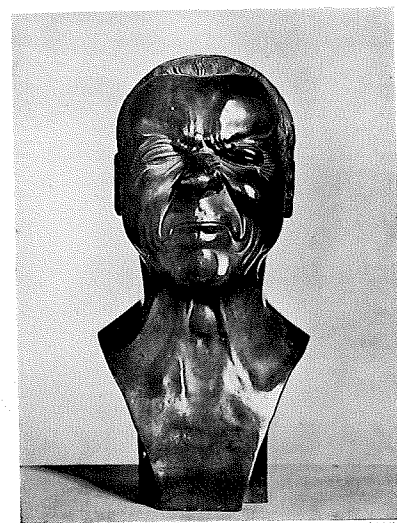
importance when considering claims made for the ways that images work in DOCUMENTS, claims often rooted in Bataille's philosophical writings. Before considering this rather uneven critical terrain, much of which turns on the concept of the 'formless', it is important to acknowledge that like 'formless' and the other words in the Critical Dictionary, the images in DOCUMENTS do indeed have tasks. They genuinely *work*: destabilising, undermining and debunking. In fact, a primary doctrine of the magazine (its philosophy of illustration perhaps) could be said to be abandonment to the possibility of misrecognition: objects are reproduced in close-up, at confusing scales; illustrations turn up uninvited in the wrong places; images act as spanners in the smooth workings of earnest, determined arguments, and echo uncannily in the spaces between unrelated ideas. Images are everywhere: anonymous photographs, film stills, reproductions of works of art, press agency archive, book pages, posters, out-dated theatrical portraits, visions of expeditions and debacles. The question is not whether DOCUMENTS is concerned with images but to what end?

In issue 6, 1929, for example, there is a split-page layout of stills from the musical film *Fox's Movietown Follies of 1929*, despite the fact that the text on the film, by Michael Leiris, was not published until the following issue. When it did finally appear, Leiris's text was instead faced by two images from another of the first 'talkies': King Vidor's *Hallelujah!* (1929, cat. 178). The *Fox Follies* images, liberated from their text, are thus purposefully and effectively stranded. Whilst waiting for the occasion when they might be called upon as illustrations, they begin to do other work, entering into a strange play of visual echoes. Within the issue of DOCUMENTS that they appear, the *Fox Follies*' sword-wielding skeletal dancers reprise a scythe-bearing Haitian 'oracle of death' from William Seabrook's

book *The Magic Island* (1929, cat. 167), while the dismembered dancers' legs hark back to the neatly stacked hooves of an Eli Lotar photograph of the abattoir at La Villette (cat. 99).

Georges Didi-Huberman's book *La Ressemblance Informe*, a study of Bataille's thought traced through the pages of DOCUMENTS, characterises this phenomenon as 'formless resemblance'.¹² In DOCUMENTS, he suggests, forms *de-form* themselves under the pressure of destabilising comparisons and the rhetorical framework of the articles. Objects and images fail to hold on to their own resemblances and stop looking like themselves. There are examples of this deliberate strategy throughout DOCUMENTS, delayed juxtapositions like that between the legs in *Fox Follies* and those in the abattoir. Didi-Huberman singles out an example from the final issue of DOCUMENTS, where a bronze bust by the baroque sculptor Franz Xavier Messerschmidt resonates uncannily with a photograph of a leather mask.¹³ The reader is provoked into seeing non-existent relations between images from separately authored articles: a bronze bust begins to look something like a leather mask, and ceases to hold on to its essential material quality, its 'bronze-ness'.

The implication here is that each issue of DOCUMENTS might contain one or more of these autonomous visual essays that work in tandem with, or as counterpoints to, the contributors' texts. A remarkable example of this phenomenon can be seen in issue 4, 1930, with a scholarly report by Léo Frobenius on prehistoric rock paintings discovered in southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). As so often in DOCUMENTS, the article ends with an image rather than text, so the layout has the last word. What is striking in this case is what happens when the reader then turns the page to an essay on Fernand Léger by Carl Einstein. There appears to be an involuntary echo between the wavy black form surrounding the 'king of



the dead' on the rock painting and the central form of a Léger composition. No aesthetic or art-historical judgement is offered in support of this correlation, and neither Léger's or Einstein's feelings about prehistoric rock art are mentioned. The effect is to allow readers to 'discover' an unlikely and misleading link, confusing rather than elucidating both authors' arguments.¹⁴

The question remains, however, to what end such mischievous, unhelpful comparisons and juxtapositions were contrived. In the 1997 book *Formless: A User's Guide*, Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois propose a subtle counterpoint to that of 'formless resemblance'. They too draw on Bataille's 'formless' but offer an alternative spin on its relationship to the concept of resemblance. Bois puts it very neatly: 'Metaphor, figure, theme, morphology, meaning – everything that resembles something ... is what the formless operation crushes, sets aside with an irreverent wink.'¹⁵ This interpretation of Bataille's attitude to resemblance is based upon a specific reading of the passage of 'formless', which suggests that 'affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless, amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.'¹⁶

Here then is a riddle: formless means to resemble nothing; for the universe to be formless it would have to be something; all things, even spiders and spit have form and thus resemble other things, and yet the universe cannot. Bataille does not mean that the universe is *something like* a spider or spit, he means that it is *something*, a thing with form, *like* a spider, or spit, that nevertheless resembles nothing. There is evidently nothing *like* the universe. Formless thus undoes the notion of resemblance by revealing it as redundant, stopping it from working.

Mapping this idea back over the misleading comparisons that punctuate DOCUMENTS takes us through and beyond formless resemblance: things do not stop resembling

Left to right:

2 pages from DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930

2 pages from DOCUMENTS, 4, 1930

Left to right:

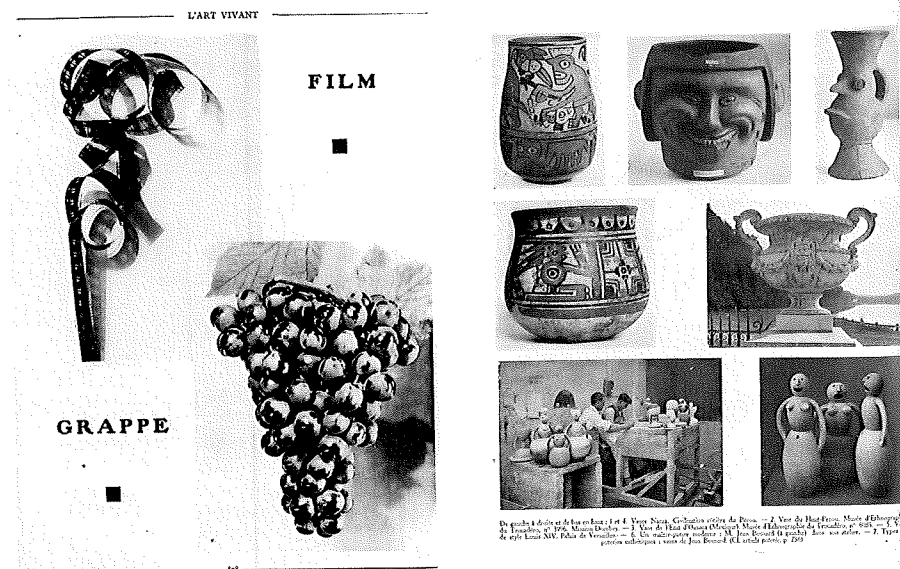
L'Art Vivant, Year 5, no. 118, 15 November 1929 (cat. 148)

DOCUMENTS, 4, 1930

Spread from DOCUMENTS, 3, 1929

themselves, resemblances are not 'unformed': it is the very concept of resemblance that is debased as it gradually makes less and less sense. As Bataille says, 'formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world.'¹⁷ The DOCUMENTS reader is encouraged to reach the conclusion that finding affinities between prehistoric rock art and avant-garde painting is symptomatic of a disruptive glitch in the process of representation.

One ideological consistency throughout DOCUMENTS is the exercise of this argument about visual rhetoric, marshalled against contemporary aesthetic conventions. Understanding the visual culture against which DOCUMENTS emerged is therefore absolutely vital, although it was not (surprisingly enough) surrealist publications that seem to have been its principal targets. In 1929, although Surrealism was influential and important, it was modernist photography of the kind associated in Germany with Albert Renger-Patzsch and in France with Germaine Krull or André Kertesz that was dominant in the mainstream illustrated press. The question 'Is Photography an Art?' brought Eugène Atget, Brassai, Kertesz, Krull and Man Ray to popular French magazines like *L'Art Vivant*, vying with the competition in *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*, *Cahiers d'Art*, *Jazz* and *Variétés*. This photographic culture rejoiced in games of juxtaposition and the dissemblance of resemblance by which anything could be shown to be 'something like' anything else.¹⁸ In *L'Art Vivant*, for example, the photographer Emmanuel Sougez makes both a roll of film and a bunch of grapes resemble one another with the camera's lens.¹⁹ DOCUMENTS, by contrast, chose to reveal such ludicrous sophistry for what it was. In the Critical Dictionary entry 'Pottery', Marcel Griaule uses a page of banal photographs of wildly contrasting types of pottery to explain the shortcomings of the word: 'pottery' is meaningless if its task has to include referring



to all of these objects.²⁰ Where magazines of the time used photography to transform everything into aesthetic equivalents, DOCUMENTS opted instead to deny the symbolic functions of aesthetic objects in favour of their tasks or use-values.

In a short unpublished review of contemporary photography written for DOCUMENTS, Bataille reveals his reservations about current photographic tendencies: 'After the photographs of Atget and the tentative curiosities of Man Ray it doesn't seem as though the specialist "art photographers" can produce anything other than very fastidious acrobatic techniques.'²¹ Although he makes an exception for Jacques-André Boiffard and 'photographs from the news or the cinema', it is the aestheticisation of objects, exemplified by Sougez and intrinsic to the photographic still-life industry of the time that troubled Bataille. The fact that the only representative of this tendency to appear in the pages of DOCUMENTS was Karl Blossfeldt is significant.²² Despite being hugely influential, Blossfeldt originally considered his photographs no more than useful tools to teach art. His 1928 book *Urformen der Kunst* (*Art Forms in Nature*) coincided with, rather than pandered to, current photographic fashions.²³ In DOCUMENTS, Blossfeldt's austere close-ups of plants are mercilessly uprooted by Bataille's text 'The Language of Flowers'. Throughout DOCUMENTS, but never more skillfully than here, Bataille plays with a game of the moment: in this case the uncanny knack of the camera to 'reveal' meanings through apparent resemblance. Faced with the architectural structure of vegetation ('art forms in nature'), produced brilliantly by Blossfeldt's lens, Bataille begins as follows:

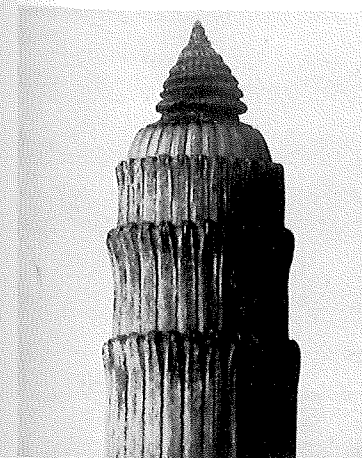
'It is vain to consider, in the appearance of things, only the intelligible signs that allow the various elements to be distinguished from each other. What strikes human

eyes determines not only the knowledge of relations between various objects, but also a given decisive and inexplicable state of mind. Thus the sight of a flower reveals, it is true, the presence of this well-defined part of a plant but it is impossible to stop at this superficial observation; in fact, the sight of this flower provokes in the mind much more significant reactions ... even the most beautiful flowers are spoiled in their centres by hairy sexual organs.'²⁴

The relationship of image and text may seem something like a duel, but rather than opposing Blossfeldt's practice or critically undermining his work, Bataille turns the photographs to his own pedagogical agenda, radically altering their significance. The photographic rule of the day was that the camera could train the eye to look beyond the mundane and find beauty.²⁵ For Bataille, however, the superficial 'appearance of things' was insufficient not because the eye needed retraining to spot beauty. Taking Blossfeldt's example of the sight of a flower, Bataille turns beauty into a Trojan horse full of perverse implications. Following the logic of *Art Forms in Nature* to the point of attributing aesthetic quality to natural phenomena, Bataille suggests, means including nature in its entirety, that which is visible and that which is hidden from view:

'Roots, in fact, represent the perfect counterpart to the visible parts of a plant. While the visible parts are nobly elevated, the ignoble and sticky roots wallow in the ground, loving rotteness just as leaves love light. There is reason to note, moreover, that the incontestable moral value of the term *base* conforms to this systematic interpretation of the meaning of roots; what is evil is necessarily represented, among movements, by a movement from high to low.'²⁶

Bataille's attitude to images and their uses, revealed



OBJET EN CÉRAMIQUE (RÉPÉTITION DES MÉCANISMES, ROUGE MARSEILLE, MOUVEMENT 29 FOS)



DEUXIÈME FAUCON (RÉPÉTITION DES MÉCANISMES, SCIENCE 1 FOS)

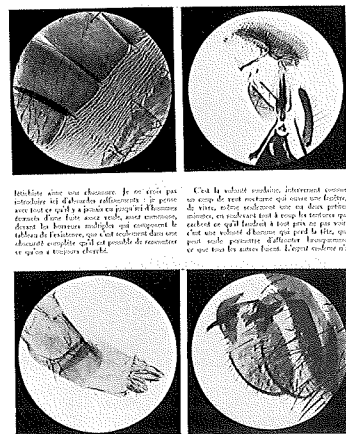
through the pages of DOCUMENTS, constitutes a profound challenge to the viewer to move beyond the obvious and the acceptable in favour of an uncomfortable alternative: a movement, as he describes it, 'from high to low'. In his final contribution to DOCUMENTS, 'The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions', Bataille describes the condition of representation in all its forms as a kind of impasse.²⁷ In the simplest but most provocative terms he defies 'any lover of painting to love a picture as much as a fetishist loves a shoe': fetishism, after all, is not a matter of choice, or the exercise of judgement, but an unacceptable, irrepressible urge. 'What is really loved', he quips, 'is loved mainly in shame.' Bataille describes a disavowal of decay and death haunting the human condition by contrasting it with the 'soap, toothbrushes and ... pharmaceutical products' used to keep it at bay. Art too, takes its place in this scheme: 'we enter art galleries as we do the chemists', he says, 'seeking well-presented remedies for accepted sicknesses.' And, in an unusual turn, Bataille also reflects upon the process of illustrating his argument:

'Thus the photographs accompanying this article ... probably reveal the extent of current powerlessness. The equality of the soul and human insipidity has always been offered by forms arranged to show, rather gratuitously it is true, the terror caused by death or decay, flowing blood, skeletons, or insects which devour us. Who would take it upon themselves to make such a display in anything other than an entirely rhetorical way? The relative paucity of interest the illustrations to these few pages represent, in my view, marks well enough the impasse into which those who today, for one reason or another, find themselves having to manipulate and transform the sad fetishes destined to move us.'²⁸ Even when, with the aid of microscopes, the camera takes

the eye right up to, or deep inside flies and parasites, the appearance of things seems less than convincing than the way their photographs are used. Despite this absolute proximity to their subjects the images represent nothing beyond the rhetorical significance leant to them by their context. This underwhelming revelation brings us back to the issue of the 'doctrine' at the heart of DOCUMENTS: the secrets hidden in plain view throughout its pages.

Notes

- 1 G. Bataille, 'The Solar Anus', in A. Stoekl (ed.), *Georges Bataille, Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-39*, p. 5.
- 2 3, 1929.
- 3 7, 1929.
- 4 See D. Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, pp. 228-243; D. Hollier, 'La valeur d'usage de l'impossible', preface to DOCUMENTS facsimile, published in translation as 'The Use Value of the Impossible', *October*, 60, Spring 1992, and in D. Hollier, *Absent Without Leave*, pp. 125-144; and Alastair Brotchie's introduction to the English translation of the Critical Dictionary, A. Brotchie (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, pp. 9-28.
- 5 See I. Walker, 'Jacques-André Boiffard', in this book.
- 6 Bataille was 'general secretary' for every issue and is usually described as the 'controlling mind' of DOCUMENTS, but as Denis Hollier notes in his text 'Ethiopia' in this book, various managing editors took responsibility for the magazine, including Georges Limbour, Michel Leiris and Marcel Griaule.
- 7 The quote upon which this sentence is based is taken from G. Bataille, 'The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions', 8, 1930, newly translated in this book. In the original manuscript Bataille crossed out 'a Picasso' and replaced it with 'a painting' to give the present version: G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes, I, Premiers Ecrits 1922-1940*, pp. 273 and 655.
- 8 7, 1929.
- 9 See C. Miller, 'Archaeology', and M. Richardson, 'Coins and Medals', in this book, for more on Bataille's work at the Bibliothèque nationale.



Bataille, avec une abaissement. Le se crée par... C'est la volonté humaine, intentionnellement...

- 10 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Department of Manuscripts, Fonds Bataille, Boite 6B (n): the author is indebted to Guillaume Fau for his assistance with this resource, which also contains the manuscript of Bataille's novel *Histoire de l'œil (The Story of the Eye)*, all 180 pages of which are written on the backs of used library stationery.
- 11 1, 1929. These photographs were probably taken by the same 'Giraudon' credited in Jean Babelon's article on Macedonian coins.
- 12 G. Didi-Huberman, *La Ressemblance Informe ou le gai savoir visuel selon Georges Bataille*.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 89-96.
- 14 Elsewhere in 5, 1929, paintings by Paul Klee sit, without explanation, alongside illuminated manuscripts and ancient coins: again similarities are offered rather than proposed.
- 15 Y.-A. Bois and R. Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, p. 79.
- 16 G. Bataille, 'Formless', *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 18 See also examples from the German magazine *Der Querschnitt* discussed in the 'Variety (Civilizing "Race")' essay in this book (especially in the light of Denis Hollier's suggestion in his essay 'The Question of Lay Ethnography (The Entropological Wild Card)', that DOCUMENTS could be seen as a German magazine published in France.)
- 19 *L'Art Vivant*, 15 November 1929, pp. 877-879.
- 20 4, 1930.
- 21 G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes, II*, p. 122.
- 22 Another exception could be made for Eli Lotar but for the nature of the abattoir photographs reproduced in issue 6, 1929.
- 23 K. Blossfeldt, *Urformen der Kunst*, Berlin, 1928, translated as *Art Forms in Nature*.
- 24 3, 1929.
- 25 The epitome being Albert Renger-Patzsch's book *Die Welt ist Schön (The World is Beautiful)*, Munich, 1928.
- 26 A. Stoekl, op. cit., p. 13.
- 27 8, 1930, newly translated in this book.
- 28 *Ibid.*

ARCHAEOLOGY

C.F.B. Miller

DOCUMENTS was split from the start. Georges Bataille dedicated his imaginative life to violent transgression, excess, eroticism and unknowing. But he was also an academic, a librarian, a highbrow. At the magazine's launch a promotional text stated that:

'The most irritating, as yet unclassified works of art, and certain heterogeneous, hitherto neglected productions, will be the object of studies as rigorous, as scientific, as those of archaeologists.'¹

This tension between agitation, anomaly and marginality on the one hand, and 'scientific' interpretive rigour on the other, would animate the magazine's 'impossible' dynamic. But why, at its public origin-point, might DOCUMENTS code itself as an 'archaeological' project? What did archaeology signify in 1929?

In 1928 the *Larousse du XXe siècle* gave the general sense of archaeology as the 'science of ancient things', and its specialist meaning as 'knowledge of the figurative monuments of antiquity or the middle ages'. Though the dictionary's focus on the 'figurative' – that is, the non-textual – indicates an important aspect of expert discourse, the implicit limits of this definition were contested assumptions at the time. Archaeology was actively defining *itself*, a fluidity visible in DOCUMENTS, where Paul Rivet (who practised pre-Columbian Mexican archaeology) declared the separation between ethnography, *préhistoire* (the nominally separate discipline of prehistoric archaeology) and archaeology, to be 'absolutely artificial'.²

In his 1922 book *Archaeology: Domain and Goal*, the classical archaeologist Waldemar Deonna wrote:

'Archaeology is a history and science of material art, that is to say the observation and explication by all possible means of the material forms that humanity has created, in particular and in general, without

restriction in time or space.'³

The unusual catholicity of this framework – Deonna meant 'art' in the broadest sense – would encompass even an archaeology of the present. We know that in 1928 Bataille read Deonna,⁴ whose understanding of the archaeological object as 'a psychological document that explains the life of a people' has some resonance with Bataille's DOCUMENTS writings. Deonna insisted that archaeology should examine all material culture, without aesthetic distinction, as did Rivet – although Deonna the idealist and Rivet the materialist were otherwise philosophically distant. Already in 1926, reviewing a book of numismatics, Bataille had distinguished the 'archaeological' interest of its 'documents' from their 'artistic' status.⁵ One might deduce that DOCUMENTS' 'archaeological' project consisted in the treatment, without aesthetic judgement, of the socio-cultural meanings of objects. This would fit with Denis Hollier's anti-aesthetic reading of DOCUMENTS.⁶

But the mobilisation of ancient objects in DOCUMENTS – the 'Archéologie' of the title rubric – did a number of divergent jobs. Alongside the arguments made by Rivet and the controversial Austrian scholar Josef Strzygowski against archaeological aestheticism,⁷ DOCUMENTS' archaeology was one of art-objects. To an extent this was a function of the discipline. Though late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century prehistoric and colonial archaeologies had opened up material culture to examination, undercutting the classical and Near-Eastern archaeologies (text-based, preferring the art-object) prevalent since Johann Winckelmann's eighteenth-century systematisation of antiquarianism, a strong art-historical dimension inhered. Palaeolithic artistic production, for instance, occupied the centre of *préhistoire*. In the first issue of DOCUMENTS of 1930 an 'Analytical Table' separates articles in the 'Archéologie' section into artistic

subcategories: 'Bulgarian Art', 'Chinese Art', 'Gaulish Art', 'Siberian Art', etc.⁸

Such coding responded to consumer demand. Archaeological artworks were fashionable: they featured in art magazines like the DOCUMENTS publisher Georges Wildenstein's other venture, the *Gazette des beaux-arts*; in the luxury international 'yearbook for prehistoric and ethnographic art', *IPEK*; and in Christian Zervos's *Cahiers d'Art*, where archaeology cohabited with modernist production – notably Pablo Picasso's. DOCUMENTS made comparable juxtapositions to *Cahiers d'Art*, bringing dialogues between avant-garde and archaeology into play. Carl Einstein rendered the parallelism a simultaneity, by equating the experience of looking at Hans Arp's works with the viewer's 'Neolithic childhood', a time of cannibalism, clan-rites and cake.⁹ This formula relies on the evolutionist doctrine, operative in Freudian psychoanalysis, of the recapitulation of phylogeny – species-development – by ontogeny – the development of the individual. But it reminds us of the radical anachronism of the infant, and therefore the Stone-Age primitive, within the psychoanalytic adult.

In scholarly terms DOCUMENTS produced archaeological knowledge about cultures anterior or marginal to written history, disseminating new finds, such as the Palaeolithic sculptures at Le Roc¹⁰ (cat. 31) or the results of the 1920s researches of the *Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan*, described in DOCUMENTS by the eminent Orientalist, René Grousset, curator at the Musée Guimet in Paris (cat. 20).¹¹ While these articles were often the work of 'establishment figures', they were co-opted within an anti-humanist editorial strategy. In the 1920s two competing models of human development underwrote archaeology: what Rivet called the 'great controversy' of evolutionism versus diffusionism.¹² The first posited a linear story of internal progress within cultures, with Western

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DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929
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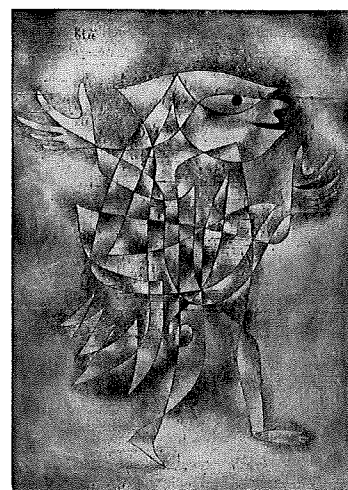
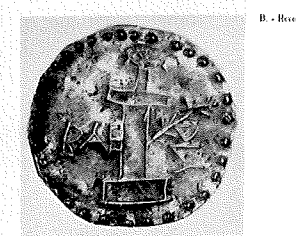
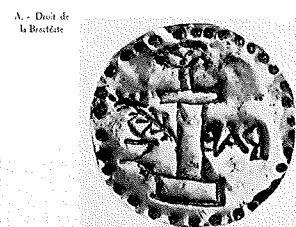
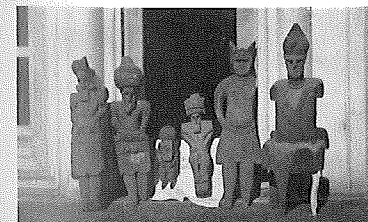


Tableau spirituel de Paul Klee, Feu en traces. — Berlin Galerie Heiderich.



Bactriane d'or. Provenir du sal de la Rivière, époque indienne. — Collection S. M. Berger.



Kafiristan. Statues égyptiennes. — Musée de Kaboul.

UN CAS DE RÉGRESSION VERS LES ARTS - BARBARES - LA STATUAIRE DU KAFIRISTAN

Le Kafiristan est un canton de l'Afghanistan oriental, borné au nord par la terre de Hindou-Kouch, à l'est par les hauteurs du Kailash, à l'est par le massif du Chitral; vers le sud ses hautes vallées longitudinales, dont les principales sont celles du Pechou et du Bakhval, descendant vers la rivière de Kanar, affluent du Kabil-rod, mais elles en sont séparées par la chaîne qui surplombe la plaine de JERUSALEM. Grâce à cette barrière continue, grâce aussi à un réseau montagneux intérieur qui isole les vallées entre elles, le Kafiristan, situé pourtant au seul même de la vallée du Kabil, cette voie habitée des communications entre l'Hera et l'Inde, se trouve échappé aux attractions du dehors. Aucune Saïte, aucun Montefraque qui se soit plus farouchement gardé contre les grands courants montés des plaines historiques. L'Homme qui eût été né, de Bakhval Kabilina, n'est que l'évolution vivante du mythe qui pleure hier creux sur ses cantons alpestres.

Est-ce à dire que le Kafiristan ait toujours échappé aux grands migrations et civilisations voisines? Non, puisque les dialectes locaux, le *kafiristi*, le *soat-é*, le *soer*, le *hous* et le *dad*, appartiennent à la famille iranienne orientale ou peut-être même, comme le suppose Grousset, doivent être considérés comme représentant un stade indigène commun, antérieur à la division définitive des Indes et des Indes, particularité en tous cas curieuse, qui atteste le caractère archaïque de ce pays « orographique-ment isolaire ».

Nul doute non plus que l'actuel Kafiristan n'ait participé à la culture gréco-asiatique, ou plutôt gréco-irano-toussilienne qui rayonna dans la vallée du Kabil-rod du 1^{er} siècle avant J.-C. au 5^e siècle de notre ère. Aux portes du Kafiristan, les districts illustres de Kapisa (Kabilina), de Langar (Langar), de Nagarabara (Nagarab) et de Gandhara (Peshawar) virent fleurir l'école hellénistique de sculpture dont les stucs récemment rapportés de Hadda au Musée Guimet nous fournissent d'admirables spécimens. Un peu plus loin vers l'est, les statues de Bamian et de Dabul et Nishapur formaient des étonnantes fresques tout à fait gréco-indiennes et peres assaillies que vient d'aller étudier à nouveau, à travers tous périls, M. Hackin.

La majeure partie de la région dont d'allures vers cette époque être englobée par ou moins directement dans l'empire perse sassanide, comme semblent l'indiquer les découvertes de MM. Godard et Hackin (1) ainsi que les études de numismatique de M. G. Bataille (2). Un peu plus tard, à l'époque du préliminaire du voyageur chinois Hsuan-tsong (630 de notre ère), le futur Kafiristan, nullement encore différencié du

modernity at the summit; the second sought to map the transmission of inventions from geographical centres of origin to secondary territories. Adjacent to diffusion-theory ran hypotheses of essential links between ethnicity and culture, with 'culture-history' telling stories of the movement and mixing of racial groups (the Aryans, for instance). These constructs were hierarchical and ideological, and thus open to subversive (mis)appropriation. As Waldemar Deonna remarked, archaeology can act as 'an agent of patriotism'; but in DOCUMENTS Bataille deployed archaeology against a certain paradigm of national identity.

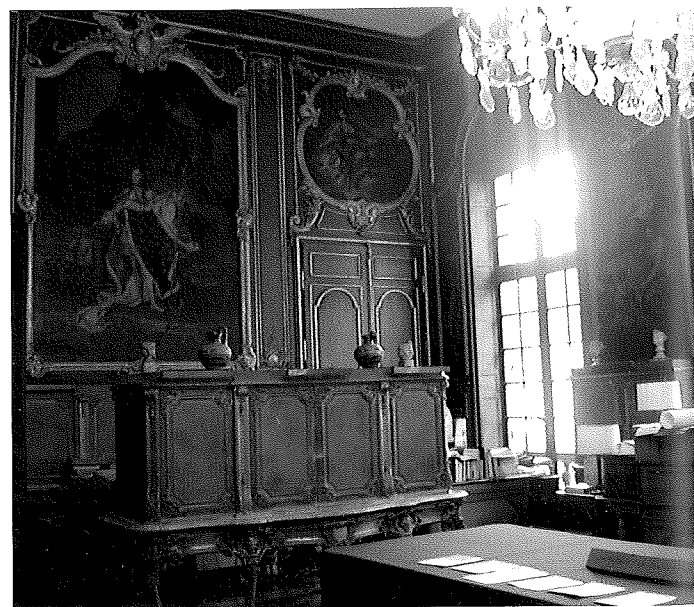
Archaeology has often conspired with nationalism, since archaeology promises knowledge of primordial identity – a promise etymologically on the side of the law. Within the Greek *arkhaios* ('ancient') lies *arkhè* ('beginning'), which also signifies 'government', and shares a root with *arkhos* ('chief'). The *architect* is the *head* builder. For a writer whose whole corpus has been characterised as militating 'against architecture' (against system, against the ideal),¹³ it is unsurprising that Bataille's evident fascination with human origins and evolution often ruptures those ideas. The originary moments dispersed across his texts – such as the evolutionary transition between quadruped and biped, the sadistic aetiology of art, the asexual reproduction of cells or the emergence of work – tend to pose becomings, or splittings, rather than punctual, absolute beginnings. Similarly, when Leiris marked Bataille's death by thinking back to DOCUMENTS, he opened up a cloven origin-story with Bataille as creator: the 'Janus-faced publication' had been 'made in his image', like Adam in Genesis.¹⁴

A split Adam, then, bifurcating between 'high cultural spheres' on the one hand, and 'savage', uncharted zones on the other; a cleft, cognate with the 'impossible' conjunction of

conservative and radical collaborators that tore the organ apart after only two years. Leiris associated Bataille's 'high' aspect with his professional status as an archivist and numismatist at the Bibliothèque nationale de France – an expertise located, within DOCUMENTS, under the legend 'Archéologie'. Part of the excitement of Bataille's DOCUMENTS texts – not least for frustrated academics – is their insurgent erudition: high scholarship swinging low blows against Western civilization; learned discourse ruining differential logic or the humanist subject – undermining, in short, *its own foundations*. Bataille's successors – chief among them Jacques Derrida, who declared the key texts of deconstruction to be 'explicitly' in dialogue with Bataille¹⁵ – have redoubled this forked style of epistemological critique.

André Breton's attack on DOCUMENTS in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* established Bataille's schizophrenic image: by day the bookish librarian, by night the 'excremental philosopher'. More recently Patrick French has counterposed the 'pure sacred' of the thesis by which Bataille qualified in 1922 as an 'archivist-palaeographer' (which concerned a thirteenth-century document of the holy initiation rites of knighthood),¹⁶ against the 'impure sacred' of *The Story of the Eye* and DOCUMENTS.¹⁷ Bataille the transgressor is a well-known figure; but what of the archivist-palaeographer?

Bataille had joined the École des Chartes, the elite Sorbonne academy for the official guardians of the French textual *patrimoine*, in 1918, aged 21. Through its naming and foundation by Louis XVIII in 1821, this 'School of Charters' bears the inscriptions of monarchy and law. Though its programme was not limited to legal records, it centred on original, principally medieval texts as positive historical evidence. Students acquired a bibliophilic research apparatus: palaeography (the decipherment of ancient writing), Romance languages and lit-



erature (at which Bataille excelled), bibliographic technique, methods of textual authentication and analysis, historiography – a regime at variance with Bataille's subsequent decapitations of discursive meaning.

In 1927 the Director of the École, Maurice Prou, who taught Bataille, evoked the typical *chartiste*:

'Candidates have to be passionately curious about the past ... At the very base of all the scholarly labours that should precede historical exposition, is found an anxiety to know the origins and development of every monument and phenomenon we see around us.'¹⁸

Prou was describing an archaeological impulse, but the curriculum he oversaw stressed above all archival classification as the foundation of historical knowledge. DOCUMENTS, against archivist decorum, promiscuously conjoined discourses, defying generic differences; likewise the *informe* was a 'term that serves to declassify'.¹⁹ Again, whereas Bataille's mature writing prosecuted profligacy, the École des Chartes was conservative both in its vocational objective – the preservation of documents – and its politics. Maurice Prou wrote that 'knowledge of the past is the surest foundation of the patriotic idea', and that the École had revived 'the tradition of the great historians of the *Ancien Régime*'. At this time the Action Française, the militant nationalist, neo-Royalist body, was active at the École. Royalty would also loom large at the Bibliothèque nationale.

Bataille was diligent, coming top in his first year, for which he received a prize of two volumes of medieval poetry – the source of the nonsense poems whose rendering into modern French was his sole contribution to *La Révolution surréaliste*. There are other continuities between Bataille's experience at the École des Chartes and his radical future: he met Alfred Métraux there, who went on to train with the great ethnologist



Marcel Mauss, providing a conduit to the field of anthropology; and it was by graduating second in his year (he later claimed to have sold first place) that Bataille won a study trip to Spain, where he witnessed the death of the toreador Granero – an episode that would resurface in *The Story of the Eye*. It was through a *chartiste* that Bataille met Michel Leiris in 1924, by which time he had lost his Catholic faith and pledged himself to dissolution.

Bataille had wanted to work in the Department of Manuscripts at the Bibliothèque nationale, but in 1922 he got a job at the Department of Prints, from where, in 1924, he moved to the Cabinet des médailles. This extraordinary locale houses the state hoard of coins and medals, but the collection goes far beyond numismatics. Derived from the Cabinet du roi, the French monarch's personal reserve of treasures and curios, the Cabinet des médailles lays claim to being the oldest museum in France, even the world. The collection's logic, however, is that of the cabinet of curiosities: Dagobert's throne, Charlemagne's chessboard, antique vases, statuettes, cameos and intaglios, Oriental porcelain and furniture, mummies, ethnographic and natural history objects, a cloak made from a whale's intestine, a piece of the vessel in which Christ performed the miracle at Cana – all coexist. One might remark that DOCUMENTS, with its proliferation of heterogeneous stuff, also resembles a curiosity cabinet.

The curators of the Cabinet des médailles still work where Bataille did, in the luxurious confines of the nineteenth-century reconstruction, in the old Bibliothèque nationale, of the home built for the collection when it moved from the Palace of Versailles in the 1740s.²⁰ In the Louis XV Salon, portraits of that monarch and his great grandfather the Sun King supervise a room decorated with elaborate eighteenth-century furniture and allegorical paintings by François Boucher. It was

LE CHEVAL ACADÉMIQUE



MONNAIES GREQUES ET GAULOISES (AGRANDIES)
1. MACÉDOINE. - 2. LIMOUSIN - 3. ARTOIS

amid this *Ancien Régime* conspicuous consumption that Bataille obsessed about hierarchy, revolution and excess.

Bataille's first DOCUMENTS article emerged from the Cabinet des médailles, though it deviated violently from the numismatic norm. 'The Academic Horse' pursues a dualism between the academic and the savage, seizing on the common archaeological observation that ancient Celtic coins figure deformations of Hellenic prototypes.²¹ The customary term for this process was 'degeneration', overlaying cultural diffusion with an implicitly evolutionist hierarchy of Greek original and (failed) Gaulish copy. Bataille reverses the value-judgement, stating that the style of the 'imitations' denotes not a 'technical fault', but a 'positive extravagance'.²² Nonetheless, he retains the ancient bipolarity, annexed in the late nineteenth century to evolutionist world histories, of civilization versus barbarism; 'contradictory social states' of which he takes the Greek and Gaulish styles to be 'symptoms'.

This stylistic opposition also owes something to Heinrich Wölfflin's classical/baroque art-historical dyad, but Bataille's characterisation of the Gauls principally refigures the extant literature on pre-Roman France. As against the organised Hellenic State, Bataille's Gauls represent absurd formlessness and anarchic aggression, a troping that stems from the accounts of Amédée Thierry and Jules Michelet in the nineteenth century (whose Gauls were bellicose, without discipline), and the twentieth-century scholar Camille Jullian, who portrayed the Gauls as avatars of motion too 'manic' for rest or work,²³ driven only by 'the spirit of battle' towards 'the four points of the horizon'.²⁴ This undirected aggression echoes in Bataille's claim that the Gauls 'calculated nothing, conceiving of no progress and giving free rein to immediate suggestions and violent sentiment'.

The Greek historian Polybius wrote of the Celts that



7. CELTES DE TRANSYLVANIE



8. EAUZE (GERS)

'passion reigned sovereign in their souls, reason had no purchase on them'; but Bataille's 'savages', creatures of instinct on the side of horror, 'nightmares' and the unconscious, also engage the modern discourse on the 'primitive'. Bataille's claim that pre-Roman Gaulish culture was 'comparable to the current peoples of Central Africa,' mimics the enlistment of comparative ethnography by archaeologists such as Henri Hubert, who lectured on Celtic archaeology at the École du Louvre in the 1920s. Hubert compared Celtic head-hunting with that of modern Borneo, and Celtic ritual gift-giving with the Chinook *potlatch* made famous by Marcel Mauss. Beheading is a constant theme in DOCUMENTS (as in Bataille's corpus) – we see it in the skulls of the 'demi-savage' Celtic 'sanctuary' at Roquepertuse.²⁵ Likewise Bataille's various interrogations of excessive expenditure, with which his Gauls can be seen to communicate, proceeded from Mauss on *potlatch*.

There is political cogency in Bataille's positioning of the Gauls alongside Central African tribes, in 'veritable antithesis to classical civilization'. The Gauls have been mobile recruits in the French national historiography, adopted as right-wing ethno-cultural paragons, proletarian underdogs, primitives in need of Roman civilization, and victims of imperialism analogous to modern colonial subjects. Bataille exploits the latter parallel. By identifying the Gauls with French imperialism's Heart of Darkness, its phobic other (associated in the popular imagination with colonial tortures and indigene 'savagery'), he draws on the evolutionist conflation of far away with long ago, maximising Gaulish alterity to Greco-Roman Civilization. This antagonism rehearses Thierry's narrative of ethnic division, in which the French class struggle reproduced the 'race war' of Romans versus Gauls; a split at odds with the rightist origin-story, ascendant in the 1920s, of French identity as essentially 'Greco-Latin', and united by the Roman conquest.

Bataille's rhetoric of social contradiction gestures at Marxist dialectical materialism, as does his proposition of a 'common measure' between animal and human evolution. But whereas Engels saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as a Darwinian development homologous with nature, Bataille undercuts the ideology of progress, proffering instead a cosmic vision of oscillating order and disorder that owes more to Nietzsche or Heraclitus. Animal 'primitive forms' – the gorilla in relation to the human, for example – jostle their so-called superiors, and in the same way the savage insurrection embodied by Gaulish coins permanently threatens authority. Crucially, 'alterations of plastic forms often represent the principal symptom of great reversals'; reversals of the type that might, Bataille implies, attend the 'recent negation' of the First World War. The motifs of DOCUMENTS acquire the menace of harbingers.

Clearly, Bataille put archaeology to exorbitant use. Third- and fourth-century Gnostic intaglios became an 'evil' means of excavating the prehistory of dialectical materialism, thus to deconstruct its repressed idealism.²⁶ This heretical margin of Christian doctrine, in which 'Persian dualism' and 'Judaeo-Oriental heterodoxy' had introduced the 'most impure ferments' into 'Greco-Roman ideology', points to the geopolitical thrust of most of the archaeology in DOCUMENTS. The 1920s were a time of great anxiety on the French right about the dangers of the East. Colonial revolt, Bolshevism and German instability merged in the nationalist self-image into an excluded Eastern bloc of atavistic formlessness, disintegration and revolution, against which stood a Greco-Roman principle of form, unity and tradition.

DOCUMENTS inflicted Oriental pressure on Greco-Roman culture. A conservative editorial committee member's article about Greek coins veered towards the 'orgiastic cults' of

Dionysus – an Asiatic deity whose mysteries were an early Orientalist topos.²⁷ When Bataille summoned up Rome, it was in terms of the crazed ritual, imported from the Orient, of Cybele's priests' self-castration.²⁸ Greek magic appeared as a monstrous hybrid of Oriental parts.²⁹ The Hellenistic sculpture of Asia Minor manifested an 'irresistible force' analogous to Genghis Khan's Mongolian hordes.³⁰ In Josef Strzygowski DOCUMENTS gave a platform to an art-historical race-theorist with extreme anti-Romano-centric archaeological beliefs about late antiquity and the middle ages, which he saw as determined by Eastern ethno-cultural factors. An article on 'The Birth Hour of European Occidental Art' acknowledged the geopolitical stakes of the debate: 'A new crisis between West and East is manifesting itself,' wrote the German author, 'It is up to us to find a solution.'³¹ Rather than a solution, DOCUMENTS staged the conflict.

The archaeology of DOCUMENTS foregrounded the archaic Asiatic: Siberian, Scythian, Chinese, Japanese. One recalls Georges Henri Rivière's 1926 vaunting of 'archaeology, parricidal daughter of humanism', as having 'awoken' Khmer statues 'beneath the foundations of the Parthenon of Murras and Winckelmann': humanist, classical archaeology as the property of Charles Maurras, leader of the Action française; Eastern archaeology as humanism's murderous child.³² The right-wing critic Waldemar George denounced the 'Afghan gods' illustrated in René Grousset's DOCUMENTS article as pernicious sops to a 'fascination' for 'archaic and barbarian forms', an anti-classical, anti-humanist 'pessimism based on masochism, a secret desire to humiliate the human being and to degrade him to the level of a reptile'.³³ George's accusation of evolutionary regression intercepts both Grousset's evolutionist interpretation of the Afghan statues as 'a case of regression towards "barbarian" arts', and Bataille's (none too

secret) counter-evolutionary dethronements of the human. What is key is George's view of Grousset's scholarship as coincident with Bataille's subversion. Editorial strategy subsumes professional archaeology.

DOCUMENTS inhabits a genealogy of counter-cultural (an)archaeological thinking, traceable through Nietzsche to the Asiatic nomadic war-machine of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and the 'psychic palaeolithism' of Hakim Bey. From Nietzsche's Dionysus onwards, there has been a marked Orientalising strand in this Western skein. The archaeology of DOCUMENTS inaugurates no unified identity. It dramatises a split.

Notes

- 1 Quoted in M. Leiris, 'De Bataille l'impossible à l'impossible "Documents"', in *Critique* 195–196, August–September 1963, pp. 685–693.
- 2 'A Study of Material Civilizations; Ethnography, Archaeology, Prehistory', 3, 1929.
- 3 W. Deonna, *L'Archéologie. Son domaine, son but*.
- 4 G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, XII, p. 570.
- 5 G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, I, *Premiers Ecrits 1922–1940*, p. 107.
- 6 D. Hollier, 'The Use Value of the Impossible', in *October*, 60, Spring 1992, pp. 3–24.
- 7 "Research on the Plastic Arts" and "History of Art"', 1, 1929.
- 8 1, 1930. This 'Table analytique' does not appear in the Jean-Michel Place reprint of the magazine.
- 9 'Neolithic Childhood', 8, 1930.
- 10 'Solutrean Art in the Vallée du Roc (Charente)', 6, 1929.
- 11 'A Case of Regression Towards "Barbarian" arts: The Kafiristan Statuary', 2, 1930.
- 12 'A Study of Material Civilizations; Ethnography, Archaeology, Prehistory', 3, 1929.
- 13 D. Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*.
- 14 M. Leiris, op. cit.
- 15 J. Derrida, *Positions*, p. 85, n. 35.
- 16 G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, I, *Premiers Ecrits 1922–1940*, pp. 99–102.
- 17 P. French, *The Cut / Reading Bataille's Histoire de l'œil*, pp. 45–46.

Left to right:

DOCUMENTS, 2, 1930

DOCUMENTS, 1, 1930

DOCUMENTS, 7, 1930

DOCUMENTS, 6, 1930 (detail)

DOCUMENTS, 6, 1930



Reconstitution de l'ensemble des statues à l'Acropole — Musée, Mars Borée.



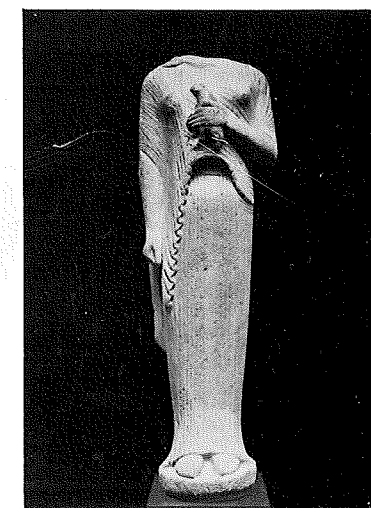
2. Un aureus (19) — Époque des Grecs — Hauteur 20 mm. — Cabinet de Médailles.



3. Une statue en bronze (à gauche) — Musée de la Cour des Miracles, Paris.



PERSONNAGE DÉROUÉ, SAMOS, D'APRÈS ATHÈNES, MUSEUM, 1888.



PERSONNAGE DÉROUÉ, SAMOS, D'APRÈS ATHÈNES, MUSEUM, 1888.

- 18 M. Prou, *L'École des Chartes*, p. 18.
- 19 'Formless', 7, 1929.
- 20 I wish to thank for their assistance M. Michel Amandry, Mme Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet and M. Michel Dhénin of the Bibliothèque nationale's Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques.
- 21 1, 1929, newly translated in this book.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 C. Jullian, *Histoire de la Gaule*, Vol. 1, *Les invasions gauloises et la colonisation grecque*, p. 345.
- 24 C. Jullian, *De la Gaule à la France: Nos origine historiques*, p. 125.
- 25 'The Roquepertuse Heads', 2, 1930.
- 26 'Base Materialism and Gnosticism', 1, 1930.
- 27 'A Macedonian Eldorado: 5th century BC', 2, 1929.
- 28 'Sacrificial Mutilation and Vincent van Gogh's Severed Ear', 8, 1930.
- 29 'The God Bes and Hellenistic Magic', 7, 1930.
- 30 'Greek Sculpture of Minor Asia in the 6th century BC', 6, 1930.
- 31 8, 1930.
- 32 G.H. Rivière, 'Archéologismes', in *Cahiers d'Art*, I, 1926, p. 177.
- 33 W. George, 'The Twilight of the Idols' (*Les Arts à Paris* 17, May 1930, pp. 7-13), translated in J. Flam and M. Deutch (ed.), *Primitivism and twentieth-century art: A Documentary history*, pp. 212-218, 213.

BEAUX-ARTS

Dawn Aides

'*Beaux-Arts*' (Fine Arts), together with Archaeology and Ethnography, was a constant in the rubric on the covers of DOCUMENTS. But precisely which articles had the honour of belonging to this category quickly becomes unclear as the magazine's revisions of the very idea of aesthetic value developed.

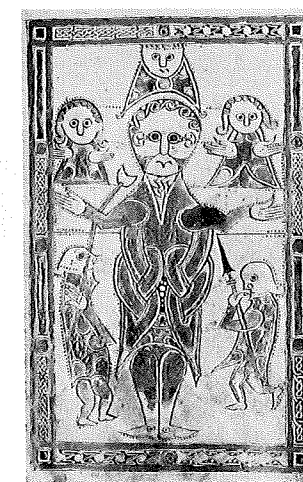
'*Beaux-Arts*' was, to begin with, the knot that bound DOCUMENTS to the venerable review published by its financial backer Georges Wildenstein, the *Gazette des beaux-arts*. Founded in 1858, the *Gazette des beaux-arts* had from the start announced itself as a '*chronique des arts et de la curiosité*' (chronicle of arts and curiosities) covering 'Acquisitions of French and Foreign Museums; Archaeology; Classification of Historic Monuments; Libraries; Sales; Ancient and Modern Art Exhibitions; Art Books; Law; Academies; Learned Societies.' The close relationship between sales and scholarship, dealers and the academy is not surprising given that Wildenstein owned one of the premier commercial galleries in Paris. Scholarly articles on numismatics, antique sculpture, Romanesque architecture, current archaeological excavations and so on, as well as essays on 'ancient' and modern art, were part of a well-oiled exchange, adding value to the objects on the market. Hence the disconcerting effect of Bataille's very first contribution to DOCUMENTS, 'The Academic Horse', on the monstrous and horrible deformations of Greek coin-imagery among the Gauls.¹ The terms that were to become a staple of Bataille's language of base materialism in DOCUMENTS, such as 'absurd', 'burlesque' and 'incoherent', have no place in regular art historical or archaeological discourse. They imply a disturbance of established methodologies and values and are at odds with the usual modes of dealing with the so-called highs and lows of Western civilization.

The contrast between DOCUMENTS' approach to Art

DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929



Tableau abstrait de Paul Klee - Clous.
Galerie Flechmann.



Fresque irlandaise, Saint-John's College Library, Cambridge.
(D'après G. E. Sauer, *Early Hibernicism*.)

Left to right:

Sculptures nègres, 1917 (fig. 6)

2 pages from DOCUMENTS, 7, 1929

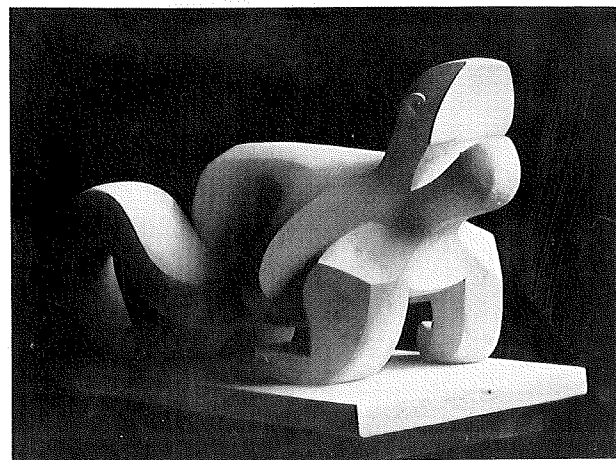
and that of its backer is vividly pointed up by an advertisement that appeared regularly on the last page of each issue of the journal, for a new book on the 'Great artists and the great artistic schools of France' to be published by Wildenstein. The divergence between the cultural nationalism and the confident assertion of 'great' art and artistic schools in this announcement and DOCUMENTS' approach to the heterogeneous range of objects in its pages is very apparent.

The analytical table of contents published at the end of DOCUMENTS' first year reels off under the heading 'archaeology' an impressive list of different civilizations whose 'Art' had been the subject of an article: Bulgarian, Byzantine, Chinese, Gaulish, Greek, Greco-Celtic, Hittite, Roman, Scandinavian, Siberian and Sumerian. However, Africa, America and Oceania, together with 'popular art' in Europe, are gathered under the heading 'Ethnography and Folklore'. Given that Paul Rivet and Georges Henri Rivière, among the most influential figures in modern French ethnography, were on the editorial board of DOCUMENTS this was clearly a purposeful geo-cultural distinction.² DOCUMENTS was not to be a 'Gazette des beaux-arts primitifs'.³

There had recently been several attempts, propelled by the interest of avant-garde artists, to rescue 'primitive art' from its subaltern position and recognise its aesthetic value. Guillaume Apollinaire announced the 1917 album *Sculptures nègres* as the first to 'value, not the ethnic character of negro statues, but their beauty', at the same time as lamenting the lack of a critical language with which to address them, given the severe absence of information about their production and their makers.⁴ In the same album Paul Guillaume noted that while in London, Holland, Belgium and Germany negro sculpture was exhibited alongside 'the finest remains of antiquity', at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris it was included



IDOLE DE LA RÉGION DE BOBO-DIOULASSO (Senegal)



Lipshiz, Sculpteur (1929)

only for its ethnographic interest. The notoriously chaotic displays at the Trocadéro were about to be radically reorganised, but not in the direction signalled by Apollinaire. Paul Rivet, in 'A Study of Material Civilizations; Ethnography, Archaeology, Prehistory', firmly rejects the tendency of both archaeologists and ethnographers to single out choice objects to label as 'art' rather than collecting objects of all kinds from a given civilization.⁵ It would be like, he says, judging current French civilization by its 'objets de luxe' alone, when these were in fact the province of a tiny proportion of the French population. Thus he sweeps away the patronising nostalgia of displays that linked African, Oceanic or American sculpture with the distant past of classical antiquity together with the aesthetic enjoyment of the *amateur* and the formalist appreciation of the modernists, in favour of the study of the full range of material remains.

André Schaeffner, in 'Musical Instruments in an Ethnographic Museum', while no less democratic in tone than Rivet, insists on the need to research the whole cultural complex of which the musical 'aesthetic' is a part.⁶ The innate inability of the museum to embody in its display the nature of a given instrument can be partly compensated, he proposes, by photographs of the player in action and recordings of the sound. But there is an irresolvable problem of classification in many instances, when it is unclear whether an object is instrument and/or sculpture, sound statue rather than decorated drum (a problem partly caused by Western terminology). The anthropomorphic Upper Ubanghi 'guitar' or 'harp' (cat. 21), standing upright like a statue, with its elongated caricature of a neck, tiny head and precise anatomical details, is of as much interest, Schaeffner argues, for the student of the plastic arts as for the musicologist. This is not to suggest that Schaeffner is going against the grain of DOCUMENTS' 'anti-aesthetic',

but rather that he proposes that it is the job of the art historian to investigate the ritual function of the object, to enquire into, for example, the relationship between the wooden animal-drums (cat. 56) and 'other idols, to note the sculptural expression that they aim to construct of superior powers...'. This job is very different both from the vague appreciation of the *amateur*, the art lover or connoisseur, or the aestheticising museographer, attacked by Michel Leiris for transforming 'a mask or a statue made for precise and complicated ritual purposes into a common art object.'⁷

Leiris here enjoys the conjunction of 'common' (*vulgaire*) and 'work of art', an operation performing the same 'bringing down', debasing, as when Bataille refers to the 'base idealism' of Surrealism. In Leiris's phrase, 'work of art' is a devaluation of the object, draining it of purpose. However, in the same article, 'Civilization', Leiris hints at a new kind of work whose function would no longer be that of aesthetic sublimation. Passionately rejecting the polite world of 'taste', the veneer of civilization that is like a thin layer of mildew over the boiling, volcanic savagery underneath, Leiris writes:

'...we would so like to get closer to our savage ancestry, to appreciate only now that which, obliterating at a stroke the passing of the centuries, places us, naked and bald, in front of a world that is closer and newer. We've already seen for several years numerous signs of such a rebellion in literature and painting...'

The new 'rebellious' kind of work to which Leiris refers is a distinctive kind of modern art, which appears, not at all chosen at random, in DOCUMENTS: Pablo Picasso most prominently, then André Masson, Joan Miró, Hans Arp, Salvador Dalí and Alberto Giacometti among others. While Masson, Miró and Arp were among the dissident surrealists embraced by DOCUMENTS, Giacometti and Dalí were at



Applique de boiserie chinoise, époque Pré-Han (cf. p. 396). — Coll. David-Weill.

very early stages in their careers, and yet to move in the other direction, towards Surrealism. It is Carl Einstein who spells out the dilemma these works pose for the normal art critic or historian. Einstein, a poet who had associated with both Expressionism and Dada but was above all a writer on the visual arts, had recently arrived in Paris from Germany. He had had classical training as an art historian under Heinrich Wölfflin in the 1900s and subsequently set about destroying the aesthetic model of this tradition, publishing *Negerplastik* (1915) and *The Art of the Twentieth Century* (1926).⁸ Einstein was from the start a member of the editorial committee of DOCUMENTS and a key conduit for the contributions from German scholars to the magazine. His writings in DOCUMENTS concentrate exclusively on theory and the visual arts and it has been suggested that his interest in the 'tectonic' functioned as an opposition to Bataille's 'formless'.⁹ However, both question the human habit of unconsciously structuring experience of their environment (whether in art or any other type of object) on the model of their own body and thus anthropomorphising it, civilizing it so that it no longer has the threatening immediacy of direct experience.

In 'Notes on Cubism' Einstein argues that neither art history (which, when it attempts to be more than a calendar, flounders in baseless judgements) nor what he calls *la science de l'art* (the science of art), philosophical aesthetics, can cope with the new art, Cubism.¹⁰ Pessimists saw the shattering of the relation of identity between nature and picture as 'the death throes of reality', the end of a comfortable tautology, the repetition of imitations, whereby man could be reassured of immortality.

A dualism of long preparation between form and object appeared: the real as criterion for the picture was rejected; it was the end of the optimistic unity between

reality and the picture; this is no longer an allegory, nor the fiction of another reality. Thus the rights of the latter were strictly limited and one could speak of the *murderous power* of the work of art.'

For Einstein Cubism, and the works of artists like Masson and Arp whom he encountered in Paris, not only rendered futile the aesthetic tradition in which Einstein had been formed and from which he struggled to escape but responded to and were produced by fundamental psychological needs. Cubist paintings, which, he agrees with André Breton, are not rationalist, are 'imaginative pictures which show a completely invented structure'. But Einstein was not a supporter of abstract art. It was rather the 'concrete fact' of the invented structure that he linked to 'archaic and mythical epochs'. His essays on Arp ('Neolithic Childhood'¹¹) and Masson ('André Masson, an Ethnological Study'¹²) betray a utopian primitivisation, the notion of unconscious psychological regression to childhood or to a mythological past. Despite the scepticism he expresses in 'Notes on Cubism' about the value of a psychological approach to art, in which he saw the danger of treating the painting as a symptom, Einstein praises the hallucinatory quality of Masson's work, his 'psychogrammes', spontaneous or automatic mark-making, which are outside the 'control of reason'. Einstein is close here to orthodox Surrealism, but his discussion of metamorphosis moves in a different direction, towards a notion of sacrifice closer to Bataille. 'Metamorphosis is the classic drama of totemism ... It is thanks to the identification of man with animal that the projection of self-sacrifice becomes possible.'

As Denis Hollier points out in 'La valeur d'usage de l'impossible', the notion of the use value of an object takes two directions in DOCUMENTS: on the one hand the material concerns of the ethnologist who is interested in the 'technical,

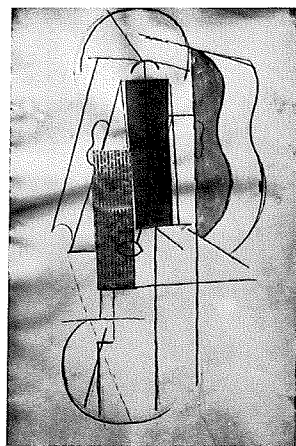
social and economic utilisation of the object', and on the other hand the unproductive but no less urgent value of ritual use, which touches a different kind of human need.¹³ In DOCUMENTS it was not a matter of trying to redefine the notion of the 'aura' of a work of art, once conferred on it by its religious status, but of exploring instincts, desires and urges which could be invested in any object, including painting and sculpture. Sacrifice, for Bataille, was a form of ritual violence whose significance was obscured in modern society, where it has been largely transformed and muted into purely symbolic or token acts. He used the idea of sacrifice to attack the sterility and hypocrisy of modern life, arguing that the temple and the abattoir descend from a single site where killing took place, and explains the invisibility of slaughterhouses in modern cities as the consequence of man's squeamish reluctance to face the slaughter on which he nonetheless depends for his meat. Bataille locates modern sacrifice not in the heroism of the battlefield but in acts of obsessional self-mutilation such as van Gogh's slicing of his ear. In 'Sacrificial Mutilation and Vincent van Gogh's Severed Ear' Bataille equates the severing of the ear with the torment of Prometheus, whose liver was devoured by the eagle of Jupiter.¹⁴

There are in DOCUMENTS a few relatively routine art historical articles on, for instance, unpublished drawings by Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Eugène Delacroix's painting *Roi Rodrigue*, Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, Siberian bronzes and Cycladic sculpture, which would not have been out of place in the *Gazette des beaux-arts*. However, whereas there they would have remained as discrete units within the neutral frame of the art magazine, in DOCUMENTS the powerful visual aesthetic, the principle of juxtaposition, of contrast and of comparison draws connecting webs across its pages. In the case of the unexceptionable Cycladic sculptures (cat. 40-41), one of

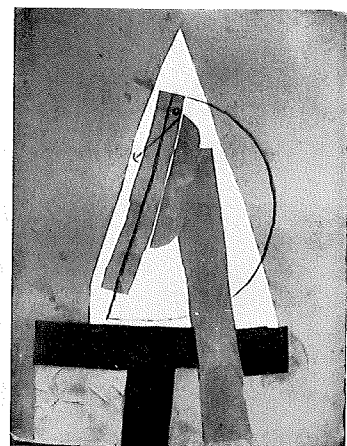
Left to right:

DOCUMENTS, 1, 1929

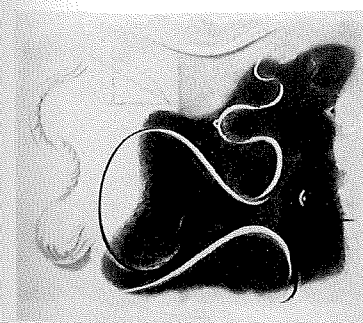
2 pages from DOCUMENTS, 2, 1929



PICASSO, TÊTE (1912)

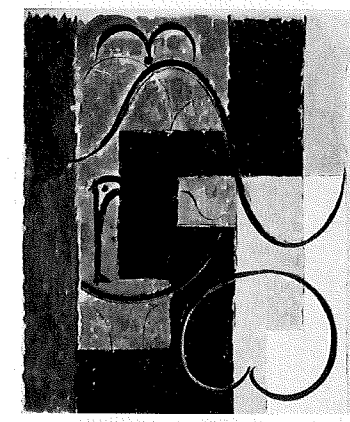


TÊTE (1914)

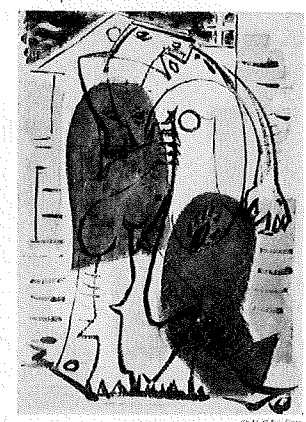


MASSON, LE CHIFFRE CINQ (1925), COLL. P. DAUSSE, N° 44

Parallèles sont caractérisés par le fait que toute donnée historique est hors de cause. Il n'est plus question de se résigner.
On trouve beaucoup au sujet de la destruction de l'édifice. Il serait peut-être de parler de dissociation de la conscience; en effet, il n'y a pas de concordance entre les notes de notes de la conscience et la succession des signes hallucinatoires. Nous constatons la tension entre le spontané et le causalité. Plus la nature est impérieuse de causalité, moins elle est admissible au point de vue psychologique. Nous aggrégons encore la causalité et la conscience comme d'instincts instrumentaux mais nous y voyons un obstacle aux processus spontanés. De son côté, le rationnel s'éloigne de l'instinct dans tous les processus psychologiques. Mais c'est justement dans cette discordance entre l'hallucination et la structure des objets que réside notre ultime chance de liberté: une possibilité de charger l'ordre des choses. Le



MASSON, LE CHIFFRE CINQ (1925), GALERIE SIMON, N° 44



LES ADIEUX (1929), COLL. P. DAUSSE, N° 45

Left to right:

Spread from DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930

DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929

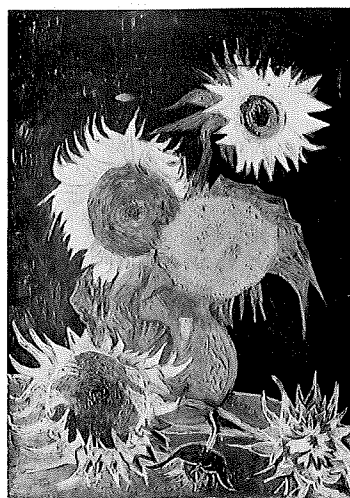
Nicolas-François Regnault and Geneviève Regnault, *The Deviations of Nature or a Collection of the Main Monstrosities that Nature Produces in Animals*, 1775 (cat. 139)

the underlying threads in DOCUMENTS, the primitivisation or archaizing of modern art is hinted at with the reproduction a few pages later of photographs of Giacometti's recent sculpture (cat. 142).¹⁵ The simplified forms of the Cycladic figurines and the open, linear structures of the *Harp Player* (cat. 141) oddly reverberate with Giacometti's figures, drastically reduced to violent, jagged or cage-like geometries. But a few pages further on another comparison with the Giacomettis leaps out, with a group of Benin iron 'fetish trees' (cat. 44-47).

'Fetish trees? Or perhaps genealogical trees ... the ethnographers find it hard to decide on the nature of these most mysterious of trees. The stems and summits have been animated with a strange fauna of chameleons, leopards, antelopes, serpents, ibis and even of humans.'¹⁶

Even of humans – in the case of these three sets of images it is the precariousness of the human form, shrunk or trapped or threatened by space that suggests itself. This impression suddenly leaches into the rest of this issue of DOCUMENTS (a remarkable one, but no more than many of the others). In Einstein's article on Hercule Seghers, the seventeenth-century artist victimised by Dutch society, so poor he had only his bed sheets to paint on, his rocky landscapes 'bear witness to agoraphobia and a strangulation complex'.¹⁷ Bataille's 'Cannibal Delicacy', part of the Critical Dictionary entry on 'Eye', discusses both J.J. Grandville's engraving of the criminal's dream of being pursued across the heavens and the sea by a gigantic eye and the scene of the slicing of the eye in Luis Buñuel and Dalí's film *Un chien andalou* (1929, cat. 188-190).

'We know that civilized man is characterised by the acuteness of often inexplicable horrors. The fear of insects is doubtless one of the most peculiar and most developed of those horrors among which one is



LA MUTILATION SACRIFICIELLE

ET L'OREILLE COUPÉE DE VINCENT VAN GOGH

Les *Années médicol-psychologiques* (II) rapportent les faits suivants au sujet de « Gaston F., âgé de 30 ans, dessinateur en broderie, entré à l'Asile Sainte Anne, le 25 janvier 1924. »

« Il se promenait le matin du 11 décembre, sur le boulevard de Miquelmontant quand, arrivé à la hauteur de Père-Lachaise, il se mit à fixer le soleil et recouvrit de ses regards l'ordre impétueux de l'année un défilé, sans hésiter, sans ressentir aucune douleur, sans sentir ses dents son index gauche, sectionné successivement le poeur, les tendons Béchassures et extenseurs, les ligaments articulaires au niveau de l'articulation phalange phalangeienne, touché de sa main droite l'extrémité de son index gauche ainsi défilé et l'arracha complètement. Il tenta de faire dresser les agents, qui révoquèrent cependant à s'emparer de lui et le conduisirent à l'hôpital. »

Le jeune auto-mutilateur, outre son métier de dessinateur en broderies, exerçait dans un hôtel-chalet de peinture. Sans grande renommée sur les tendances représentées par sa peinture, nous savons cependant qu'il avait lu des essais de critique d'art de Marbeau. Son inquiétude se portait d'autre part sur des sujets tels que le mystique hindou ou la philosophie de Frédéric Nietzsche.

« Dans les jours qui précèdent l'auto-mutilation, il prit plusieurs verres de rhum ou de cognac. Il se demande encore s'il n'a pas été influencé par la biographie de Van Gogh dans laquelle il avait lu que le peintre prit un accès de folie. « J'ai coupé une oreille et l'arrachée envoyée à une fille dans une maison de prostitution. C'est alors qu'en se promenant le 11 décembre sur le boulevard de Miquelmontant, » il prit avis du soleil, se suggestionna, fixa le soleil pour s'approcher de ce qui se défilait devant lui. Il eut recevoir ainsi un assommoir de pensée. « Faisant, fais quelque chose, vers de cet état » souhaitait-il devenir par transmission de pensée. « Ça ne me paraissait pas étonnant, ajoute-t-il, après avoir eu l'idée du suicide, de m'enlever un doigt. Je me disais : je peux toujours faire cela. »

Je ne suis pas qu'il soit utile de noter autrement que pour mémoire le fait que Gaston F., a connu l'exemple de Van Gogh. Lorsqu'une dévotion intervient avec la violence nécessaire à l'arrachement d'un doigt, elle échappe entièrement aux suggestions littéraires qui ont pu la précéder et l'entraîne au-delà de son objet. L'auto-mutilation doit apparaître comme un besoin auquel personne ne pourrait résister. La coïncidence des gestes des deux peintres retrouve d'ailleurs toute son étrange liberté à partir du moment où la même force extérieure, choisie indépendamment de part et d'autre, intervient dans le même acte des deux en ce sens qu'elle a une biographie de Van Gogh ne pouvait pousser le mutilateur de Père-Lachaise, accomplissant un sacrifice dont personne n'aurait pu supporter la vue sans craindre, à recourir accidentellement aux aspects évocateurs du soleil.

II

surprised to count that of the eye.'¹⁸

Unlike the banality of so many avant-garde productions, *Un chien andalou* grips the spectator from the start through its *open-eyed* and direct penetration into horror.

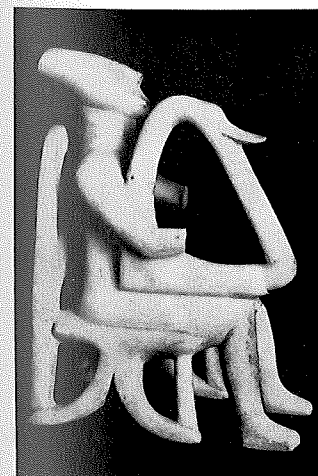
Such moments, whether in film, photography or painting, are few enough. For Bataille and Leiris the loss of directness, of concrete experience in modern life, is matched by the usually feeble comforts of art. In his only extended article on a contemporary painter, 'The Lugubrious Game', Bataille cuts across all the counter-aesthetic propositions of Einstein or Leiris to admire Dalí's painting of the same name for its appalling violence.¹⁹ He starts with an implied critique of Surrealism: 'Intellectual despair ends neither in inertia nor dreams, but in violence', and ends with a burlesque inversion of the contemplative aesthetic experience: in front of Dalí's painting *The Lugubrious Game*, he 'squeals like a pig'.

In a sense the discourse of aesthetics is displaced in DOCUMENTS from the essays on painting and sculpture to those by Bataille such as 'Human Figure' and 'The Deviations of Nature'.²⁰ In the latter Bataille attacks the classical ideal, the composite built from the amalgamation of a number of different images (of faces, for example) which 'gives a kind of reality to the platonic idea, necessarily beautiful'. But the corollary is that all individual forms differ from this common ideal measure and are therefore to some degree monstrous. The painful, even cruel, juxtaposition of this short text with the illustrations from Nicolas-François and Geneviève Regnault's 1775 publication *The Deviations of Nature* (cat. 139) has a double function. It not only subverts the notion of the ideal perfectibility of nature but also highlights the prurient pleasure in the curiosity, the monster, the seductive horror of these deviations of nature which by Bataille's extremist logic are, once the effort is made to classify the species, 'dialectically situated in

opposition to geometrical regularity, in the same way as individual forms, though in an irreducible fashion.'

Notes

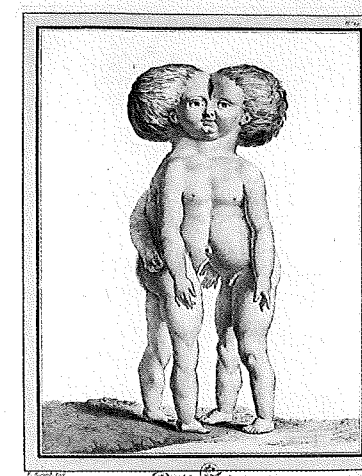
- 1, 1929, newly translated in this book.
- 2 Rivet was Director of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro; Rivière was Deputy Director and later founder of the Musée national des Arts et Traditions Populaires, now about to relocate to Marseille as the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée.
- 3 D. Hollier, 'La valeur d'usage de l'impossible', preface to DOCUMENTS facsimile, p. VIII, published in translation as 'The Use Value of the Impossible', *October*, 60, Spring 1992, and in D. Hollier, *Absent Without Leave*, pp. 125-144.
- 4 *Sculptures nègres*, 1917. Only 63 copies were printed, privately. Reprinted by Hacker Art Books, New York, 1972. Apollinaire seems to have been unaware of Einstein's 1915 *Negerplastik*.
- 5 3, 1929.
- 6 5, 1929.
- 7 'Civilization', 4, 1929.
- 8 See S. Zeidler, 'Totality against a subject: Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik*', in *October*, 107, Winter 2004, Special issue on Carl Einstein.
- 9 See C. Joyce, *Carl Einstein in Documents and his Collaboration with Georges Bataille*, Xlibris.com, 2003.
- 10 3, 1929.
- 11 8, 1930.
- 12 2, 1929.
- 13 D. Hollier, op. cit., p. XIV.
- 14 8, 1930.
- 15 'Cannibal Delicacy', 4, 1929.
- 16 'Benin Fetish Trees', 4, 1929.
- 17 See also L. Monahan, 'Rock Paper Scissors', in *October*, 107, op. cit.
- 18 4, 1929.
- 19 7, 1929.
- 20 4, 1929; 2, 1930



II. HARBETTE. — MARBRE PROVENÇALE, ANSORGOS, HAÛT, 21 CM. — MUSÉE D'ATHÈNES.



II. LE MEM, DE FACE.



Double Epinette.
 Ce sont deux enfants nés d'un même ventre, et qui ont été séparés par le hasard, et qui se trouvent en face l'un de l'autre, dans le monde, et qui ont été séparés par le hasard, et qui se trouvent en face l'un de l'autre, dans le monde, et qui ont été séparés par le hasard, et qui se trouvent en face l'un de l'autre, dans le monde.

THE QUESTION OF LAY ETHNOGRAPHY [The Entropological Wild Card]

Denis Hollier

On the bright yellow cover of *DOCUMENTS*, underneath the big, bold capitals of the banner-like title, a column of four epistemological labels reads: 'Doctrines, Archéologie, Beaux-Arts, Ethnographie' (Doctrines, Archaeology, Fine Arts, Ethnography). This last field has been – at the time and since – the most controversial of the four. In the influential essay in which he coined the expression 'ethnographic Surrealism', James Clifford called it the wild card of the list, and to be sure the anthropological component of the *DOCUMENTS* adventure would play its part in the reshuffling of the epistemological and museographic deck that was underway in France during the late 1920s and early 1930s.¹ But ethnography, at the time an ill-defined field that stretched from physical anthropology to European folklore, needed to become unsettled before becoming unsettling. If one trusts the two photographs of storage rooms at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris, crammed with life-size wax figures of naked black bodies that had been piled up haphazardly after having been removed from the staged scenes of primitive life where they used to be displayed, the most urgent problem faced by the field had more to do with fighting dust, the only wild thing on the premises, than with anything else. 'Dust' is the title of the entry Bataille wrote for the Critical Dictionary section of *DOCUMENTS* as an accompaniment to these photographs; it concludes with the evocation of a world irreversibly put to sleep under a shroud of 'dust', like a cosmic Snow White.² The Trocadéro Palace had become a palace of entropy: no light, heating, funds or human resources, no one to dust off the windows, not to mention the helter-skelter display of pieces that had been gathered without any coherent collecting programme, as Georges Henri Rivière complains in his contribution to the first issue of *DOCUMENTS*.³ In fact, the challenge of an ethnographic museum without dust was the

task for which the new directorial team, Paul Rivet and Rivière, had just been hired.

In spite of the recent archival research that has reclaimed for the freelance German art historian Carl Einstein his central role in the founding and editorial management of *DOCUMENTS*, much remains unrecorded about the genesis of the journal as well as about the constitution and functioning of its famously heterogeneous editorial team.⁴ For Einstein, having just emigrated from Germany to France (in May 1928), such an enterprise was a great opportunity to insert himself into Parisian cultural life. And although, with its pages of advertising for galleries and publishing houses from Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna and Zurich, *DOCUMENTS* has, in many respects, the strange look of a German journal published in French, Einstein brought with him the art historical reflection on primitivism that was considerably more developed in his native country than in France (he would thus publish, among others, anthropologists such as Eckart von Sydow and Léo Frobenius, the latter having curated a recent show of copies of prehistorical cave drawings from South Africa at the Galerie Pleyel).⁵

Without being an academically legitimated anthropologist himself, Einstein, the author of *Negerplastik* (1915) and even more importantly of *Afrikanerplastik* (1921), was more entitled to claim the field of ethnography than any of his French colleagues on the *DOCUMENTS* board, and it is reasonable to admit, with Lilian Meffre, that in the journal he held authority on ethnographic matters.⁶ For there are degrees even in what, paraphrasing Sigmund Freud's expression, one could call 'lay' ethnography, and Bataille, Leiris, Schaeffner and even Rivière were very low on the scale. Although years later Michel Leiris became a professional ethnographer, it would be a retroactive anachronism to infer that at the time he was already an

amateur one. This can be witnessed by Leiris's offhandedness when, in a diary entry for May 1929, he writes down the decision he had just made that morning (no doubt in connection with his duties at *DOCUMENTS*) 'to brush up a little on ethnographic and sociological questions'.⁷ The same is more or less true of André Schaeffner. The only French practitioner anthropologist on the board was Paul Rivet, who was neither an Africanist nor particularly interested in art. As for Marcel Griaule, he still had to take his exams and he would not earn his full diploma until after his return from the Dakar-Djibouti Mission in 1933.

Should one conclude from this recentering that the attribution to Bataille of a position of leadership in *DOCUMENTS* is simply a rewriting of the journal's history in the light of the 1929 crisis of the surrealist movement and of André Breton's violent attack on Bataille and his friends in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*? Not quite. For Bataille seems to have been associated with the journal from the initial stages of the project, as early as the summer of 1928. However, this was in consideration not of his acquaintance (rather tangential in any case) with Surrealism, but of the erudite article on coins from Central Asia he had just published in *Aréthuse* (later footnoted by René Grousset, curator at the Musée Guimet, in *DOCUMENTS*), and maybe also of his contribution to the issue of the *Cahiers de la République des lettres* edited by Alfred Métraux in connection with the show of ancient American arts that Rivière curated the same year at the Musée des Arts décoratifs.

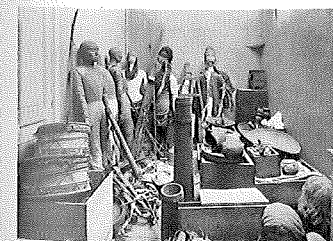
Einstein was significantly older than Bataille and his friends and, like Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, he belonged more to the Cubist generation than to the surrealist one. There is no reason, however, to think that this was enough to make the interactions between the individuals involved in the project conflictual from the beginning. Leiris, for one, was quite

Left to right:

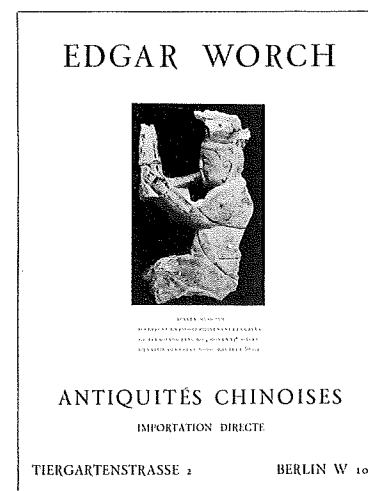
Board at the Trocadéro announcing the closure of the Musée d'Ethnographie and its replacement by the Musée de l'Homme in the Palais de Chaillot, to open in 1937, 1935 (fig. 7)

DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929

Advert from *DOCUMENTS*, 6, 1930



Création, Montagu, Africa et peinture © 200



impressed by Einstein's intellectual personality, and his first contribution to DOCUMENTS, a review of the latest book of the art historian Fritz Saxl, was obviously commissioned by Einstein who was simultaneously negotiating a text on a similar subject with Saxl.⁹ Moreover, Leiris (who at the time was reading Alexandra David-Néel on Tibetan spiritual exercises¹⁰) could refer without the slightest reservation to concepts such as 'ecstatic training' or 'mystical anatomy' that Einstein used in his article on André Masson.¹¹

It is true that from one book to the other Einstein moved from a non-contextual reading of African artifacts to one that integrates a certain level of ethnographic mediation. While in *Negerplastik* he writes, 'We will bracket-out subject matter and the contextual associations related to it',¹² in *Afrikanerplastik* he explicitly links the current exhaustion of African formal creativity to colonialism. The contamination by Western visual patterns, he claims, dismantled the traditional crafts. In that sense, his aesthetic reflection on African art was more and more affected by the white shadows cast on it by the political dimension of colonialism. It might also be that 20 years of fashion had exhausted the formal energy of primitive productions to 'rupture the visual economy of the Western subject'.¹³

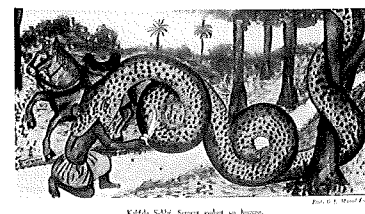
The conflicts that eventually developed between Einstein and the younger editorial and publishing team, which month after month regrouped around Bataille, probably sprang not from a tension internal to 'Ethnography' but from a disjunction between 'Ethnography' and 'Variétés' (Variety), the new rubric that was substituted for 'Doctrines' on the cover of the fourth issue of the journal. This substitution was made after Bataille, Leiris, Schaeffner, Rivière, and maybe also Marcel Griaule, who was just back from his first Ethiopian mission, had spent the summer of 1929 indulging in an unreserved Negrophilia, entranced as they were by the Lew Leslie's Black

Birds show at the Moulin-Rouge.¹⁴ Einstein's approach to African cultures, on the other hand, as the titles of his two books make sufficiently clear, was foremost concerned with the 'plastic', i.e. Apollonian (centred on what today we would call visual arts). It was not mediated by Broadway's, nor even by New Orleans's, lowbrow music-hall Dionysism. It was totally foreign to the post-war fashion of jazz. There is not the slightest trace of its being tainted by Afro-Americanism.

Like Einstein, the Bataille team also grew diffident *vis-à-vis* primitivism, but it was more out of a combination of ignorance and insolence. It did this by means of two apparently contradictory gestures. The first was a blurring of the line between the primitive and the non-primitive, valorising what both ethnographers and art critics would reject as inauthentic. The second goes in the exact opposite direction by exacerbating the difference between them to the utmost, i.e. bracketing any consideration of aesthetics as such.

The first trend appears, for example, in Leiris's review of the paintings of the Sudanese (Malian) artist Kalifala Sidibé, whose work was touring European galleries at the time (Paris, Vienna and Berlin). The composite character of his work, Leiris writes, might lead some connoisseurs to a negative judgment:

'...victims as they are of the prejudice of the "purity of style" which together with that of the "high periods" obsesses so many people. As far I am concerned, I love everything that presents this dimension of mixing, everything *mixed blood*, from sarcophagi dating from Roman times with faces of splendidly made-up women painted in the most realistic way to Fuegeans wearing European pants found in shipwrecks, not forgetting Alexandrine philosophy and the unmatched elegance of Harlem Negroes along the way.'¹⁵



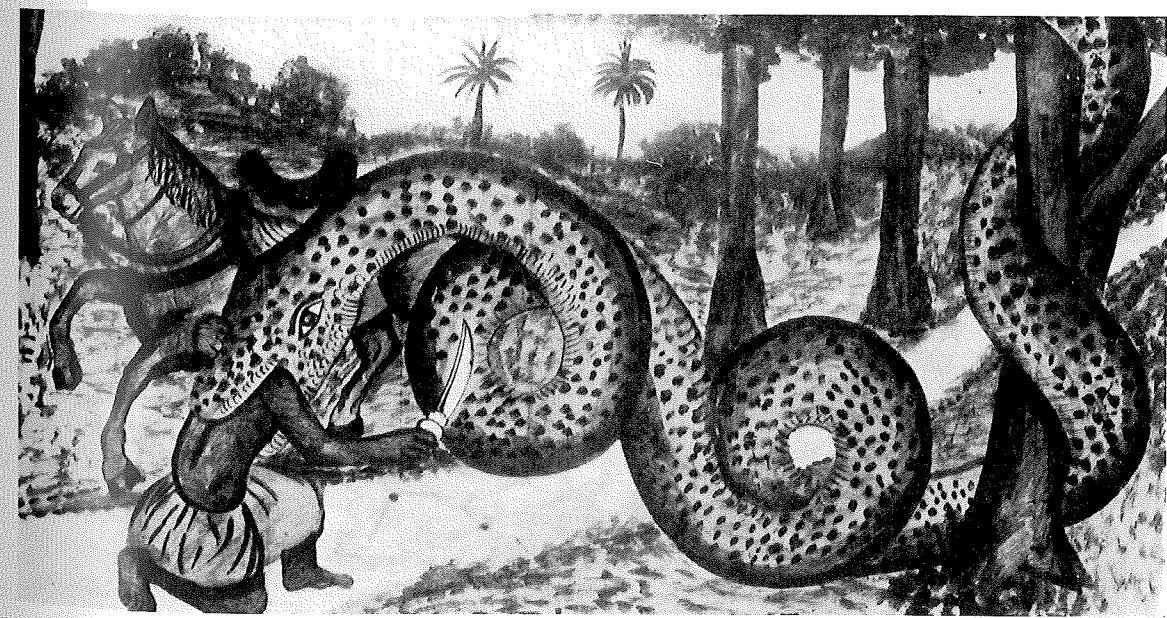
EXPOSITION KALIFALA SIDIBÉ (GALERIE GEORGES BERNHEIM)

Voilà et voilà, le noir bleuté d'origine... KALIFALA SIDIBÉ, le grand et robuste... L'œuvre est faite de terre et de bois... Les yeux sont noirs, les lèvres sont rouges... On voit dans la peinture une certaine... M. L.

One might wonder if Einstein approved of such a statement. It is more likely that he would have seen in such an 'inauthentic' production one more sign of the collapse of African cultures under the colonial regime that he had already lamented in *Afrikanerplastik*. The Einstein scholar Klaus Kiefer remarks something of that vein in connection with the translation of one of the myths Einstein collected in his 1925 anthology *Afrikanische Legenden*. It tells the story of a young couple who married against the wishes of the keepers of tradition in each of their respective tribes. At one point in the story, the husband happens to kill the totemic animal of his wife's tribe, the bull, who was grazing on the vegetables he was growing. This event marks the beginning of a Wagnerian *dämmerung* that will end in the tribe's collective suicide.

Einstein translated the myth from a French version in which the husband kills the bull with a gun. In his translation, however, he replaces the gun with a more traditional spear. Creative translation or pious denial? The story is a fable addressed to young people, warning them against innovation. But it is clear that for Einstein the worst transgression was not that of the manifest content – i.e. the young couple marrying against the rules of kinship – but the fact that the husband perpetrated the killing of the bull with a non-African arm. Like a worm in an apple, Europe and modernity had already contaminated the story from within. 'Isn't the catastrophe', Kiefer asks, 'a consequence of the use of such an arm foreign to the usual context of African civilization?'¹⁶ The African immune system must have already been terribly weakened for a European firearm to be smuggled so discreetly, unbeknown to them, in a traditional legend. The discussion of such iconological issues is by no means insignificant and Griaule takes it up again in DOCUMENTS, but reversing its terms, in a piece devoted to a Baoulé drum from the collection of the Musée

Left to right:
DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929
DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929 (detail)



Left to right:
DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929
DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929 (detail)
DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930

d'Ethnographie whose decoration includes a man carrying a gun.¹⁷ Such a motif, it seems, generated a debate among curators concerning the representativity of the object, whether or not this gun was a mark of inauthenticity that made the drum unworthy of a museum. Griaule answers by questioning the aesthetic taboo according to which 'a Black cannot use an exotic object – I mean a European one – without debasing himself.'

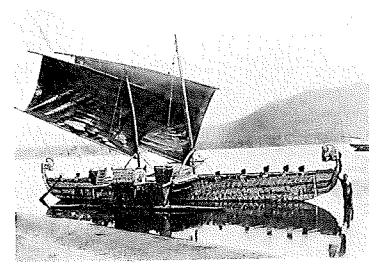
But there is also the opposite move, the desire to maximise otherness. Jean Paulhan, who called it 'the illusion of the explorer', described the way it always tends 'to consider as particularly representative of a language the feature which, in the acquisition of this language, surprises or inconveniences us the most.'¹⁸ Similarly, the ethnographer Alfred Métraux, a close friend of Bataille and a colleague of Rivet, later emphasised the passionate heterophilia that was at the core of his professional orientation in the 1920s:

'All of a sudden, exotic populations came, so to speak, to validate the existence of aspirations that could not be voiced in our own civilization ... The purely aesthetic interest was overtaken very early on by the amazement in front of all the incongruous and extraordinary practices that these civilizations were offering ... What we looked for in ethnography was picturesque, odd.'¹⁹

In that sense, ethnography was easily identified as the ultimate form of what Bataille soon came to label heterology. And it would be a common rhetorical feature of travel narrative to invoke this, as a disclaimer, to prepare the reader for the worse:

'I am not an ethnographer', the adventurer Henry de Monfreid thus writes, 'but if I were one I would tell about this strange custom practiced by all races ... this operation whose details, though highly picturesque, are out of place in a non-ethnographical work.'

Or:



LA MORT D'UNE TRIBU.

Le spectacle lugubre de la mort de la plus jeune des tribus du nord de l'Australie est le sujet de la Nouvelle Géographie et de la Nouvelle Ethnologie, deux ouvrages qui ont paru dans la collection Documents, 6, 1929.



Bateau des Iles Hermites. — Détail.

'The time was not well-chosen for a lecture on ethnography, so I didn't insist. Nevertheless, I think that it might be useful here to provide some explanations about a barbaric custom still practiced in this whole part of Africa.'²⁰

The ethnographic imagination here is reminiscent of that of the nineteenth-century historical novel, such as Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* (1862), which Marxist critic Georg Lukács denounced in his 1938 book *The Historical Novel* for its gratuitous complacency in brutality and in cruelty for its own sake, together with a criticism of the way novelists of the 1930s revelled 'in descriptions of cruel executions and torture'.²¹ This at times extravagant inflation of differences ranging from the most irrational to the most gruesome seems to have been feeding for the most part on the common belief in the imminent triumph of Occidental entropy, as if dissimilarities had to be heightened so intensely because they were on the verge of disappearing. Ethnography appears as the savior of heterogeneity at the very moment it becomes clear that erasure is the historical fate of differences. The fascination exerted by exotic strangeness was rooted not so much in a pleasure in variation as such as in an anxiety for it or, to use Roland Barthes's words, not so much in the ethnographer's interest in the positivity of a *studium* as in his sensitivity to what Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, would call the wound of the *punctum*.²²

In the sixth issue of DOCUMENTS two photographic images of a boat from the Hermit Islands (north of New Guinea) are accompanied by an article by A. Eichorn which bears the almost 'eulogiac' title of 'The Death of a Tribe'.²³ In it, the curator of Berlin's Museum of Ethnography presents the boat, now part of his collection, as 'a representative example of the culture of a race, which today has almost disappeared'. And, in the last issue, the French ethnographer



LES HISTOIRES DE CAMU
Entre le monde de la légende, le monde de la réalité et celui de la science, il faut chercher à saisir ce qui est réel et ce qui est imaginaire. C'est ce que Camu a fait dans ses ouvrages, et ce qu'il a fait dans ce livre-ci.

Maurice Leenhardt comments in the same tone on the picture of some ritual dance of the Mabunda, a tribe that lives between the border of Angola and Zambezi:

'Today, the Makishi dance is dying. But a missionary, Ellenberger, studied it and described it while his colleague Boiteux was able, one lucky day, to catch the participants, which one can see in the image published here. Ancient African gestures that are in the process of being swept up into the vast crisis of transformation of the Black Continent. The documents here gathered that evoke these curious initiation rites will constitute the most surprising pages of history for the generations of black people who will live one hundred and fifty years from now.'²⁴

As Vincent Debaene perceptively noted at the time: 'Ethnology is thought of as archaeology by anticipation.'²⁵ In *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), Claude Lévi-Strauss famously forged the neologism 'entropology' to suggest that the imminent disappearance of its object was the founding motive of anthropology.

Notes

- 1 J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, p. 129. This phrase had already been discussed by J. Jamin, 'L'Ethnographie mode d'emploi. De quelques rapports de l'ethnologie avec le malaise dans la civilisation', in J. Hinaud and R. Kaehr (eds), *Le mal et la douleur*, pp. 45-79.
- 2 5, 1929.
- 3 'Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro', 1, 1929.
- 4 The earliest piece of archival material related to DOCUMENTS seems to be a letter from Carl Einstein to his friend the art collector Friedrich Reber in which Einstein inserted a prospective table of contents for the first ten issues of the still unnamed journal (K.H. Kiefer, 'Die Ethnologisierung des kunstkritischen Diskurses – Carl Einstein's Beitrag zu 'Documents'', in H. Gassner (ed.), *Elan vital*

oder das Auge des Eros). Conor Joyce dates the letter from August 1928 (C. Joyce, *Carl Einstein in Documents and his collaboration with Georges Bataille*, Xlibris.com, 2003, p. 222). Einstein had already communicated the list to Georges Wildenstein who, he writes, was very taken by the project (K.H. Kiefer, op. cit., p. 93).

- 5 'Janus Masks from the Cross-River (Cameroon)', 6, 1930; L. Frobenius, 'Cave Drawings in Southern Rhodesia', 4, 1930. Bataille wrote a review of the show for DOCUMENTS but it wasn't published ('L'Exposition Frobenius à la Galerie Pleyel', in *Oeuvres complètes, II*, pp. 116-117).
- 6 L. Mellre, in C. Einstein, *Ethnologie de l'art moderne*, p. 10.
- 7 M. Leiris, *Journal (1922-1989)*, p. 142.
- 8 'A Case of Regression Towards "Barbarian" Arts: The Kafiristan Statuary', 2, 1930.
- 9 'Notes on Two Microcosmic Figures of the 14th and 15th centuries', 1, 1929. Fritz Saxl did send Einstein an essay, 'Makrokosmos and Mikrokosmos', but, for whatever reason, it was not published in DOCUMENTS. See the correspondence between Carl Einstein and Fritz Saxl in C. Joyce, op. cit., pp. 230-238.
- 10 Leiris refers to Alexandra David-Nécl, the first European woman to have entered Lhassa, in his contribution to the last issue of the journal, 'The "Caput Mortuum" or the Alchemist's Wife', 8, 1930.
- 11 C. Einstein uses the expressions in 'André Masson, an Ethnological Study', 2, 1929. Leiris quotes it ('*training de l'extase*') in a May 1929 entry of his *Journal (1922-1989)*, p. 137.
- 12 C. Einstein, 'Negro Sculpture (Negerplastik)', translated by S. Zeidler and C.W. Haxthausen, in *October*, 107, Winter 2004 (special issue on Carl Einstein edited by Sebastian Zeidler), p. 125.
- 13 S. Zeidler, 'Totality against a subject: Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik*', in *October*, 107, Winter 2004, p. 38.
- 14 In the same issue, Leiris evokes 'a negress from the troupe of the Black Birds holding a bouquet of misty roses with her two hands' in his article on 'Giacometti'; Bataille signs the 'Black Birds' entry in the Critical Dictionary section; Leiris again writes about them at length in the 'Civilization' entry of the same rubric; André Schaeffner reviews the show ('The "Lew Leslie's Black Birds" at the Moulin Rouge'); and in his jazz column Georges Henri Rivière compares one of the records under

review to 'the remarkable dance of the Berry Brothers in the Black Birds revue', a list to which should be added the photograph of the Black Birds on the deck of the liner France at their arrival in Le Havre (4, 1929). See P. Archer-Shaw, *Negrophilia. Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*, pp. 147-152.

- 15 'Kalifala Sidibé Exhibition (Galerie Georges Bernheim)', 6, 1929. For Leiris's lasting taste for such syncretism, see *Frêle bruit*, in *La Règle du jeu*, p. 960.
- 16 K. H. Kiefer, 'Fonction de l'art africain dans l'oeuvre de Carl Einstein', in *Images de l'Africain de l'Antiquité au XX^e siècle*, pp. 157-159.
- 17 'Gunshot', 1, 1930.
- 18 J. Paulhan, 'La mentalité primitive et l'illusion des explorateurs', (1925), in *Oeuvres*, vol. 2, Cercle du livre précieux, 1966, p. 150.
- 19 A. Métraux, 'Entretiens avec Alfred Métraux', in *L'Homme*, IV, 1964, p. 21.
- 20 H. de Monfreid, *Le Lépreux*, pp. 48, 145.
- 21 G. Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 193.
- 22 R. Barthes, *Camera Obscura*.
- 23 6, 1929.
- 24 'The Makishi Dance', 8, 1930. For Leenhardt's mission in Upper Zambezi see J. Clifford, *Person and Myth. Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian World*, pp. 107-111.
- 25 V. Debaene, *Les deux livres l'ethnographie: l'ethnologie française au XX^e siècle entre science et littérature*, p. 148.

VARIETY [Civilizing 'Race'] Simon Baker

'All our moral habits and polite customs, that delightfully coloured cloak that veils the coarseness of our dangerous instincts, all those attractive forms of culture of which we are so proud – since it is thanks to them that we regard ourselves as "civilized" – are ready to disappear at the slightest turbulence, to shatter at the least impact...'
Michel Leiris¹

In Jean Rouch's 1969 film *Petit à petit (Little by Little)* a Congolese man arrives in Paris and sets about performing the time-honoured tasks of the anthropologist: measuring Parisian 'specimens', questioning and observing the behaviour of local (native) inhabitants. Rouch, a controversial anthropological filmmaker, trained and worked on the expedition that originated with Marcel Griaule's Dakar-Djibouti mission, the departure of which was heralded in the final issues of DOCUMENTS. Rouch's film can therefore be seen as a direct legacy of DOCUMENTS, and one very much in the spirit of that moment of origin: troubling and questioning the civilizing deficit inherent to the concept of 'race-relations'.

Michel Leiris, who also joined Griaule's Dakar-Djibouti mission, begins his DOCUMENTS essay 'Civilization'² by likening it to the green scum that forms on the surface of stagnant water. But despite this fetid start, the text soon flows, swirling around the nocturnal world of musical entertainment. Leiris had just seen a show in Paris featuring a group of African-American musicians and dancers called Lew Leslie's Black Birds, of whom he offers the following assessment:

'What is beautiful about such art is not its exotic aspect nor even its highly modern content (this modernism is simply coincidental), but the fact that it doesn't really constitute an Art at all ... Revues like the *Black Birds* take

Spread from DOCUMENTS, 6, 1930



DUKE ELLINGTON

... et ce n'est pas seulement la couleur de sa peau, mais aussi la couleur de son esprit. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en force. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en art. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en musique. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en légende. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en gloire. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en immortalité.

Il est né le 29 avril 1899, à Washington (D.C.). Il est mort le 24 juillet 1974, à Washington (D.C.). Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en art. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en musique. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en légende. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en gloire. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en immortalité.

... et ce n'est pas seulement la couleur de sa peau, mais aussi la couleur de son esprit. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en force. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en art. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en musique. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en légende. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en gloire. Il est un homme qui a su transformer sa couleur en immortalité.



Left to right:
DOCUMENTS, 5, 1930
Advert from DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929
Der Querschnitt, June 1929 (fig. 8)

us to a point on the other side of art, to a point of human development at which that bastard son of the illegitimate love of magic and free play has not yet been hypertrophied.⁷

What did it mean to object to the description of the Black Birds as 'Art with a capital A' in a critique of the concept of civilization in 1929? It is true that throughout the run of DOCUMENTS, ethnographers like Griaule and art-historians like Carl Einstein objected to the appropriation, commodification and misrepresentation involved in the contemporary fashion for 'art nègre' (literally Negro Art). As Einstein points out reviewing an exhibition of African Art at a Parisian gallery, the unproblematic presentation of objects with religious or ritual significance as 'art' is less a question of bad taste than the application of the wrong criteria.⁸ Removing the use-value of wooden figures or masks for specific purposes by presenting them as aesthetic objects entails a particular kind of cultural brutality. But in 'Civilization' Leiris is not talking about African sculpture in the commercial galleries of Paris. Instead, he imagines a radical reversal of perspective, 'a point on the other side of art' from which to understand his own response to the Black Birds. What Leiris is interested in, above all, is how a performance by African-American musicians and dancers (despite its 'coincidental modernism') reveals the paucity and superficiality of the European imagination. 'This music and these dances', he says, 'do not linger on the surface, they plunge deep organic roots into us, roots whose thousand ramifications penetrate us; a painful surgery that nevertheless quickens our blood.' This is hardly a sophisticated political position, perhaps not even a naïve one. It is, instead, an acknowledgment of the terms under which cultural exchanges occur. The Black Birds' show is beautiful because it is not art: not because it is not 'art' but because it reveals the failure of the

concept of art to cross continents and remain intact.⁴

Unlike some comparable magazines of its time, DOCUMENTS did far more than simply cover jazz as the popular music of the day. There are examples of reviews by Georges Henri Rivière and reportage by the jazz 'correspondent' Jacques Fray, who went as far as New York to interview Duke Ellington.⁵ But under the ethnographic/musicological influences of Rivière and André Schaeffner, and certainly as a result of interventions by Bataille and Leiris, DOCUMENTS drew the discussion of popular culture into a kind of reversed ethnography. Jazz, particularly the music of African-American groups, is not merely idealised and fetishised as exotic and 'other': its presence in Parisian culture is treated as symptomatic of relations between cultures. This is not to suggest that DOCUMENTS was somehow radically 'politically correct' (to coin an anachronism) for its time. Interviews with Duke Ellington notwithstanding, Bataille, Leiris, Rivière, et al. were neither willing nor able to engage with, or reflect, anything like an authentic 'black' perspective. Indeed there is much to be said for the argument that, in any case, what white audiences actually got with Ellington was 'not jungle music but a creative form of irony', derived from, but in no way representative of, 'black culture'.⁶ This is indicated in Ellington's own use of the term 'Black and Tan' in music and film titles: 'fantasies' con-fected to appeal to white tastes.⁷

Whilst DOCUMENTS contained none of the manifesto-style tracts declaiming colonial politics that appeared in surrealist publications, it did avoid the racist caricatures common to its mainstream European competitors.⁸ In 1930 the self-consciously 'modern' French magazine *Jazz* still ran sensationalising 'exposés' on cannibalism, while the German magazine *Der Querschnitt* was fairly typical in comparing 'exotic' people with abstract paintings and women in Islamic

dress with ancient Egyptian art.⁹ The Belgian magazine *Variétés*, in comparison, avant-garde enough to have a surrealist special issue in 1929, still sent Eli Lotar into the Black Birds' dressing rooms for pictures of the semi-naked dancers.¹⁰ *Variétés*, which specialised in the 'humorous' juxtapositions of pairs of images popular at the time, published layouts with overt, sometimes extreme racist content. One (unreproducible) pair of photographs entitled 'the negroes' paradise' shows a naked, spread-eagled adolescent African girl sitting on the ground, subtitled 'young negress in the congolese bush', alongside an African-American typist in chic contemporary dress, subtitled 'the next year in Harlem'.¹¹

Such contemporary examples raise the question of how DOCUMENTS should be situated in relation to the racial politics of its time. Although there is clearly a refusal on the part of the editors to accept racist conventions of the *Variétés* variety, there is no consequent attempt to account for black experiences or perspectives. This position contrasts with more progressive attitudes exemplified by Nancy Cunard's book *Negro* (published in 1934, but underway by 1931) and with surrealist and communist calls for political emancipation. Despite the temptation to contrast DOCUMENTS with surrealist activity, it is the comparison with Cunard's approach that best illustrates DOCUMENTS' position. Although compiled and edited by a white heiress, *Negro* is almost entirely comprised of essays and contributions by black writers, among whom W.E.B. du Bois, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Johnstone (Jomo) Kenyatta are notable. Cunard also reviews some of the same cultural terrain covered in DOCUMENTS (the taste for African 'art', Duke Ellington's music, films and plays featuring African-American actors such as *Hallelujah!* (cat. 178) and *The Green Pastures* (cat. 184-185)) but always from a markedly more informed and militant perspective with



CHRONIQUE MUSICALE

EDDIE SOUTH AND HIS ALABAMIANS

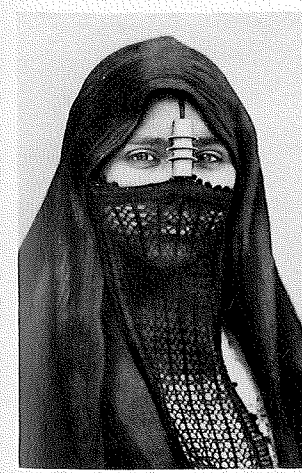
Chaque semaine à Paris le jazz de *Clubs Florent* qui revient au jazz de New York avec une progression dans le temps. Tous les dimanche à *Clubs Florent*, *Clubs Florent* et à leurs semaines, sont venus de France, quelques fois l'étranger. Ce sont des artistes de jazz qui ont été amenés à Paris par un éditeur. Les artistes qui ont été amenés à Paris par un éditeur. Les artistes qui ont été amenés à Paris par un éditeur.

HAYMAN SWAYZE PLANTATION ORCHESTRA

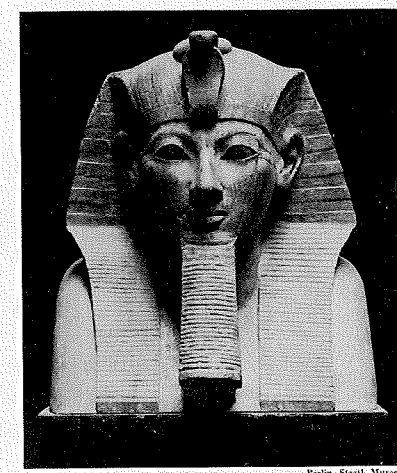
Cet orchestre est en partie formé de quelques uns des meilleurs éléments du jazz moderne de New York. On entend dans le monde entier le nom de Hayman Swayze. Les artistes qui ont été amenés à Paris par un éditeur.



EN FRANCE LES JEUNES HOMMES DE LA MUSIQUE...
LES PRINCIPALES SONS SONT...
LES PRINCIPALES SONS SONT...
LES PRINCIPALES SONS SONT...



Aegyptierin



Kopf einer Sphinx aus Granit

Berlin, Staatl. Museen

respect to the issue of race.¹² This is not to say, with the benefit of hindsight, that DOCUMENTS could or should have adopted this radical approach: it was clearly not what its editors intended. But it is vital to recognise that throughout DOCUMENTS there are persistent efforts to reveal and, where possible, destabilise, the skewed equilibrium of the cultural politics of the time. DOCUMENTS' 'politics of race', if we can call it that, was not a strategy or a policy, but more of an inoculation: an attempt to infect the sterile, complacent body of white European opinion.

This is best exemplified by a single issue of DOCUMENTS (4, 1929) which calls into question the nature of cultural exchange epitomised by jazz-age Paris by riffing on the theme of Lew Leslie's *Black Birds* in a variety of ways. First, through Bataille's *Critical Dictionary* entry 'Black Birds', then Leiris's 'Civilization', followed by a review of the *Black Birds* show at the Moulin Rouge by André Schaeffner, and finally a publicity photograph of the group.¹³ Bataille gets the first word in, questioning the idea that black performers can avoid the putrefying effects of the 'mass grave' of European civilization. But it is the subsequent introduction of a series of nineteenth-century photographs of New Caledonia by Ernest Robin (cat. 140) that transforms what should be a discussion of popular music into one of the most challenging critiques of the politics of cultural exchange to appear anywhere in DOCUMENTS.

The first, in what turns out to be a series of clever pictorial layouts in the 'chroniques' section of the issue, immediately precedes Leiris's essay 'Civilization' and cleverly contrasts two very different spectacles. There is a film-still from the musical spectacular *The Broadway Melody* (1929, cat. 180-181), whose female dancers seem to glow white against a black backdrop. This is set above a photograph of a row of black children

standing to attention in a line that descends in height order and ends with a man in a military uniform, captioned 'school children, Bacouya, Bourail'. It is likely that this is a veiled reference to an early form of cinematic 'special effect' used in musical productions that explicitly produced (racial) difference across the colour line.¹⁴ In *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* (cat. 186-187), for example, also mentioned and illustrated in DOCUMENTS, the first big musical number took up the theme of the contrast between black and white. Against a backdrop depicting a bisected black-and-white circle, dancers perform in costumes that also alternate in opposing areas of light and dark. As they dance, the film is switched into negative, creating 'black' dancers in precisely reversed black-and-white outfits. A production still of this number replicates the effect with the less technologically sophisticated use of black face make-up. The DOCUMENTS layout reflects this tendency to represent racial difference as though it were, essentially, only black and white. Here, the white female dancers contrast with a black 'chorus-line' of boys in New Caledonia: Hollywood's choreography of frivolity and sexuality is faced down awkwardly by the equally ludicrous French export of militarised schooling.

The next photograph in the series accompanies André Schaeffner's short piece about Lew Leslie's *Black Birds* at the Moulin Rouge: a very positive, if traditional, review of what was evidently a showbiz sensation in Paris at the time. However, in spite, or perhaps more likely because of its relative conservatism, Schaeffner's article is 'illustrated' by a startling and disconcerting photograph subtitled, '*Canaques de Koua, Koua-oua, côte est, Albums E. Robin*'. Startling, because it sits above the headline '*Lew Leslie's Black Birds au Moulin Rouge*' to which it obviously cannot possibly refer, and disconcerting, because aside from not being a group of musicians and

dancers, the Canaques, reclining in a rough semicircle among palm trees, stare out of the photograph, as if challenging their misidentification.

Turning the page from Schaeffner's review reveals the final set of images in the series, a double-page spread of juxtapositions that culminates with the *Black Birds* arriving in France. The left hand side comprises four photographs arranged in a grid and described as follows: a little black girl in New York; a wet-nurse in Noumea (Robin album); Mademoiselle Lovzeski, by Nadar; and Sandouli, a Kanala *petit-chef* (Robin album). The rationale for these selections and comparisons is not apparent, however, until the final pair of photographs in the series, on the right-hand side, clarifies the overall agenda: a photograph of the prison garrison of Kanala in New Caledonia (also by Robin) above a *Black Birds* publicity shot of the group 'at the time of their arrival in Le Havre, onboard the liner "France".'

At this point it becomes obvious that the Canaques and the rest of the indigenous population of New Caledonia have been the unwitting victims of that most pernicious European cultural export: criminal justice. In this case, the prison garrison at Kanala would have been associated with communards, political enemies of the state exiled after the fall of the Paris Commune in 1871. In the context of which all the dubious markers of 'civilization': the children's ability to form a parade line, the anomalous straw boaters and top hats, are cast as the side-effects of a 'civilizing mission' founded on exploitation and utilitarian inhumanity. Meanwhile, the final juxtaposition suggests that in return for the precious European 'gift' of 'development', an alternative cultural export (albeit one refined to meet European expectations) arrives from New York. The implications seem clear: 'white' France exports undesirables and builds prisons; 'black' America sends jazz.

Left to right:

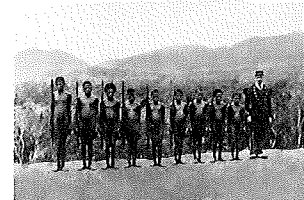
DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929

Charles F. Riesner (director), *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*, 1929 (still, cat. 186)

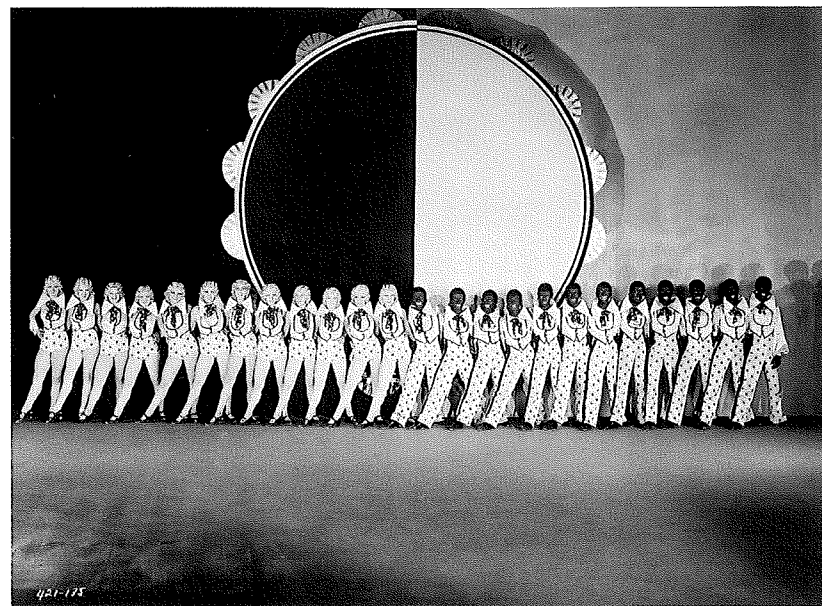
3 pages from DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929



Les danseuses de Lew Leslie dans le film *The Broadway Melody*, au palais des Sports à Paris.



Enfants de Koua, de la région de Koua, Nouvelle-Calédonie. (Album E. Robin).



421-175



Caniques de Koua, Nouvelle-Calédonie. (Album E. Robin).

LES "LEW LESLIE'S BLACK BIRDS" AU MOULIN ROUGE

C'est là, le spectacle, au Moulin Rouge, qui a permis de faire connaître en France, par les photographes de l'agence *Black and White*, l'existence de ces danseuses de couleur. Elles sont venues à Paris au cours de leur tournée de concert. Elles ont été vues à la fois dans les salles de spectacle, au Moulin Rouge, et dans les rues de Paris, où elles ont été vues dans leurs costumes de scène, et dans leurs costumes de ville. Elles ont été vues dans les rues de Paris, où elles ont été vues dans leurs costumes de scène, et dans leurs costumes de ville. Elles ont été vues dans les rues de Paris, où elles ont été vues dans leurs costumes de scène, et dans leurs costumes de ville.



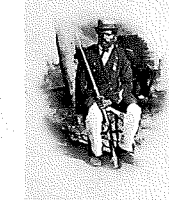
Photo de New York.



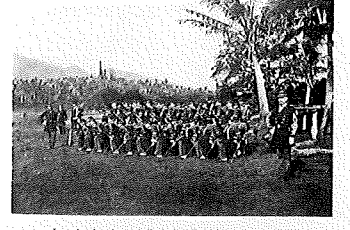
Mademoiselle Lovzeski.



Mademoiselle Lovzeski.



Sandouli, petit chef de Kanala.



La garnison de Kanala, Nouvelle-Calédonie. (Album E. Robin).



Les Lew Leslie's Black Birds à leur arrivée en France, à bord du paquebot "France".

Left to right:

2 pages from Mariel Jean Brunhes
Delamarre, *Races 'Images du Monde'*, 1930
(cat. 158)

DOCUMENTS, 1, 1930

The last laugh is the name of the liner on which the Black Birds' arrive: 'France'.

This subtle visual polemic epitomises one of the most critical components of DOCUMENTS' politics of representation: as much an attack on the contemporary rhetoric of image-use and games of resemblance as on a bankrupt political system. Over 50 years later, in 1984, James Clifford brilliantly exposed the affinities 'left out' of MoMA's exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, identifying the concept of affinity as the problem rather than the solution.¹⁵ But in 1929, DOCUMENTS was already engaged in exposing the impossibility of reading across cultural paradigms without questioning codes of representational rhetoric. The presentation of the Black Birds, from 'a point on the other side of art', secured as entertainment, but only fully contextualised by the racism inherent in colonial cultural exchanges, deals with 'race' not as a problem or political cause, but as a symptom of the iniquitous process of European 'civilization'.¹⁶

This point is hammered home in Leiris's treatment of a picture-book called *Races*, compiled by Jean Brunhes, and reviewed in the same issue of DOCUMENTS as Fray's interview with Duke Ellington.¹⁷ *Races* offers a foretaste of that peculiar brand of humanism which, as Roland Barthes later identified, pretends to find variety interesting while relishing in the hierarchies that result from cross-cultural comparisons.¹⁸ There is, Leiris accepts, some interesting material in Brunhes's book, including some images from William Seabrook's expedition to the Ivory Coast also reproduced in DOCUMENTS. But it is, unsurprisingly perhaps, the use and captioning of the photographs in *Races* that Leiris objects to. The final two pages of the book, reproduced side-by-side in DOCUMENTS, juxtapose the 'primitive' social activity of nit-picking with the 'civilized' one of international diplomacy: the European

statesmen, according to Brunhes, display skulls 'remarkably characteristic' of the white race. For Leiris, this observation, coupled with the implications underlying the visual comparison, reveal an appalling hypocrisy and barbarism, 'no less insulting to us' than those other 'races' stigmatised by their proximity to Europeans.

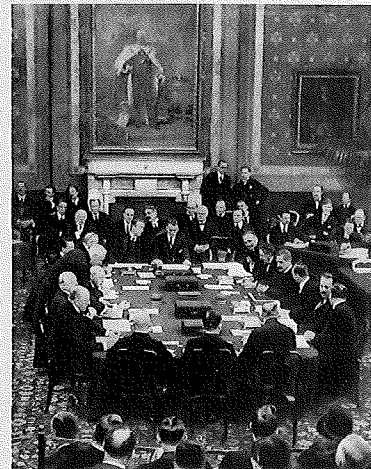
Finally, perhaps, the most effective critique of the process of European civilization delivered in DOCUMENTS is Marcel Griaule's 'Gunshot': as uncannily prescient of the rhetoric of post-colonialism as of the work of African contemporary artists.¹⁹ 'Gunshot' concerns African works of art rejected by the European art market on the grounds that they contain iconographic references to the process of colonialism. The nadir of this scandal, for Griaule, is represented by a carving showing an African warrior with a machine gun, deemed 'inauthentic' and thus unacceptable for an audience of Parisian *art nègre* connoisseurs. For all the talk of 'negrophilia', and the fashion for all things African and African-American in jazz-age Paris, in 'Gunshot' we have the first salvo of a gut reaction to the phenomenon.²⁰

'If a black [artist] cannot, without debasing himself, use an exotic element, namely a European one familiar to him, what is one to make of our blind borrowings from an exotic world, one of colour about which we must, in self-defence, declare we know nothing?'²¹

Notes

- 1 4, 1929.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 'Concerning the Galerie Pigalle Exhibition', 2, 1930.
- 4 See for comparison Ladislav Szeci's 1934 essay 'The Term "Negro Art" is essentially a non-African concept', in N. Cunard, *Negro: An Anthology*, p. 413.
- 5 'Duke Ellington', 6, 1930.

- 6 The claim was made by Professor Howard 'Stretch' Johnson who was a dancer with Duke Ellington's Cotton Club Boys in 1932, and cited in A. Lively, *Masks: Blackness, Race & The Imagination*, p. 214.
- 7 See also Amiri Baraka's discussion of Ellington's use of 'jungle things' in L. Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, pp. 158-163.
- 8 For translations of surrealist declarations from this period see M. Richardson and K. Fijalkowski (eds), *Surrealism Against the Current: Tracts and Declarations*, pp. 180-190.
- 9 'Jazz', December 1929, and *Der Querschnitt*, June 1929.
- 10 *Variétés*, 4 August, 1929.
- 11 *Variétés*, 15 March, 1929.
- 12 King Vidor's film *Hallelujah!*, for example, is illustrated in an essay entitled 'A Negro Film Union - Why Not?', in N. Cunard, op.cit., p. 207.
- 13 The essay 'Doctrines (The Appearance of Things)', in this book, describes how such deliberate 'mistakes' came to pass and how they may have been supposed to work.
- 14 This technique is also evident in the positive and negative versions of Man Ray's photograph *Noir et Blanche* which 'switches' an African mask and the face of a white model in the same way.
- 15 J. Clifford, 'Histories of the Tribal and the Modern', in *The Predicament of Culture*.
- 16 See Bataille's Critical Dictionary entry 'Black Birds', 4, 1929.
- 17 6, 1930.
- 18 Barthes's comments are made in regard to Edward Steichen's 1955 exhibition of photography, *The Family of Man*; R. Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man', in *Mythologies*, pp. 100-102.
- 19 1, 1930. Particularly Kester's 'Throne of Weapons', a chair built from recycled machine guns from Mozambique and recently acquired by the British Museum.
- 20 Negrophilia was a term used to refer to enthusiasm for African art and the music of black performers. See P. Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*.
- 21 1, 1930.



DICTIONARY

PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE



Ouverture du film parlant et sonore "Hollywood revue", parodisant les splendeurs de Hollywood.

LIEUX DE PÈLERINAGE : HOLLYWOOD

On se demande parfois, absolument déprimé, au sortir d'une occupation qui n'avait rien d'agréable (par exemple, sans parler de travailler, se raser, ranger ses affaires, se couper les ongles), quel est le prix d'efforts minuscules, dont on ose à peine parler, de peur d'être regardé avec dédain ainsi qu'une fourmi. Et alors on s'aperçoit que le seul prix est probablement de pouvoir constater, sans aucune erreur, que la partie (qu'on n'a d'ailleurs commencée que malgré soi) est perdue à l'avance, car même si l'on devait s'emparer du pouvoir de tout détruire et de tout construire à nouveau, on préférerait parfois tomber malade. En sorte que le prix, en fin de compte, doit être cette terrible maladie qui est probablement déjà réelle, au cours de laquelle les moindres hochets procurent autant de distractions. Car nous en sommes

encore au point, cela ne fait pas le moindre doute, où une activité quelconque n'a aucun autre but que de procurer quelque relâche, quelque répit au malheureux imbécile. Mais cela ne s'écrit plus par mépris, simplement par détresse, et parce que la faillite totale de l'activité humaine peut encore passer, aux yeux d'esprits sans police, sans plus pour une distraction.

Tout ceci pourrait bien faire comprendre pourquoi, actuellement, Hollywood est le nombril de la Terre, étant le seul endroit où l'on ne songe qu'à amuser le reste du monde, à fabriquer les vessies qui sont nos lanternes! Hollywood, en somme la ville pour vous faire sangloter ou rire, aux larmes, la marchande de coups de revolvers, d'empoisements et de pillage de banque et, en général, de tout

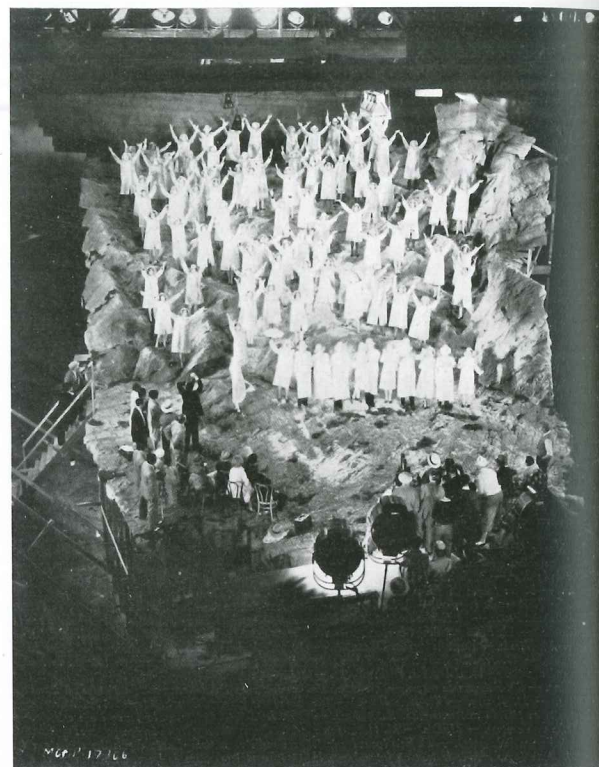
280

A

PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE: HOLLYWOOD

Georges Bataille

One wonders sometimes, when in a state of absolute depression, on coming away from some charmless occupation (for example, without mentioning work, shaving, putting one's affairs in order, cutting one's nails) what the price is of minuscule efforts, that one hardly dares talk about for fear of being looked at with as much disdain as if one were an ant. And then one notices that the only price is probably that of being able to establish for sure that the game (that moreover one has only started despite oneself) is already lost, because even if one were to seize the power to destroy everything and start to build from scratch, one would sometimes prefer to get ill. So that the price, in the end, must be that terrible sickness which is probably already real, in the course of which the meanest toys procure as many *amusements*. For we are again at the point, without the slightest doubt, where any activity whatsoever has no other purpose than to procure some respite, some rest for the unhappy fool. But that was written no longer from scorn, simply from distress, and



Un des tableaux de "Hollywood revue".

Phot. Mito-Gélope

A Spread from DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929
 B Anon, Nigeria (Cross River Region, Ejagham or Anyang), Janus-faced, Skin-covered Helmet Mask, late 19th C. (cat. 49)



B

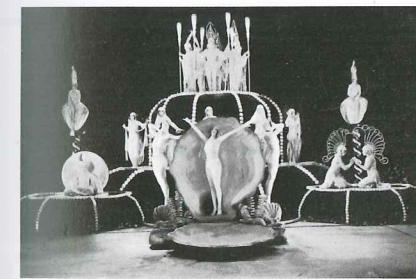


A

A Pablo Picasso, *The Three Dancers*, 1925
(cat. 127)
B DOCUMENTS, 7, 1929



La Seine pendant l'hiver 1870-71 (41^e et 42^e).



Un des tableaux du film parlant "Hollywood révélé". Photo: Météo-Globe.

B

because the total failure of human activity can adequately pass off, to the unpoliced mind's eye, as an *amusement*.

This all helps to understand why, at present, Hollywood is the navel of the Earth, as it is the only place where the sole dream is to entertain the rest of the world, to persuade us that the moon is made of green cheese! Hollywood, all things considered, is the town to make you sob or laugh until you cry, purveyor of revolver shots, poisonings and bank robbery, and, in general, to keep the circulation flowing. Hollywood is also the last boudoir where philosophy (now masochistic) could find the lacerations to which, after all, it aspires: thanks to an unmissable illusion it seems that one can no longer find women so de-natured as to appear impossible in such a flagrant way anywhere else. The whole world throws them money every day so that they will lack for nothing, just as was done in times past to statues of divinities or saints: a sad way of putting what saves the heart in a tinsel mirage.

But more than any sanctuary Hollywood could now be the place of pilgrimage for all those whom life has treated as we commonly treat a piece of cloth (for example, when we cut out a pair of trousers): were it only for its shamelessly trumpeted falsity, evidently a true goddess, naked enough to please and lead astray!

DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929. Translated from the French by Dawn Ades

Places of Pilgrimage

Bataille names Hollywood and Notre-Dame-de-Liesse as the first of the places of pilgrimage to be covered by DOCUMENTS, which promises to devote future articles to 'Lisieux, Lourdes, Chicago, Salt Lake City, etc'.¹ By comparison with his sententious text on Hollywood, the short note on 'Notre-Dame-de-Liesse' (5, 1929) contents itself with a simple description of the ancient place of pilgrimage, its sanctuary housing the unique 'passion bottles' filled with the miraculous water of the fountain of Liesse. In these were suspended from tiny ampoules minute figures and objects of coloured glass, representing the instruments of the passion (hammer, nails, sponge, lance, cross, etc) and characters specific to the story of the miraculous statue of Notre-Dame-de-Liesse, including Isméria, daughter of an emir of Cairo who was converted to Christianity and transported by angels back to Liesse in 1134.

'Passion bottles' were sold to the thousands of pilgrims who still flock to Liesse every year, and examples of this 'astonishing *saint-sulpicerie*' were illustrated in DOCUMENTS.² However, Bataille and Leiris had originally planned a more ambitious article. As Leiris writes, the *saint-sulpicerie* that proliferated at Notre-Dame-de-Liesse 'seemed to Bataille and some of the



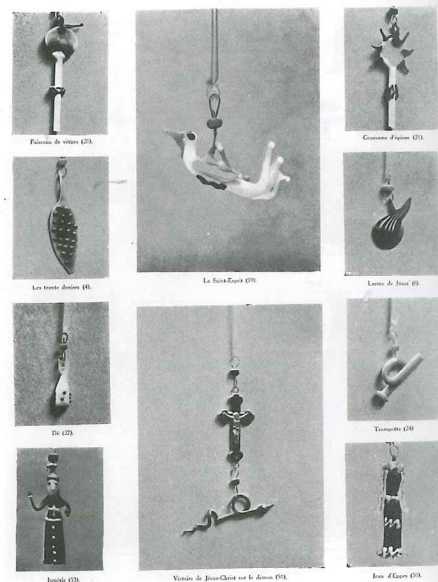
A

rest of us a particularly interesting subject, and so we went there on a pilgrimage day to document it; but our financial backer [Georges Wildenstein] was opposed to the publication we planned, given the sacrilegious turn it would not have failed to take.³ Perhaps this censorship provoked Bataille into a different kind of sacrilege by juxtaposing Notre-Dame-de-Liesse with Hollywood, a striking instance of the to-and-fro, up-and-down movement in DOCUMENTS between sanctity and contamination, sacred and profane, elevation and debasement. Applying the holy concept of pilgrimage to the shameless displays of Hollywood may now be a sociological commonplace but it was unusual at the time.

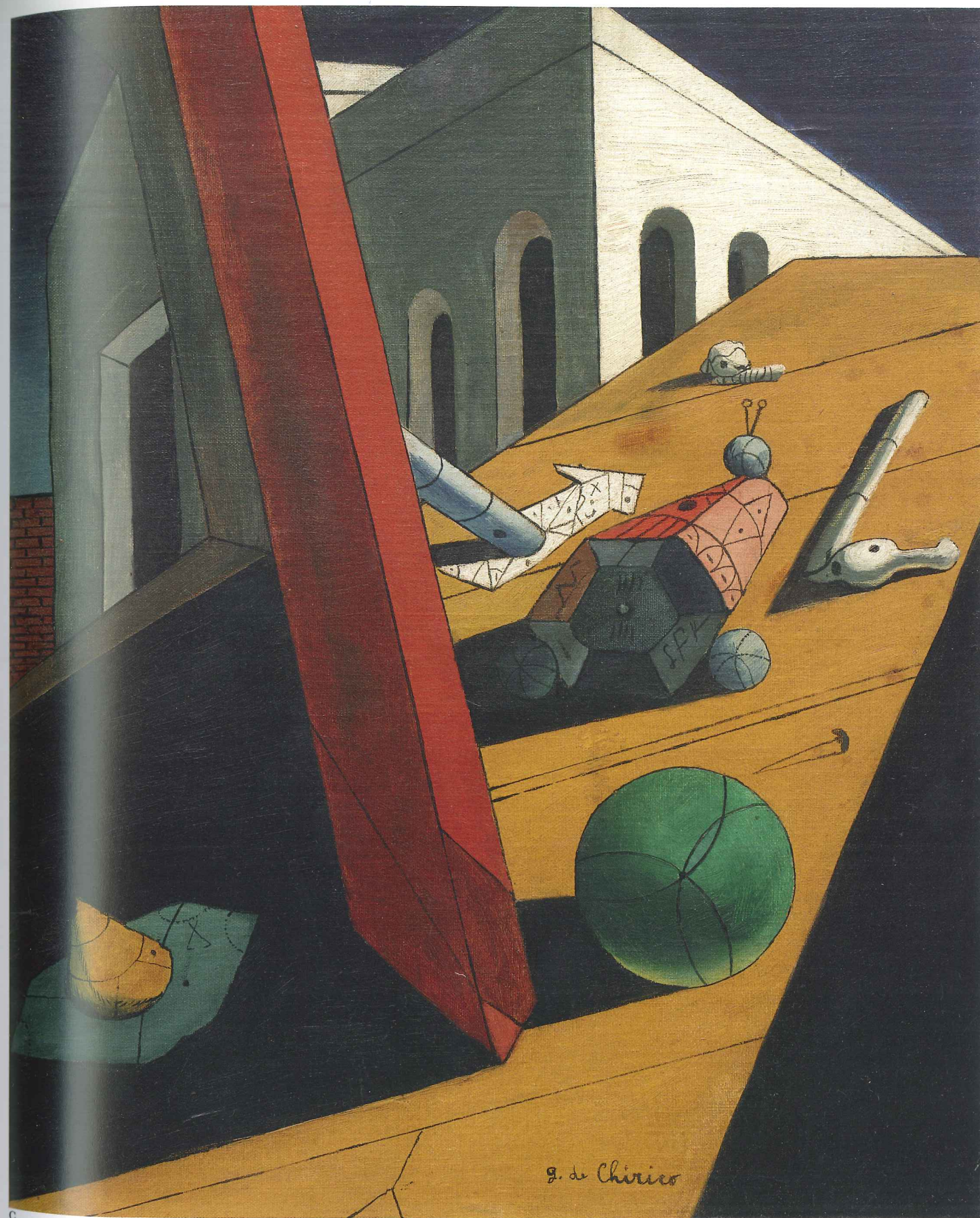
Places of pilgrimage are, in most religious traditions, sites of miracles or martyrdoms, tombs of prophets or saints, favourable to intercession or simply the object of extreme devotion. The place may house relics, icons and objects with a special power, often for the non-initiated of obscure purpose like the *Osun Staffs* of Benin, Nigeria.⁴ Whether in a church, in a museum or at a modern shrine like Hollywood, famous things, remains or people acquire an aura and draw in their pilgrims. So the devout Christian makes a pilgrimage to Lourdes, the art lover to the Louvre and Elvis fans to Graceland.

Pablo's Picasso's *Three Dancers* (1925) is an ecstatic and iconoclastic celebration of a death, its central figure for all that it is clearly female pinioned like Christ on a crucifix, recipient of the rites of its devotees. Picasso was the most celebrated modern artist of the time, and there was competition to be the first to reproduce this major painting. Following desperate appeals from André Breton, it appeared initially under the title *Girls dancing in front of a window* in *La Révolution surréaliste* in 1925, where it presides over Breton's rehabilitation of painting. It was then reproduced in the special issue of DOCUMENTS 'Homage to Picasso' (3, 1930). Picasso said that *The Three Dancers* commemorated the death of his friend Ramon Pichot, the tall black shadow figure on the right. Pichot used to

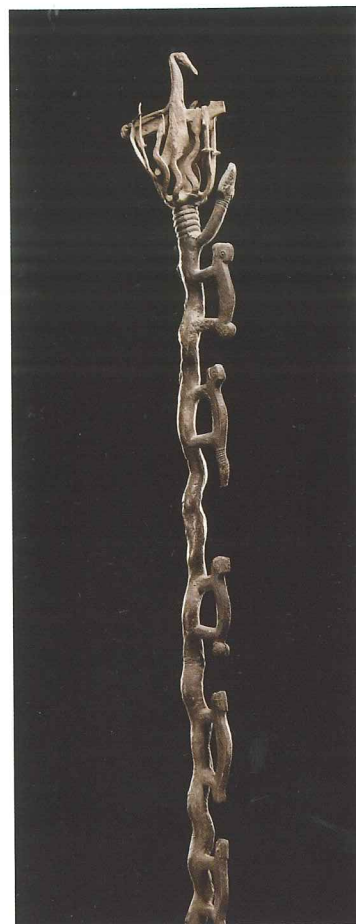
A Anon, France (Aisne, Notre-Dame-de-Liesse), *Passion Bottle*, late 18th – early 19th C. (and detail) (cat. 28)
 B DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929
 C Giorgio de Chirico, *The Evil Genius of a King*, 1914–15 (cat. 83)



B

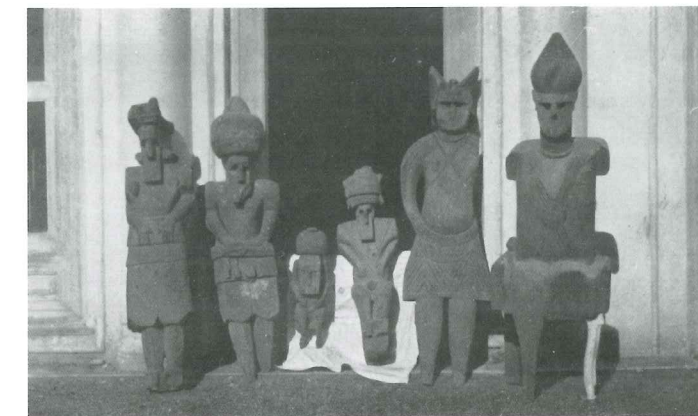


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A Anon, Nigeria, *Osun Staffs*, late 18th or 19th C. (cat. 44–46)
 B Anon, Afghanistan (Kafiristan), *Gandaho Funeral Effigy*, 20th C. (cat. 20)
 C DOCUMENTS, 2, 1930 (detail)



C

perform a 'wonderful religious Spanish dance ending in making of himself a crucified Christ upon the floor'.⁵ *The Three Dancers* is a Dionysian icon, invoking Christ as Orphic victim: Orpheus, often linked to Christ in early Christian tradition, was torn to pieces by the Maenads, and Picasso here links Dionysian ecstasy to both Eros and Thanatos. The arms are uplifted at once in dance and in agony, against the background of a common or garden window and balcony. Grand and grotesque, it corresponds perfectly with Bataille's notion of 'une rupture de l'élevation portée à son comble' ('a rupture of elevation carried to its height', 'Rotten Sun', 3, 1930).

Bataille's 'Places of Pilgrimage: Hollywood' proposes Hollywood as a modern place of pilgrimage, contemporary dream-peddler, but hardly celebrates it for a glamour comparable to that of the great cathedrals. The text moves from gloom to hilarity; it starts not with the provocative comparison of Hollywood to a sacred site but from a despairing sense of the unprofitable expenditure of energy in all human activity, the recognition of which is in itself an 'amusement'. Pilgrimage, however, like sacrifice, is a 'gift that compels the deity to make a return'.⁶ The expenditure of emotion, money and time on the celebration of fame and glamour encapsulated by Hollywood has parallels with Marcel Mauss's description of systems of reciprocal gifts and rites which reached excessive proportions in the *pollatch* ceremony in North American Haida and Tlingit societies. Bataille's modern man has no gods but as compensation the great illusion of cinematic myth. Bereft of purpose, whether in leisure or work, he locks onto spectacle as distraction. Hollywood, with its screen divas and repertoire of violent myths, could embody, like the 'passion bottles' of Notre-Dame-de-Liesse, the dreams of everyman. And in the pages of DOCUMENTS extraordinary scenes from screen musicals like *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* mimic a rhetoric of ecstasy, of processions and rituals, offerings and invocations. DA



B



A



B

A CORPSE

In February 1929, André Breton, the head of the surrealist group in Paris, wrote to leading artists, writers and intellectuals on the subject of the possibility of collective action. In the context of the shift of several key members of the surrealist group towards the communist party, Breton's letter constituted both an invitation and a challenge. It resulted, as perhaps he had expected, in both declarations of support and statements of opposition. Georges Bataille, who was known to have been the author of the scandalous *Story of the Eye* (1928) but had contributed almost nothing to the surrealist cause thus far, ended his nominal fellow traveller status with the memorable response: 'too many bloody idealists'. This sucker punch was followed up by his participation in the pamphlet *Un Cadavre*, which pointedly revealed Breton's excommunicatory tendencies by papal analogy – Breton is crowned with thorns and embalmed with words he himself had used to attack a deceased writer: 'once dead this man must make no more dust'. Breton, for his part, mocked Bataille's day-job, derisively referring to him as a 'staid librarian' in his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*. The enduring legacy of Bataille's 'NO', however, was the subsequent participation in DOCUMENTS of many of the surrealists who had left Breton's direction: Jacques-André Boiffard, Robert Desnos, Michel Leiris and Roger Vitrac, to name a few. Bataille's status (as he later put it) as 'Surrealism's old enemy within' can be traced back to this fraught but hugely productive moment of confrontation: one that, despite the rhetoric, took place on common ground. **SB**

- A Eli Lotar, *André Breton*, c.1927 (cat. 97)
 B Eli Lotar, *Hair and Crown of Thorns*, c.1927 (cat. 98)
 C Cover of *Un Cadavre*, Paris, 1930 (cat. 150)

UN CADAVRE

Il ne faut plus que mort cet homme fasse de la poussière.

André BRETON (*Un Cadavre*, 1924.)

PAPOLOGIE D'ANDRÉ BRETON

Le deuxième manifeste du Surréalisme n'est pas une révélation, mais c'est une réussite.

On ne fait pas mieux dans le genre hypocrite, faux-frère, pelotard, sacristain, et pour tout dire : flic et curé.

Car en somme : on vous dit que l'acte surréaliste le plus simple consiste, revolvers aux poings, à descendre dans la rue et à tirer au hasard, tant qu'on peut, dans la foule.

Mais l'inspecteur Breton serait sans doute déjà arrêté s'il n'avait pas tout de l'agent provocateur, tandis que chacun de ses petits amis se garde bien d'accomplir l'acte surréaliste le plus simple.

Cette impunité prouve également le mépris dans lequel un Etat, quel qu'il soit, tient justement les intellectuels. Principalement ceux qui, comme l'inspecteur Breton, mènent la petite vie sordide de l'intellectuel professionnel.

Les révélations touchant par exemple Naville ou Masson ont le caractère des chantages quotidiens exercés par les journaux vendus à la police. La méthode et le ton sont absolument les mêmes. Pour les autres appréciations sur d'anciens amis, chers parce que l'inspecteur Breton espérant qu'ignorant sa qualité ils le nommeraient président d'un Soviet local des Grands Hommes, elles ne dépassent pas les ignominies ordinaires des habitués de commissariat, ni les coups de pied en vache. A cette heure où sont maîtresses de la rue ces deux ordures : la littérature et la police, il ne faut s'étonner de rien. Aux deux extrêmes, comme Dieu et Diable, il y a Chiappe et Breton.

Que Dada ait abouti à ça, c'est une grande consolation pour l'humanité qui retourne à sa collique. — Mais dira-t-on, n'avez-vous pas aimé le surréalisme ? Mais oui : amours de jeunesse, amours ancillaires. D'ailleurs une récente enquête donne aux petits jeunes gens l'autorisation d'aimer même la femme d'un gendarme.

Où la femme d'un curé. Car on pense bien que dans l'affaire le flic rejoint le curé : le frère Breton qui fait accommoder le prêtre à la sauce moutarde ne parle plus qu'en chaire. Il est plein de mandarin curacao, sait ce qu'on peut tirer des femmes, mais il impose

G. RIBEMONT-DESSAIGNES.

(Voir la suite page 2)



AUTO-PROPHÉTIE

Ce monde dans lequel je subis ce que je subis (n'y allez pas voir), ce monde moderne, enfin, diable! que voulez-vous que j'y fasse? La voix surréaliste se taira peut-être, je n'en suis plus à compter mes disparitions. Je n'entrerai plus, si peu que ce soit, dans le décompte merveilleux de mes années et de mes jours. Je serai comme Nijinsky, qu'on conduisit l'an dernier aux Ballets russes et qui ne comprit pas à quel spectacle il assistait.

AD
ANDRÉ
BRETON

ANDRÉ BRETON, *Manifeste du Surréalisme*.

2209 24

MORT D'UN MONSIEUR

Hélas, je ne reverrai plus l'illustre Palotin du Monde Occidental, celui qui me faisait rire!

De son vivant, il écrivait, pour abrégé le temps, disait-il, pour trouver des hommes et, lorsque par hasard il en trouvait, il avait atrocement peur et, leur faisant le coup de l'amitié bouleversante, il guettait le moment où il pourrait les salir.

Un jour il crut voir passer en rêve un Vaisseau-Fantôme et sentit les galons du capitaine Bordure lui pousser sur la tête, il se regarda sérieusement dans la glace et se trouva beau.

Ce fut la fin, il devint bête du cœur et confondit tout, le désespoir et le mal de foie, la Bible et les chants de Maldoror, Dieu et Dieu, l'encre et le foudre, les barricades et le divan de Mme Sabatier, le marquis de Sade et Jean Lorrain, la Révolution Russe et la révolution surréaliste (1).

Pion lyrique il distribua des diplômes aux grands amoureux, des jours d'indulgences aux débutants en désespoir et se lamenta sur la grande pitié des poètes de France.

« Est-il vrai, écrivait-il, que les Patries veulent le plus tôt possible le sang de leurs grands hommes? »

Excellent musicien il joua pendant un certain temps du luth de classe sous les fenêtres du Parti communiste, reçut des briques sur la tête, et repartit déçu, aigri, maîtrechanter dans les cours d'amour.

Il ne pouvait pas jouer sans tricher, il trichait d'ailleurs très mal et cachait des boules de billard dans ses manches ; quand elles tombaient par terre avec un bruit désagréable devant ses fidèles très gênés il disait que c'était de l'humour.

C'était un grand honnête homme, il mettait parfois sa toque de juge par dessus son képi, et faisait de la Morale ou de la critique d'art, mais il cachait difficilement les cicatrices que lui avaient laissées le croc à phynances de la peinture moderne.

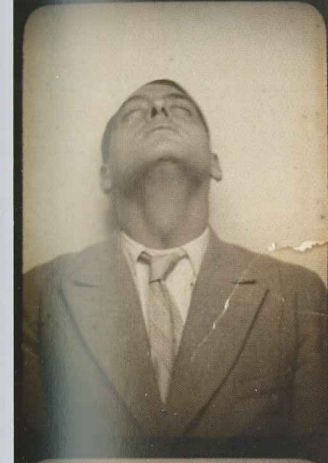
Un jour il criait contre le prêtres, le lendemain il se croyait évêque ou pape en Avignon, prenait un billet pour aller voir et revenait quelques jours après plus révolutionnaire que jamais et pleurerait bientôt de grosses larmes de rage le 1^{er} mai parce qu'il n'avait pas trouvé

Jacques PREVERT.

(Voir la suite page 2)



A



B



E



F

- A Hans Bellmer, illustration from *L'histoire de l'oeil (The Story of the Eye)* by 'Lord Auch' (Georges Bataille), 1947 (cat. 155)
- B Luis Buñuel, c.1929 (cat. 8)
- C Max Ernst, c.1929 (cat. 9)
- D Salvador Dalí, c.1929 (cat. 12)
- E André Breton, c.1929 (cat. 2)
- F *La Révolution surréaliste*, No. 12, Year 5, 15 December 1929 (fig. 9)



A

COINS AND MEDALS

Georges Bataille apparently became involved with DOCUMENTS through his work as a numismatist at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. We know little about Bataille's interest in coins, a subject he appears not to have pursued after publishing two essays in the journal: 'The Academic Horse' (1, 1929, translated in this book) and 'Base Materialism and Gnosticism' (1, 1930). The appearance of the former essay in the first issue was among the things that appears to have caused his colleague Pierre d'Espezel to accuse Bataille of betraying the principles upon which the journal had been founded, since it was a 'document' only in that it bore witness to Bataille's own 'state of mind'.

'The Academic Horse' was nevertheless not so very different – at least superficially – from the essay 'A Macedonian Eldorado: 5th century BC' (2, 1929), written by Jean Babelon about Macedonian coins (the only other essay directly concerning coins to appear in DOCUMENTS – d'Espezel himself never published anything in the journal). Babelon, in fact, makes rather more excessive claims than Bataille, extolling the barbarism of the Macedonian 'Eldorado' from which the coins he is studying came in a way that may strike us today as rather more academically doubtful than Bataille's assertions about Celtic representations of the horse. Babelon's essay, however, has the virtue of scientific detachment, allowing the luxury of contemplating barbarism from a distance. Bataille, on the other hand, implicates the reader in the distinction he draws between the barbarism of the Celts and Greek civilization, not allowing us to know where we stand in relation to either. It was doubtless this methodological collapse of scientific detachment, rather than Bataille's actual argument, that incurred d'Espezel's ire.

One might infer that Bataille's fascination for coins came from his interest in what was *base* (for instance, the psychological association between money and excrement). Base materialism plays an important role in Bataille's thinking, but it did not imply – as many of his over zealous devotees have assumed – a theory of matter. It was rather developed as part of a strategy of opposition not, as has too easily been assumed, to Surrealism, nor even, as Bataille himself tended to assert, to idealism, but to human dignity. As a theory of substance, however, it was incompatible both with traditional materialism and with the later development of Bataille's own thought.

The curious thing about Bataille's materialism in DOCUMENTS is that he less denied the reality of the mind than sought to expel it, as though it represented some form of contamination. His distrust of Surrealism here was not so much that it was essentially idealist as that it had failed to expel idealism completely, especially in André Breton's conception of it.

Nevertheless, DOCUMENTS cannot be seen as an organ

- A Anon, Group Photograph (Robert Desnos, Georges Bataille, Gaston-Louis Roux, Alberto Giacometti, Michel Leiris, Vicomte de Noailles and Georges Auric, outside the home of Marie-Laure de Noailles, place des États-Unis, Paris), c.1925 (cat. 13)
 B Anon, France (Region of Verdun, attributed to the Verodunenses), *Stater*, France, 4th C. BC (cat. 38)
 C Anon, France (Region of Paris, the Parisii), *Stater*, 4th C. BC (cat. 37)
 D Anon, France (Gers, Eauze, Elusates), *Coin*, 4th C. BC (cat. 35)



B



C



D

A *Magical Amulets*, from DOCUMENTS, 1, 1930 (see cat. 52, 53 and 55)
 B DOCUMENTS, 1, 1930

for the circulation of Bataille's notion of materialism, any more than it reflected his 'state of mind'. The other contributors doubtless had a variety of reasons for publishing in it, but none appear to have done so because they shared Bataille's hatred of idealism. Equally, the relationship of the journal with Surrealism is complex and cannot be reduced to an oppositional role; in fact, it would be doing less than justice to DOCUMENTS to see it principally in the light of Surrealism. The power of the journal comes from its heterodox nature and the tensions generated within it, held together uneasily through Bataille's editorship. Those who have seen the journal as a compromise by Bataille, who was constrained from what he really wanted to do by the institutional aims of the journal, seem to miss the point. Or, if compromise there was, it was one within Bataille himself between his position as numismatist and librarian, and his will to disrupt the very conditions of clear classification and taxonomy that such a position called for. **MR**

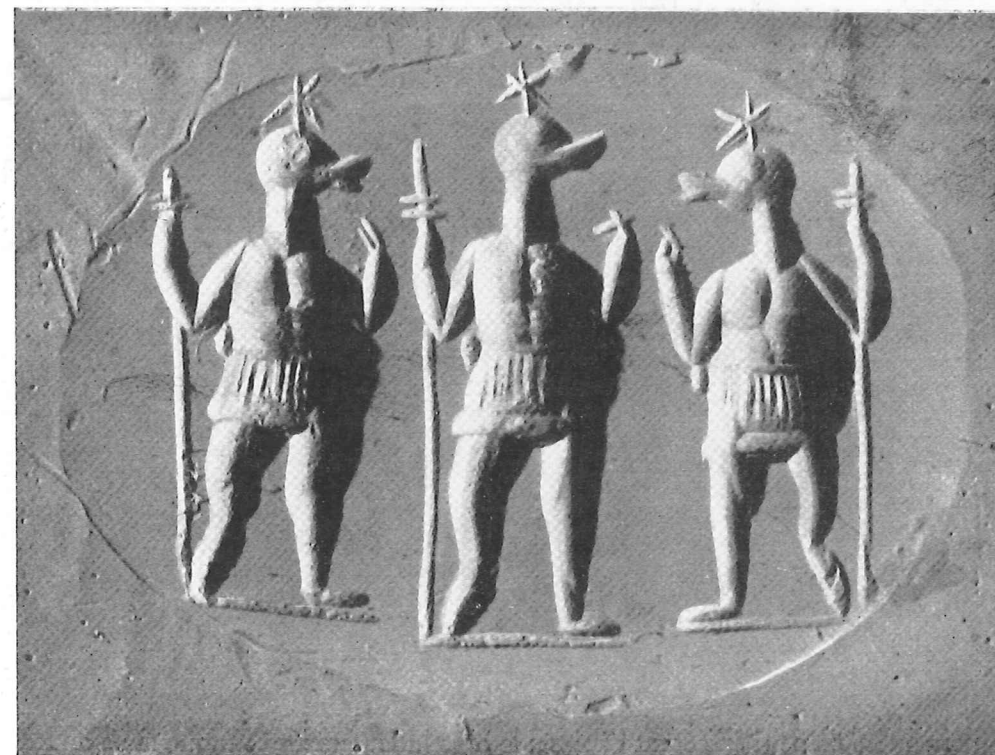
ARCHAEOLOGY, THE ACADEMIC HORSE



A



B



1. Archontes à tête de canard. — Empreinte d'intaille gnostique. Haut. réelle, 27 $\frac{m}{m}$. — Cabinet des Médailles.

LE BAS MATÉRIALISME ET LA GNOSE

Si l'on envisage un objet particulier, il est facile de distinguer la matière de la forme et une distinction analogue peut être faite en ce qui concerne les êtres organiques, la forme prenant cette fois la valeur de l'unité de l'être et de son existence individuelle. Mais si l'on envisage l'ensemble des choses, les distinctions de cet ordre transposées deviennent arbitraires et même inintelligibles. Il se forme ainsi deux entités verbales, qui s'expliquent uniquement par leur valeur constructive dans l'ordre social, Dieu abstrait (ou simplement idée) et matière abstraite, le gardien-chef et les murs de la prison. Les variantes de cet échafaudage métaphysique n'ont pas plus d'intérêt que les différents styles d'architecture. On s'est agité pour savoir si la prison procédait du gardien ou le gardien de la prison : bien que cette agitation ait eu historiquement une importance primordiale, elle risque aujourd'hui de provoquer un étonnement tardif, ne serait-ce qu'en raison de la disproportion entre les conséquences du débat et son insignifiance radicale.

1

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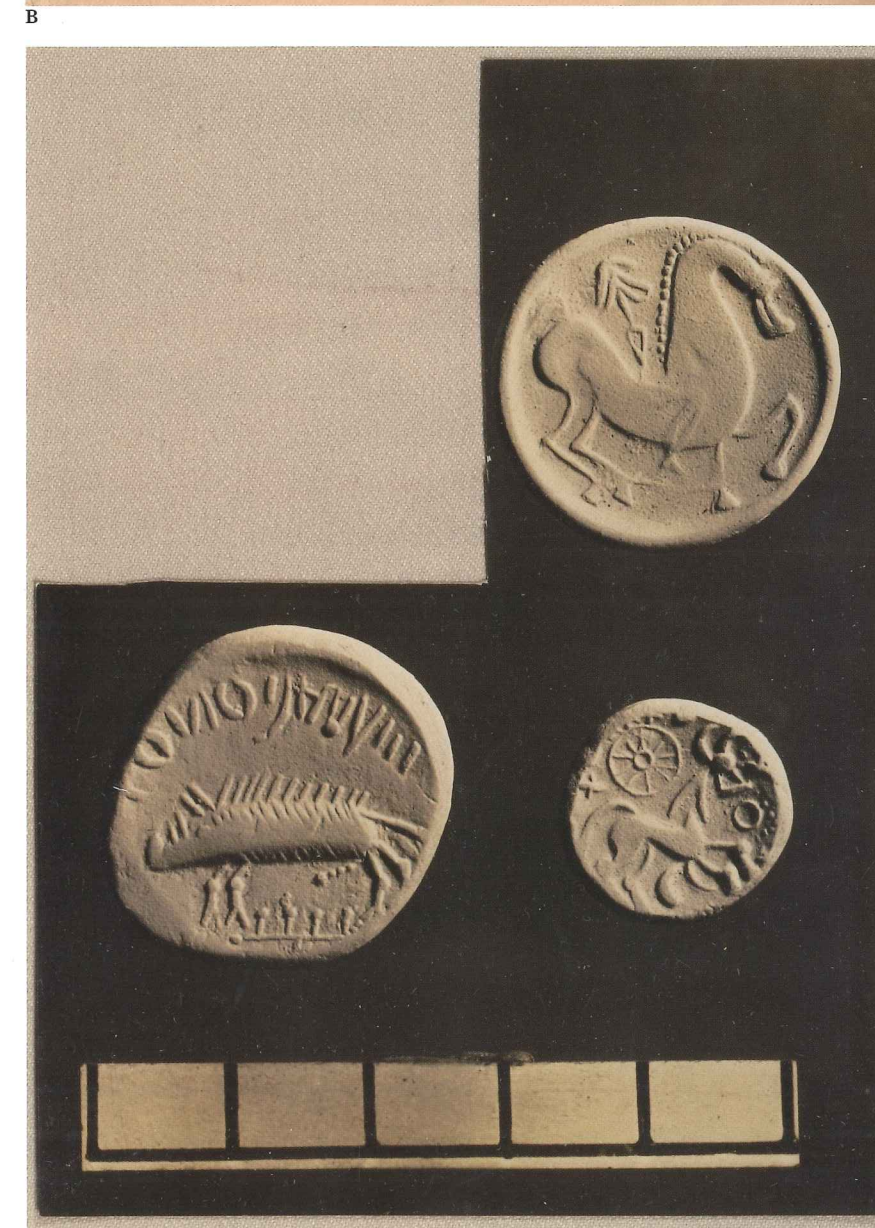
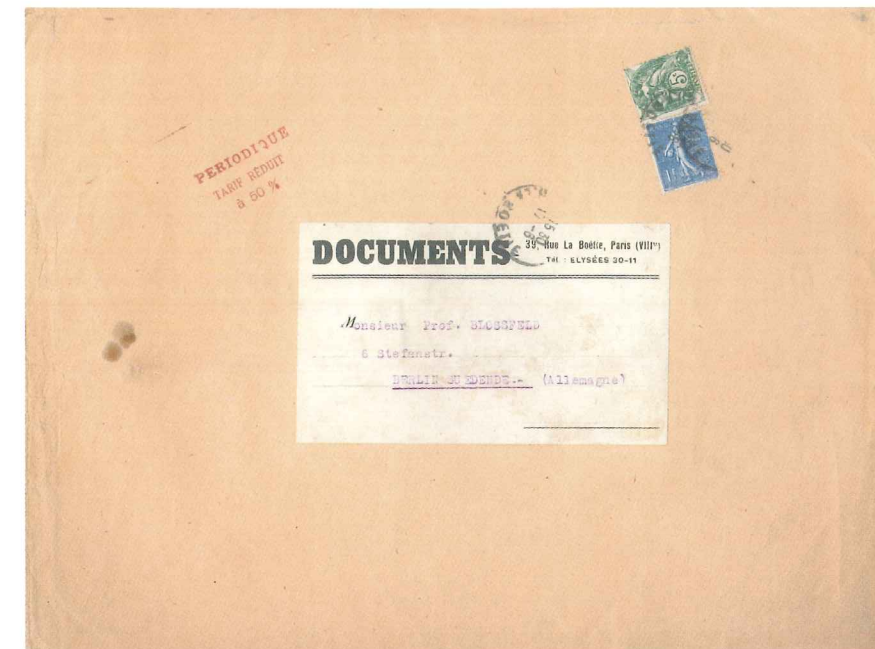
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8471-536-1927. [1070]

- A Manuscript page (verso) of the article in DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929, 'Human Figure', on the back of library stationery, 1929 (cat. 65)
- B Envelope with address of Prof. Blossfeldt and the label of DOCUMENTS, 1930 (cat. 6)
- C Original photo for the article in DOCUMENTS, 1, 1929, 'The Academic Horse' (cat. 11)



A Spread from DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929
 B Spread from DOCUMENTS, 1, 1930

DICTIONARY

For Bataille a dictionary begins when it gives the tasks rather than the meanings of words. As an example, Bataille gives us his definition of formless, seen as the epitome of what eludes classification. 'Formless' appears in the Dictionary section of the final issue of the first year of DOCUMENTS (the 'Critical Dictionary' had been a part of DOCUMENTS since the second issue, but by this time it had lost its 'critical' tag). This suggests that this definition was not in Bataille's mind when the Dictionary began, but was shaped precisely through the developmental process of the Dictionary itself. The first entry in the Dictionary had in fact defined 'Architecture' as epitomising 'form': its edifices represent authority, imposing silence on the crowd and inspiring 'good social behaviour and often even genuine fear' (2, 1929). Bataille here ignores the fact that certain buildings, such as medieval cathedrals or minarets, were inspired less by a will towards authority than by communal consecration. Furthermore, buildings may in the course of time take revenge on human will as they become haunted by the presence of those who have inhabited them. It is in this manner that the Dictionary took shape: as an edifice lacking architecture but emerging through the process of construction from the ground up, like a medieval cathedral or a minaret. As such it would become 'haunted', shaped not by human intention but by the very process of its own enactment. **MR**

DOCTRINES

FORMLESS Georges Bataille

A dictionary would begin from the point at which it no longer rendered the meanings of words but rather their tasks. Thus *formless* is not only an adjective with a given meaning but a term which declassifies, generally requiring that each thing take on a form. That which it designates has no claim in any sense, and is always trampled upon like a spider or an earthworm. Indeed, for academics to be happy, the universe would have to take on form. The whole of philosophy has no other goal: to provide a frock coat for what is, a mathematical frock coat. To declare, on the contrary, that the universe is not like anything, and is simply *formless*, is tantamount to saying the universe is something like a spider or spittle.

DOCUMENTS, 7, 1929. Translated from the French by Dominic Faccini, October, 60, Spring, 1992.

CHRONIQUE

DICTIONNAIRE

ABATTOIR. — L'abattoir relève de la religion en ce sens que des temples des époques reculées, (sans parler de nos jours de ceux des hindous) étaient à double usage, servant en même temps aux implorations et aux tueries. Il en résultait sans aucun doute (on peut en juger d'après l'aspect de chaos des abattoirs actuels) une coïncidence bouleversante entre les mystères mythologiques et la grandeur lugubre caractéristique des lieux où le sang coule. Il est curieux de voir s'exprimer en Amérique un regret lancinant : W. B. Seabrook (1) constatant que la vie orgiaque a subsisté, mais que le sang de sacrifices n'est pas mêlé aux cocktails, trouve insipide les mœurs actuelles. Cependant de nos jours l'abattoir est maudit et mis en quarantaine comme un bateau portant le choléra. Or les victimes de cette malédiction ne sont pas les bouchers ou les animaux, mais les braves gens eux-mêmes qui en sont arrivés à ne pouvoir supporter que leur propre laid, laid qui répondant en effet à un besoin malade de propriété, de possession, et d'ennui: la malédiction qui ne terrifie que ceux qui la préfèrent) les amène à végéter aussi loin que possible des abattoirs, à s'exiler par correction dans un monde amorphe, où il n'y a plus rien d'horrible et où, subissant l'obsession indélébile de l'ignominie, ils sont réduits à manger du fromage. — G. BATAILLE.

(1) *L'île magique*, Firmin-Didot, 1929 (cf. plus loin, p. 33).

CHEMINÉE D'USINE. — Si je tiens compte de mes souvenirs personnels, il semble que, dès l'apparition des diverses choses du monde, au cours de la première enfance, pour notre génération, les formes d'architecture terrifiantes étaient beaucoup moins les églises, même les plus monstrueuses, que certaines grandes cheminées d'usine, véritables tuyaux de communication entre le ciel sinistrement sale et la terre boueuse empoussiée des quartiers de filatures et de teintureries.

Aujourd'hui, alors que de très misérables esthètes, en quête de placer leur chlorotique admiration, inventent platement la *beauté* des usines, la lugubre saleté de ces énormes tentacules m'apparaît d'autant plus écoeurante, les flaque d'eau sous la pluie, à leur pied, dans les terrains vagues, la fumée noire à moitié



Châta d'une cheminée haute de 63 mètres
 Bâtisse de Londres.

rabattue par le vent, les monceaux de scories et de mâcheter sont bien les seuls attributs possibles de ces dieux d'un Olympe d'égout et je n'étais pas halluciné lorsque j'étais enfant et que ma terreur me faisait discerner dans mes épouvantails géants, qui m'attaqueraient jusqu'à l'angoisse et aussi parfois me faisaient fuir en courant à toutes jambes, la présence d'une effrayante colère, colère qui, pouvais-je m'en douter, allait devenir plus tard ma propre colère, donner un sens à tout ce qui se salissait dans ma tête, et en même temps à tout ce qui, dans des états civilisés, surgit comme la charogne dans un cauchemar. Sans doute je n'ignore pas que la plupart des gens, quand



Aux abattoirs de La Villette. — Photo. Eli Lotar.

A



1. Le jour où les murs s'écroulaient devant les ruines de leur carlot (p. 40).
 Effondrement d'une prison, à Columbus (Ohio, U. S. A.)



... qu'un singe habillé en femme ne soit qu'une des divisions de l'espace (p. 41).

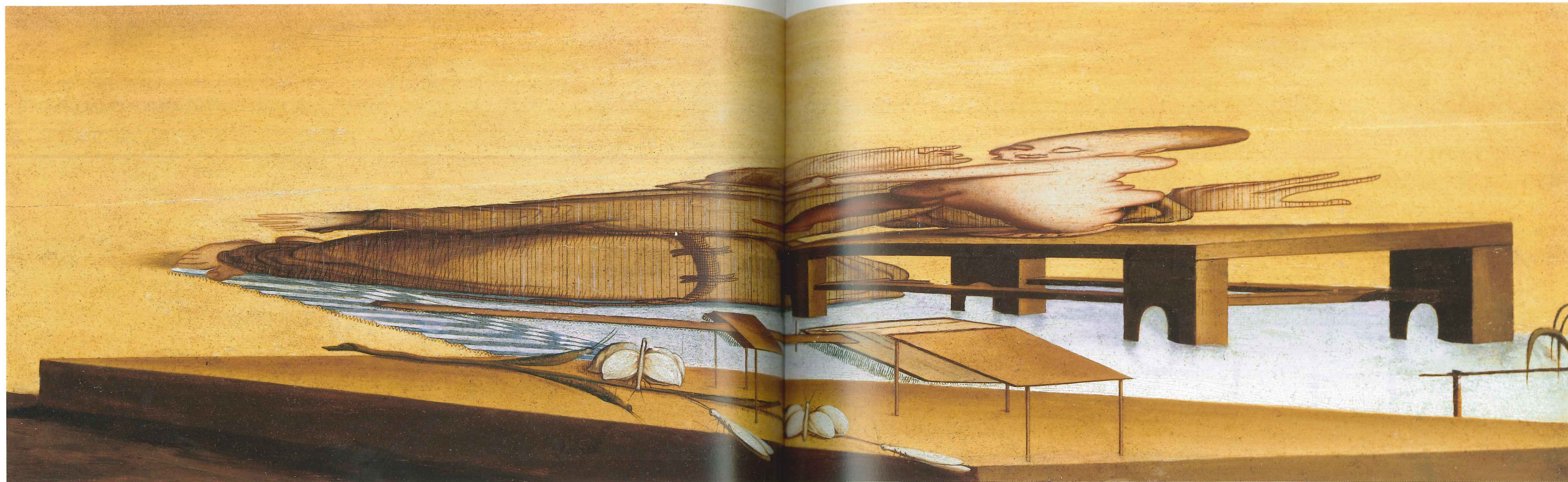
B



... un rituel ignoble d'initiation pratiqué par quelques nègres (p. 40).
 (Peuple Nandi; plaines du Tanganka. — Expédition Colorado, 1929).



... l'espace peut devenir un poisson qui en mange un autre (p. 41).

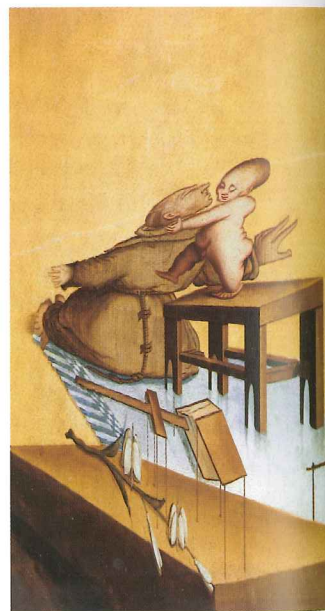


A

SALVADOR DALÍ

Salvador Dalí's *Female Bathers* (1928) represents a hideously deformed female figure lying on the beach, depicted almost as a giant phallic toe, an image reminiscent of Jacques-André Boiffard's photographs of big toes in *DOCUMENTS*, which accompany Georges Bataille's article 'The Big Toe' (6, 1929). As with André Masson's 1927 sand paintings, so Dalí has applied stones from an actual beach to the surface of the painting, substituting a literal part of a real beach for the pictorial signifier representing the beach. This painting, and another similar work, *Feminine Nude* (1928), are reproduced in *DOCUMENTS* (4, 1929) alongside a baroque anamorphic painting representing *Saint Antony of Padua and the Infant Jesus*. The association of this painting with the more pornographic Dalí bathers underscores the degree to which Dalí himself was exploring anamorphosis even in 1928. Such distorted optics denote an assault on vision itself, and demonstrate how sight is intimately linked in *DOCUMENTS* to what psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan referred to as the 'death drive'.

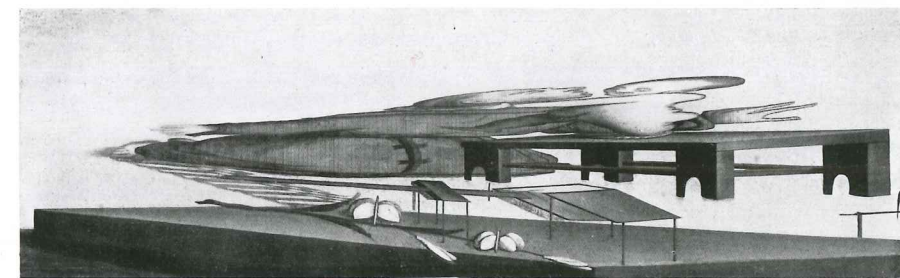
In the same issue of *DOCUMENTS*, Dalí's *Blood is Sweeter than Honey* (1927, see p. 102) is reproduced alongside Bataille's *Critical Dictionary* entry on 'Eye'. The painting's central figure is a three dimensional architect's set square with an empty eye-socket-like void at the upper right. This figure



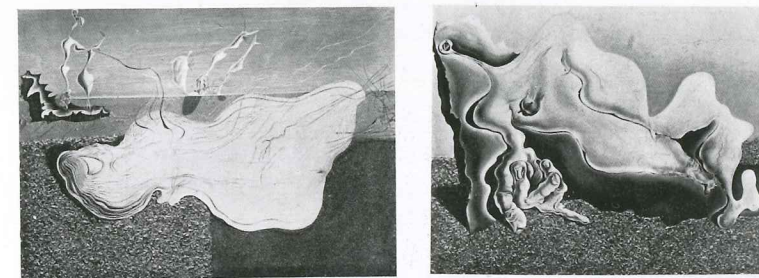
A

A Anon, *Saint Antony of Padua and the Infant Jesus*, c.18th or early 19th C. (original anamorphic painting and digitally compressed reproduction) (cat. 18)

B *DOCUMENTS*, 4, 1929



Saint Antoine de Padoue et l'Enfant Jésus. — Coll. Lipchitz.



Deux tableaux de Salvador Dalí, 1. Baigneuses, 2. Nu féminin, qui figureront à l'Exposition d'art abstrait et surréaliste, au Kunsthaus de Zurich.

B

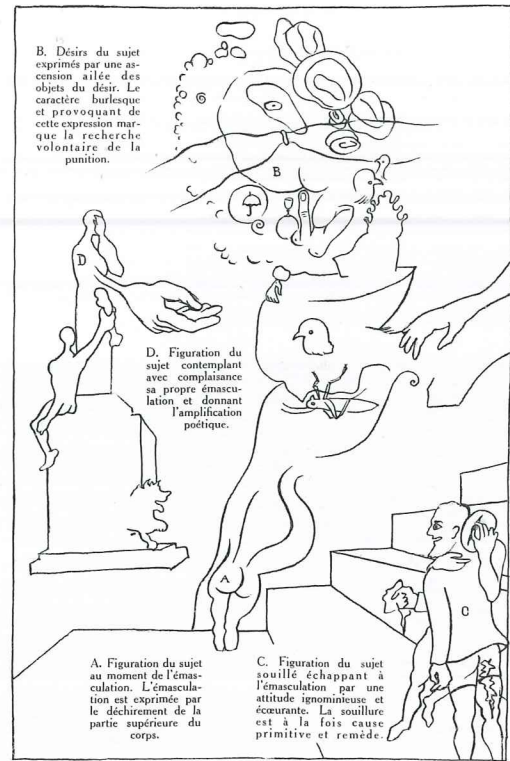
A Salvador Dalí, *Female Bathers*, 1928
(cat. 84)
B Salvador Dalí, *Feminine Nude*, 1928
(fig. 10)



A



B

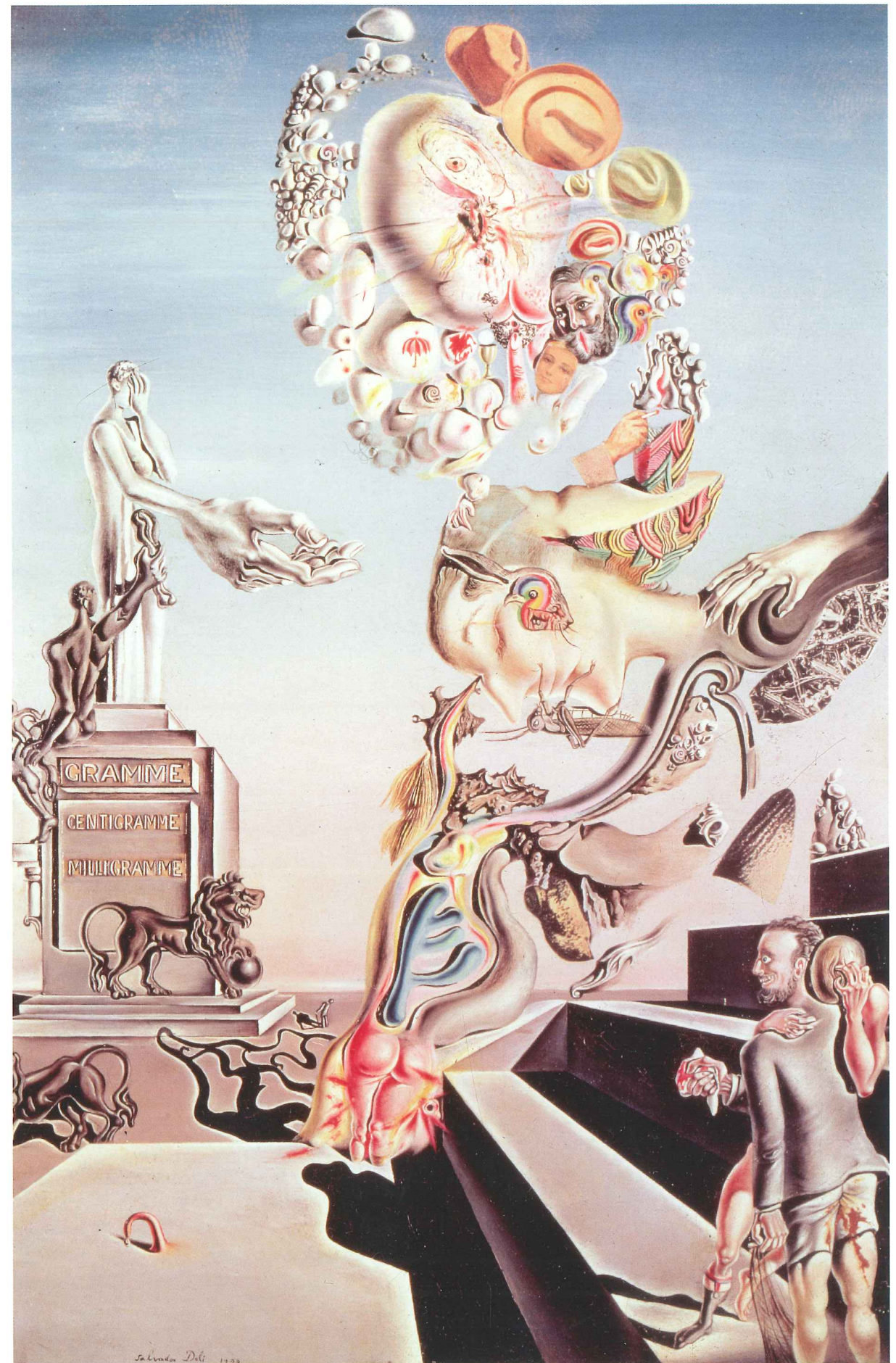


SCHEMA PSYCHANALYTIQUE DES FIGURATIONS CONTRADICTOIRES DU SUJET DANS "LE JEU LUGUBRE" DE SALVADOR DALI.

Psychoanalytic Diagram of the Contradictory Representations of the Subject in *The Lugubrious Game* by Salvador Dali

A. Representation of the subject at the moment of emasculation. The emasculation is expressed by the tearing of the upper part of the body.
 B. The subject's desires expressed by a winged ascension of the objects of desire. The burlesque and provocative character of this expression indicates the voluntary quest for punishment.
 C. Representation of the soiled subject escaping emasculation through an ignominious and disgusting posture. The soiling is both original cause and remedy.
 D. Representation of the subject contemplating his own emasculation with satisfaction and amplifying it poetically.

A 3 pages from DOCUMENTS, 7, 1929
 B Salvador Dali, *The Lugubrious Game*, 1929 (fig. 11)



MANUSCRIT AUTOGRAPHE ORIGINAL DES CENT-VINGT JOURNÉES DE SODOME, ÉCRIT PAR LE MARQUIS DE SÈDE À LA BASTILLE EN 1793 ET TROUVÉ SUR PLACE APRÈS LA PRISE DE LA FORTERESSE - COLL. DU VICOMTE DE NOUILLES (Copyright by Siodor et C, 1929) - PHOTO J. A. BOFFARD.

LE "JEU LUGUBRE" (1)

Le désespoir intellectuel n'aboutit ni à la veulerie ni au rêve, mais à la violence. Ainsi il est hors de question d'abandonner certaines investigations. Il s'agit seulement de savoir comment on peut exercer sa rage ; si on veut seulement tourner comme des fous autour des prisons, ou bien les renverser.
 Contre les demi-mesures, les échappatoires, les délires trahissant la grande impuissance poétique, il n'y a qu'à opposer une colère noire et même une indiscutable bestialité : il est impossible de s'agiter autrement que comme un porc quand il bafre dans le fumier et dans la boue en arrachant tout avec le groin et que rien ne peut arrêter une répugnante voracité.

Si les formes réunies par un peintre sur une toile n'avaient pas de répercussion, si par exemple, puisqu'on parle de voracité — même dans l'ordre intellectuel — des ombres horribles qui se choquent dans la tête, des mâchoires aux dents hideuses n'étaient pas sorties du crâne de Picasso pour faire peur à ceux qui ont encore le front de penser honnêtement, la peinture serait bonne tout au plus à distraire les gens de leur rage, au même titre que les bars ou les films américains. Mais pourquoi hésiter à écrire que quand Picasso peint, la dislocation des formes entraîne celle de la pensée, c'est-à-dire que le mouvement intellectuel immédiat, qui dans d'autres cas aboutit à l'idée, avorte. Nous ne pouvons pas ignorer que les fleurs sont aphrodisiaques, qu'un seul éclat de rire peut traverser et soulever une foule, qu'un avortement aussi obstiné est l'éclat criard et susceptible de répercussion d'un *non serviam* opposé par la brute humaine à l'idée. Et l'idée a sur l'homme le même pouvoir avilissant qu'un harnachement sur un cheval : je peux renâcler et râler : je n'en vais pas moins à droite et à gauche, la tête bridée et tirillée par l'idée qui abrutit et fait marcher droit tous les hommes, sous la forme, entre autres, du papier imprimé aux armes de l'état. A la tricherie près, la vie humaine est toujours plus ou moins conforme à l'image du soldat commandé à l'exercice. Les cataclysmes soudains, les grandes démences populaires, les émeutes, les énormes tueries révolutionnaires donnent la mesure des compensations inévitables.

J'en arrive à dire, à peu près sans préambule, que les peintures de Picasso sont hideuses, que celles de Dalí sont d'une laideur effroyable (2). On est victime de l'inconfort des mots, ou encore d'un maléfice relevant quelque peu des pratiques de la magie noire, quand on s'assure du contraire. Il suffit d'imaginer brusquement la petite fille, d'apparence charmante, dont l'âme serait l'abominable miroir de Dalí, pour mesurer l'étendue du mal. La langue de cette petite fille n'est pas une langue mais une rate. Et si elle paraît encore admirablement belle, c'est, comme on dit, que le sang noir est beau, coulant sur le pelage d'un bœuf ou sur la gorge d'une femme. (Si les mouvements violents arrivent à délivrer un être d'un ennui profond, c'est qu'ils peuvent faire accéder, par on ne sait quelle erreur obscure, à une affreuse laideur qui rassasie. Il faut dire, d'ailleurs, que la laideur peut être haïssable sans aucun recours et, pour ainsi dire, par malheur, mais rien n'est plus commun que la laideur qui, quoique donnant, d'une façon provocante, l'illusion du contraire. Quant à la laideur irrécusable, elle est exactement aussi détestable que certaines beautés : la beauté qui ne dissimule

A DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929
 B Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí,
Un chien andalou, 1929 (stills) (cat. 188)



GROS ORTEIL. SUJET FÉMININ. 24 ANS. — PHOTO. J.-A. BOIFFARD.

A



B



doubles as a sacrificial dagger ready to sever vision, and recalls Masson's predilection for the blood-stained knife. Bataille's 'Eye' article praises Dalí and Luis Buñuel's recent film *Un chien andalou* (1929), especially the scene at the beginning, where a razor slices through the eye of a young woman. In the film, as with the chain of oval images in Bataille's novel *The Story of the Eye* (1928), the eye and razor are metaphorically associated with the moon and dark clouds passing before it. Bataille gleefully notes, 'the eye even occupies an extremely elevated rank in horror', and he associates it with spectacle and a thirst for blood.

A diagram detailing the psychoanalytic symbolism of Dalí's painting *The Lugubrious Game* (1929) accompanies Georges Bataille's article of the same title (7, 1929). At the last minute Dalí had withdrawn permission to reproduce the painting, likely as a result of his growing proximity to André Breton, leader of the Surrealist movement. For Bataille, Dalí's paintings were 'frighteningly ugly', and his perverse metamorphoses took the viewer into the realm of 'evil'. He went on to note that: 'The great constructions of the intelligence finally are prisons: that is why they are obstinately overthrown.' On 2 July 1789, as a prisoner in the Bastille, according to the prison's logbooks, the Marquis de Sade had screamed that the inmates were being executed ('The Count de Sade shouted several times from the window of the cell that the prisoners were being slaughtered and the people should come and liberate them'), provoking the authorities to move him to Charenton Asylum on the 4 July. This act famously anticipated the burning of the gaol on the 14 July. The pure irrationality of Sade's sadistic screams, as recounted by one of his victims (Rose Keller), approximated the 'violence' and 'brutal hilarity' of Dalí's paintings, leading Bataille to one desire: 'I am here only determined ... to make myself squeal like a pig before his canvases.' WJ



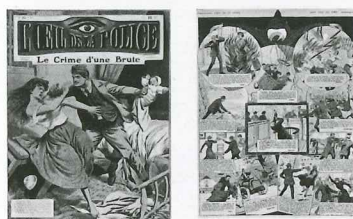
CONTENU EN COULEUR DE LA PREMIÈRE ÉDITION DU TOME 1 DE FANTÔMAS
PAR ROBERT DESNOS - GALL, ROMAN NOIR.

A



Quatre couvertures de Fantômas (d. p. 38). Éditions Archipel Fayard.

B



L'Oeil de la Police, pages de la couverture en couleurs. — 1938, N° 26.



Salvador Dalí, Le sang est plus doux que le lait (1927).
Barcelone, Coll. privée.

C

CRIME

The interest in crime and criminality in DOCUMENTS falls into two camps. On the one hand, contributors to the magazine, including Robert Desnos and Georges Henri Rivière, were interested in crime-fiction, especially Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain's detective series *Fantômas*. But these books seem to have been judged primarily by their covers, and it was under the rubric of 'Modern Imagery' that the lurid illustrations for the paperback editions of *Fantômas* appeared in DOCUMENTS (7, 1929). Desnos reproduced the first ever *Fantômas* cover, where the top-hatted, masked protagonist looms over the Paris skyline, and Rivière a selection of his favourites, including *The Severed Hand* and *Loves of a Prince* (1, 1930). The second, but no-less graphic criminal element in DOCUMENTS was the sensational 'reportage' introduced by Bataille, including the true-crime magazine *L'Oeil de la Police* and an extraordinary book entitled *X Marks the Spot: Chicago Gang Wars in Pictures* (4, 1929; 7, 1930). As Bataille explains in his review, the police usually replaced the body of the victim with a white X when they published crime-scene photographs. *X Marks the Spot*, however, contained uncensored photographs with the corpses still in place, to which were added deadpan commentaries on the gruesome career highlights of 'Alphonse Capone, the Big Boy of Chicago Gangland', such as the St Valentine's Day Massacre and the photo-spread that Bataille reproduced in DOCUMENTS, 'Dingbat' Oberta goes for a Ride. SB

👁️ SALVADOR DALÍ



D

- A DOCUMENTS, 7, 1929
- B DOCUMENTS, 1, 1930
- C DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929
- D Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain,
Fantômas. 'Les amours d'un prince', 1912
(cat. 171)
- E Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain,
Fantômas. 'La main coupée', 1927
(cat. 173)



E

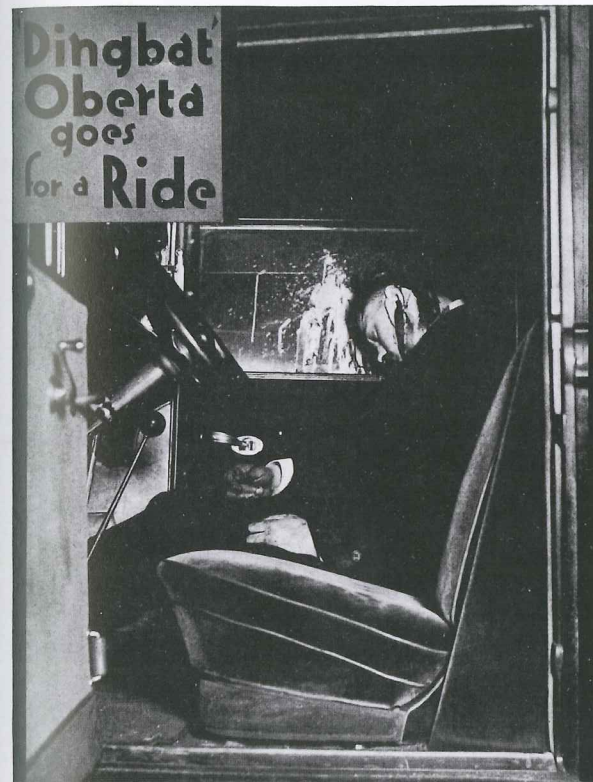
CHICAGO Gang Wars in Pictures



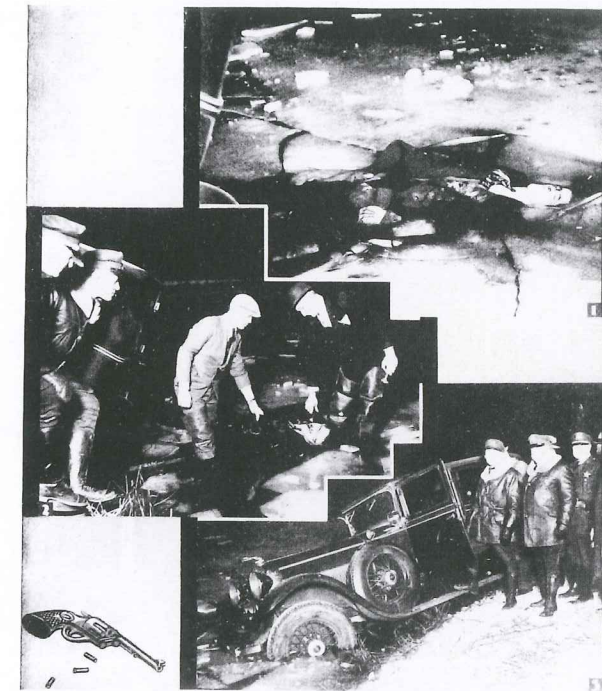
marks the Spot

Price, \$1.00

Cover and spread from *X Marks the Spot: Chicago Gang Wars in Pictures*, facsimile of original 1930 publication (cat. 153)



Johnny "Dingbat" Oberta and his body-guard Sammy Malaga left a roadhouse late one night with a "friend" sitting in the rear seat of their limousine. Oberta got in first in the back of the head. Sammy tried to run away but he was "dingbat" and his body thrown into a small creek. (Picture on opposite page.) Willie Hamoth is believed to have been the "friend" sitting in the rear seat. Hamoth is now in Baltimore where he was convicted and sentenced for a bank robbery.



Sammy Malaga, body guard to Oberta, attempted to get away from the killer in the rear seat of their automobile. He didn't make it, as the photographs seem to indicate. the shooting began, and Raymond Cassidy fell to the sidewalk dead, victim of a bullet intended for Stanton. This dreadful marksmanship gave credence to the belief that Quinlan must have done the shooting, because Maloney had never been known to miss his man. Neither "Bubs" nor Maloney was arrested for this murder, but it inspired young Michael McGovern to more serious efforts to avenge his brother's death. How many attempts he made to kill Maloney will never be known, but he made several. One occurred on July 6, 1929, and was partly successful, for when Maloney went on trial for the murders of McPaden and McGovern, he moved about on crutches. He

SACRIFICE

'I had the distinct sense – not at all literary, but truly spontaneous – that I had offered a sacrifice, with all that this word implies of the mystical and intoxicating.'¹ Such was the revelation that Michel Leiris claimed to have experienced, having just spilt his semen on the stones of the Temple of Zeus on Mount Olympus in Greece in 1927. The juxtaposition of exalted location and erotic (or, from the perspective of bourgeois morals, sordid) act was deliberate: the contrast is typical of the virulent but unstable notion of sacrifice that Bataille promoted, a notion that Leiris rendered in his own peculiarly everyday manner. Although both Leiris and Bataille conceived of the practice of sacrifice as fundamental to human experience, there is no *Critical Dictionary* entry for the term in *DOCUMENTS*. Nevertheless, sacrifices are everywhere in the pages of the journal: in the psychotic biting off of a finger or van Gogh's severing of his ear; in the immolation of a bull by the god Mithras or in the blood soaked temple of Kali; on the altars of Aztec temples; in the local slaughterhouse or in André Masson's painting *Abattoir* (1930); in the child's act of mutilating an insect. This heterogeneous list reflects the dynamism and totalising confidence of the theory of sacrifice that characterised the rise of anthropology, ethnography,

A Spread from *DOCUMENTS*, 6, 1929
 B Eli Lotar, *La Villette Abattoir*, 1929
 (cat. 99a)



Aux abattoirs de La Villette (cf. p. 329). — Photo Eli Lotar.



1. Tête de crevette; 2. Tête de crabe. (cf. p. 332). — Film Jean Painlevé (1929).



A Eli Lotar, *La Villette Abattoir*, 1929

(cat. 99g)

B Eli Lotar, *La Villette Abattoir*, 1929

(cat. 99c)



A

sociology and the comparative study of religions in the late nineteenth century. In this vast literature, 'sacrifice', closely tied to the concepts of the 'sacred' and the 'numinous' (a neologism coined by Rudolf Otto in 1917, referring to the power of the sacred to induce feelings of awe and terror), was thought of as a mechanism that mediates the relationship between the notionally profane and sacred domains. Early authors believed that a universal theory of this supposedly fundamental dimension of religious experience was possible.² Sacrifice was variously conceived of as gift-giving, communion, regeneration or transgression. The prominence in its pages of rites of sacrifice, the numerous examples and imagery of the ecstatic moments where the sacred is revealed to the profane world, highlight the degree to which DOCUMENTS focused on the most challenging research of its day.

Bataille left a trail of his anthropological apprenticeship in the records of the books he borrowed when working as a librarian in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. We do not know whether he had read Emile Durkheim's *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912), but he had tackled parts of James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Marcel Mauss's 'Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice' (1898) and Salomon Reinach's *Cultes, mythes et religions...* (1922–28).³ Bataille's studies culminated in his essay on 'Sacrificial Mutilation and Vincent van Gogh's Severed Ear' (8, 1930).⁴ Here van Gogh's obsessive representations of a blinding sun and of virulent sunflowers express his sensations of abysmal inadequacy in the face of the fantasy of the ideal – manifested as god or solar brilliance. Bataille reads van Gogh's auto-mutilation as an attempt to match god's perfect form – where this form is that of a constantly auto-mutilating solar god. The eagle that gnaws at the liver of Prometheus is the agent of Zeus, but Bataille agrees with those who find the eagle himself, not Prometheus, culpable of having stolen fire from the wheel of the sun. Thus Prometheus is not being punished – rather he is the means for Zeus to sacrifice himself – and the eternally regenerating liver of Prometheus is the figure of the endlessly sacrificed body of God, the ideal that underpins the apparent horror of an artist's severed ear or the ablated finger of a schizophrenic.

'Perhaps the practice of sacrifice disappeared from the earth because it could never be sufficiently charged with this element of hate and disgust, without which it appears in our eyes as servitude', Bataille writes at the end of the van Gogh essay.⁵ That modern societies are definitively alienated from the practice of sacrifice, and are neutered without it, was a recurrent theme in DOCUMENTS. Eli Lotar's tough photographs of the abattoir at La Villette (now the venue for the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie) were commissioned by Bataille to accompany his short Critical Dictionary text 'Abattoir' (6, 1929). Lotar had exhibited successfully in Brussels in 1928



B



Eli Lotar, *La Villette Abattoir*, 1929 (cat. 99, b, e, f, h)



A

with other modernist photographers including Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy, Germaine Krull (his partner), André Kertész and Berenice Abbott. A critic in *Variétés* described his work as 'a poetic exaltation of the modern picturesque'.⁶ Only a few of the photographs that Lotar took during the visit were reproduced with Bataille's text, but the ones selected no doubt seemed to communicate the strange mix of ordered system and bloody chaos that was one aspect of the text. Beyond this, it is obvious that the mere admission of these images into the pages of the journal constituted an avant-garde shock tactic designed to expose the paranoid-hygienic bourgeoisie to the abattoir, whose accursed nature Bataille interprets as a symptom of the sclerosis of polite society. Lotar's photographs are nevertheless still marked by a poetic impulse. He is pricked by the sight of a gathering of stray calves feet, still attempting to stand by propping themselves against a wall, or bovine skins crawling across the pavement while weeping trails of blood grope towards the gutter. These photographs, like Bataille's text, focus on the abattoir as a particular place, a curious para-urban site. The image of the calf's head, its tongue lolling towards the pavement, did not appear in DOCUMENTS, but perhaps it inspired the silhouette of a calf's head on a platter that Bataille, Breton and Maurice Heine (under the banner of the political association Contre-Attaque) later used to advertise an event in celebration of the anniversary of the decapitation of Louis XVI on 21 January, 1936.

Decapitation became the most potent image of sacrifice in



B

Bataille's thought – not only does it resonate with the regicide that founded the French Republic, thereby inaugurating the criminal nature of the French people, its existence in guilt – but it also stands for the overturning of civilization, of morality, of idealism. In this manner it subverted one resonance of the term 'sacrifice' in the Third Republic – the voluntary and supposedly 'noble' sacrifice of French citizens in the fields of Flanders. André Masson's abattoir paintings, and his contemporary drawings of massacres, turn on this act of subversion. They represent his gruesome memories of the bloodbath of the Chemin des Dames, a military offensive of April/May 1917 during which around 96,000 French troops were massacred during the first week under German machine gun and artillery fire, in chaotic and ecstatic – rather than ennobling – sacrificial orgies. As a popular army song of the day put it after the final assault at Craonne:

'It's at Craonne on the plateau
That's where we'll leave our skins
for we've all been condemned
we are the sacrificed.'

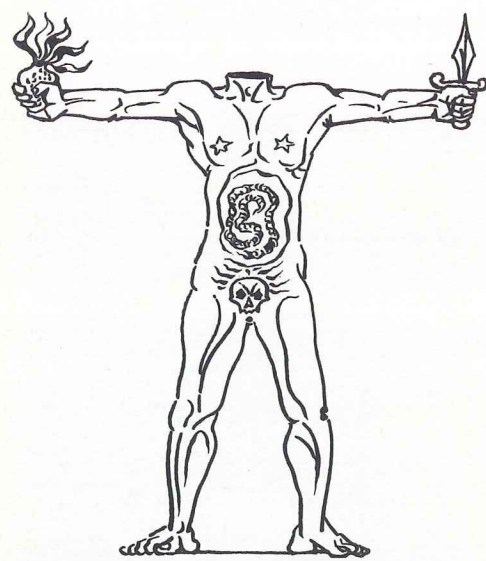
Oneiric decapitations fill the vista in Antoine Caron's *Massacre under the Triumvirate* (1566). Reproduced for the first time in the pages of DOCUMENTS, this hitherto unknown work prompted Leiris in his accompanying essay to speculate on the sadistic motivations of the artist, and to treat it as an accursed avatar of the massacre of St Bartholomew's night in 1572. The painting is, he claims, a work of black magic – an idea underscored by an anecdote that at the hour of the armistice in 1918 it crashed to the floor in the owner's house. Yet Leiris also interpolates his own masochistic fantasies. The descriptions he gives of his childhood fears were to reappear in his tribute to his own castration complex, *L'âge d'homme*, published in 1939. Here Leiris finds his alter ego in the biblical figures of Holofernes



C

- A Antoine Caron, *Massacre under the Triumvirate*, 1566 (fig. 12)
B Eli Lotar, *La Villette Abattoir*, 1929 (cat. 99d)
C Antoine Caron, *Massacre under the Triumvirate*, 1566 (detail) (fig. 12)

- A Cover of *Acéphale: Religion, Sociologie, Philosophie* (cat. 143)
- B *Codex Magliabechiano*, c.1566, Mexico: Cholula? (detail) (cat. 5)
- C *Codex Zouche-Nuttall*, Pre-Cortesian, 13th–16th C., Mexico: Tilantongo Region (fig. 13)



ACEPHALE
 RELIGION · SOCIOLOGIE · PHILOSOPHIE · REVUE PARAISSANT 4 FOIS PAR AN
 1^{re} année LA CONJURATION SACRÉE 24 Juin 1936
 PAR GEORGES BATAILLE PIERRE KLOSSOWSKI ET ANDRÉ MASSON

and John the Baptist, beheaded directly or indirectly by beautiful women.⁷ For Leiris sacrifices are always allied to eroticism.

The sacred became more rather than less important to Bataille after the demise of DOCUMENTS – in 1936 he published a short text entitled ‘Sacrifices’ accompanied by five prints by André Masson, and in 1937 he co-founded the College of Sociology with Roger Caillois, the mission of which was to examine the decisive role of the sacred in modern life. It was later rumoured, perhaps maliciously, that Bataille sought to organise a human sacrifice under the aegis of Acéphale, the practical para-religious organisation of the College. Whatever the truth of the matter, there is no doubt that Bataille believed it possible to inaugurate a new movement towards the sacred, founded on the meditation on one’s own death.

Nowadays the quest for a universal theory of the sacred, or of sacrifice, seems to most anthropologists unnecessary and inappropriate when they confront the enormous diversity of particular rites and beliefs. From the other end of the spectrum to this empirical critique, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben has also attacked the discourse of the ambiguity of the sacred, central to the work of Bataille, Leiris and Caillois, as misguided and obfuscating when compared to the political meaning of the sacred man, the figure of mere biological existence produced by the sovereign’s pronouncement of a state of emergency, the suspension of normal law.⁸

If Bataille’s sacred is most evident in the ordure of the body and the horror of the sacrifice that liberates us from our profane existence, Agamben’s sacred man is similarly abject only insofar as he is disposed of as vermin in the concentration camp, the archetypal site produced under the state of emergency. In its pursuit of the notion of violent sacrifice as essential to human experience we encounter an aspect of DOCUMENTS that stands definitively – brilliantly or misguidedly – on the other side of the horrors that have come to define our age. NC

DOCTRINES, ANDRÉ MASSON, OMELETTES



B



C

'Human Sacrifices of Central America'

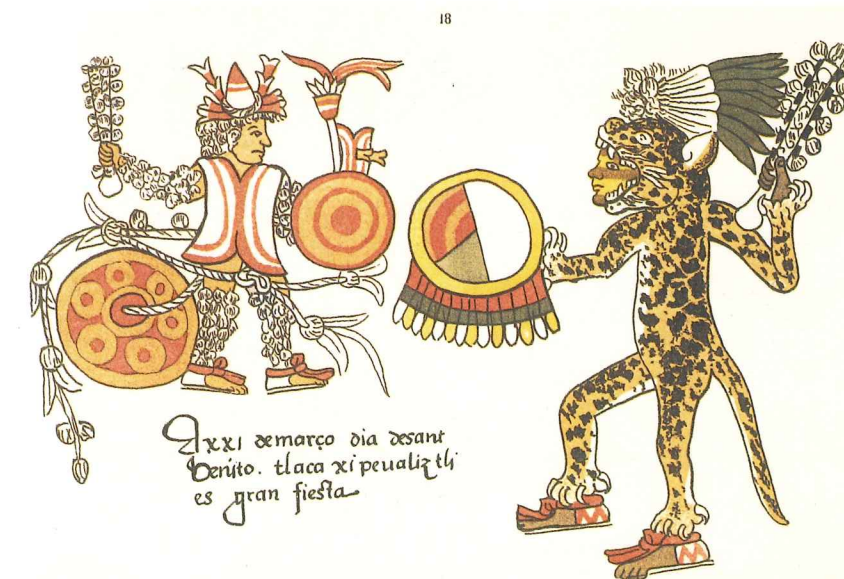
The pages from the Mexican codices in Roger Hervé's 'Human Sacrifices of Central America' (4, 1930) depict Mexican gods, eagle and jaguar warriors, and scenes of human and animal sacrifice. Bataille, in his earlier essay 'Extinct America' (*L'Art Précolombien*, 1928), imagined the high civilization of the Aztec on the eve of the Spanish invasions, their capital Tenochtitlán an American Venice, a rich town of canals and gardens but whose temples and flowery altars flowed with blood, where horror, black humour and poetry were mingled. Hervé's more scientific article points to the Spanish conquerors' exaggerated horror of human sacrifice (which, though he doesn't mention this, surprised Mexicans faced with the practices of the Inquisition and the image of Christ on the cross), integral to the justification for the Conquest. He recognises the special interest of Mexico for a 'general theory of sacrifice' and describes the 'theology of sacrifice' uncovered by ethnographic studies, whereby it formed part of a complex pact between man and the gods, who were nourished by blood. The scene reproduced in DOCUMENTS from Codex Borgia, however (top line, third from right), is now recognised as part of a sequence of birth prognostications concerning the cutting of the umbilical cord. DA



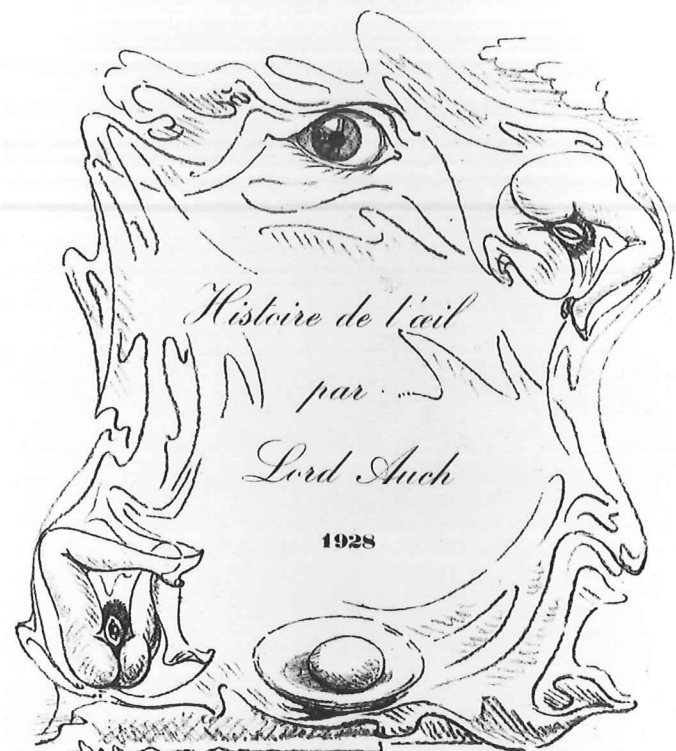
A

A *Codex Borgia*, Pre-Cortesian, 13th–16th C., Mexico: Cholula? (cat. 3)

B *Codex Magliabechiano*, c.1566, Mexico: Cholula? (detail) (cat. 5)



B



ANDRÉ MASSON

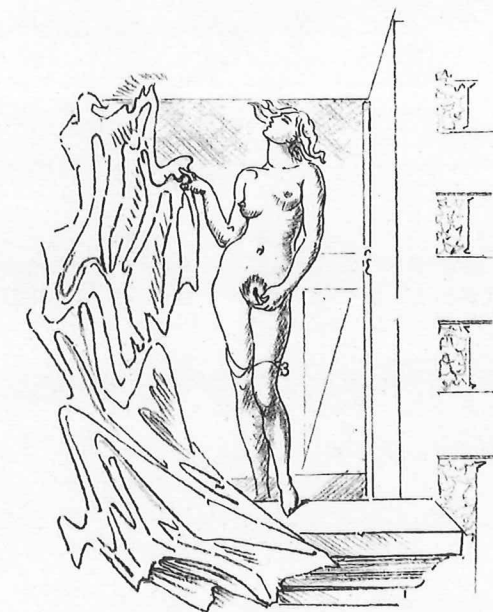
André Masson once said that 'the knife immobilised on the Cubist tables will finally be seized', meaning that he sought to destroy conventional and modern painting. His early still-lives disturbingly imply immanent danger and often feature daggers. His 1927 work *Combats* introduces a more violent tone with the drama of fighting fish or animals. *The Dead Horses* (1927) uses the spontaneous application of sand to which was applied paint, including a red spot indicating blood, to depict the putrefying carcasses of recently killed horses. *The Drop of Blood* (1927) similarly incorporates red paint to point to blood. *The Horse Butcher* (1928) introduces a red, blood-stained dagger representing both the butchering of horses and the metaphorical cutting-up of the canvas.

While Masson's work of this period is often presented as surrealist automatism, it is more accurately described in terms of purely mental images originating in a rhythmic, biological pulse or spasm. As Carl Einstein argues about the artist's work in his essay 'André Masson, an Ethnological Study' (2, 1929), such hallucinations ripped through mechanical constructions of reality revealing an absence of causality. Masson approached the ecstasy of the mystic's loss of ego rather than merely exploiting technical spontaneity. Pascal Pia similarly noted that with Masson, 'reality appears only through the form of

André Masson, illustrations from
L'histoire de l'œil (*The Story of the Eye*)
by 'Lord Auch' (Georges Bataille), 1928
(cat. 154)



99





André Masson, *The Horse Butcher*, 1928
(cat. 104)

hallucinations...'¹ So, Masson endowed surrealist modes of drawing with a biological drive, thereby making drawing an expression of hallucinatory impulses originating in the corporeal reality of the body.

Masson's painting represents the reality of murder and human death. Georges Limbour considered sand the ideal material to absorb the colour of blood.² In an essay in *DOCUMENTS*, he labels Masson '*le dépeceur universel*', or 'the universal dismemberer' ('André Masson: The Universal Dismemberer', 5, 1930). Masson, of course, went with Eli Lotar when the latter photographed the abattoir of La Villette, the images of which accompany Georges Bataille's short *Critical Dictionary* text on the slaughterhouse ('Abattoir', 6, 1929). In Masson's painting *Abattoir* (1930) the butcher's knife slices the flesh of a bull's throat at the same time as it slices up the painting's grid into jagged, collage-like forms.

Masson's illustrations for Bataille's erotic novel *The Story of the Eye* (1928) establish a chain of continuously substituted images – eyes, eggs, testicles – culminating in the image of an eye lodged in a woman's sex. In 1922 Bataille had witnessed the enucleation and death by goring of the bullfighter Granero in Madrid. In *The Story of the Eye* this event has been incorporated into the resolution of the narrative: one of the bull's testicles is eaten by the character Simone, the other placed by Simone into her sex, and Granero's eye is dislodged from its socket. At the end of the book a murdered priest's eye is also inserted into

Simone's sex. A similar sequence of rhyming images can be found in Masson's earlier painting *The Wing* (1925), where a bird's eye and a disembodied eye are associated with women's breasts. Masson explored in pictorial terms similar chains of images throughout the period of DOCUMENTS. As Pia concluded:

'...murder, love, death ... It is always a question of expressing the revolt of the mind before the destiny which the universe imposes on it. That with time Masson's paintings will eventually lose their air of insolence; I am sure that they will retain their seditious character.'⁹

WJ

☛ SACRIFICE, ANDRÉ MASSON, AN ETHNOLOGICAL STUDY

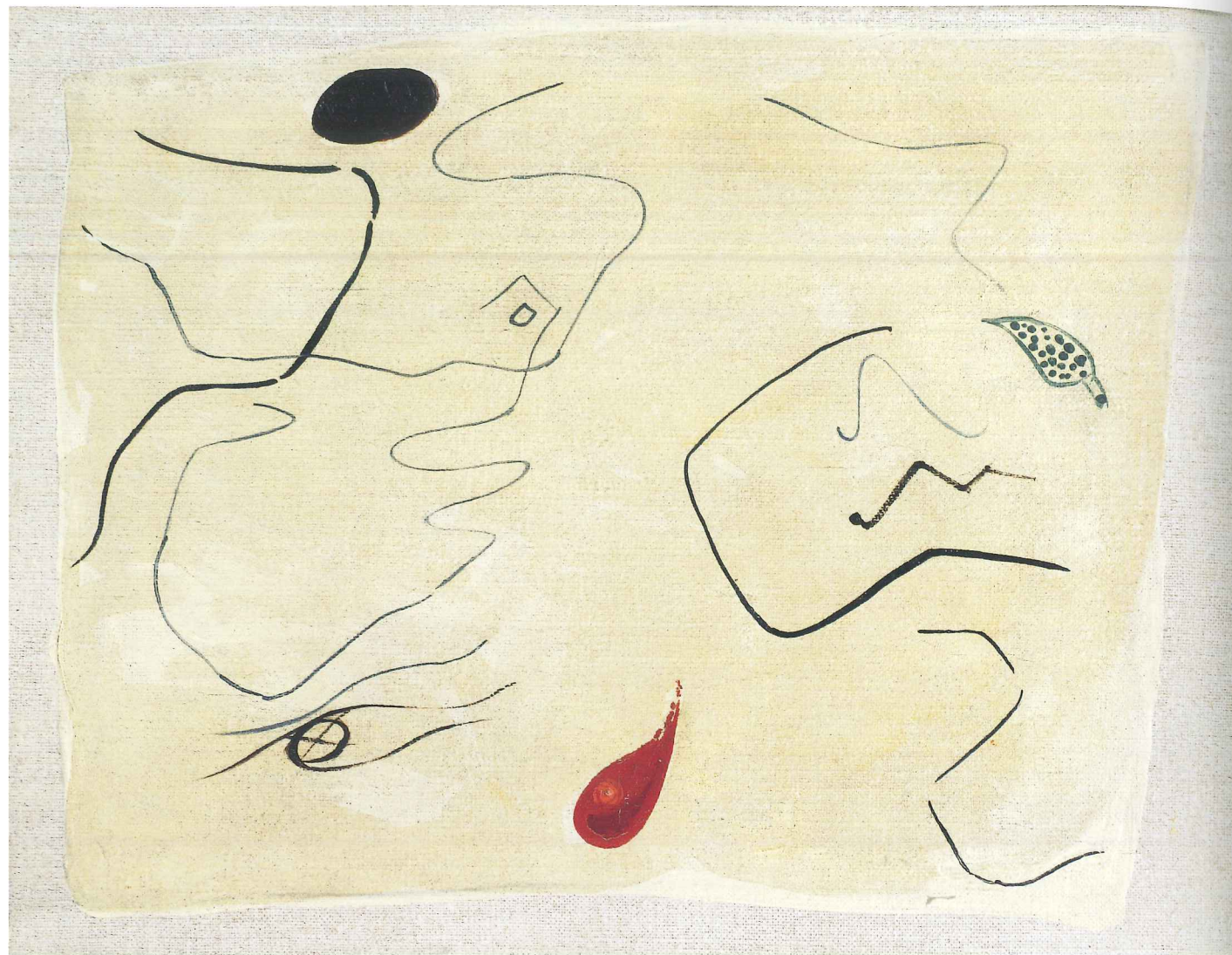


A

A André Masson, *Abattoir*, 1930 (cat. 105)
B André Masson, *The Wing*, 1925 (cat. 101)



B

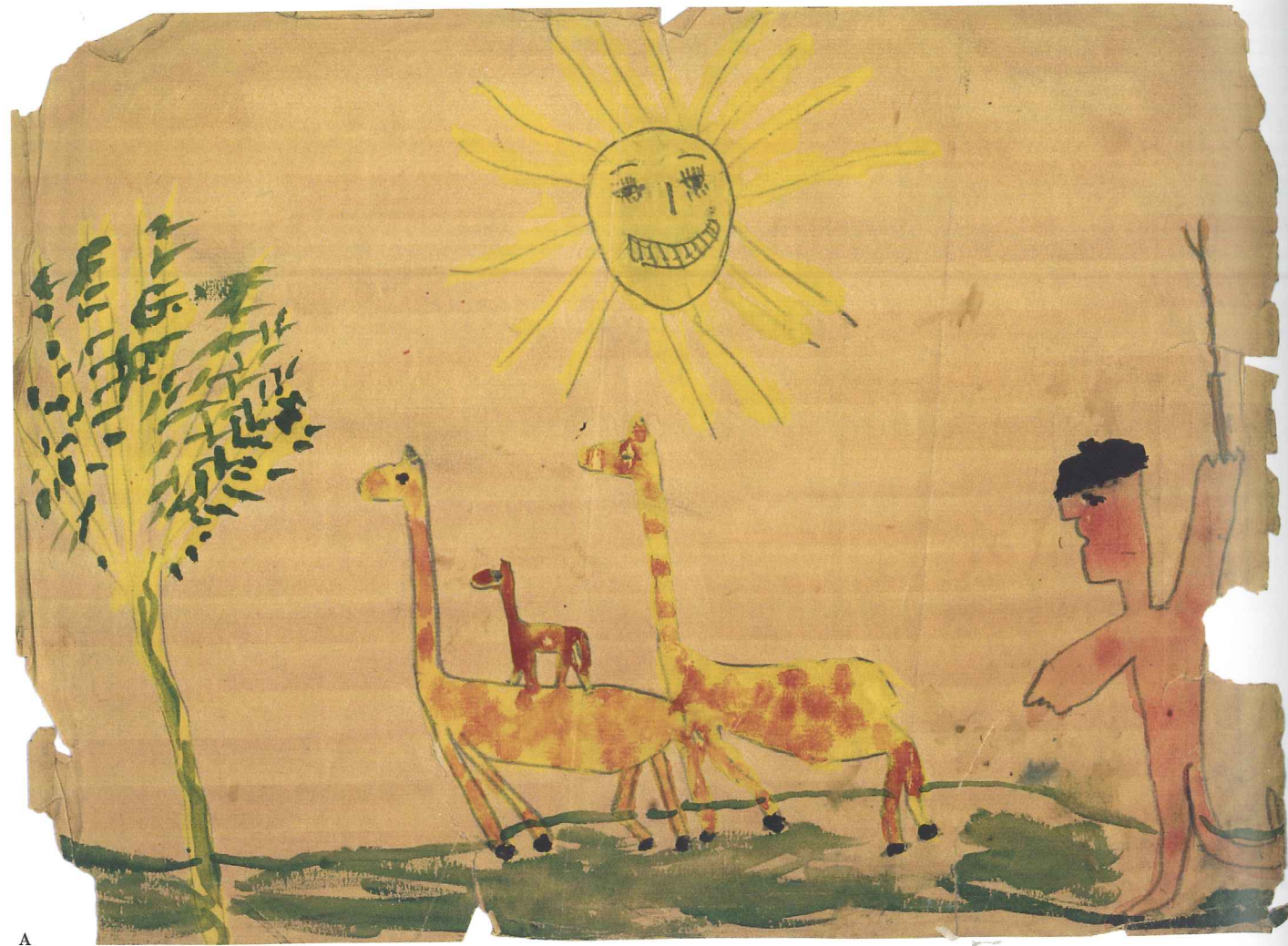


A

A André Masson, *The Drop of Blood*, 1927
(cat. 103)
B André Masson, *The Dead Horses*, 1927
(cat. 102)



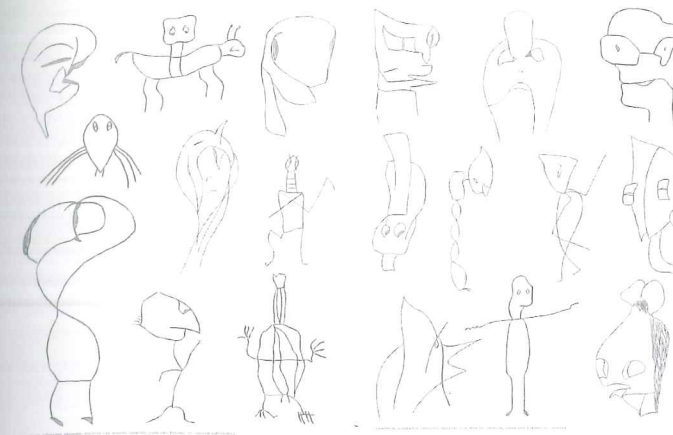
B



A

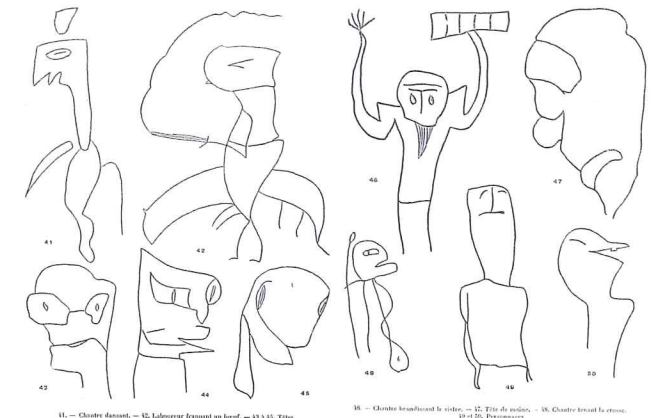
MAKING MARKS

There are many unlikely artists whose works rub up against one another in DOCUMENTS. But perhaps the least likely encounter is that between nine-year-old Lili Masson and her Ethiopian peers, the children whose graffiti is reproduced in Georges Bataille's essay 'Primitive Art' (7, 1930). This serendipitous meeting was inspired by Bataille's review of a book of the same title by Georges-Henri Luquet which explained so-called 'primitive art' (the tendency of prehistoric peoples to make marks, even if only with 'dirty hands wiped across walls') through anachronistic comparison with the doodles of children.¹ The illustrations for Bataille's review, however, were taken not from Luquet's book but from a friendly family (the Massons) and a contemporary study of the silhouettes and graffiti found in Ethiopian churches by Marcel Griaule.² In his review, Bataille engages with the logic of earlier books by the same author which posit the idea that a process of deformation is at the heart of childhood image-making.³ Bataille drives a wedge through Luquet's argument, suggesting an important distinction between the prehistoric urge to deform (which is 'reserved for the representation of the human form') and



C

- A Lili Masson, *Poor Giraffe*, 1930 (cat. 106)
 B Georges-Henri Luquet, *Le Dessin Enfantin*, 1927 (cat. 164)
 C Spread from DOCUMENTS, 7, 1930
 D Spread from Marcel Griaule, *Silhouettes et graffiti abyssins*, (1930), 2001 (cat. 161)

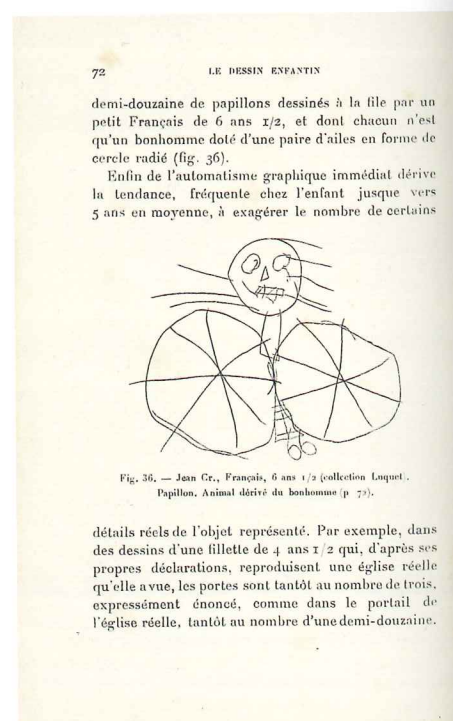


D

contemporary children's drawings, which show an insatiable desire for alteration:

'It is a matter, above all, of transforming what is at hand ... this evolution is easy to follow, starting with some scribbles. Chance isolates a visual resemblance from a few strange lines that can be fixed through repetition. This phase represents a second degree of transformation, that is to say, that the altered object (paper or wall) is transformed to the point where it becomes a new object, a horse, a head, a man. Finally, by dint of repetition, this new object is itself altered by a series of deformations. Art, since that is incontestably what it is, proceeds in this sense through successive destructions.'⁴

The art of drawing is not simply a matter of making one's mark but of changing forever the surface upon which that mark is made. 'I remember,' Bataille says, 'having practiced such scrawls: I spent a whole year smearing the suit of the student in front of me with ink from my ink well.'⁵ Luquet's association of such a strategy with primitive or prehistoric peoples (and the link to children) is problematised not only by the sophistication of Lili Masson's whimsical watercolour, but by the inclusion elsewhere in DOCUMENTS of stained, scribbled-over pages from Pablo Picasso's sketchbooks and Joan Miró's wildly crossed-out 1930 paintings. In fact, Bataille's short text 'Joan Miró: Recent Paintings' (7, 1930, the next entry in this book) also followed his 'Primitive Art' essay in DOCUMENTS, so the reader moves directly from one kind of mark making to the other. Neither did Bataille's interest in the value of such scrawls stop here, for it is now clear that at this time Bataille himself engaged in doodling and mark making of his own. Two sets of drawings attributed to Bataille (some of which have a striking affinity with Miró's work) came to the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York through a Dr Dausse, a friend of the psychoanalyst Adrien Borel who treated Bataille briefly in 1926.⁶ **SB**



B

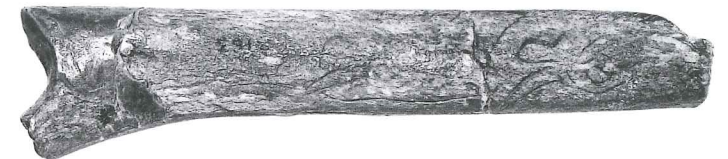


A

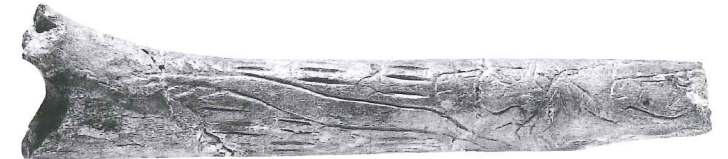
- A Anon, North America (Blackfoot),
Robe, Dress (with Painted Figures),
1820–65 (cat. 51)
- B Anon, France (Dordogne,
La Madeleine), *Perforated Baton with
Low Relief Horse*, late Magdalenian,
c.12,500 years old (cat. 34)
- C Anon, France (Dordogne,
La Madeleine), *Perforated Baton*,
late Magdalenian, c.15,000 years
old (cat. 32)
- D Anon, France (Charente, Roc de
Sers), *Rock with Engraved Bird*,
Solutrean, c.20,000 years old (cat. 31)



B



C

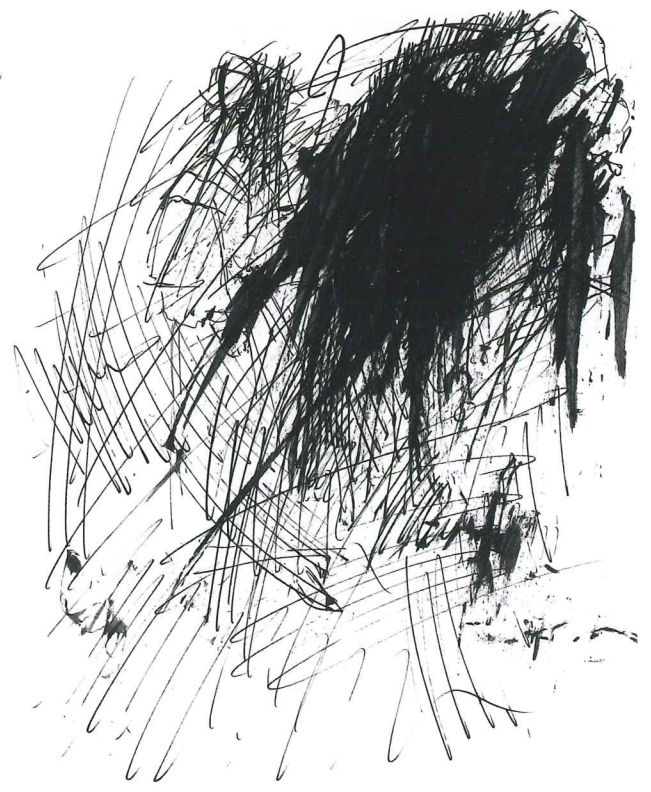


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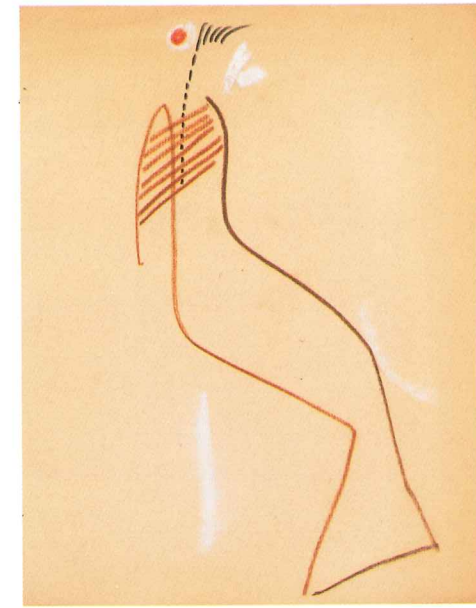
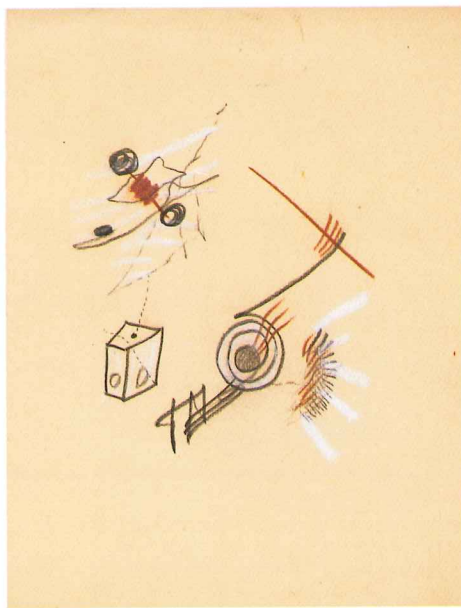
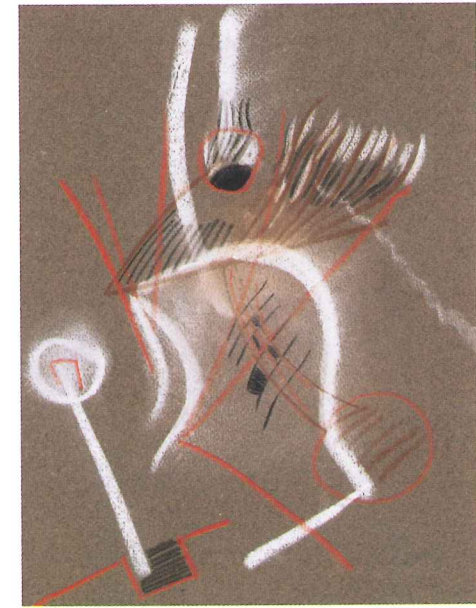
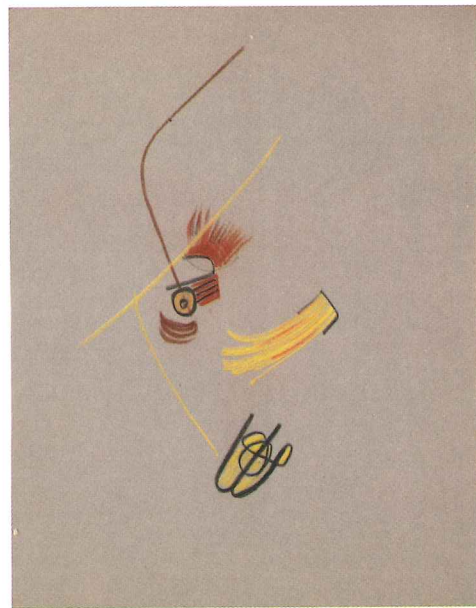
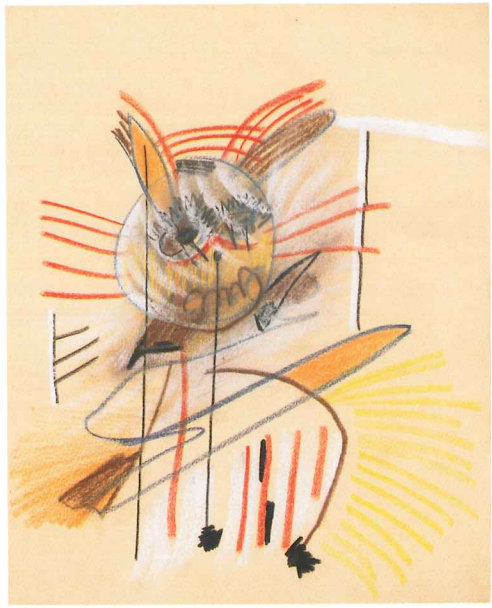
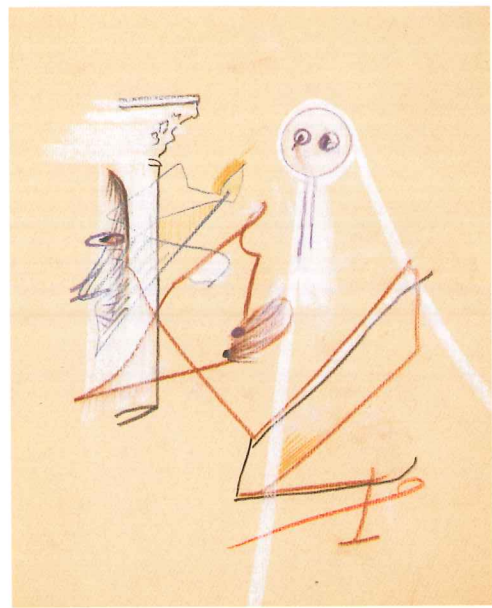
A 2 pages from Pablo Picasso, *Sketchbook 1044, Dinard, 1928* (cat. 131)
B Georges Bataille, *Untitled Drawings for Vitreous Sun (Soleil Vitré)*, n.d. (cat. 64)



17 JAN 1928

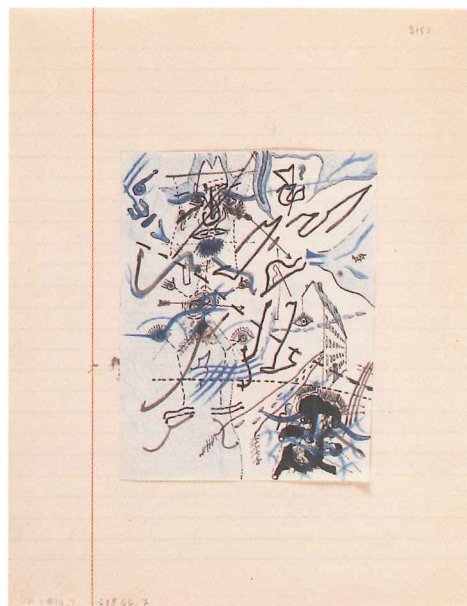
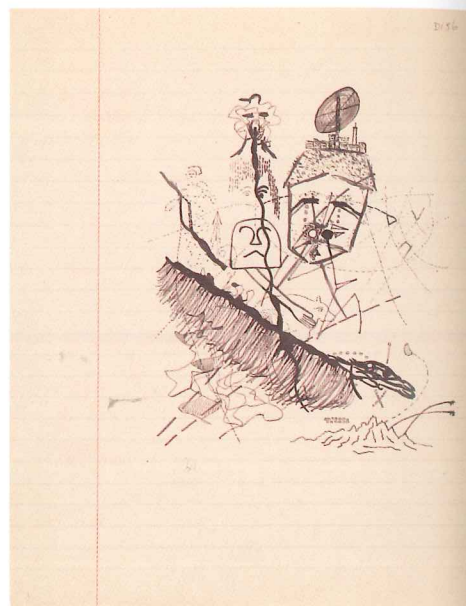
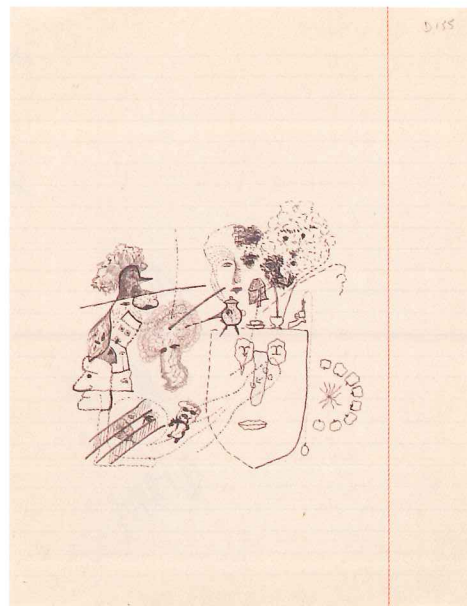
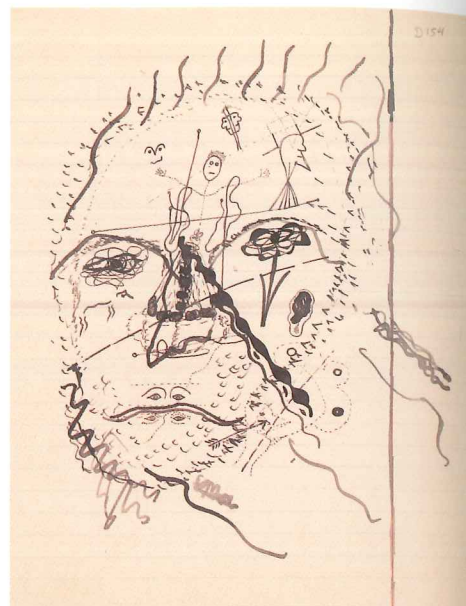
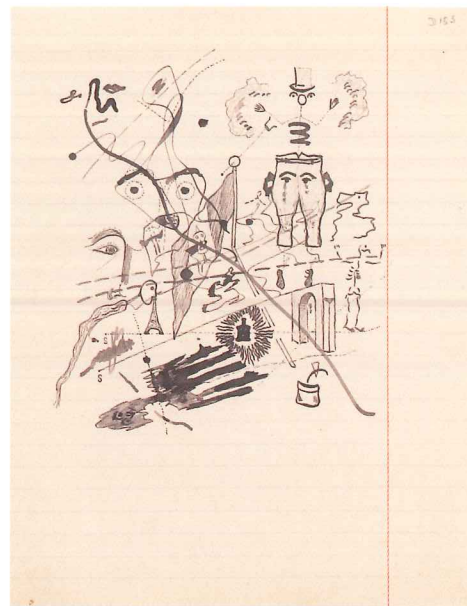


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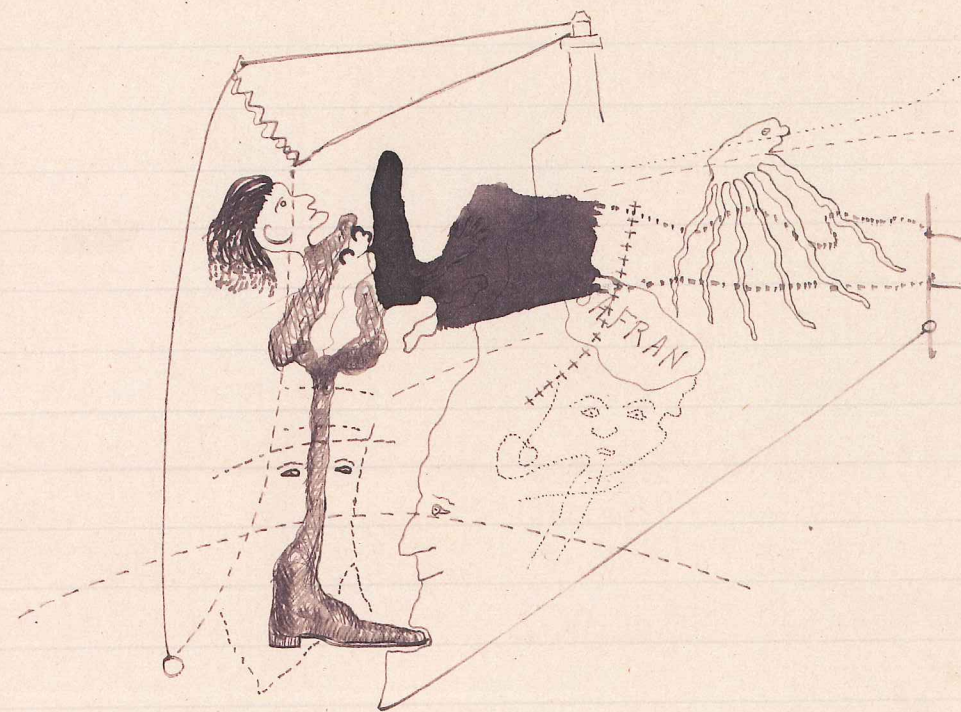


B

Georges Bataille, *Untitled Drawings for Vitreous Sun (Soleil Vitre)*, n.d. (cat. 64)



Le plus important était évidemment de substituer
une fonction négative à une fonction positive
On pouvait ajouter des preuves confirmant l'impression
d'aboutissement inévitable ?



JOAN MIRÓ

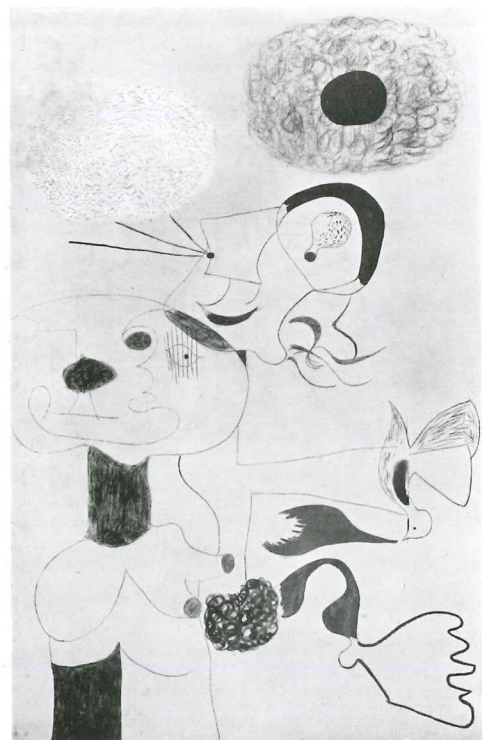
JOAN MIRÓ: RECENT PAINTINGS

Georges Bataille

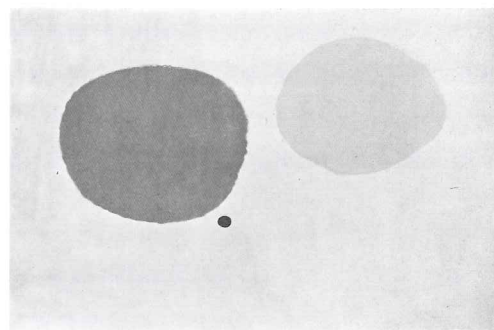
The various paintings by Miró we are publishing here represent the most recent stage reached by this painter whose present evolution has a rather remarkable interest. Joan Miró begins with a representation of objects so meticulous that at a certain point they turn reality to dust, a sort of sunlit dust. Subsequently, these tiny objects individually liberate themselves from all reality and appear as a throng of decomposed elements which are also a lot more agitated. Finally, as Miró himself professed to want to 'kill painting', the decomposition was pushed to such a point that nothing else remained but a few formless stains on the lid (or on the tombstone, if you prefer) of the box of tricks. The little angry and alienated elements proceeded to a new irruption, before once more disappearing today into these paintings, leaving only the traces of who knows what disaster.

DOCUMENTS, 7, 1930. Translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson

BEAUX-ARTS, MAKING MARKS, FORM



JOAN MIRÓ, PEINTURE, 1930 (230 x 150 cm) — GALERIE PERRÉ



JOAN MIRÓ, PEINTURE, 1930 (130 x 225 cm) — GALERIE PERRÉ

JOAN MIRÓ : PEINTURES RÉCENTES

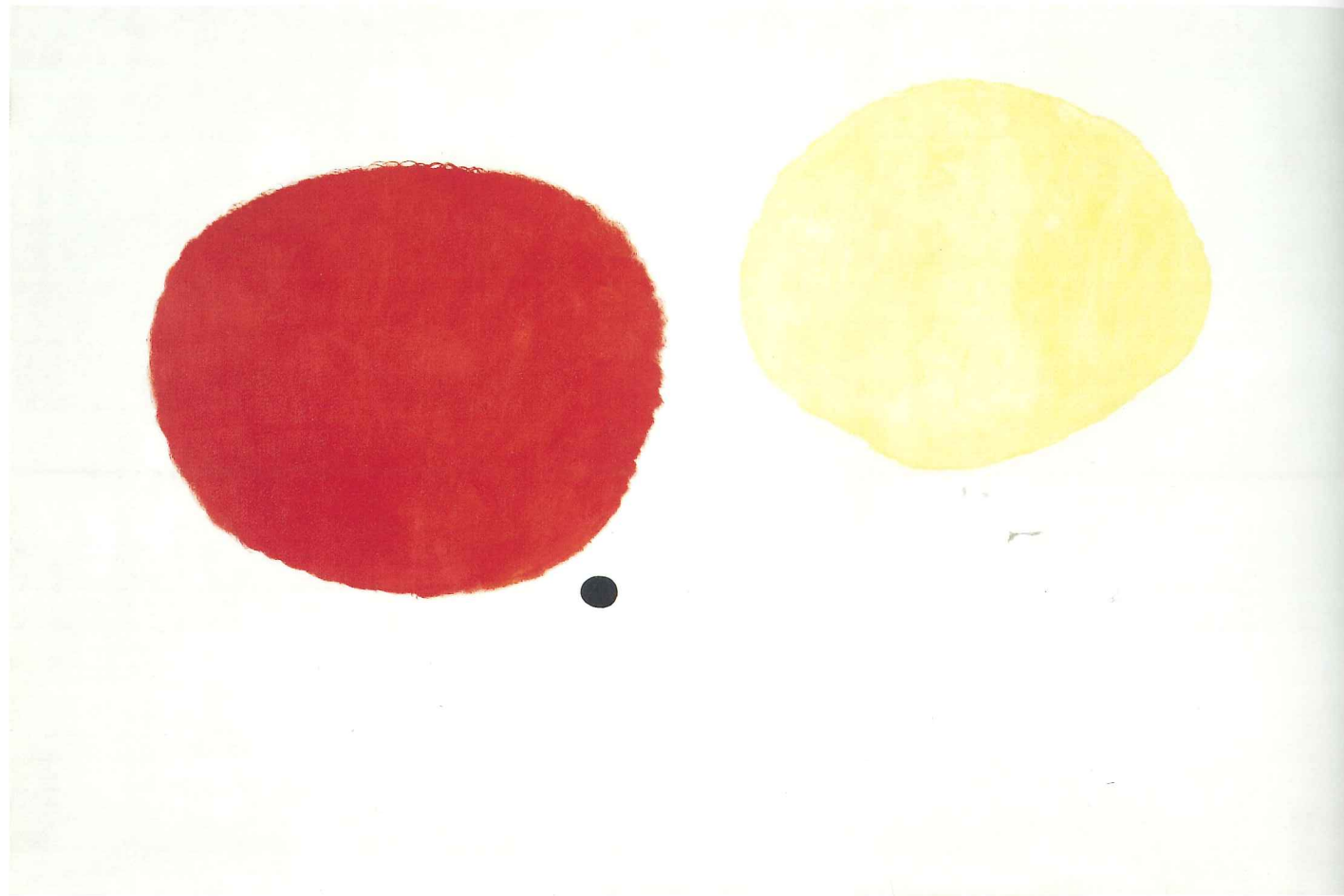
Les quelques peintures de Miró que nous publions ici représentent l'étape la plus récente de ce peintre dont l'évolution présente un intérêt bien singulier. Joan Miró est parti d'une représentation des objets si minutieuse qu'elle mettait jusqu'à un certain point la réalité en poussière, une sorte de poussière ensoleillée. Par la suite, ces objets infimes eux-mêmes se libèrent individuellement de toute réalité et apparurent comme une foule d'éléments décomposés et d'autant plus agités. Enfin comme Miró lui-même professait qu'il voulait « tuer la peinture », la décomposition fut poussée à tel point qu'il ne resta plus que quelques taches informes sur le couvercle (ou sur la pierre tombale, si l'on veut) de la boîte à malices. Puis les petits éléments colorés et aliénés procédèrent à une nouvelle irruption, puis ils disparaissent encore une fois aujourd'hui dans ces peintures, laissant seulement les traces d'on ne sait quel désastre. — G. B.

399

A Spread from *DOCUMENTS*, 7, 1930
B Joan Miró, *Painting-Poem (Music - Seine - Michel, Bataille and I)*, 1927 (cat. 107)



B



A

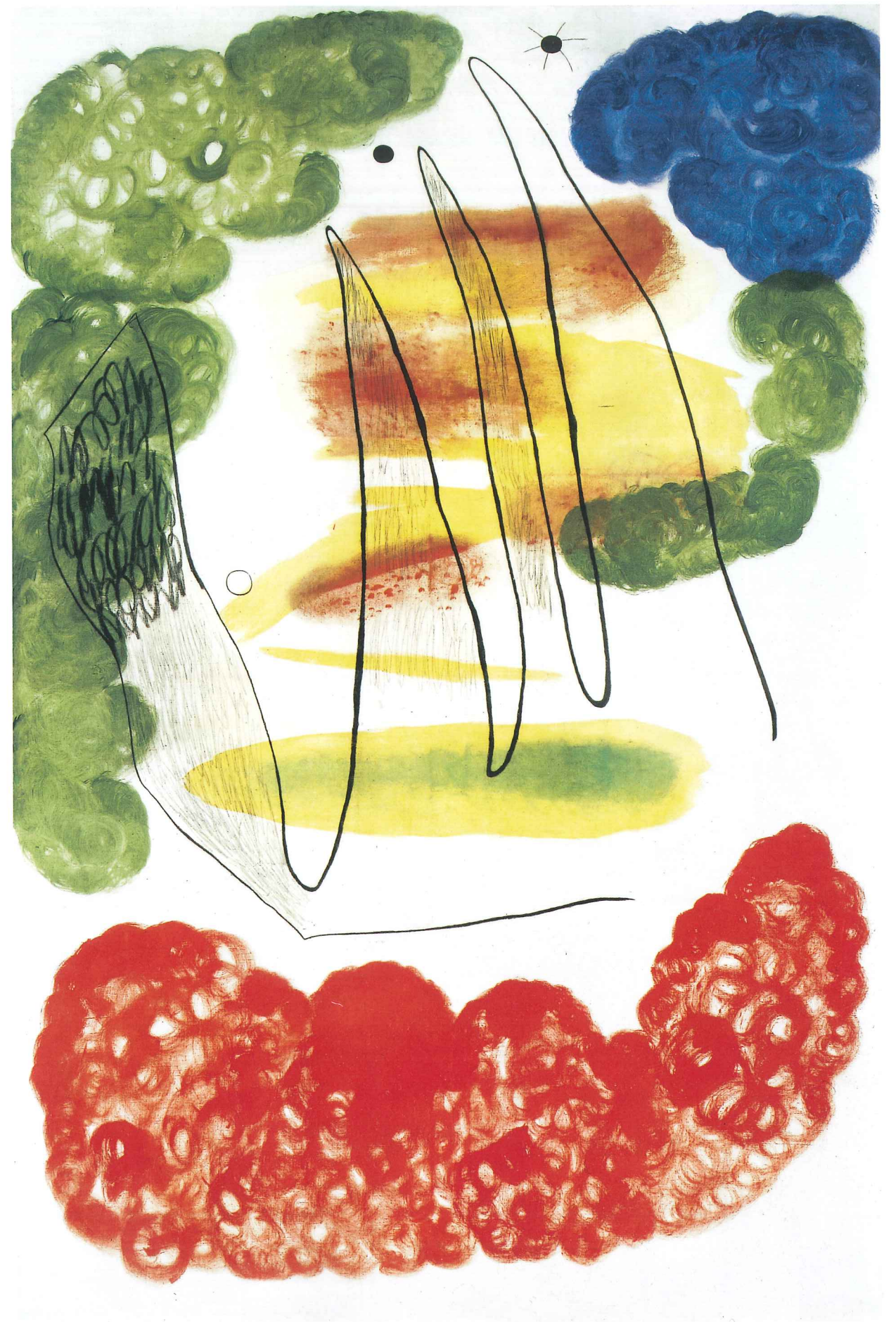
- A Joan Miró, *Painting (The Magic of Colour)*, 1930 (fig. 13)
 B Joan Miró, *Painting*, 1930 (cat. 109)
 C (overleaf) Joan Miró, *Composition*, 1930 (cat. 108)
 D (overleaf) Joan Miró, *Painting*, 1930 (cat. 110)



B



C



D



A



B



C

ETHIOPIA

In retrospect, DOCUMENTS appears like a bridge not only between Surrealism and ethnography but also, as far as French ethnography is concerned, between the dusting off of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, which began in 1928 (with Paul Rivet as its director and Georges Henri Rivière as its vice-director), and the opening of the Musée de l'Homme in 1938. In many regards, the two years during which DOCUMENTS was published were also a parenthesis between the two ethnographic missions that Marcel Griaule headed in Ethiopia or, more precisely, the part of Ethiopia associated with the name Abyssinia (the legendarily unapproachable ancient fortress of the north-west mountains). Ethiopia looms large (larger and larger) in the background of DOCUMENTS. Griaule carried out his first mission to the country in 1928 and 1929 with Marcel Larget. Upon his return to Paris, in July of 1929, he assumed the position of DOCUMENTS' managing editor, which Georges Henri Rivière had promised him before his departure, and which Georges Limbour and Michel Leiris had occupied on a temporary basis. The second expedition was the Dakar-Djibouti Mission, which lasted two years, from May 1931 to March 1933. It is probably not an accident that DOCUMENTS did not survive its departure as the expedition involved many of the journal's contributors.

Why Ethiopia? The geopolitical framework cannot be ignored with the recent territorial expansion of Ethiopia, accompanied under Emperor Menelik II by the rebirth of a central imperial power, the creation of a new capital in Addis Ababa, and the risky exposure of the country, half-actively, half-passively, to the uncontrollable game of international competition. In 1922 Ethiopia became (after Liberia and white South Africa) the third African Member of the League of Nations. In November 1930, publicity savvy Ras Tafari staged his own coronation as Emperor (King of Kings) in front of the world media, taking the name by which he is best known, Haile Selassie. The event gave the most supportive Western powers the impression of being witness and tutors to what they optimistically interpreted as the accelerating growth of a modern state, with all the threats such a modernisation implied for as old a civilization as Ethiopia.

For Griaule, Ethiopia and painting had long been associated. The first Ethiopian he encountered was 'a young educated Abyssinian, Agnagnahou Engeda, who was in Paris, sent by Tafari to further his studies as a painter at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.'¹ They met at the seminar of the linguist Marcel Cohen at the Ecole nationale des langues orientales vivantes where Griaule was studying Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia) and Gueez (an old Ethiopian language) and where Agnagnahou Engeda worked as a linguistic informer. However, the conjunction between Griaule's own interest

- A Anon, Ethiopia (Abyssinian), *Magical Prayer Scroll*, 19th C. (cat. 23)
 B Anon, Ethiopia (Abyssinian), *Magical Prayer Scroll*, 17th–18th C. (cat. 22)
 C Anon, Ethiopia (Abyssinian), *Magical Prayer Book*, 19th–20th C. (cat. 24)
 D Anon, Ethiopia (Abyssinian), *The Legend of the Queen of Sheba*, c.1920–30 (cat. 25)

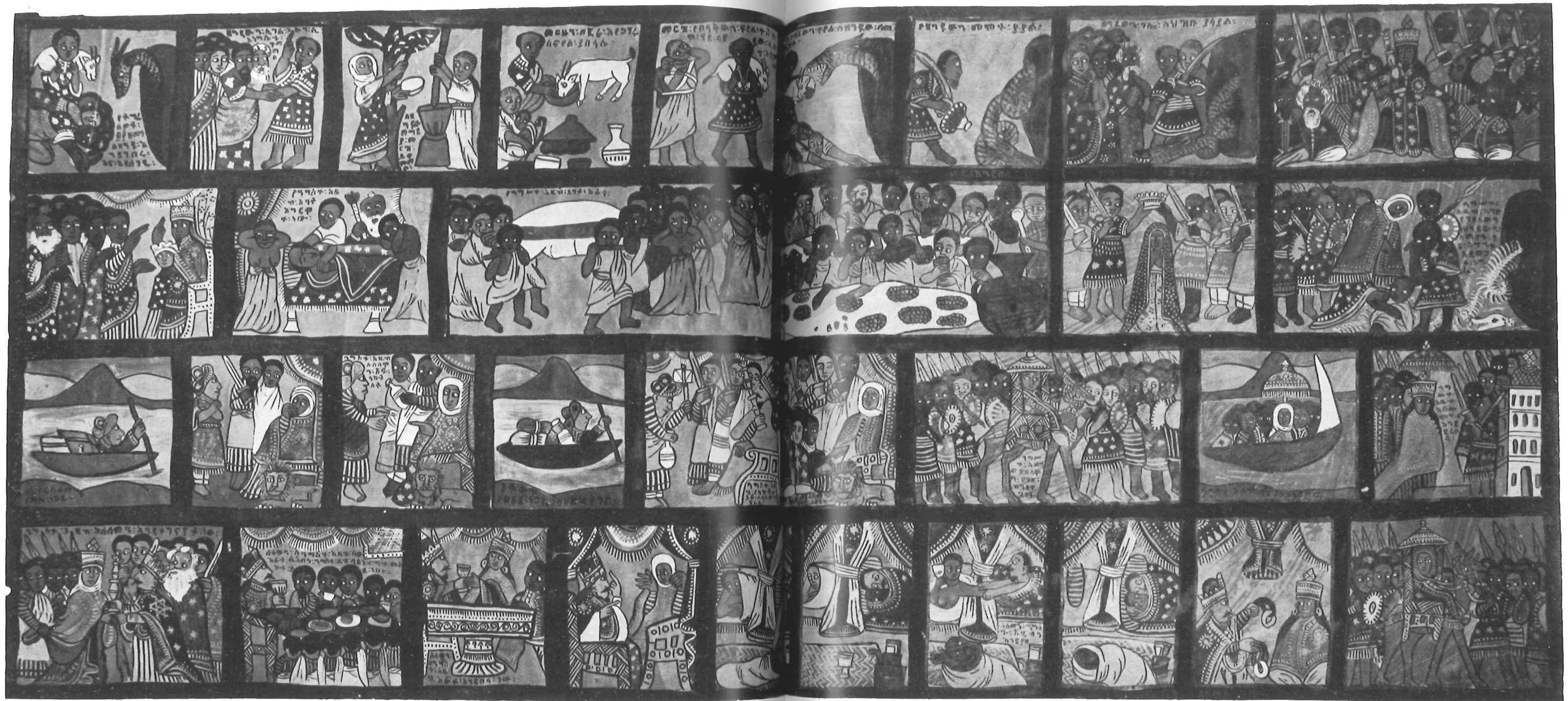
(Ethiopia) and what motivated Agnagnahou Engeda's presence in Paris (painting) doesn't seem to have produced any sparkle in Griaule. He never took into consideration anything but Agnagnahou Engeda's ethnographic, philological and mythological background. None of the Ethiopian iconographic material published in DOCUMENTS is credited to him.

During his first mission, Griaule stayed mostly in the north-western province of Godjam whose leader, Ras Haylou, was at the time an enterprising religious builder, constructing new churches and ruthlessly restoring old ones. Griaule, having witnessed the 'clean-up' of about 20 churches, all of which had eighteenth- or nineteenth-century wall paintings, became as alarmed as Victor Hugo had been a century earlier with the Romantic reinvention of the Gothic. He felt that Ethiopians, having long lost their professional skills, could only have their paintings saved by specialists from Europe.² Griaule's attitude in this matter relied on the same premises he had already used during the first part of the Dakar-Djibouti Mission in western colonial Africa: do not count on the natives to salvage their past (that is why the painter Gaston-Louis Roux, one of the artists actively supported by DOCUMENTS, joined the Dakar-Djibouti Mission).

However, not all 'sacred' art had disappeared from Ethiopia's culture. Griaule brought back from his first mission and published in DOCUMENTS samples of graphic productions that could still be qualified as 'religious', even though some of them were endowed with the marginal, transgressive, almost clandestine dimension of magic that perfectly fit with the heterodox values Georges Bataille and his allies cultivated in the journal. There were amulets painted, not by painters but by *dabtara* (healers), on strips of parchment cut to the same size as the body of the commissioning client and rolled in a cylindrical leather case. Griaule used a detail of one of these to



D



The Legend of the Queen of Sheba, Ethiopian Painting (230 × 88 cm), Collection of Marcel Griaule

First Row

1. The adoration of the Serpent King by the people of Tigray
2. Agabos promising the notables that he will kill the Serpent
3. Preparing the poison
4. A goat taking the poison
5. Agabos carrying the goat
6. The bait being offered to the Serpent
7. Death of the Serpent
8. The presentation of the dead Serpent to the people
9. Agabos ascending to the throne

Second Row

1. The presentation to the people of the future queen, the daughter of King Agabos
2. The death of Agabos
3. The funeral of Agabos
4. The ritual feast of parents and guests after the King's funeral
5. The crowning of the Queen of Sheba.
6. The Queen of Sheba visiting the skeleton of the Serpent. The Queen, pricked in the foot by a bone, is cared for by a servant

Third Row

1. A merchant from Jerusalem crossing the sea
2. The reception of the merchant by the Queen of Sheba
3. Presentation of gifts for Solomon
4. The merchant returning to his country
5. The reception of the merchant by Solomon
6. The Queen holding council on the subject of a voyage to the country of the great King
7. The Queen's caravan
8. Crossing the sea
9. Arriving in Jerusalem

Fourth Row

1. The reception of the Queen by Solomon
2. A banquet offered by Solomon to the Queen's followers
3. The meal offered to the Queen
4. Solomon propositioning his guest
5. Solomon surprising the Queen's servant
6. Solomon sleeping with the servant
7. Solomon taking the Queen
8. Solomon sleeping with the Queen of Sheba.
9. Solomon presenting gifts to his guest
10. The Queen of Sheba returning home

A Spread from DOCUMENTS, 7, 1930

B Anon, *Michel Leiris during the Dakar-Djibouti Mission, c.1931-32* (cat. 17)

C Anon, *Marcel Griaule at Addis Ababa, 1933* (cat. 16)

illustrate his first contribution to DOCUMENTS, the 'Evil Eye' section of the 'Eye' entry to the Critical Dictionary (4, 1929). There were also graffiti drawn by bored rather than mischievous children during the religious services on the lower parts of the walls of churches (some of which illustrate a double page in Bataille's article 'Primitive Art' (7, 1930)).

A more secular Ethiopian artistic activity had recently begun, no longer associated with the scriptoria of the monasteries from the islands and the surroundings of Lake Tana, but with centres of political power, Western commercial and diplomatic presence, and urbanisation, i.e. mainly with Addis Ababa. Among the favourite subjects of this modern popular art was the Legend of the Queen of Sheba, a pictorial narrative told, comic strip-wise, in some 20 to 30 episodes, which was an unending success among foreign visitors, but also a subject endowed with an obvious propaganda value for a regime that never missed an opportunity to root its legitimacy in its mythical Solomonic origins. In part because they felt technically shy in front of such less codified subjects, traditionally trained painters generally kept their distance from this incipient art market – as one of them told Griaule, they were 'not used to that type of work' ('Illustrated Legend of the Queen of Sheba', 1, 1930).

In his contributions to DOCUMENTS, Griaule refers to two Ethiopian painters. The first one, Bahaylou, belonged to this new breed of popular painters whose style and choice of subject matter answer a growing demand, both external and internal, for Ethiopian iconographic authenticity. Griaule credits him for the drawings that accompany 'the illustrated legend of the aloe' in 'Abyssinian Totemism' (6, 1929). In all likelihood, he also may very well have been the 'young Abyssinian from Addis Ababa (Choa), but whose native place is Begamder', who painted *The Legend of the Queen of Sheba* (1, 1930). The second painter was Agnagnahou Engeda. His name doesn't appear in DOCUMENTS, even though, as Griaule confirms in a later article, Agnagnahou Engeda was the informer who introduced him to the aloe myth in 1925 in Paris. In both articles, however, the accompanying drawings are credited to 'an artist, born in Begamder, but living in Addis Ababa, Bahaylou'. They are dated 1928, which suggests a chronological and geographical explanation to Griaule's silence about Agnagnahou Engeda: Bahaylou happened to be in Addis Ababa when Griaule was researching there, while Agnagnahou Engeda had remained in Paris.³ But one suspects that there may have been a deeper reason, especially when one reads in the substantial entry the *Encyclopaedia Ethiopica* devotes to Agnagnahou Engeda that he was 'the most prominent Ethiopian artist of the early twentieth century'. As opposed to Bahaylou and the new secular and popular painters, instead of playing the card of Ethiopian authenticity in front of the world, he played the Western card in Ethiopia. Which is why,



L'ŒIL DE L'ETHNOGRAPHE

(A propos de la Mission Dakar-Djibouti)



Le grand-père de l'ethnologue — un Akas de 1911 — de la mission Dakar-Djibouti qui se trouve, en haut à gauche, de la mission Dakar-Djibouti. Le grand-père de l'ethnologue — un Akas de 1911 — de la mission Dakar-Djibouti qui se trouve, en haut à gauche, de la mission Dakar-Djibouti. Le grand-père de l'ethnologue — un Akas de 1911 — de la mission Dakar-Djibouti qui se trouve, en haut à gauche, de la mission Dakar-Djibouti.



B

for Griaule, his Parisian informer was anything but an Ethiopian painter. And it is with him in mind that he praises the painter of *The Legend of the Queen of Sheba* for 'an effort at least as interesting as that of painters on the payroll of the King of Ethiopia who are sent in our schools to learn an art that is valid only for our part of the world' (1, 1930). Sensitive to the danger of a subservient infatuation with a Western model of painting, Griaule thinks that Ethiopian painting should grow organically and not mimetically. **DH**

THE QUESTION OF LAY ETHNOGRAPHY, RHYTHM





A

RHYTHM

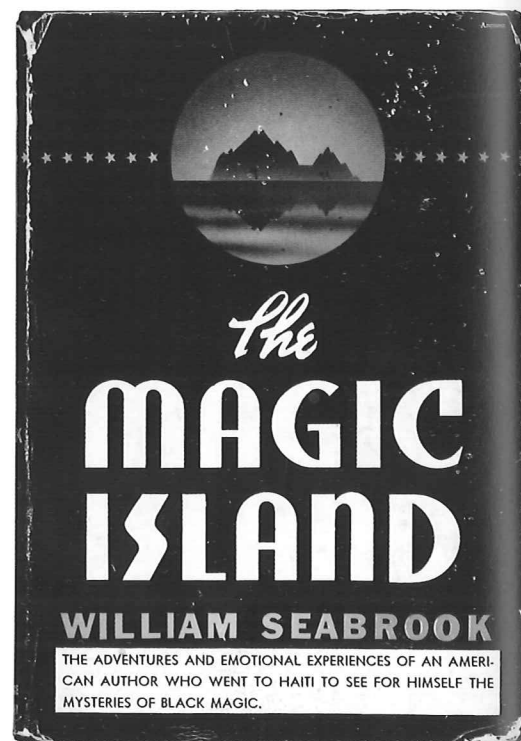
Rhythm beats through the heart of DOCUMENTS, from the Ethiopian earth-drum, the most rudimentary possible percussive bass, to the cutting-edge syncopation of Duke Ellington's Cotton Club Orchestra. There are careful eye-witness accounts of Haitian Voodoo ceremonies in William Seabrook's book *The Magic Island* (1929) and Alejo Carpentier's transcriptions of the magic symbols on Cuban drums in a groundbreaking account of the traditional Cuban music known as 'Son'. This is not the beginning of the anodyne enthusiasm of 'world music' but a deeper, more intense engagement with the social functions of the medium. André Schaeffner, a musicologist who contributed frequently to DOCUMENTS, exemplified this attitude, challenging the foundations of the rhetorical structures that European institutions applied (and still apply) to the music of other cultures. He was particularly interested in the ethnographic display of African objects like the anthropomorphic harp and drum, which in addition to being working instruments, had human or animal forms ('Musical Instruments in an Ethnographic Museum', 5, 1929). The problem, as Schaeffner saw it, was how to balance the relative importance of form (their iconographies) with the functions of the instruments (the ways they were played, sounded and were used) in determining how the objects should be displayed. More important than this critical perspective, however, was the sheer scope of musical interest that Schaeffner brought to DOCUMENTS. From reviewing Stravinsky and jazz performed in Paris, to making field-recordings of African musicians on the Dakar-Djibouti mission:

'No object of musical sound or sound production, however primitive, however formless it may seem', Schaeffner wrote, 'shall be excluded from classification ... it is only on condition that nothing of a people's musical life be deemed unworthy of examination that we can consider a general study of instrument making and scoring throughout history and the five continents.' (5, 1929)

SB

VARIETY, CINEMA

A DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929 (detail)

B Cover and 2 pages from William Seabrook, *The Magic Island*, 1929 (cat. 167)

B



"Papa Nebo," Flanked by Gouédé Mazacca the Midwife and Gouédé Oussou the Drunken One. These Are Sorceresses Who Use Corpses for Magical Purposes.



Left: The Author Under Protection of Machete and Flag. Right: Maman Célie at the Baptism of the Drums.

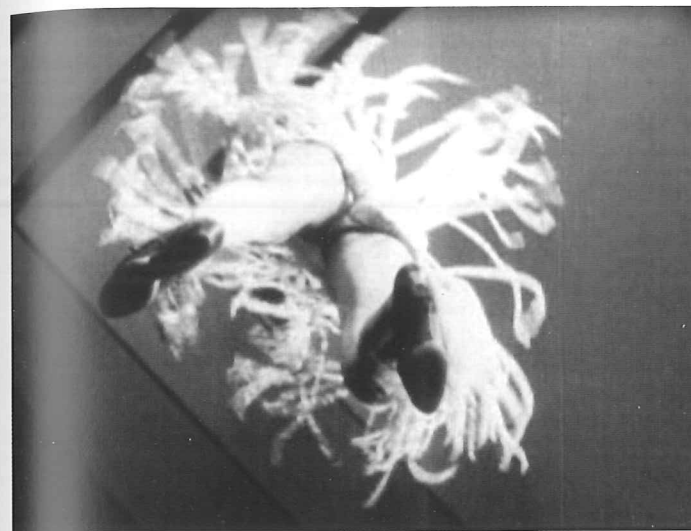
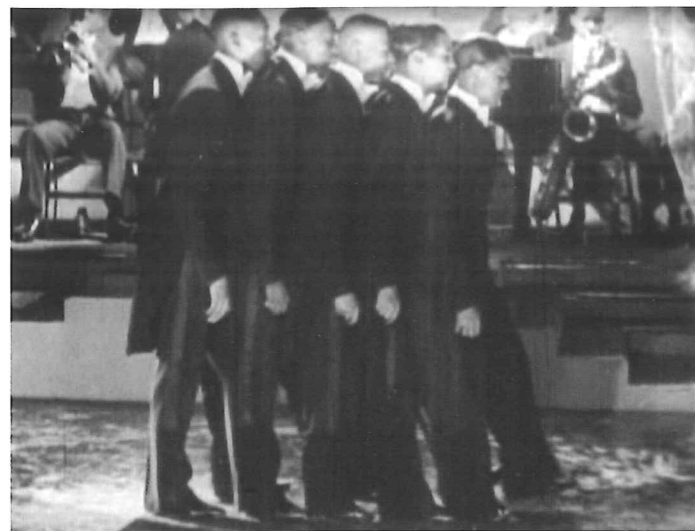


A

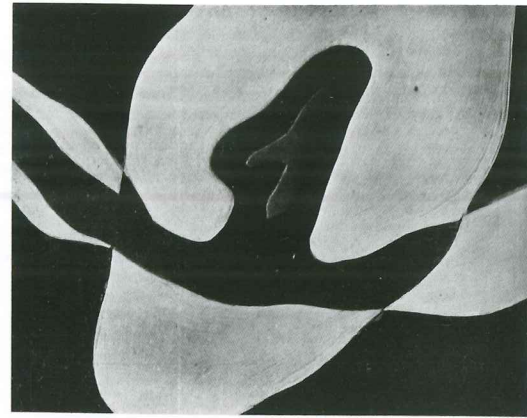
A Anon, Central Africa, *Female Anthropomorphic Arched Harp with Five Strings*, 19th C. (and detail) (cat. 21)
 B Anon, Sudan (Bahr el-Ghazal region), *Wooden Slit Drum*, late 19th C. (cat. 56)



B



Dudley Murphy (director), *Black and Tan Fantasy*, 1929 (stills) (cat. 176)



HANS ARP, MOUSTACHE SANS FIN, 1936.

L'ENFANCE NÉOLITHIQUE

Quand nous étions enfants nous mangions des gâteaux pareils aux œuvres d'Arp, faits avec de la pâte et du sucre et qu'on appelait « Dambedeys ». Nous dévorions des hommes et des femmes ennemis, des animaux, des étoiles et des cœurs, afin de renouveler et augmenter notre « mana » en nous appropriant celui des autres. Nous machions de la préhistoire et habitons dans des cavernes, nous torturons des poupées et les assassinions ensuite. Le cannibalisme, des airs de danse magiques, nous grisait jusqu'au vertige. Enfants, nous gémissions des vers incompréhensibles dans une langue que nous avions inventée pour célébrer les rites de notre clan. Nous absorbions des maisons, des hommes, des bêtes, nous nous enivrons de puissance et de sadisme, réconfortés par la force magique de la substance incorporée. Nous nous peignons le visage et les mains avec du sang de lièvre, de la farine, de l'encre et du charbon et avions

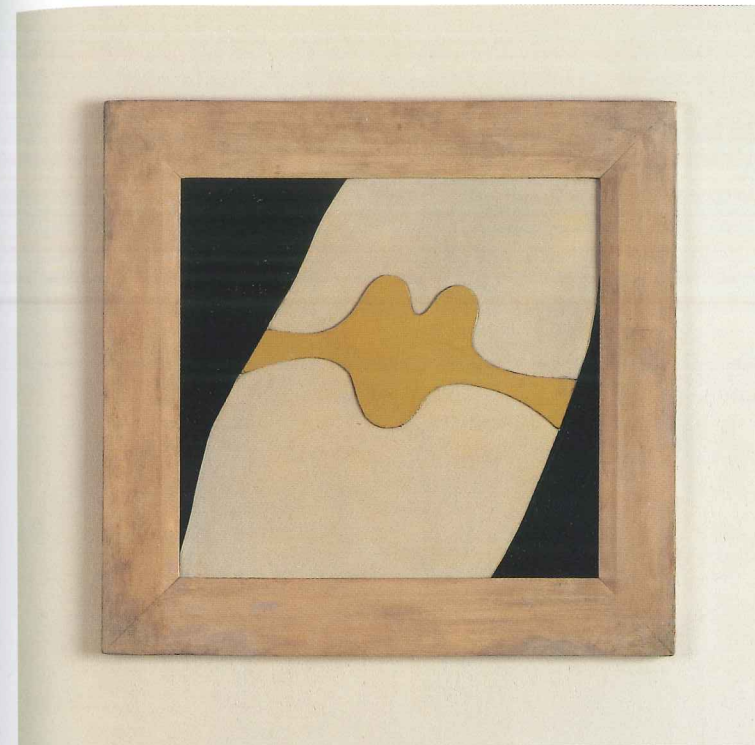
35

A

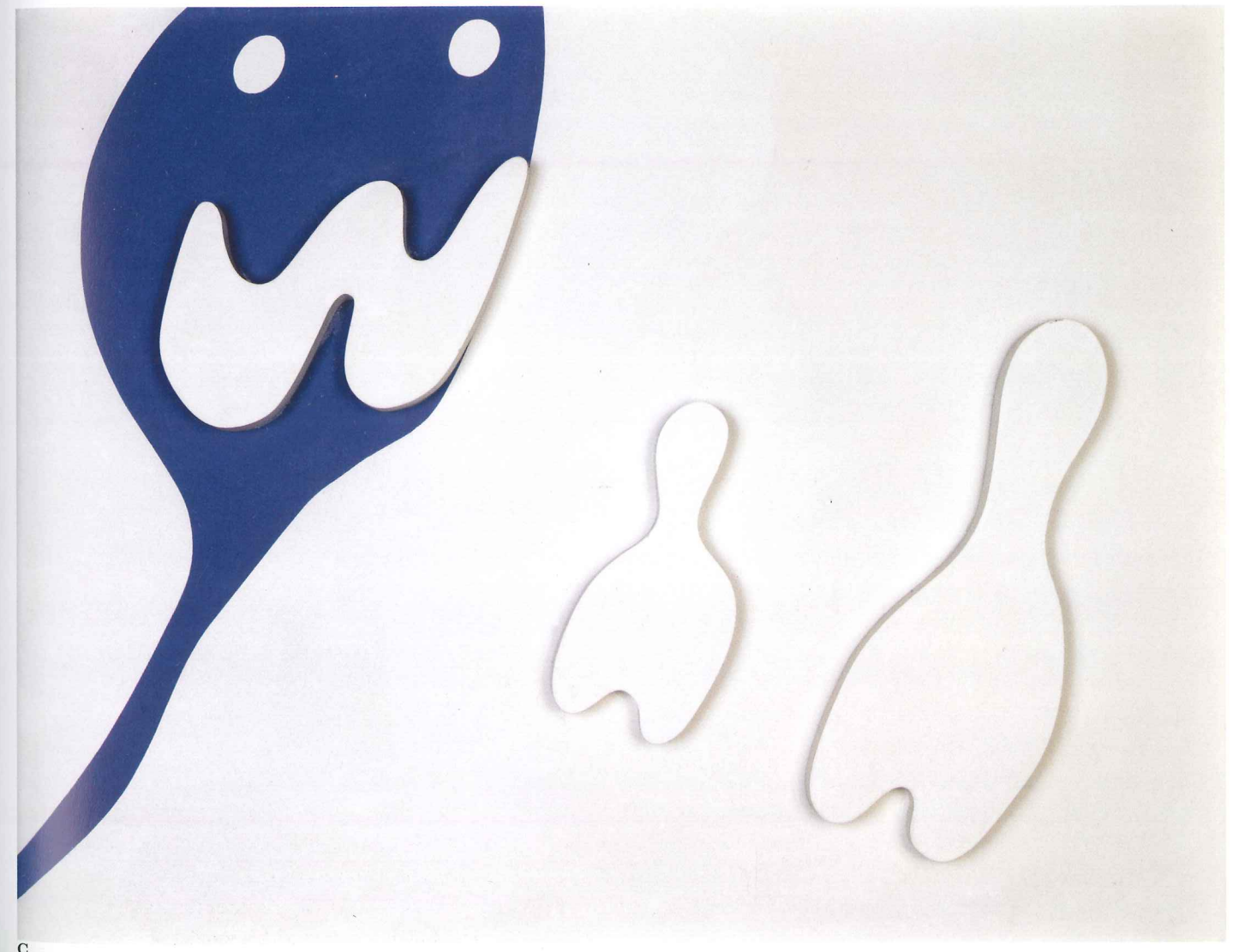
FORM

'Form' (*forme, Gestalt*) was a term that had by the 1920s become closely associated with the language of abstraction, constructivism and non-objective art. Nonetheless, it was still a word that could happily mutate between the principle of pure geometries (circle, square, sphere, cube and so on) and models of natural growth and structure. Within the many discussions about abstraction and figuration, it was non-aligned, and so particularly serviceable for those who refused the imitative representation of man, beast and apples but abjured abstract or non-objective art of the highly theoretical and rational kind, what Carl Einstein calls 'standardised and hygienic ... hypertrophies of order' ('Exhibition of Abstract Art in Zurich', 6, 1929). Why, Einstein asks, is it assumed that when forms or facts are disengaged from their conventional meaning they are spoken of as abstract and not concrete?

Bataille's Critical Dictionary entry 'Formless' (7, 1929) is in part set against this background of debates about form and meaning in modern art. Posing as a challenge to philosophy as such it argues that: '...for academics to be happy, the universe would have to take on form. The whole of philosophy has no other goal: to provide a frock coat for what is, a mathematical frock coat.' 'Formless', for Bataille, is not just an adjective with a particular meaning but a word with a job to do, and this job is



B



C

A DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930

B Hans Arp, *The Lips*, 1926 (cat. 58)C Hans Arp, *Moustache-Head and Bottles*, 1929 (cat. 62)



A

B

A Hans Arp, *Head*, 1929 (cat. 59)B Hans Arp, *Leaves IV*, 1930 (cat. 63)

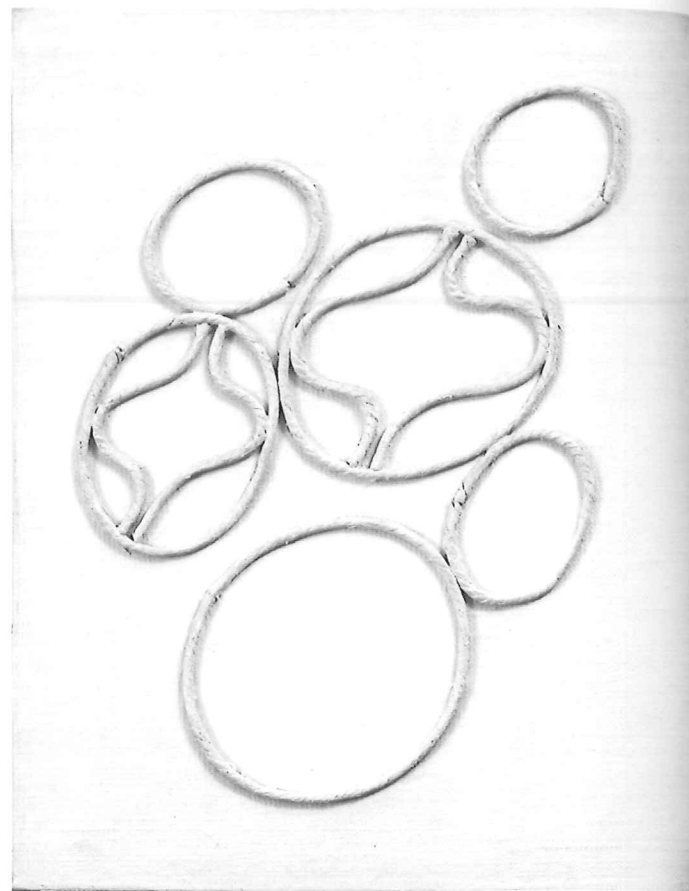
to 'declassify', to suborn identity. In a parody of academic philosophical method but also with an eye to the apparent formlessness of, for example, automatism he gives very specific 'concrete' examples: spider (twice), worm and spit. These are indeed 'something', but resemble nothing at all. But in what sense is resemblance a token of 'form'? Insofar as a work (of art) has a form is it possible for it to resemble nothing? Can it never be a thing in its own right?

The works by contemporary artists, sculptors and photographers reproduced in the pages of DOCUMENTS, drawn constantly into curious juxtaposition with other objects, are discussed not in terms of abstract aesthetic qualities but of their power to act directly on the spectator. Haunting them in retrospect but implicit throughout DOCUMENTS is Bataille's challenge: an *amateur* can never love a painting as much as a fetishist loves a shoe ('The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions', 8, 1930). So Leiris, who with Einstein is the most significant critic of contemporary art in DOCUMENTS, loves Alberto Giacometti's work because it is:

'...like the real fetishes ... (the objectivised form of our desire) ... Do not expect me to talk *sculpture* exactly.

A Hans Arp, *Leaves and Navels*, 1929

(cat. 61)

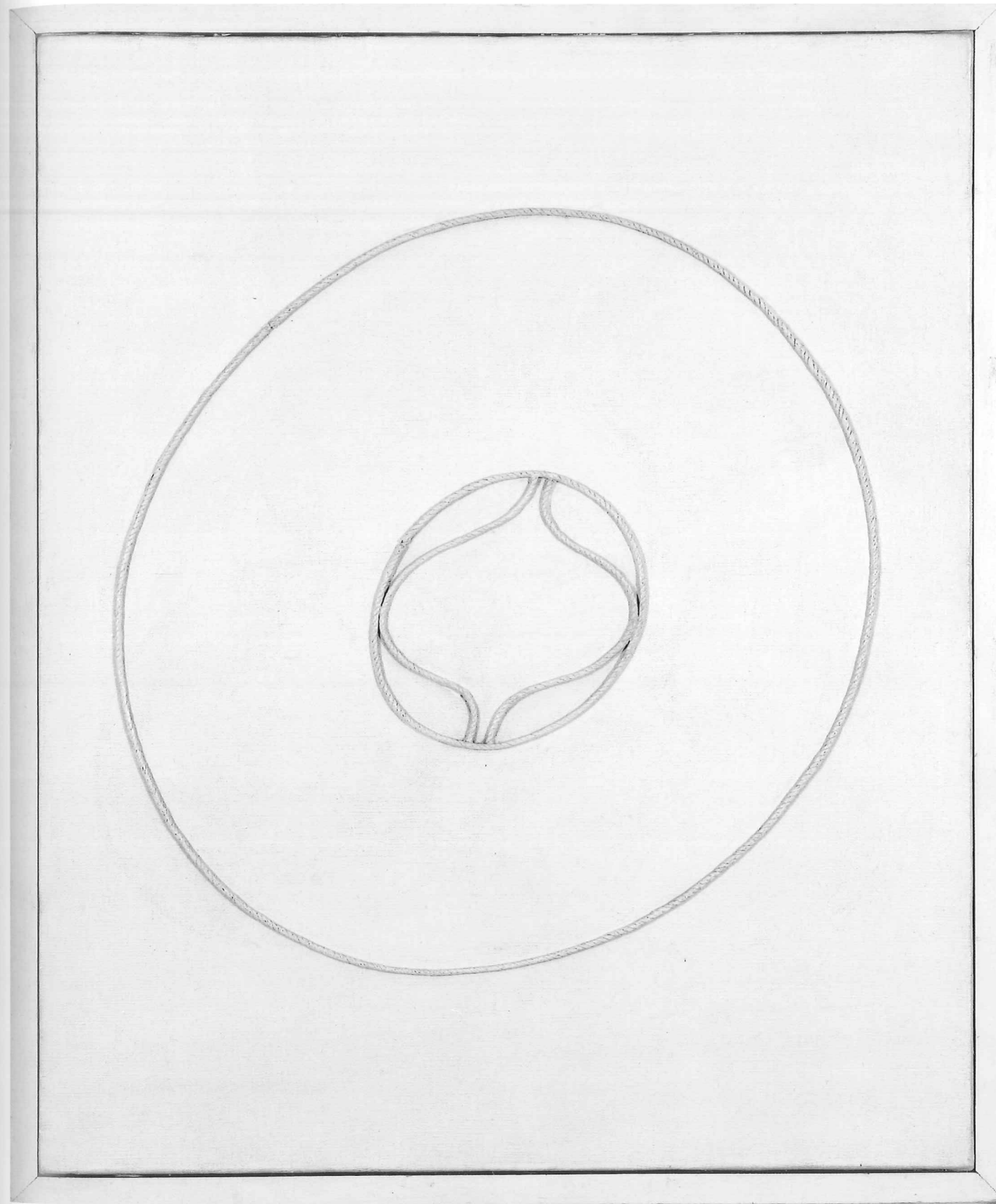
B Hans Arp, *Leaf*, 1929 (cat. 60)

A

I prefer to RAMBLE; since these beautiful objects I've been able to look at and feel ignite the ferment of so many memories in me ... Some of these sculptures are hollow like spatulas or hollowed-out fruits. Others are pierced and the air moves through them, like a mobile latticework placed between inside and out, sieves gnawed by the wind...' (Alberto Giacometti', 4, 1929)

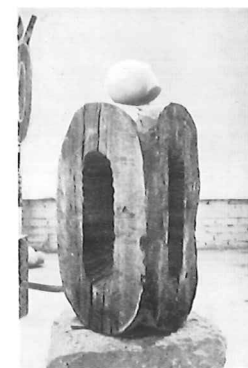
The visual parallels that are made between Giacometti's sculptures and Cycladic figurines, or between works by Jacques Lipchitz and a pre-Han Chinese bronze are as much to suggest the modern in the ancient as vice versa. However, works that may appear similar can be fundamentally different in their formal philosophy. While both Constantin Brancusi and Hans Arp reduce and simplify, Brancusi condenses appearance, affect and association while Arp annexes the notion of continual growth to an aleatory game. For Arp, who like Einstein preferred the term concrete to abstract, morphologies are fluid and identities derisory. As Leiris writes of Arp's exhibition of string and wood reliefs: 'His forms split their sides laughing and, in making almost everything resemble everything he overturns illusory classifications and the very hierarchy of created things' ('Hans Arp Exhibition', 6, 1929). Leaves resemble navels resemble mouths resemble moustaches, forms where 'names dissolve' ('Exhibition of Modern Sculpture', 7, 1929).

Shortly after 'Formless', in the same issue of DOCUMENTS, is a scathing commentary by Einstein on an



B

- A Constantin Brancusi, *Prometheus*, 1911 (cat. 80)
 B Spread from DOCUMENTS, 7, 1929
 C Constantin Brancusi, *Wood Project or Prometheus*, c.1911 (cat. 81)

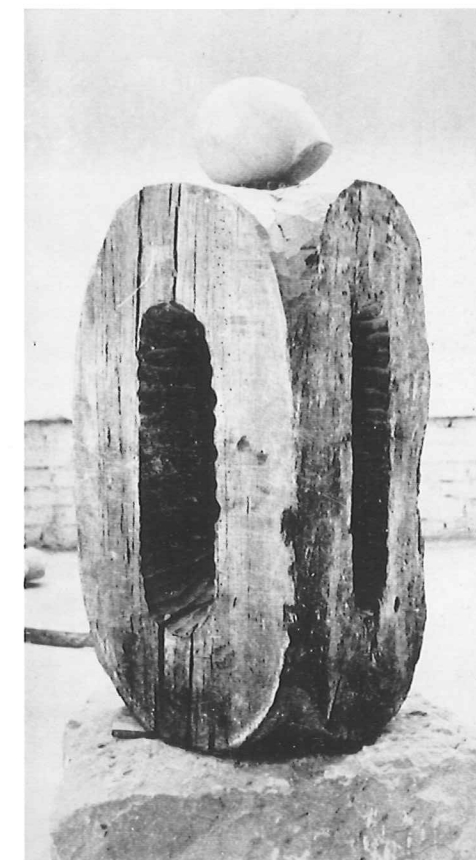


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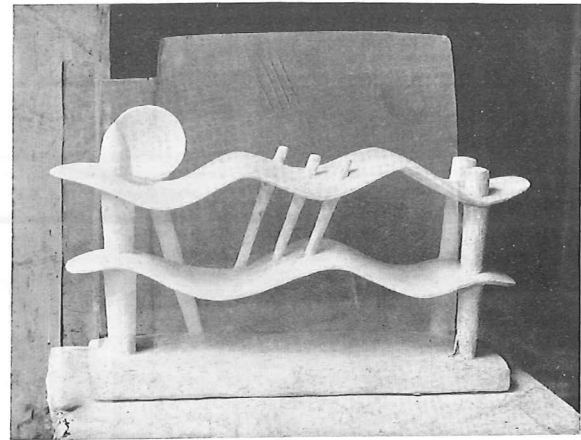
exhibition of contemporary sculpture, filled with 'orthopaedic torsos' as in some pseudo-antique gym. Accompanying Einstein's review is a photo-essay with work by the sculptors he excerpts: Brancusi, Lipchitz and Henri Laurens. Among their works are placed two other photographs: a fragment from the 'Beaux-arts' decorative friezes on the Grand Palais, of a lion's tail flowering into a ridiculous cornucopia of plants merging into the bottom of winged Cupid, and a stone picked up on the beach by Einstein, which resembles a human head. Teetering between form and formlessness, the pebble, reproduced opposite Brancusi's 'The first man' (*Prometheus*) initiates a perceptual switchback between the essentialist oval form of Brancusi's head and the reading-in of human 'resemblance' in any old shape.

Arp's attack on the mathematical straightjacket of classification through a superfluity of resemblance, making a mockery of naming, has an interesting counterpart in the close-up photographs by Karl Blossfeldt and Jean Painlevé. Here scale has an especially treacherous part to play in the question of resemblance. Close-up photography, fundamental to the natural history films of Painlevé, magnifies heads, eyes, claws, tentacles until they lose resemblance to their original form, becoming concrete but unrecognisable facts. While the photographs of enlarged fragments undo identity, the Critical Dictionary entry by Jacques Baron on 'Shellfish' (6, 1929) that accompanies them imagines the forms magnified whole. He quotes a 'painter friend of mine' (Dalí, perhaps), as saying 'that if a grasshopper were the size of a lion it would be the most beautiful animal in the world. How true that would be of a giant crayfish, a crab enormous as a house, and a shrimp as tall as a tree!'

Blossfeldt's *Urformen der Kunst* (*Art Forms in Nature*), a selection of his close-up photographs of plants and flowers published in 1928, were intended to reveal the 'close connection between the form produced by man and that developed by nature.'¹ The introduction by Karl Nierendorf argues that the creative work of man ('Art'), unlike Nature, changes according to his



C



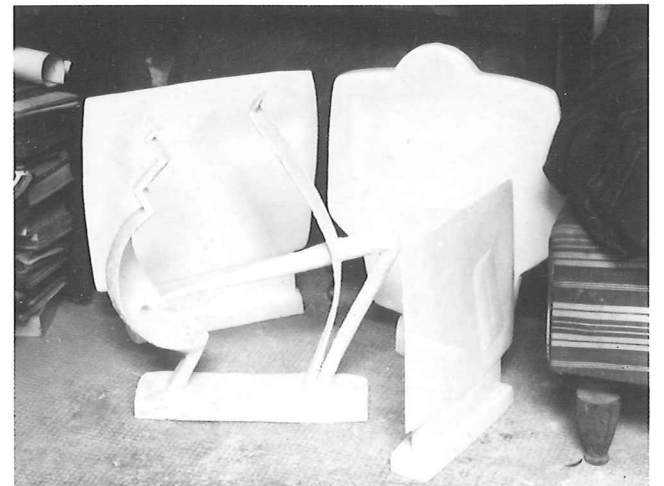
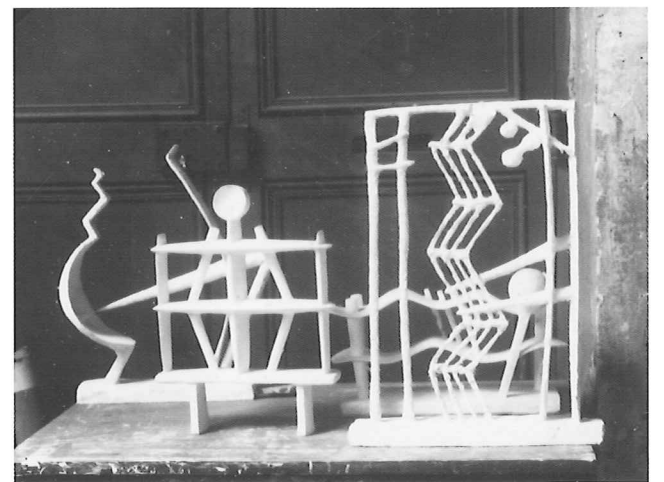
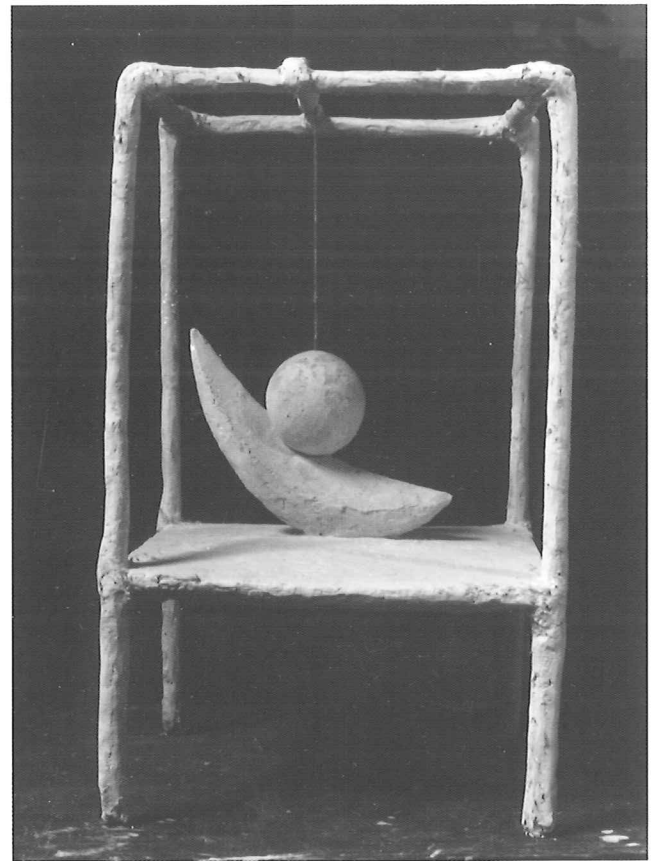
GIACOMETTI, FEMME COUCHÉE SUR LE LIT. H 134. — CARRÉE FERRE.
PHOT. GÖTTSCHE LOWE P&P/ARTS

A



B

- A Alberto Giacometti, *Sketches on DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929, Oval Lamp, 'Man, Woman and Child' Variation, Candlestick, 1928 (cat. 86)*
- B Alberto Giacometti, *Reclining Woman who Dreams, 1929 (cat. 89)*
- C Alberto Giacometti, *Man and Woman, 1928-29 (cat. 87)*
- D Marc Vaux, *Giacometti Sculptures, 1929 (top) Suspended Ball (cat. 142d) (middle) Man, Reclining Woman who Dreams, Three Figures Outdoors, Man and Woman (cat. 142b) (bottom) Man and Woman, Gazing Head, Man, Woman (cat. 142a)*



C

D

A Alberto Giacometti, *Gazing Head*, 1929
(cat. 88)

B DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929

C Anon, Greece (the Cyclades), *Female Figure with Folded Arms*, Early Cycladic II; c.2700–2400 BC; Spedos Variety
(cat. 40)

D Anon, Greece (the Cyclades), *Female Figure with Folded Arms*, Early Cycladic II; c.2700–2400 BC; Spedos Variety
(cat. 41)

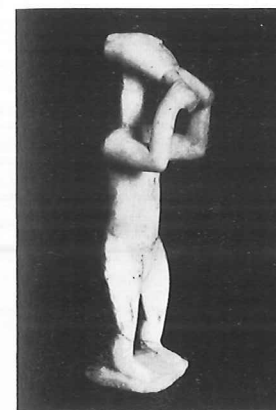


A

times and that the 'Modern technics' of close-up, slow motion, rapid projection, which reveal an unknown and hitherto concealed Nature, will produce a new, joyous and progressive expression of the human spirit.

Bataille's response in 'The Language of Flowers' (3, 1929) does not so much dissent from Nierendorf's introduction to *Urformen der Kunst*, as turn it on its head. Bataille finds quite other reasons for the fascination of Blossfeldt's photographs. How appropriate, for Bataille, is the application of the symbolic language of flowers to human beauty, love and elevated thoughts. Through the extraordinary and monstrous revelations of Blossfeldt's close-ups, flowers are revealed as unpleasant, even hideous. 'The most beautiful flower is spoiled at the centre by hairy sexual organs', and after its brief glory 'relapses into its original squalor'.

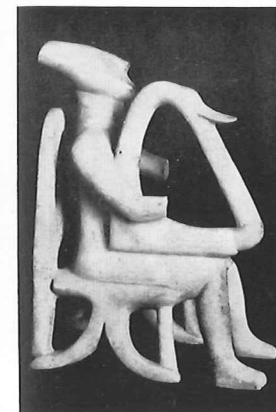
The architectural metaphors embedded in Blossfeldt's hugely magnified close-ups of plant forms echo in the photographs of skyscrapers reproduced later in DOCUMENTS. This would not at first seem out of line with Nierendorf's poetic evocation of the natural origins of artificial forms, but both the text that accompanies them, Leiris's 'Skyscraper' (7, 1930), and Bataille's 'Architecture' (2, 1929), undermine the grandeur and dominance of these great edifices. The human form, morphologically speaking, Bataille suggests in 'Architecture', lies at an intermediary stage between monkeys and tall buildings. Standing erect, he aspires to the sky but with his big toe, that which distinguishes him from the anthropoid ape, firmly stuck in the mud. Two of Boiffard's close-up enlargements of big toes, commissioned to accompany Bataille's text 'The Big Toe' (6, 1929), and in all likelihood inspired by the Blossfeldts, are erect like fetish monuments, the third lies fallen, like a tree. **DA**



9. JOUEUR DE FLÛTE. — MARBRE, ÉPIROUVENCE, AMORGOS. HAUTEUR, 20 CM. — MUSÉE D'ATHÈNES.



10. LE MÉMÉ, DE FACE.



11. HARFISTE. — MARBRE, ÉPIROUVENCE, AMORGOS. HAUTEUR, 20 CM. — MUSÉE D'ATHÈNES.



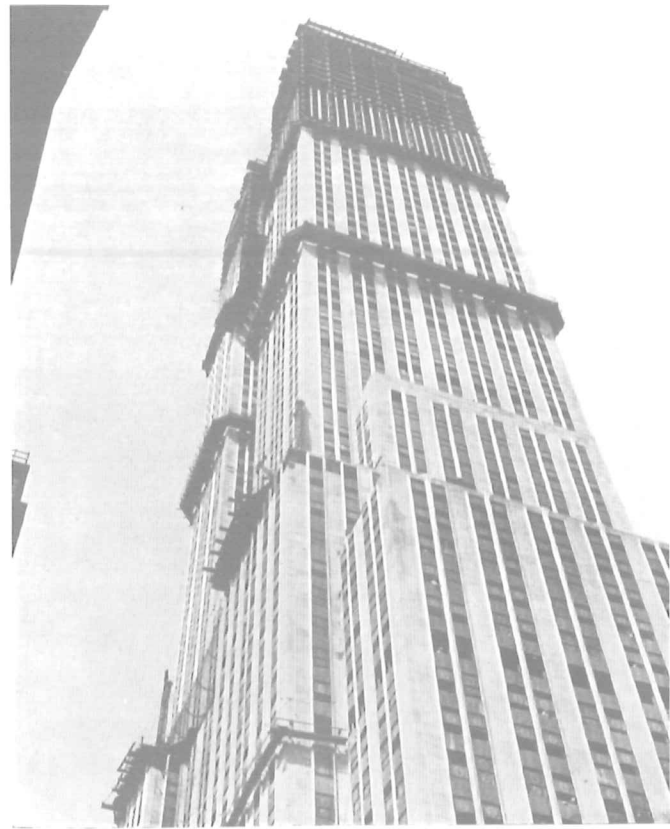
12. LE MÉMÉ, DE FACE.

B



C

D



NEW YORK. — THE CHRYSLER BUILDING, AT 300 WEST 49th STREET, WAS THE FIRST SKYSCRAPER TO BE BUILT IN THE ART DECO STYLE. PHOTO BY THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

A



NEW YORK. — THE CHRYSLER BUILDING, AT 300 WEST 49th STREET, WAS THE FIRST SKYSCRAPER TO BE BUILT IN THE ART DECO STYLE. PHOTO BY THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

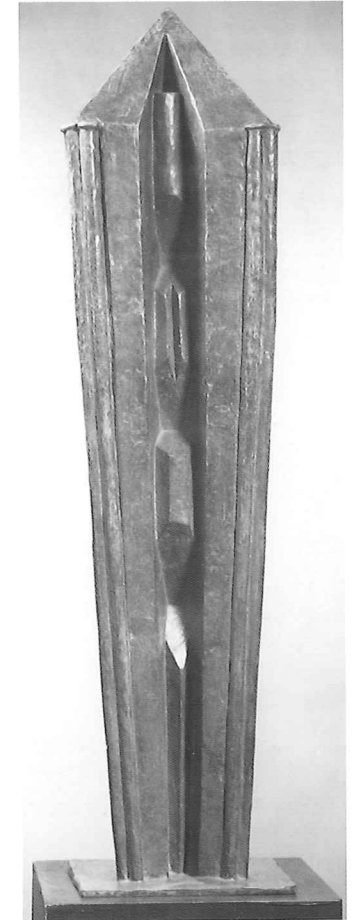


B

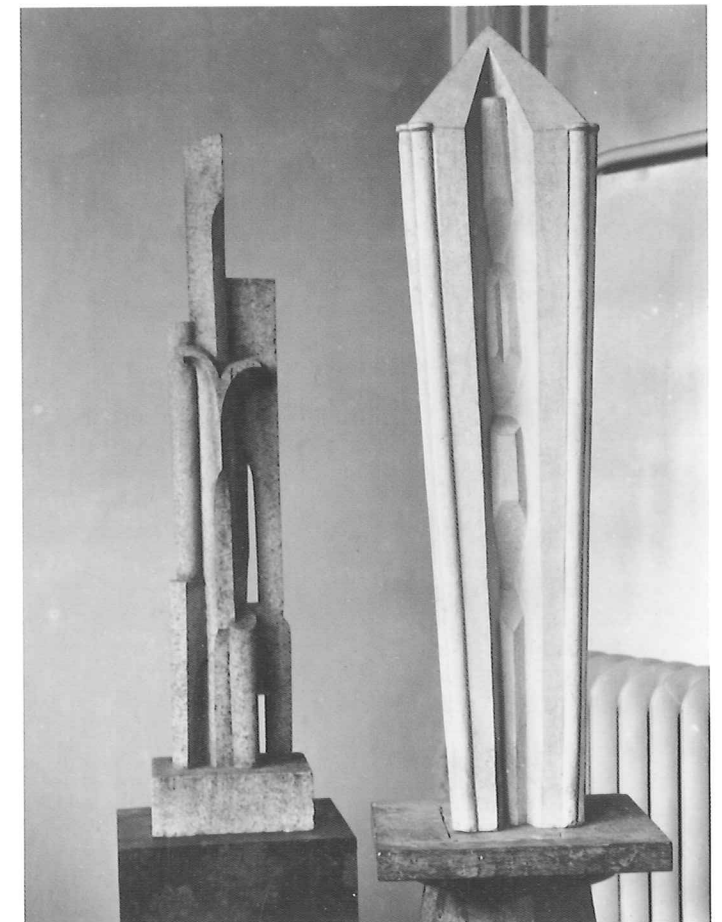
- A Spread from DOCUMENTS, 7, 1930
- B Marc Vaux, *Lipchitz Sculptures*, n.d., *Woman Seated* (cat. 141e)
- C Jacques Lipchitz, *Standing Figure*, 1916 (cat. 95)
- D Jacques Lipchitz, *Sculpture*, 1915 (cat. 94)
- E Marc Vaux, *Lipchitz Sculptures*, n.d., *Two Sculptures in Stone* (cat. 141d)



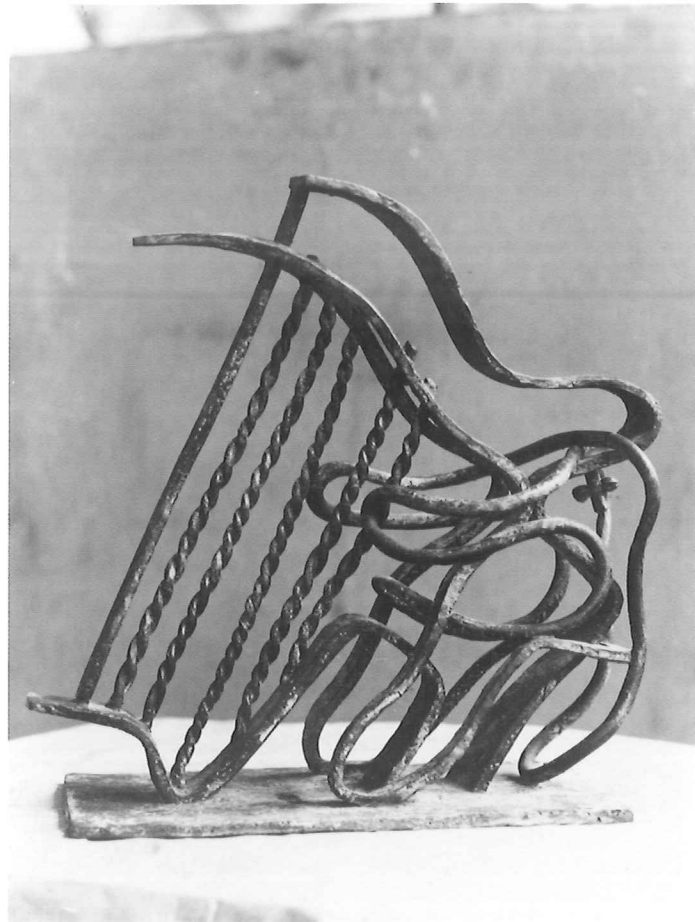
C



D



E



A



B



C

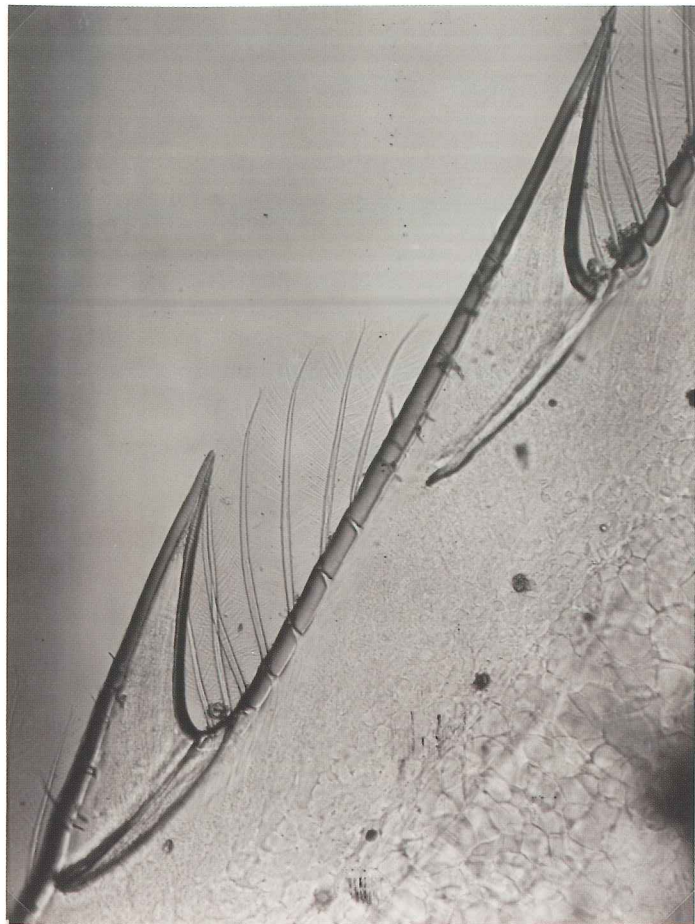


D

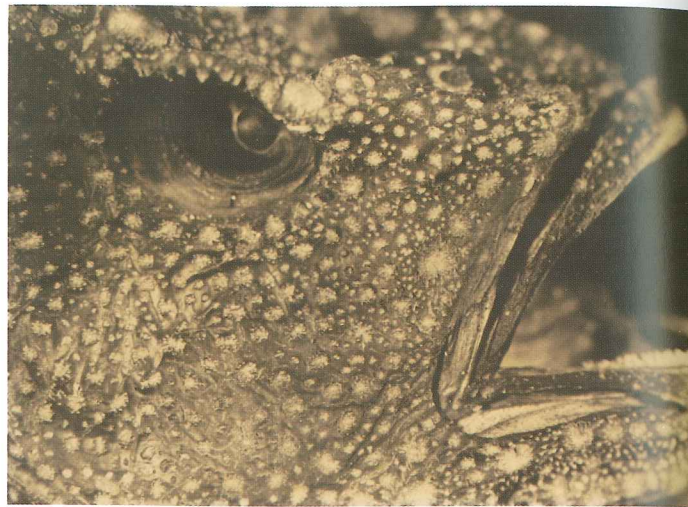


E

- A Marc Vaux, *Lipchitz Sculptures*, n.d., *Harp Player* (cat. 141b)
- B Marc Vaux, *Lipchitz Sculptures*, n.d., *Guitar Player* (cat. 141a)
- C Jacques Lipchitz, *Musical Instruments*, 1925 (cat. 96)
- D Marc Vaux, *Lipchitz Sculptures*, n.d., *Musical Instruments (Side View)* (cat. 141c)
- E Jean Painlevé, *Spider*, c.1929 (cat. 122)



A

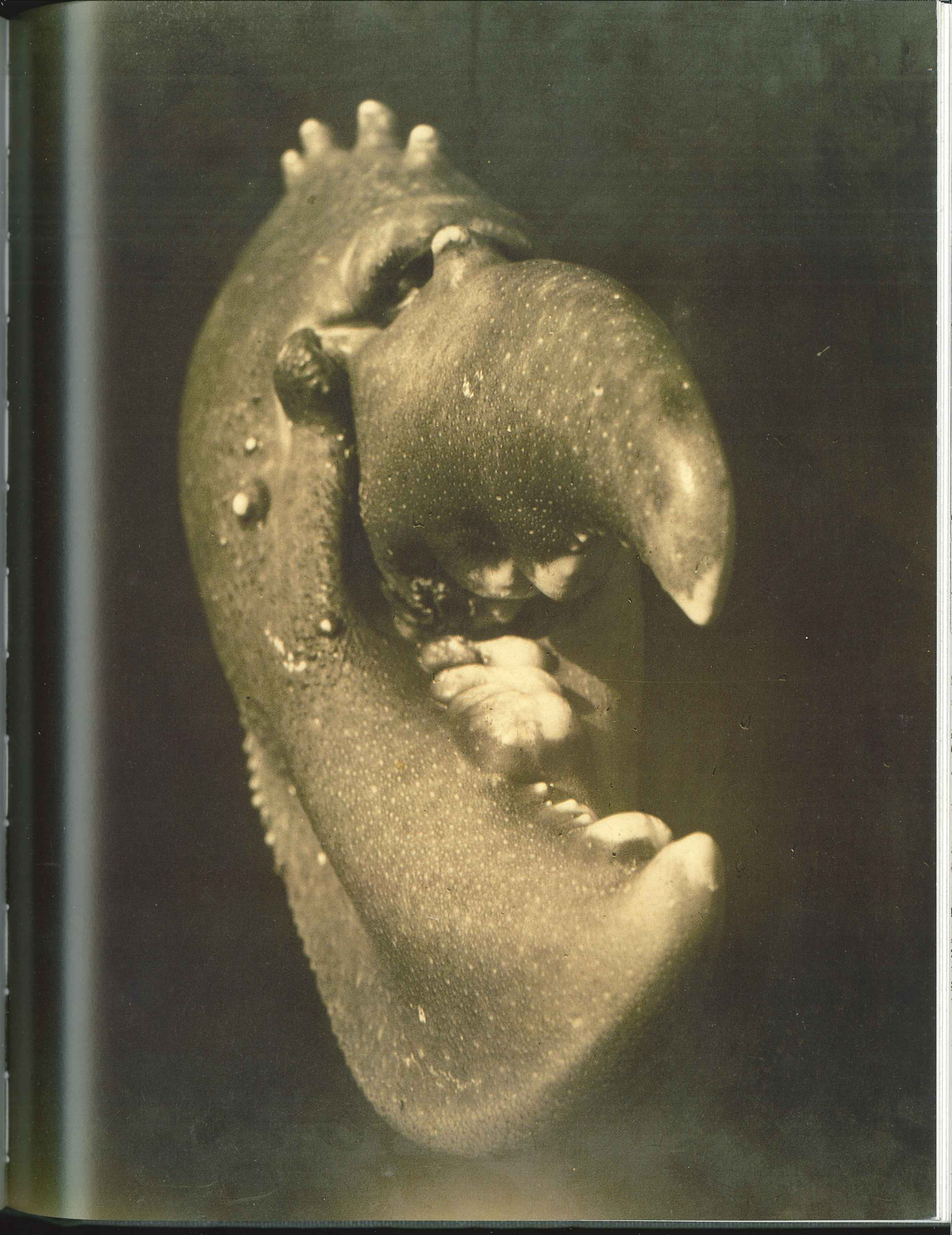


B



C

- A Jean Painlevé, *Rostrum on Shrimp Nose*, c.1930 (cat. 123)
- B Jean Painlevé, *Untitled*, c.1931 (cat. 125)
- C Jean Painlevé, *Untitled*, c.1931 (cat. 124)
- D Jean Painlevé, *Lobster Claw, Port-Blanc, Brittany*, c.1929 (cat. 121)

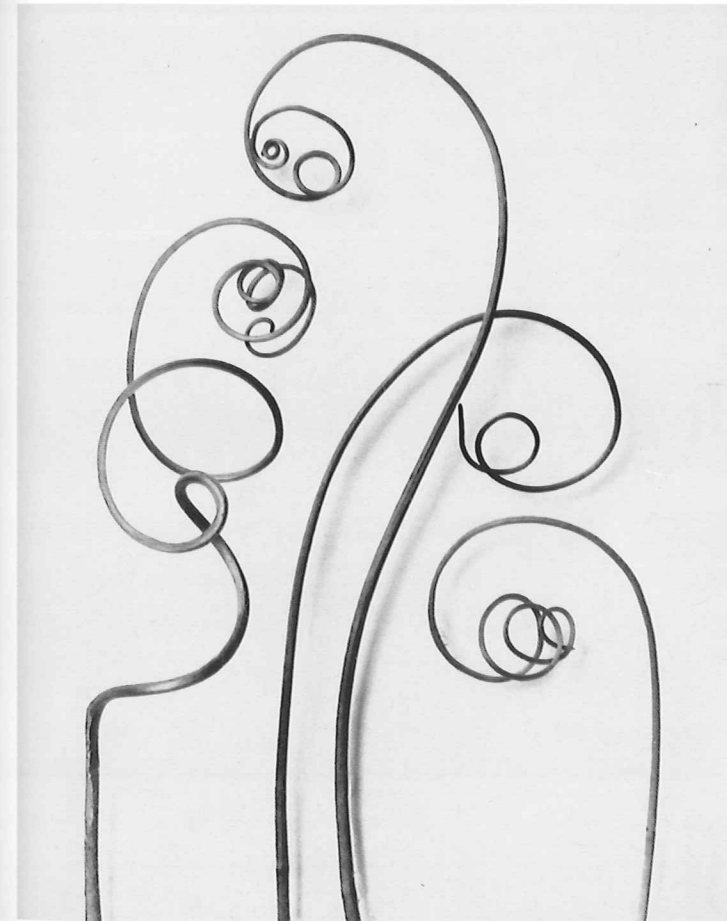




A

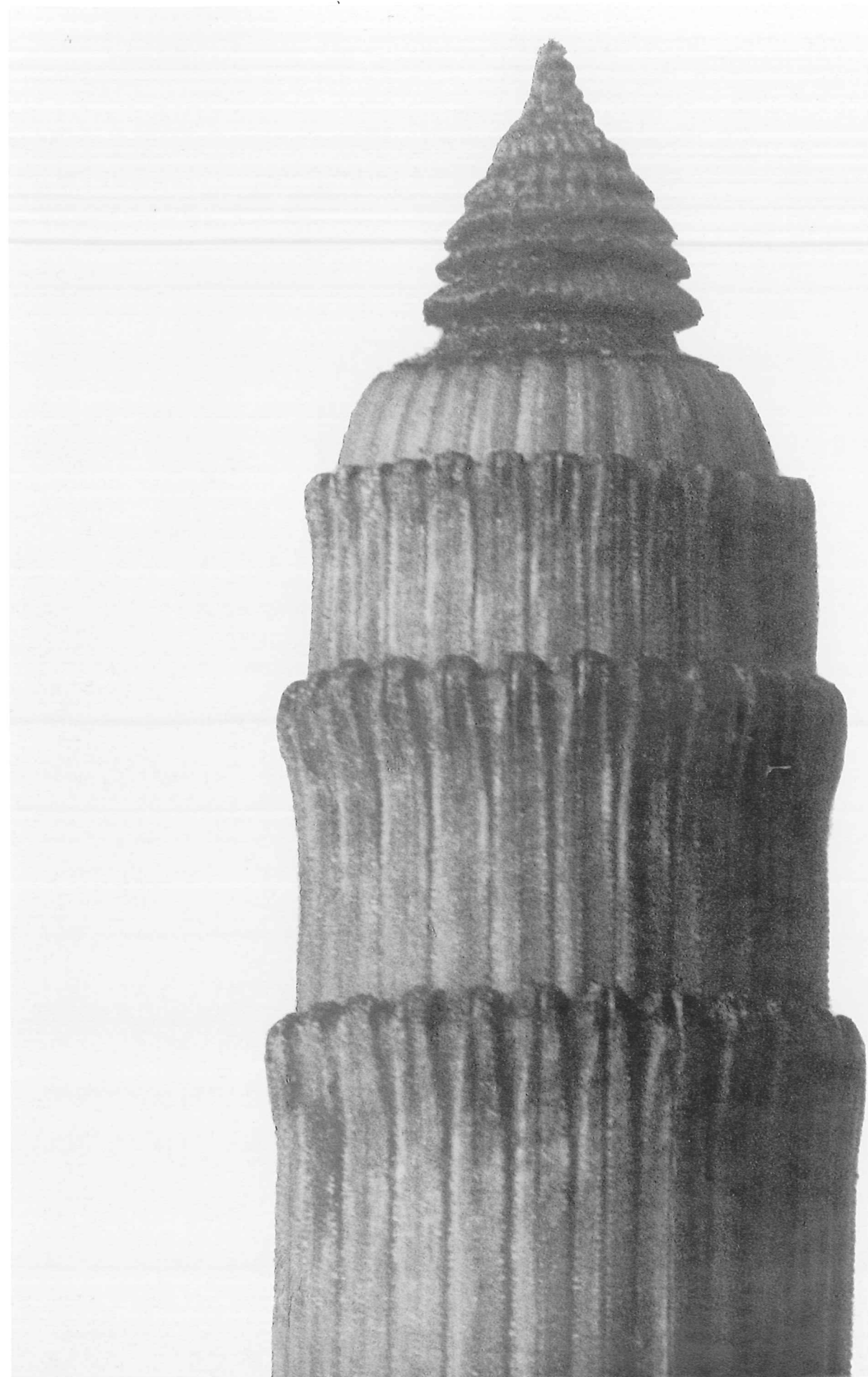


B



C

- A Karl Blossfeldt, *Dryopteris filix mas* (Common Male Fern), 1915-25 (cat. 68)
 B Karl Blossfeldt, *Azorella vidalii* (Bellflower), 1915-28 (cat. 69)
 C Karl Blossfeldt, *Bryonia alba* (White Bryony), 1915-25 (cat. 67)
 D (overleaf) Karl Blossfeldt, *Equisetum hiemale* (Rough Horsetail), 1915-28 (cat. 70)
 E (overleaf) Karl Blossfeldt, *Hordeum distichum* (Barley), 1915-28 (cat. 71)



D

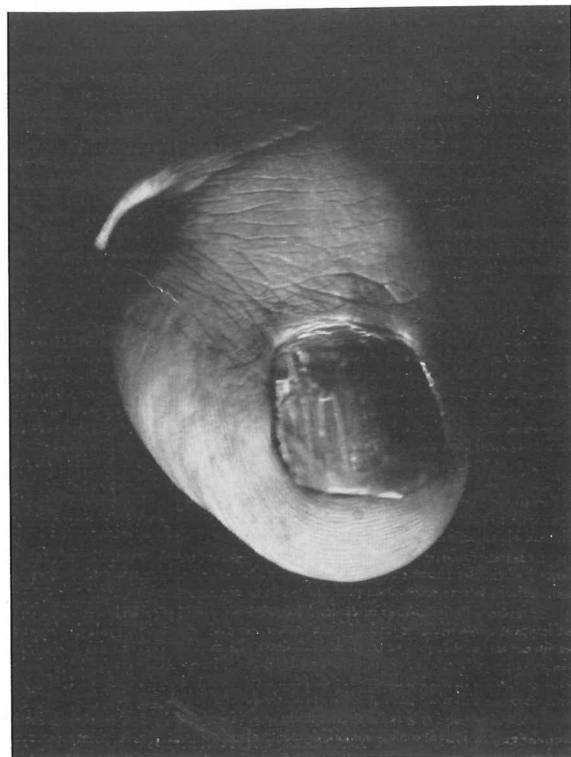


E

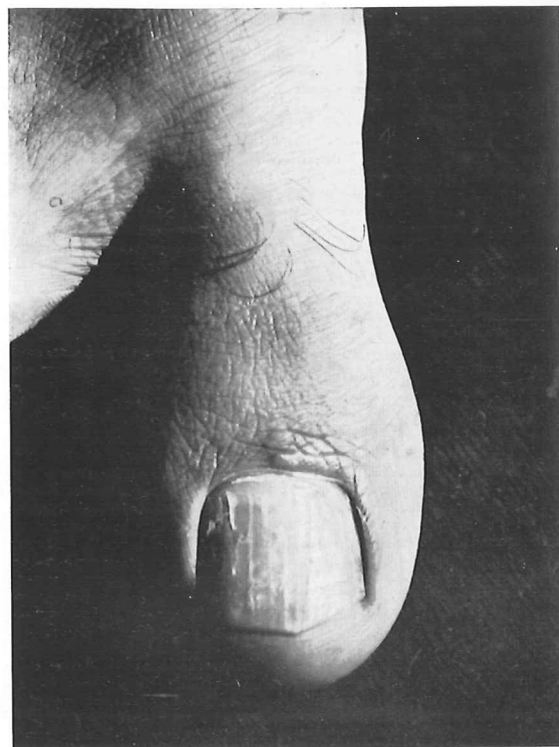
JACQUES-ANDRÉ BOIFFARD

There are a lot of photographs in DOCUMENTS, but not many photographers. In fact, photography makes a slow start; in the first three issues, amongst 123 images of paintings, sculptures and coins, only five photographs appear as such (though, of course, all these artifacts have actually been made manifest through photography). Those five photos in issue three are by Karl Blossfeldt, one of a handful of photographers whose names appear under their pictures in DOCUMENTS; others are Nadar, Marcel Griaule, William Seabrook, Eli Lotar and Jacques-André Boiffard, the photographer most associated with the magazine. Although only 17 photographs are credited to Boiffard in the whole run of the journal, they are some of its most intensely memorable images.

Boiffard's work appears for the first time in issue six when, suddenly, there is a spread of two pictures with black backgrounds out of which loom two monstrous big toes. This spread sets the tone for how Boiffard's pictures came to be used in DOCUMENTS (in five out of the remaining nine issues) and one can see how particular their placement is if we compare it with that of other photographs. Like most of the photos credited by name, Boiffard's pictures nearly all occupy a full page while the ethnographic and entertainment



GROS ORTEIL, SUJET MASCULIN, 39 ANS. — PHOTO. J.-A. BOIFFARD.



GROS ORTEIL, SUJET MASCULIN, 39 ANS. — PHOTO. J.-A. BOIFFARD.

A Spread from DOCUMENTS, 6, 1929
B DOCUMENTS, 5, 1930



... la terreur et la souffrance atroce font de la bouche l'organe des cris déchirants (p. 299). — Photo J. A. Boiffard.

- A Jacques-André Boiffard, *Big Toe*,
30-Year-Old Male Subject, 1929 (cat. 72)
 B DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930
 C Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1930
 (cat. 78)

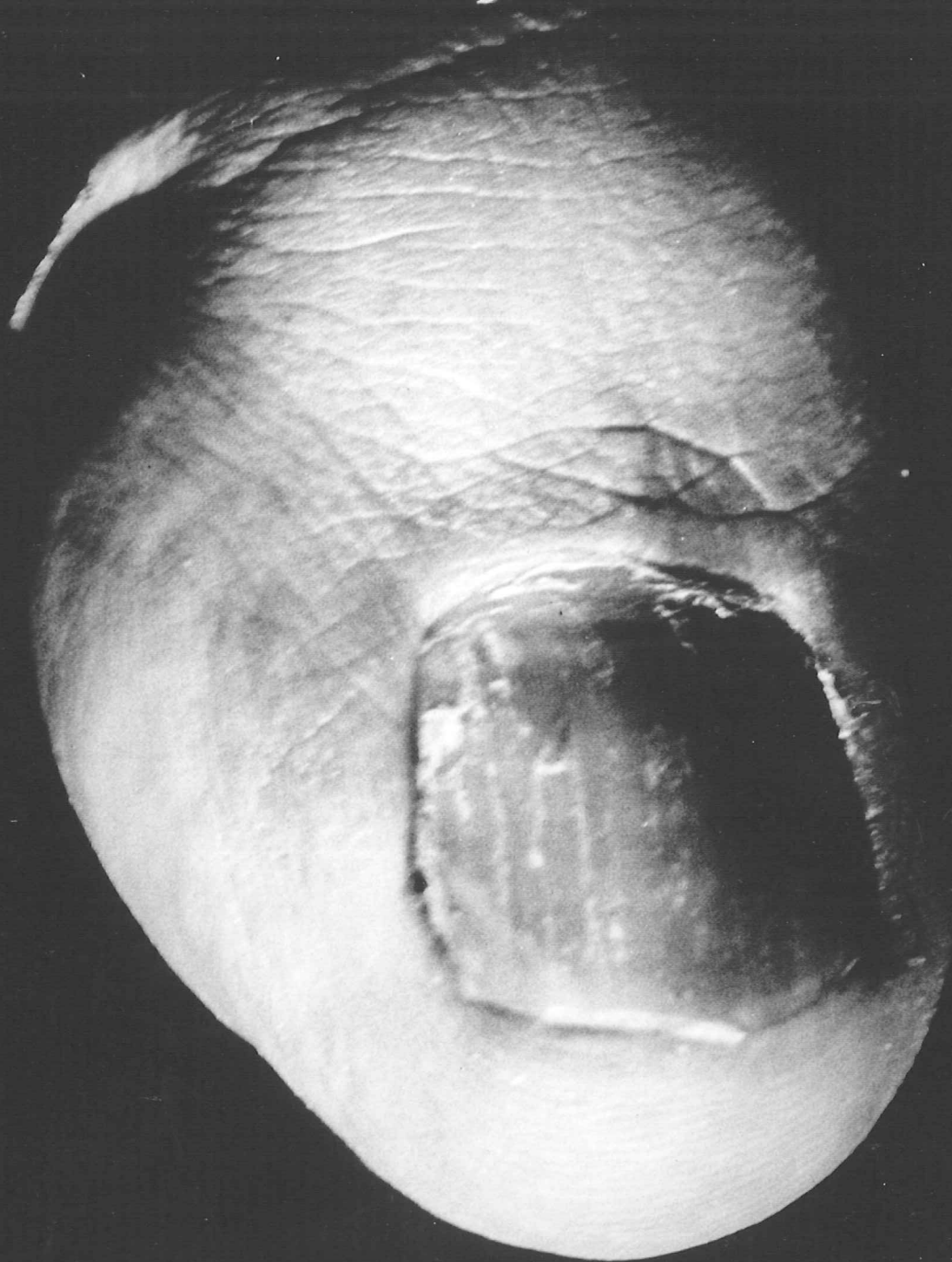


C

photographs are usually much smaller and juxtaposed with each other. (The most striking example of this type of layout is the set of 30 stills from Sergei M. Eisenstein's film *The General Line* (1929) blocked across a double page spread in Robert Desnos's essay on the film ('The General Line', 4, 1930). According to Michel Leiris, Desnos was mainly responsible for the magazine's layout.)¹

Boiffard's photographs are also unusual in being so closely tied to the magazine, with no apparent existence beyond it. It's interesting to compare his contribution to that of Eli Lotar with whom he shared a studio at the time. Lotar's 'Abattoir' photographs do seem to find their natural home in DOCUMENTS, where they are used to pungent effect. But that's not the only place where they were published, Lotar placing them subsequently in the magazines *Variétés* and *Vu*. In this, Lotar was following the usual tactics of the photographer; what's intriguing is that there's no sign of Boiffard having done the same thing.

If one extracts these 17 photographs by Boiffard from the magazine, what is immediately striking is their heterogeneity. Are all these pictures really by the same photographer? Most memorable, of course, are those images that are most visceral – the big toes or the glistening void of the open mouth. These images accompany texts by Bataille; photos made for other



B



A

A Jacques-André Boiffard, *Beneath the Mask, Pierre Prévert*, 1930 (cat. 74)

B Jacques-André Boiffard, *Beneath the Mask, Pierre Prévert*, 1930 (cat. 73)

C Jacques-André Boiffard, *Carnival Mask*, 1930 (cat. 75)



B

purposes are less extreme. The four pictures of men modelling carnival masks are more distanced and were shot in clear daylight, while the largest group of pictures that Boiffard produced for DOCUMENTS – the five photographs of Paris statues that accompany Robert Desnos's essay 'Pygmalion and the Sphinx' (1, 1930) – was made out on the street.

In terms both of style and subject matter, these last pictures relate closely to a set of photographs that Boiffard had made a year before he started to work for DOCUMENTS – the 12 photographs of Paris in André Breton's book *Nadja* (1928).² There are a few points of similarity between Boiffard's role in *Nadja* and in DOCUMENTS. In each case, he was working for a very forceful author/editor, who certainly had a highly developed concept of the images he wanted to use. In these two different situations, Boiffard produced photographs that match the tenor of the texts at the same time that their direct materiality rubs against the rhetorical flourishes of both Breton's and Bataille's writing.

Is there anything that connects the various sets of photographs by Boiffard in DOCUMENTS? When his pictures were rediscovered within the context of postmodernism, their heterogeneity was one of their attractions. (Another way to read this mix of styles is as the sign of a good jobbing photographer, but the intensity of the pictures makes us not want to accept that Boiffard was only that.) But various as they are, all



C

- A Jacques-André Boiffard, *Défense Nationale Monument* by A. Bartholdi, *Porte des Ternes, Paris*, c.1930 (cat. 76)
 B Jacques-André Boiffard, *Renée Jacobi*, 1930 (cat. 77)
 C Spread from DOCUMENTS, 1, 1930



C

the photographs bring together the ordinary and the extraordinary. We all have toes and mouths which could look like this if seen in such tight close-up. The carnival masks are unnerving in their excessive jollity, but what makes them really creepy are the ordinary clothes and gestures of the (presumably) ordinary men modelling them.³ And, finally, in another register, the photographs of monuments were shot in the pallid light of any working day, but no-one seems to notice that the car is made of stone and the balloon of bronze. In different ways, then, Boiffard's pictures all give us something we can recognise while simultaneously rendering that familiarity unstable. As Bataille's *Critical Dictionary* perversely refuses the possibility of definition, so Boiffard doesn't tell us what things mean, only how they appear (in a black-and-white photograph).

The last image by Boiffard in *DOCUMENTS* is a photograph of a nude woman who seems to be floating, her body seen at an extreme angle and the print turned upside down.⁴ It's a picture that doesn't fit, partly because of its subject – it surely could have been made by Boiffard's old master Man Ray – and partly because of its provenance. It is captioned '*Photographie de J.-A. Boiffard – Exposition de la Galerie d'Art Contemporain*'.⁵ For the first time, Boiffard's work has come from another context, from the world of art photography, and is acknowledged not as an illustration to a pre-existing text but as the independent work of an 'auteur'.

After Boiffard's nude, there are just a couple of adverts and that's it – the end of *DOCUMENTS*. Boiffard worked with photography for another five years, but in 1935 he resumed his medical studies. What is left is a very small body of work – the pictures in *Nadja* and in *DOCUMENTS* and a few other inconsequential odds and ends.⁶ But it's impossible now to imagine *Nadja* without the Place Dauphine or the Hôtel des Grands Hommes and impossible to imagine *DOCUMENTS* without the big toes, mouth, carnival masks and bronze balloon. IW



B

A Atelier Nadar: Félix Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon) and Paul Nadar, *Mademoiselle Lovzeski*, n.d. (cat. 115)
B Atelier Nadar: Félix Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon) and Paul Nadar, *Board Containing 14 Photographs from 8528b to 8540b (including 2 portraits of Mademoiselle Lovzeski)*, n.d. (cat. 111)



MADMOISELLE LOVZESKI

'Who is this mysterious Amazon lost in the collection of the photographer Nadar, so admirably beautiful among so many hideous scarecrows? The album gives nothing but a strange name.' ('Mademoiselle Lovzeski', 4, 1929)

The name given on the Nadar studio's demonstration board (containing the 'hideous scarecrows' mentioned in DOCUMENTS) is Sélinka Lovzeski. This reference to the photograph 'lost' in the Nadar collection implies that Bataille stumbled across it while choosing images for his essay 'Human Figure' (4, 1929).

Nothing is known of Mademoiselle Lovzeski, although the Nadar studio photographed many performers in costume, so she may well have been a professional horse-rider. The name Sélinka could derive from the central character of Meyerbeer's 1865 opera *L'Africaine*, a romantic tragedy set in the sixteenth century about an African slave who falls in love with a Portuguese explorer. There are examples of Sélinka subsequently being used as a stage-name by 'exotic' dancers in *fin de siècle* Paris. The 'strange name' Lovzeski, possibly Nadar's misspelling of Lozevski, a known surname of Macedonian origin, remains a mystery. **SB**



ROBIN ALBUM

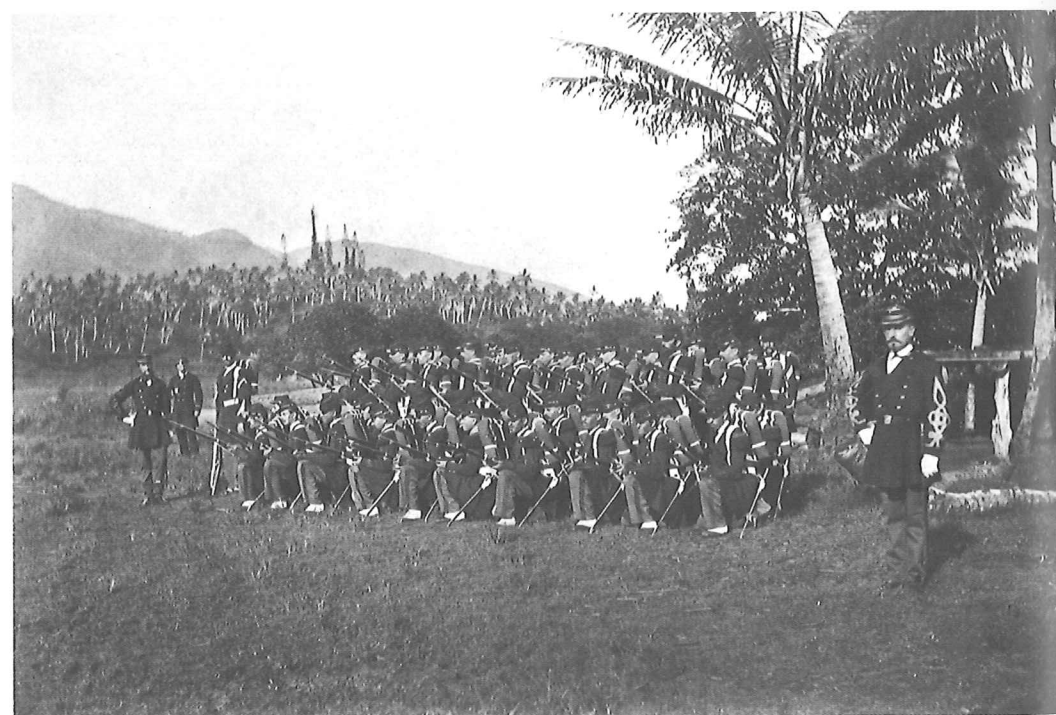
VARIETY

Ernest Robin, plates from *Souvenirs of New Caledonia: Album, Nouméa, 1871*

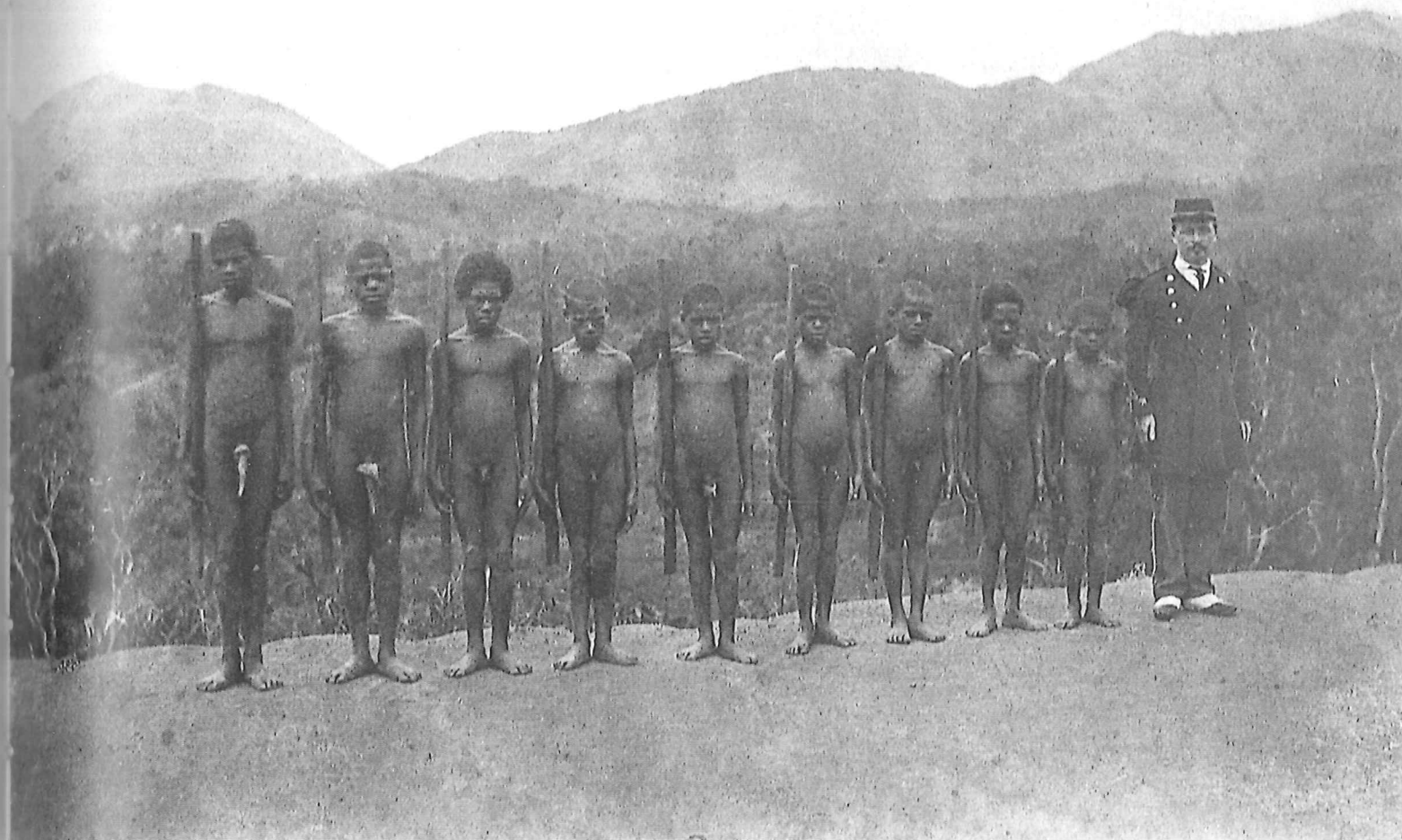
- A *Kanaks of Kiona, Koua-oua, East Coast (140c)*
- B *Prison Garrison of Kanala (140b)*
- C *School Children, Bacouya, Bourail, West Coast (140d)*
- D *Sandouli, Little Chief of Kanala, East Coast (140a)*



A



B



C



D

- A Daniel Le Bossu, based on initial drawings by Amé Bourdon, *New Anatomical Tables* (Plate 1), 1678 (cat. 91)
 B Nicolas-François Regnault and Geneviève Regnault, *The Deviations of Nature or a Collection of the Main Monstrosities that Nature Produces in Animals*, 1775 (cat. 139)

HUMAN FIGURES

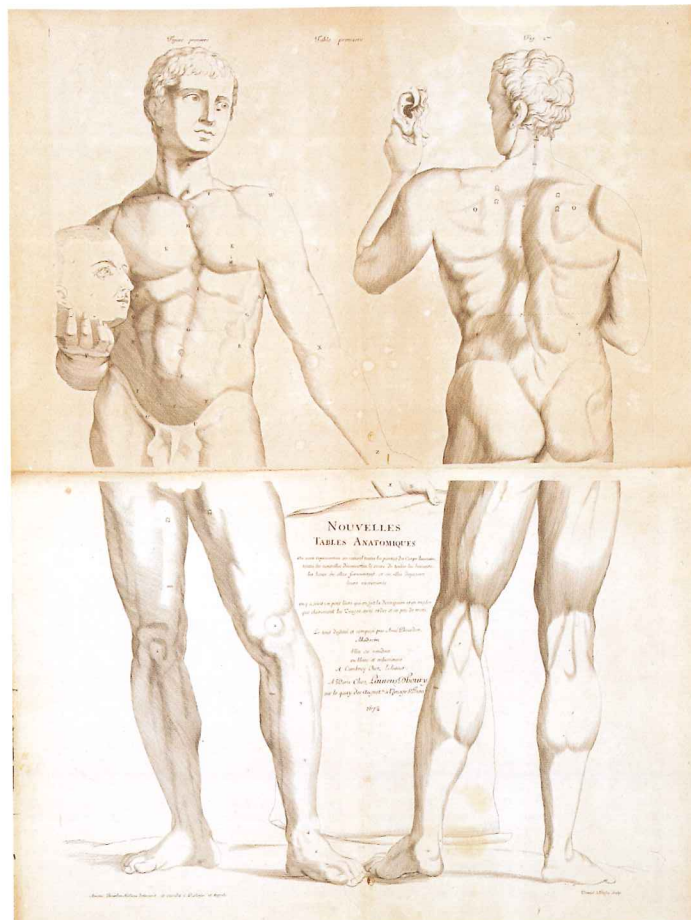
'An eminent English chemist, Dr Charles Henry Maye, set out to establish in a precise manner what man is made of and what is its chemical value. This is the result of his learned researches: "The bodily fat of a normally constituted man would suffice to make seven cakes of toilet soap. Enough iron is found in the organism to make a medium sized nail. And sugar to sweeten a cup of coffee. The phosphorus would provide 2,200 matches. The magnesium would furnish the light needed to take a photograph. In addition, a little potassium and sulphur, but in an unusable quality ... These different raw materials, costed at current prices, represent an approximate sum of 25 francs.'" (*Journal des Débats*, 13 August, 1929, as quoted in 'Man', 4, 1929)

This is one of two entries under the title 'Man' in *DOCUMENTS' Critical Dictionary*. The second entry, also a quote, makes a direct equation between the human body and the consumption of the flesh of other animals. Having suggested, rather controversially, that 'not one of the millions of animals man massacres every year is necessary for his nourishment', the extract characterises the resultant 'red and hideous bloodstain on the face of man' by reference to a second example of visceral arithmetic:

'A calculation based on very modest figures shows the quantity of blood shed each year in the slaughterhouses of Chicago is more than sufficient to float five transatlantic liners...' (5, 1929)

The alarming link between slaughterhouse carcasses and human forms occurs elsewhere in the magazine: Eli Lotar's photographs of the abattoir at La Villette raise the curtain for the topless legs of a chorus-line. Michel Leiris's essay 'Man and his Interior' (5, 1930) begins with the tale of a woman in a butcher's shop, catching sight of the inside of a disembowelled carcass. Managing not to faint at the sight, she is said to have asked 'do we have nothing but vileness inside *our* bodies?'. This story, entitled 'An Excess of Cleanliness', begins a meditation on the disturbing beauty of a series of seventeenth-century anatomical tables by Daniel Le Bossu (based on initial drawings by Amé Bourdon).

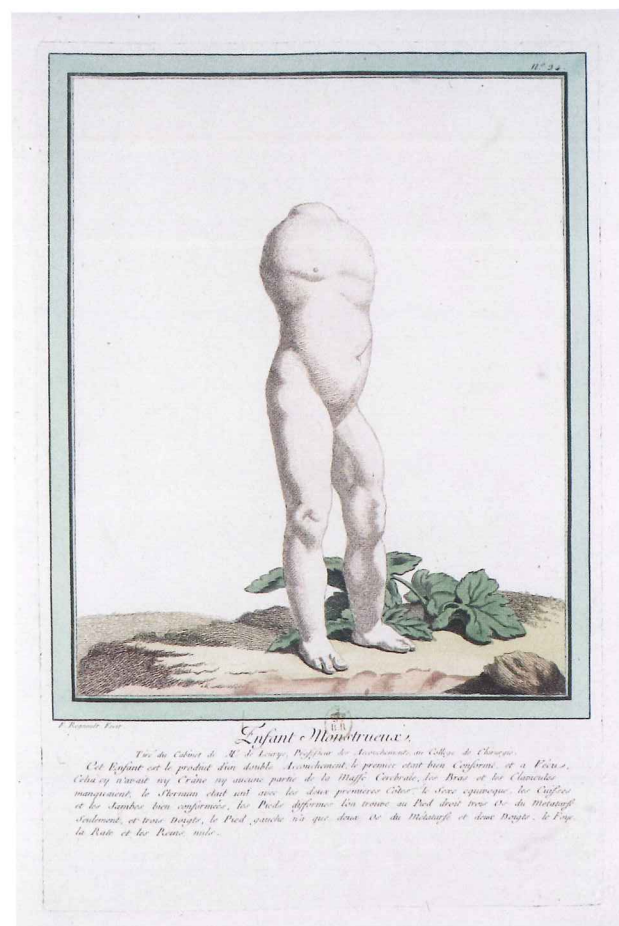
These huge prints, like Nicolas-François and Geneviève Regnault's book *The Deviations of Nature* (1775), upon which Bataille based an essay, are in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where Bataille and Leiris would have seen them. For Leiris, what is incredible and moving about Le Bossu's anatomical tables are the anomalous humanisations of the bodies. The male figures adopt unnecessary rhetorical poses: one holds a decapitated head; another contemplates a severed ear held gently between thumb and forefinger. A female figure, despite having a cross section



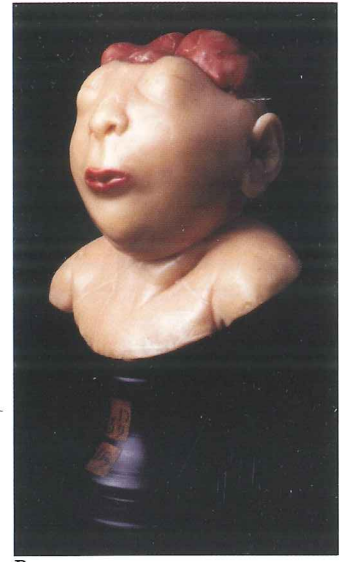
A



B



A 4 pages from Nicolas-François Regnault and Geneviève Regnault, *The Deviations of Nature or a Collection of the Main Monstrosities that Nature Produces in Animals*, 1775 (cat. 139)
 B André-Pierre Pinson, *Brainless Man*, 1770-89 (cat. 138)
 C Spread from DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929



B

through her skull down to the centre of her brain, has long flowing hair, tears rolling down her cheeks, and in a bizarre act of modesty, covers her flayed genitals. 'One understands', Leiris writes, 'why these representations of the human body, which offer to show us its secret workings, at the same time fascinating and fearsome ... are really much more beautiful and more erotically moving than all that painting pretends to give us.'

This fascinating but disturbing effect is also evident in the wax models of the eighteenth-century anatomical sculptor André-Pierre Pinson: what at first sight may appear to be a beautiful woman with fashionable coiffure and a tear on her cheek, can be turned around to reveal the intricately detailed interior of the cranial cavity. The disquieting humanising of anatomy favoured by Le Bossu and Pinson offers a direct link with the subjects of Bataille's essay on 'deviations' of the human form. The Regnaults' book *The Deviations of Nature* illustrates a range of deformed animals and people, some of the latter drawn directly from the 'Cabinet Pinson', a collection of the sculptor's case studies. Despite Bataille's claim in DOCUMENTS, there is no trace of the 'Double-Enfant' in the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle in Paris, but other evidence linking Pinson and the Regnaults remains. Not least in the form of a 'semi-acephalic child', supposedly born without the roof of his skull. Unlike Pinson whose 'portrait-bust' of the condition is limited to the relevant details of the head, the Regnaults took liberties with the poses of their subjects so their 'semi-acephalic child' is seated on a rock like a stoic philosopher. Elsewhere among the examples that Bataille reproduces, a 'monstrous child' born with no arms or head, which did not survive into life, stands impossibly upright in a grassy landscape.

It is this absurd and pointless presentation of the human form for posterity that inspired Bataille's most scathing essay on the subject, 'Human Figure' (4, 1929). 'Owing to our presumably insufficient data', Bataille begins, 'we can cite but a single era within which the human form stands out in a senile mockery of everything ... conceived by man. The mere sight (in photography) of our predecessors in the occupation of this country now produces, for varying reasons, a burst of loud and raucous laughter; that sight, however, is nonetheless hideous.'

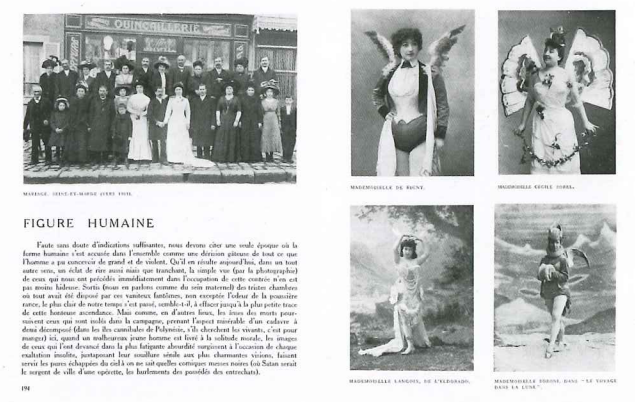


FIGURE HUMAINE

C

A

- A 2 pages from DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929
- B Atelier Nadar: Félix Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon) and Paul Nadar, *Cléo de Mérode*, n.d. (cat. 114)
- C (overleaf) Atelier Nadar: Félix Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon) and Paul Nadar, *Board Containing 16 Photographs from 20435 to 20445b* (including portraits of Mounet Sully), n.d. (cat. 113)
- D (overleaf) Atelier Nadar: Félix Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon) and Paul Nadar, *Board Containing 16 Photographs from 2624 to 2633* (including 8 portraits of Hélène Petit), n.d. (cat. 112)
- E (pp. 194-195) Spread from DOCUMENTS, 4, 1930

The photographs to which Bataille refers are publicity portraits of late-nineteenth-century celebrities made, for the most part, in the Nadar studio. These are not the auratic early Nadar portraits of Charles Baudelaire and his contemporaries. Bataille shows instead the later studio work, much of it supervised by Nadar's son Paul: Cléo de Mérode, Hélène Petit, Mounet-Sully: dancers, actresses and actors from bygone eras. These unintentionally hilarious photographs, originally collected as 'cartes-album', could be ordered directly from the Nadar studio by perusing the large demonstration boards of their back-catalogue: the unhinged logic of which Bataille recreates in the pages of DOCUMENTS. Despite the apparent claim of photography to represent and preserve something of 'human nature', Bataille suggests, any such random selection of examples erodes individuality until only outlandish costumes, melodramatic poses and forced smiles remain:

'...white men and women have, as we know, tenaciously persisted in their efforts to regain at last, *a human face* ... so many strange, merely half-monstrous individuals seem to persist in empty animation, like the jingle of the music box, in innocent vice, libidinous heat, lyrical fumes.'

SB

☛ BEAUX-ARTS, SACRIFICE, HEADS



MIRAMILLE GEMLEON, LES FIERO-BINGERS



HÉLÈNE PETIT, DANS "L'ACROBOTE"



JULMA ROUFFARD, DANS "LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE"



LÉONIE YVINGE RUSE DES FÉDÉRÉTÉS D'ORIENTALISME D'AFRIQUE, DE RAYMOND ROUSSÉ, THÉÂTRE ANTOINE, 1895



2436



P080932

2435

Monnet Sully. 2435



P080933 M. Francis
Remani.

P080934

2436B



P080935

2437



P080936

2437



P080937

2438



P080938 Zolashmet

2438



P080939

2439



P081000

2440



P081001 Amphylion. (1864-1870)

2441



P081002

2442

Paul Monnet



P081003

2443

Paul Monnet.



P081004 Odon
Serey Lorette

2443B

Montaubey.

2445B



P081005 (Koukoum)
Seyan et la suite



P081006

2624



P081220

2624

Hélène Petit. 2625



P081221



P081222

2625



P081223

2627



P081224

2627

Hélène Petit 2628



P081225

Amélie
Annonois.

P081226



2628



P081227

2629



P081228

2629



P081229

2630

Randson.



X P081230

2631

Sierra.



X P081231

2631



P081232

2631A



2632

Pierson.



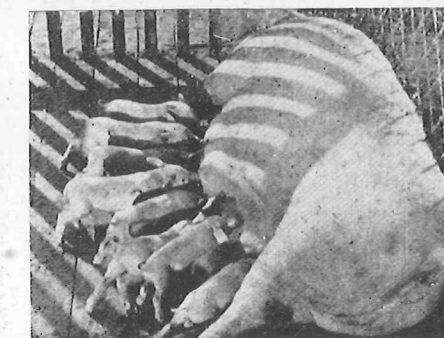
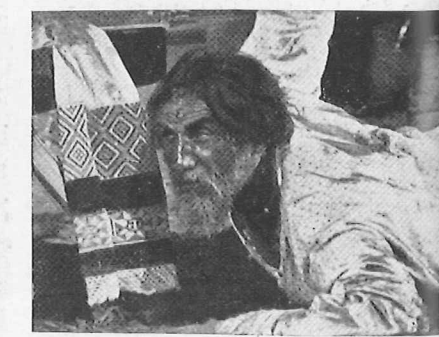
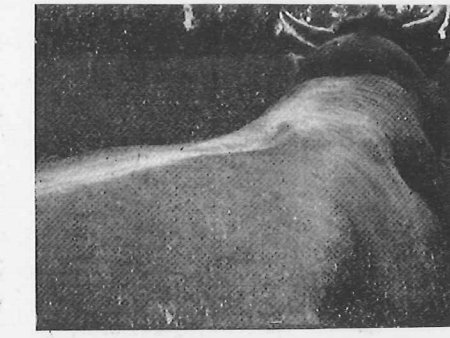
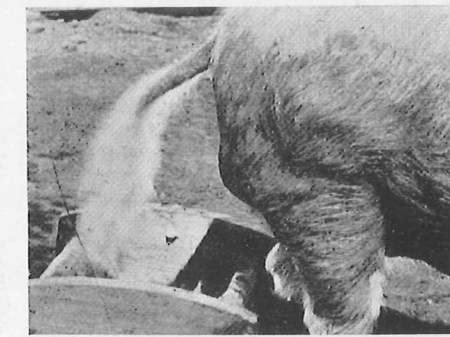
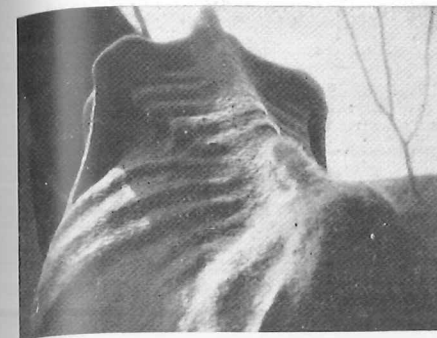
M. Pierson

2633

Pierson



P081233



La Ligne générale. 1929. Mise en scène de S. M. Eisenstein et G. Alexandrof. Opérateur : Edouard Tissé. — Paysans en procession dans la campagne cherchant à faire tomber la pluie.

La Ligne générale. — De gauche à droite et de haut en bas : 1 et 3. Le Printemps. — 2. Paysans attelés à la charrue. — 4. Le koulak. — 5. La femme du koulak. — 6. Porc. — 7 et 9. Le taureau Fomka. — 10, 12, 13 et 15. Paysans. — 11. Le komsomol. — 14. Truie allaitant.

EN HAUT
PRESQUE DES GAZÈRES
(SOUTHERN-CALÉDONIE),
MASQUE FAIT DE DENTS
D'ORANT. FERMIER SE
FERMÉ EN POSITION
DANS UN CASQUE
DE FERRE AU MOMENT
DE TENIR LE DENTIER
AVEC LES DENTS.
Photo R. von Kautzswald.



EN HAUT, A GAUCHE :
INDIENS JAVANAI
EQUATEUR,
TÊTE-BOÛTTE
(COLL. MARTIN, MUNICH).
Photo R. von Kautzswald.



EN HAUT
INDIENS MEXICAINS
(GUATEMALA),
TÊTE-BOÛTTE
EN BOIS
AUX FERMETURES
DE BOIS.
REPRODUCTION EN
GRANDER TAILLE
DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE
DE DOCUMENTS.
Photo R. von Kautzswald.



3 pages from DOCUMENTS, 6, 1930

HEADS

In 1936 Georges Bataille founded a secret society on the principle of the acephale: the body without a head. Apparently anticipating Bataille's later interest, we find Michel Leiris in one of the more acerbic entries to the Critical Dictionary in DOCUMENTS railing against the photographic portrait, calling it a 'mockery', a 'type of corpse', the very existence of which is a bewitchment, which entangles us 'like a snake in its old skins' ('Keaton (Buster)', 4, 1930).

Strange, then, in flicking through the pages of DOCUMENTS, to see a preponderance of heads: heads painted by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Edouard Manet and Eugène Delacroix; sculptures by Hans Arp and Alberto Giacometti; photos of film stars, actors and jazz musicians; portraits by Félix and Paul Nadar; Janus heads; shrunken heads; carnival masks; trophy skulls; masks of the Bapindi, the Ekoi, the Bajaka, the Dan. The final issue (8, 1930) even seems to be something of a homage to aspects of heads as Bataille explores van Gogh's mutilation of his own ear, Einstein tells us about Arp's assemblages of heads, Jean Bourdelle discusses Franz Xaver Messerschmidt's sculpted heads, an anonymous writer delves into an Iroquois legend about a Great Head, while Michel Leiris recounts an encounter with the face of God.



EN HAUT, A GAUCHE : ILE DE TORRES STRAITS, CRANE DÉCORÉ EMPLOYÉ POUR LA DIVINATION (CES CRANES PASSENT POUR EXPRIMER LEUR ORACLE PAR LE BRUIT DES DENTS QUI CLAQUENT).
Photo A. C. Haddon, extraite de Customs of the world.

EN HAUT, A DROITE : CRANES TROPHÉES DAYAK (FERMÉ A L'AIDE D'UNE PLANCHETTE, LE CRANE NOIR EST EMPLOYÉ COMME RÉCIPENT POUR DES MÉDICAMENTS).
Photo R. von Kautzswald.

AU CENTRE : NOUVELLE-GUINÉE, CRANE RECOUVERT DE TERRE GLAISE MODELÉE, AUX YEUX FAITS DE COQUILLAGES.
Photo R. von Kautzswald.

EN BAS : OSSUAIRE A HALLSTATT (AUTRICHE).
Photo Zechel, Gaisern.

- A Postcard of *Santa Maria della Concezione dei Cappuccini, Rome* (fig. 15)
 B DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930
 C Juan Gris, *The Smoker*, 1913 (cat. 90)
 D David Cusick, *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations*, 1848 (cat. 157)



A

The figure of the acephale André Masson would later draw to illustrate Bataille's conception did not, however, lack a head; it was rather a body whose skull had been displaced to take the place of – or to cover – the genitals. The head, that is, had been deprived of its features and rendered anonymous, in the process becoming an energy field.

In another entry to the Critical Dictionary ('Museum', 5, 1930), Bataille makes a correlation between the museum and the guillotine, the implication being that, as it places objects on display, the museum deprives them of their power in a manner corresponding with how the guillotine cuts off heads. A museum acts, therefore, in the opposite sense to the idea of the acephale: it maintains the individual in a state of suspended animation, fixed in time and deprived of energy. Like the photographic portrait, it 'steals souls' as it takes objects out of their living context and imposes a museum form upon them.

Among many peoples, as Ralph von Koenigswald emphasises in DOCUMENTS ('Heads and Skulls', 6, 1930), ancestor skulls and war trophies were imbued with magical properties by which a kind of 'pact with death' was constituted. Bearing this in mind, we can perceive both a continuity and a disjunction between modern and ancient responses to the head. The museum display or the photograph might even be seen as constituting our own form of ancestor worship. But there is a significant difference. Ancient people maintained heads as energy sources through which the active power of the dead remained potent. In modern times, in contrast, relics are maintained to dispel or annul the actuality of death, to render it harmless by a pretence that the dead are still alive. This distinction is not, admittedly, absolute; ancient peoples doubtless also experienced a desire to keep alive what was dead, just as we today are not immune to the vital power that is still contained in the remains of the dead. The difference of emphasis nevertheless marks a significant shift, signifying that the body is no longer considered a locus of energy that radiates out from the person but has become a material object belonging to the

sauvages qui lors d'énormes fêtes suspendent les crânes de leurs ancêtres à des mâts de cocagne, qui enfoncent le tibia de leur père dans la bouche d'un porc au moment où la bête égorcée vomit son sang à flots. Nous aussi, nous puissons de nombreux tibias et de nombreux crânes, partout le sang animal et humain coule autour de nous. Mais nous ne savons pas employer le sang ou les os à rompre

autre dont la respiration pourrait nous survivre. De cette image nous ne connaissons que la forme négative, les savons, les brosses à dents et tous les produits pharmaceutiques dont l'accumulation nous permet d'échapper péniblement chaque jour à la crise et à la mort. Chaque jour, nous nous faisons les serviteurs dociles de ces menues fabrications qui sont les seuls dieux d'un homme mo-



ÉGLISE SAINTE-MARIE DE LA CONCESSION A ROME, CHAPELLE SOUTERRAINE.

la régularité de jours qui se perdent pour nous comme le contenu d'un tonneau mal joint.

Le jeu de l'homme et de sa propre pourriture se continue dans les conditions les plus mornes sans que l'un ait jamais le courage d'affronter l'autre. Il semble que jamais nous ne pourrions nous trouver en face de l'image grandiose d'une décomposition dont le risque intervenant à chaque souffle est pourtant le sens même d'une vie que nous préférons, nous ne savons pourquoi, à celle d'un

derme. Cette servitude se poursuit dans tous les lieux où un être normal peut encore se rendre. On entre chez le marchand de tableaux comme chez un pharmacien, en quête de remèdes bien présentés pour des maladies avouables.

Un certain caractère public disqualifie — avant terme — toute espèce d'effort pour échapper à cette faillite. Ce qu'on aime vraiment, on l'aime surtout dans la honte et je défie n'importe quel amateur de peinture d'aimer une toile autant qu'un

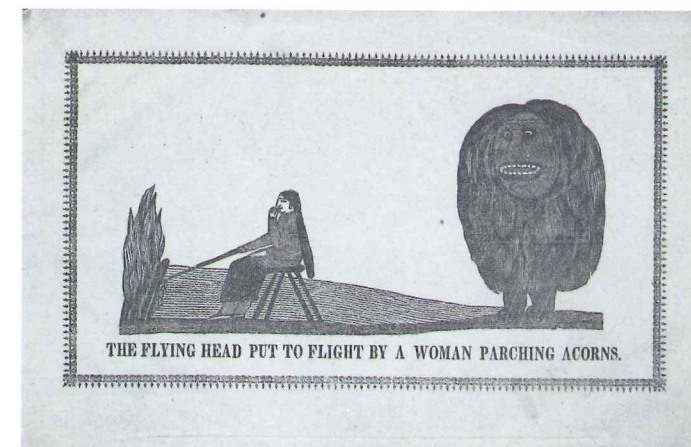
person, which may be bought and sold, and which is lost at the time of death. It follows that in a modern society, based on rational principles, the head becomes our most precious possession, the very mark of our identity, and thus to 'lose our head' is to become separated from our essential self. Today, the physical presence of our body may be insufficient to prove our identity, as refugees 'without papers' soon discover. Yet a photograph may at times be enough, giving proof of our existence even in the absence of our actually being present.

In one of the most powerful essays to appear in DOCUMENTS, 'The "Caput Mortuum" or the Alchemist's Wife' (8, 1930), Michel Leiris recounts a story in which a dervish is traumatised by an encounter with God, which becomes a confrontation with himself: the face of God is merely his own face. The power of this story comes from our not knowing what the dervish in fact experienced. Did he genuinely look into 'the face of God' and discover there nothing but himself, or did God hide himself by assuming the face of the beholder?

The photographs accompanying Leiris's article are extremely disturbing, featuring a woman in a leather mask that both constrains and compresses her features to the extent that she almost seems, as Leiris emphasises in his text, no longer to be human. These photographs, taken to instructions given by the adventurer William Seabrook, evoke the anonymous displaced skull that Bataille will later celebrate as the acephale, as well as bearing a curious resemblance to the trophy heads accompanying the von Koenigswald essay referred to above.

In editing DOCUMENTS, especially in the images he chose to illustrate it, one has the impression that Bataille was seeking to induce a condition in the viewer analogous to the trauma endured by the dervish in coming face to face with God. In doing so, he appears to have wanted to give the journal the quality of an energy source disruptive of audience gratification and self-satisfaction. **MR**

JACQUES-ANDRÉ BOIFFARD, PABLO PICASSO, THE MODERN SPIRIT AND THE PLAY OF TRANSPOSITIONS



D

- A** Anon, Ivory Coast (Guéré/Wobé-style), *Mask*, 20th C. (cat. 42)
B Anon, Ivory Coast or Liberia, *Mask*, late 19th – early 20th C. (cat. 43)
C Anon, Nigeria (Ngbe Society), *Mask*, 19th – early 20th C (cat. 50)
D Anon, Nigeria (Cross River Region), *Janus Mask*, late 19th – early 20th C. (cat. 48)



A



B



C



D

- A Jacques-André Boiffard, *Untitled*, 1932-33 (cat. 79)
- B DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929 (detail)
- C DOCUMENTS, 5, 1930
- D 2 pages from DOCUMENTS, 2, 1930



B



Joanna Allen (a typical american beauty) qui danse actuellement dans *Flying High* (p. 306) à l'Apollo de New-York.

C



Maqui de carnaval. — Photo J.-A. Boiffard.

D



Maqui de carnaval. — Photo J.-A. Boiffard.

D

ESCHYLE, LE CARNAVAL ET LES CIVILISÉS

J'entreis acheter le journal à la mercerie-papeterie. La marchande remuait en vain des cartons gonflés de disordre pour y trouver les boutons qu'une petite fille attendait, un pat de lin à la main. Dans le sillon des visages en viande saignante défilèrent les métamorphoses célèbres et corrompues de la mort et sur ces tas qui n'évoquaient aucun massacre, les mouches se pressaient et faisaient absolument leurs neufs.
L'enfant posa son pat sur la table et tendit que les mouches lui sautaient venant y

THE HUNDRED-HEADLESS WOMAN

MAX ERNST'S HUNDRED-HEADLESS WOMAN

Robert Desnos

To poetry, the poet is a wolf. He fights it, overcomes it and tears it apart with his fine teeth and long claws. He feeds upon it. Like an eternal battle, or the merciless combat of lovers, a passion as strong as hatred and death both unites the poet and his ideal mistress and sets them against each other. Without this taste for murder and blood there can be no valid creation in this territory.

It is this taste for murder, this scent of blood that characterises the work of Max Ernst and, in particular, of *The Hundred-Headless Woman*, which in some ways represents the sum total of his research.

There can be no hallucinations for the poet; there is only the real. And the inventor of collages invites us to the spectacle of a reality that has been pushed further than we normally acknowledge.

This new territory, a conquered colony in which the



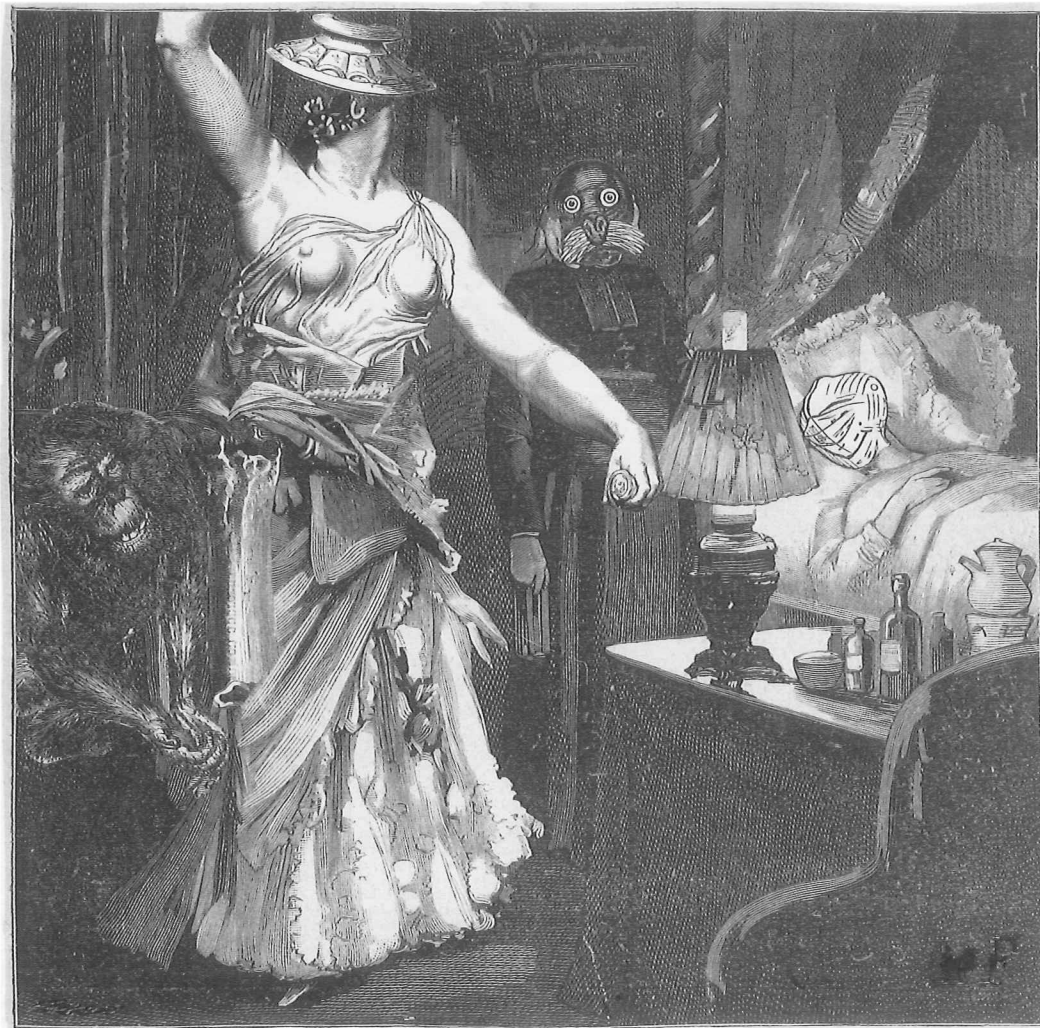
A

A attributed to Man Ray, *Portrait of Robert Desnos*, n.d. (cat. 100)

Max Ernst, *The Hundred-Headless Woman*, 1930

B *Could this Monkey be Catholic, Perhaps?* (cat. 85c)

C *The Third Mouse Seated, One Can See the Body of a Legendary Adult Fly* (cat. 85e)



« Spinge serait-il catholique, par hasard ? » max ernst

B



C

freedom to dream has subdued the imperialism of the already seen, has been won for memory by the imagination.

For what we're being shown today is enough of a panorama of an entire unknown set of nightmares and visions for us from now on to identify other views that might be offered to us, so that we can say: this belongs to the land of *The Hundred-Headless Woman* into which Max Ernst was the first to venture, situated some distance from where the titans fell, in the shadow of the stairs that witnessed the fight of the Eternal, not far from the strange cave where the peculiar mice frolic, in the territories blighted with earthquakes where balloons make their supple takeoffs, half way between waking and dusk, in the land of dreams, luxuries, murky horrors and false dawns.

From every part of this travelogue, from this diary of

an exploration, the hazy image haunting our brains emerges at the very moment when, all too briefly ceasing to be human, thanks to the erotic grace of the senses we enter a universe of delirium and wailing and kisses.

In truth this is a knowledge gained from a new Olympus (and we can now use this word stripped as it has been of all religious meaning).

When gods are deprived of their unjust and arbitrary prerogatives they become in truth not very human beings (though perhaps no less so than us) whom it is perfectly possible to understand or to fight.

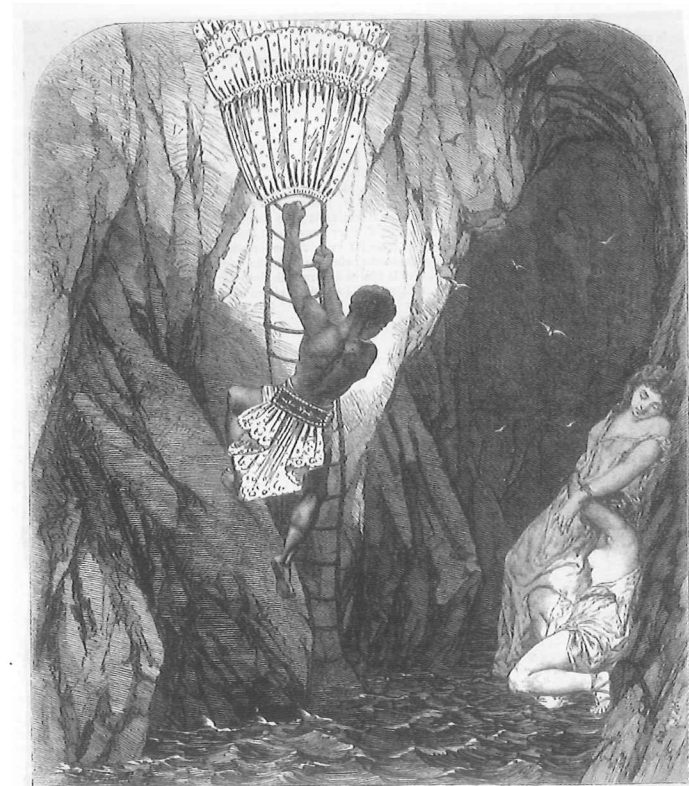
Max Ernst, subjected to the selfsame destiny of all poets, thus tears a shred from the marvellous and restores it to the torn dress of the real.

'And from now on nothing will seem more normal than a Titan in a restaurant...'

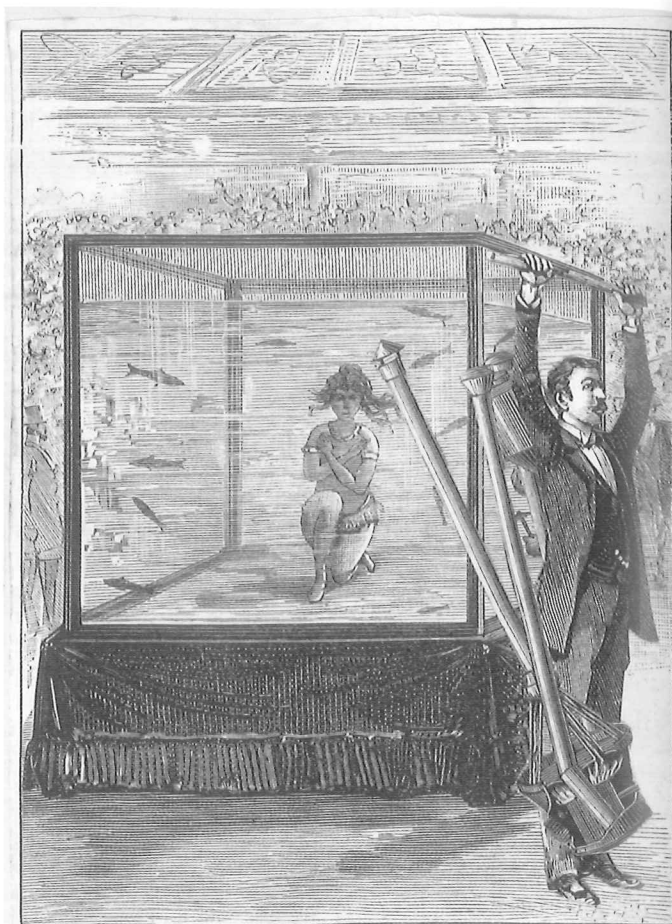
NB *The Hundred-Headless Woman* is published by Éditions du Carrefour, Paris, 1930. The originals of the illustrations (old engravings cut up and glued together) belong to the Vicomte de Noailles.

DOCUMENTS, 4, 1930. Translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijałkowski and Michael Richardson.

JACQUES-ANDRÉ BOIFFARD, HEADS



B



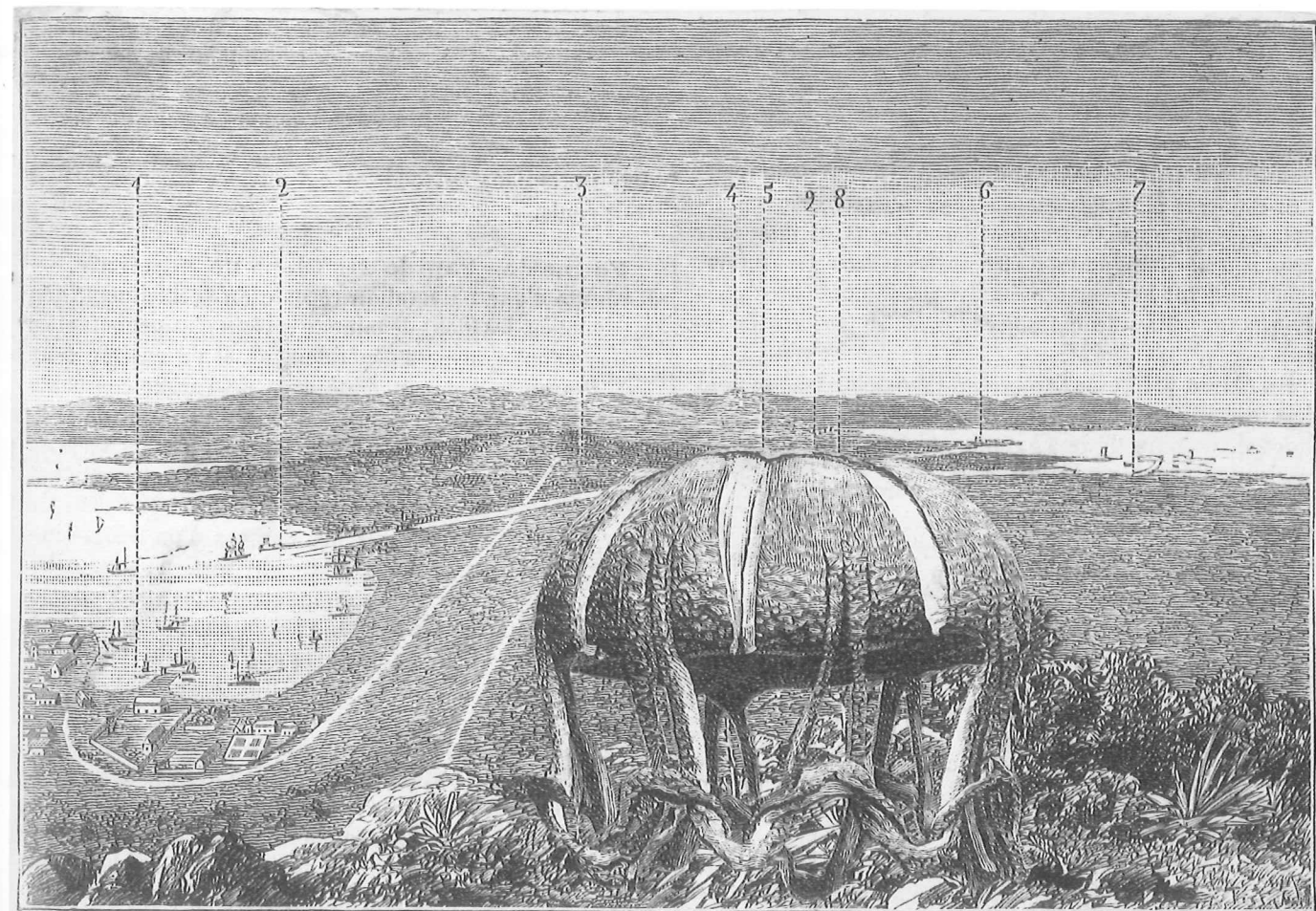
A

Max Ernst, *The Hundred-Headless Woman*, 1930

- A *Physical Training or the Death of your Choice* (cat. 85f)
- B *In Daytime, Angelic Caresses Flee to Secret Regions, Neighbouring the Poles* (cat. 85b)
- C *We Can See More than One Lawyer Dash Past Letting his Voice Drop to Time* (cat. 85d)
- D *The Landscape Changes Three Times (II)* (cat. 85a)



C



D



A

CINEMA

The two years during which DOCUMENTS was published (1929–30) was a time when documentary film as we know it today was established, taking a starting point from the problematic definition given to it by John Grierson in 1926 as 'the creative treatment of actuality'. It will immediately be noted that Grierson's formulation was incompatible with the way evidence was treated in DOCUMENTS, in which the essence of a 'document' was precisely that it precluded any such 'creative treatment'. We thus see by implication in DOCUMENTS the germ of another documentary practice, which has since known a certain shadow existence in the cinema, in which fiction is not clearly distinguishable from non-fiction. In an article in DOCUMENTS ('Modern Imagery', 7, 1929), Robert Desnos notes how popular imagery provides 'a strongly expressive commentary on actuality and history', affecting both the development of the cinema and the ideas and morals of the time. What is 'documentary' thus emerges here not from a will to impose a pattern upon actuality, whether by treating it creatively or in any other way, but from allowing evidence to emerge from the very core of its own actuality, so that Hollywood musicals doubtless contain greater documentary data than an explanatory film about the organisation of the national ballet or the mating rituals of peacocks.

DOCUMENTS also coincided with the coming of talking pictures, which its writers welcomed, against the general trend among intellectuals, especially those of the despised avant-garde who were striving to make cinema the seventh art. The films of interest to the contributors to DOCUMENTS were treated precisely in terms of their quality as evidence in the sense specified by Desnos. Thus we find Hollywood melodramas like King Vidor's *Hallelujah!* (1929) or Fox's *Movietone Follies of 1929* assuming the same evidential status as Sergei M. Eisenstein's *The General Line* (1929). **MR**



B

- A Eisenstein on the set of *The General Line*, c.1929 (fig. 16)
 B *Film Photos Like Never Seen Before*, 1929 (fig. 17)
 C Sergei M. Eisenstein (director), *The General Line*, 1929 (still) (cat. 182)
 D DOCUMENTS, 7, 1929



C



George Bancroft dans "Les Nuits de Chicago".

CINÉMA D'AVANT-GARDE

Un mode créatif de penser dû à la persistente influence d'Oscar Wilde et des esthètes de 1890, influence à laquelle nous devons entre autres les manifestations de M. Jean Cocteau, a créé dans le cinéma une œuvre conduite.

Un respect exagéré de l'art, une mystique de l'expression ont conduit tout un groupe de producteurs, d'acteurs et de spectateurs à la création du cinéma dit d'avant-garde remarquable par la rapidité avec laquelle ses productions se dissolvent, son absence d'émotion humaine et le danger qu'il fait courir au cinéma tout entier.

pas de créer une œuvre d'art ou une esthétique nouvelle mais d'être à des mouvements profonds, épiques et, par suite, nécessitant une forme nouvelle.

Nous ne citons ici que les films de *Les Nuits de Chicago*, *24 heures en 30 minutes*, *Le Maître d'œuvre* (2), etc...

Le réalisateur pas, en si peu, sur le théâtre de son acteurs. La comparaison entre des photographes de Bancroft et de Jacques Catelain suffisant à montrer le grotesque et la vanité de ce dernier qui nous parvenait quelque comme le prototype de l'acteur d'avant-garde comme M. Marcel L'Herbier et celui du metteur en scène.

Qu'on m'excuse. Lorsque René Clair et Paulin Talbot ont fait *Les Nuits de Chicago* (1) et *24 heures en 30 minutes*, il ne s'agissait

L'utilisation de procédés techniques que l'action ne rend pas nécessaires, un jeu conventionnel, la prétention à explorer les mouvements sublimes et complexi-



392-138

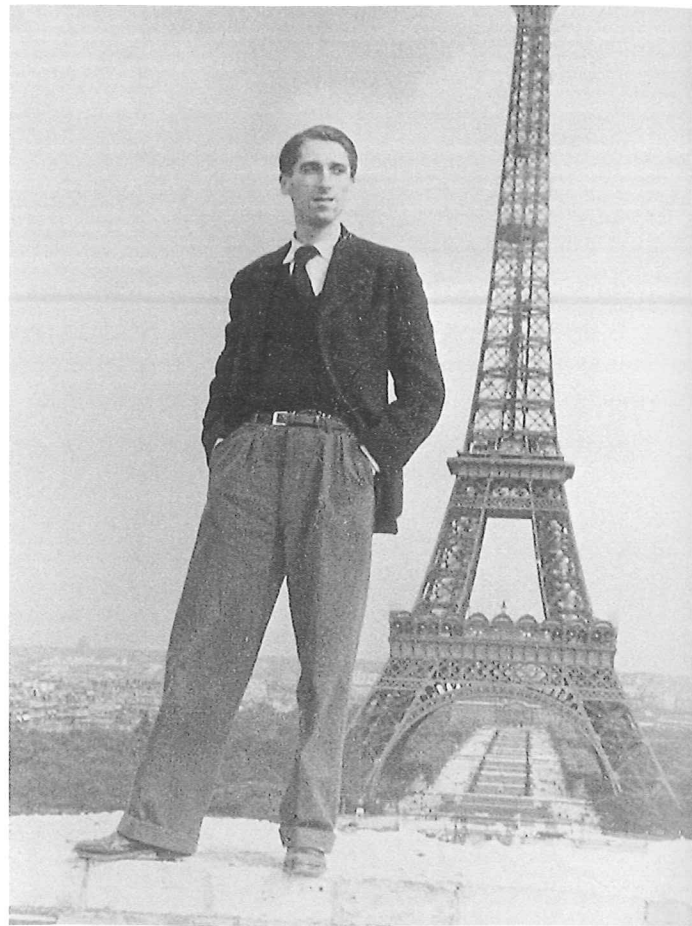
A Anon, *Georges Henri Rivière on the Roof of the Trocadéro during Demolition*, Spring 1936 (fig. 18)

B Anon, 'Provence' vitrine, *Salle de France, Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*, 1895 (fig. 19)

C DOCUMENTS, 5, 1929

D DOCUMENTS, 7, 1930

E DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930



A

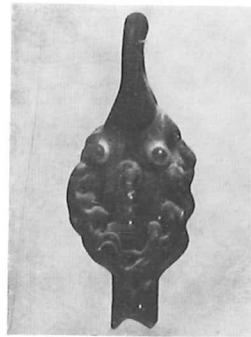
OMELETTES

In his Critical Dictionary entry 'Sun' (7, 1930), Zdenko Reich reports on a February village *fête* in the French Alps devoted to the making, offering and consumption of omelettes. His account of this thanksgiving sun ritual fits into the anthropological interest running throughout DOCUMENTS and epitomises the contemporaneous rise in France in the attention given to regional identities. Reich went on to write 'Pig Massacre' (8, 1930) describing past Roman rituals, illustrated by a photograph of a similar contemporary ceremony in New Guinea captioned: 'Although pig sacrifices have disappeared from our part of the world, they have remained frequent in Oceania where, on *fête* days, 50 to 100 pigs are sacrificed. (Photo Williamson, Mafulu Mountains people of New Guinea, London, 1912).'

In 1928 at the Musée Ethnographique du Trocadéro, Georges Henri Rivière decided to expand upon the French collections in the Salle de France and created a separate entity dedicated to the research, archive and preservation of local customs and material culture – encouraging scientific study with the aim of modernising a field with nostalgic tendencies.¹ The Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires (MNATP) was opened in 1938 and, from 1969, was housed in a



B



A droite: Bouteille de passion. — Coll. Henri Mauret.
En haut: Sainte-Face. — En bas: Tête de Jules (groscla 4 fin).

C

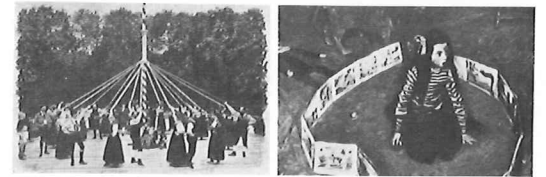


D

est accompagné de gestes et de mimique exécutés par le chœur. Nous devons enfin remarquer le fait que la ronde périphérique traite dans son refrain uniquement de Sigurd, alors que le chanteur central parle seulement de Brunehilde jusqu'à l'instant où Sigurd la rejoint; enfin, la chanson décrit Brunehilde assise sur une chaise d'or placée sur une montagne déserte. Autour de cette montagne flamboie inévitablement l'enceinte de feu la «Waberlohe». En d'autres termes, nous voyons ici l'ancien sujet exposé exactement de la même façon que dans les vieilles sagas mais dansé, interprété dramatiquement par un matériel humain vivant. Je crois que cette coïncidence surprenante nous donne les moyens de compléter d'une manière significative nos suppositions sur la cérémonie rituelle de Stonehenge. Stonehenge nous donne pour ainsi dire le squelette architectonique; les sagas de l'époque païenne tardive, traitant des fiançailles des héros, nous font connaître le sujet sous sa forme mythique, tandis que la danse de Faröe et ses nombreuses variantes nous montrent fort probablement la forme sous laquelle avait lieu la cérémonie rituelle, ainsi que la disposition et les mouvements des groupes de fidèles. La place du chanteur central était primitivement occupée par un prêtre accomplissant un acte sacré quelconque au moment où les rayons du soleil levant venaient éclairer l'autel, tandis que les fidèles entouraient en ronde ce centre sacré et accompagnaient l'action par un chant et par des gestes rituels. Et lorsque nous constatons que les missionnaires chrétiens



6. BOUÉE DE L'ÉPIROUZE.



7. BONDÉ SERVIR DE L'ARRÉE DE MAL BARRE. — 8. FÊTE DE LA SAINTE-MÈRE, D'APRÈS UNE FÊTE DE MAL BARRE.

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purpose built museum in the Bois de Boulogne. Rivière's novel structuralist displays downplayed the aesthetic nature of the object in favour of revealing its use-value and context. This extraordinary collection is now being decentralised to Marseille and renamed Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée. This move and the creation of Quai Branly are part of the current dispersal of the Musée de l'Homme's holdings.

In DOCUMENTS, European folklore and popular traditions can be traced in the religious productions of 'passion bottles' from Notre-Dame-de-Liesse and Neapolitan crèches (5, 1929), Italian and Austrian ossuaries (8, 1930), carnivals and performances such as the circus acts mentioned in 'Civilization' (4, 1929), the singer Georgius ('Theatrical Folklore', 5, 1930) and maypole dances ('The Sacred Feminine Centre', 7, 1930). Arts and crafts appear through Jean Besnard's ceramics ('Pottery', 4, 1930) and in two illustrated *découpages* by J. Pouels, which acknowledge an exhibition of 'art populaire' at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (4, 1929). CH

THE QUESTION OF LAY ETHNOGRAPHY, PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE, SACRIFICE

LE MASSACRE DES PORCS

Un sacrifice rituel de porcs, ou, si l'on veut, un jeu de massacre à signification religieuse, avait lieu à Rome, sur la montagne de *Testaccio*, durant le moyen âge jusqu'à la fin de la renaissance. Une charte du XIII^e siècle mentionne ce jeu du *Testaccio* comme une coutume observée depuis un temps immémorial (1). Une relation de 1536, assez détaillée, imprimée à Rome (2), nous permet de reconstituer les traits généraux de ce jeu singulier.

Le mardi gras, pendant que la ville pontificale exalte sa liberté par des ripailles, des mascarades et des courses grotesques, un immense cortège solennel parcourt la ville et se dirige, finalement, vers la montagne de *Testaccio*. Toute la magnificence des carnivals est obscurcie par la splendeur que les seigneurs romains déploient ce dernier jour. Habillés de pourpre et d'or, ils montent avec fierté toute leur richesse et leur puissance. Les treize quartiers de la Rome du moyen âge, représentés par leurs délégués, forment dans le cortège

treize groupes distincts de celui des seigneurs. Chaque quartier envoie, dans ce cortège, un taureau, très grand et très féroce, «superbe à voir». Rien ne suggère, dans cette cérémonie, un dénouement différent de celui des autres parades militaires. Pourtant toute cette foule s'attend à un événement extraordinaire... Pendant que les coureurs rivalisent pour la prime traditionnelle, pendant que la foule applaudit un mime, acclame le vainqueur ou demande la répétition de la course, on procède aux derniers préparatifs. Six charrettes couvertes de drap rouge, occupées chacune par un porc vivant, sont placées sur le sommet de la montagne. Derrière les



9. LE SACRIFICE DES PORCS À TESTACCIO, DANS SON CORTÈGE, LE JEU DE LA COURSE DES PORCS EN OCCASION DE LA FÊTE DE LA SAINTE-MÈRE, D'APRÈS UNE FÊTE DE MAL BARRE (1922).

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E

PABLO PICASSO

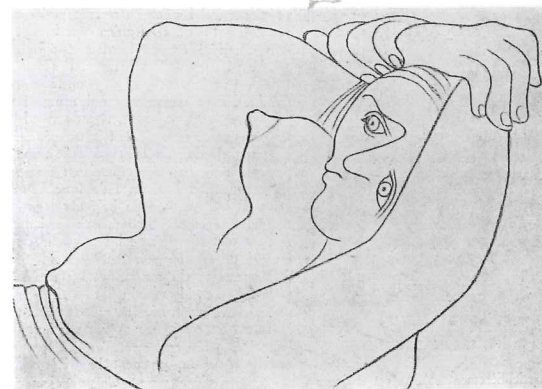
There is a seeming paradox that Picasso dominated DOCUMENTS – a publication pledged to disrespect. The magazine reproduced dozens more Picassos than works by any other artist, and published some of the most remarkable texts in the Picasso literature. An entire issue of DOCUMENTS' short run paid 'Homage' to the painter, with contributors ranging from the ex-surrealist Robert Desnos ('Hello Mr Picasso', 3, 1930) to the young Claude Lévi-Strauss ('Picasso and Cubism', 3, 1930).¹

One factor in the relationship between DOCUMENTS and Picasso was the friendship between the artist and Michel Leiris; again, Picasso's Cubism was central to Carl Einstein's narrative of twentieth-century art. Yet the magazine's historiography, and in particular the academic recuperation of the formless, has sidelined Picasso. Picasso's station as the hero of modern art might deflect this deferral from an insubordinate trope. Yet the claims that Georges Bataille made for Picasso's painting were radically anti-idealist.

The appropriation of Picasso within DOCUMENTS had a polemical function in the controversy between André Breton's Surrealism and the magazine. In *Surrealism and Painting*, published in book form in 1928, Breton installed the



Picasso [Femmes dansant devant une fenêtre] 1925 (215 x 140 cm). — Atelier du peintre.



Picasso, dessin, 1929 (15,5 x 21,5 cm). — Atelier du peintre.

SOLEIL POURRI

Le soleil, humainement parlant (c'est-à-dire en tant qu'il se confond avec la notion de midi) est la conception la plus élevée. C'est aussi la chose la plus abstraite, puisqu'il est impossible de le regarder fixement à cette heure-là. Pour achever de décrire la notion de soleil dans l'esprit de celui qui doit l'émasculer nécessairement par suite de l'incapacité des yeux, il faut dire que ce soleil-là a poétiquement le sens de la sérénité mathématique et de l'élévation d'esprit. Par contre si, en dépit de tout, on le fixe assez obstinément, cela suppose une certaine folie et la notion change de sens parce que, dans la lumière, ce n'est plus la production qui apparaît, mais le déchet, c'est-à-dire la combustion, assez bien exprimée, psychologiquement, par l'horreur qui se dégage d'une lampe à arc en incandescence. Pratiquement le soleil fixé s'identifie à l'éjaculation mentale, à l'écume aux lèvres et à la crise d'épilepsie. De même que le soleil

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A Spread from DOCUMENTS, 3, 1930

B Pablo Picasso, *Woman in an Armchair*, 1929 (cat. 133)



B

- A Pablo Picasso, *Woman's Torso*, 26
December 1929 (cat. 135)
B Pablo Picasso, *Woman in a Red
Armchair*, 1929 (cat. 134)



A



B

- A Pablo Picasso, *Bather, Design for a Monument (Dinard)*, 1928 (cat. 129)
 B Pablo Picasso, *Figure (Woman Seated)*, 1930 (cat. 137)



A

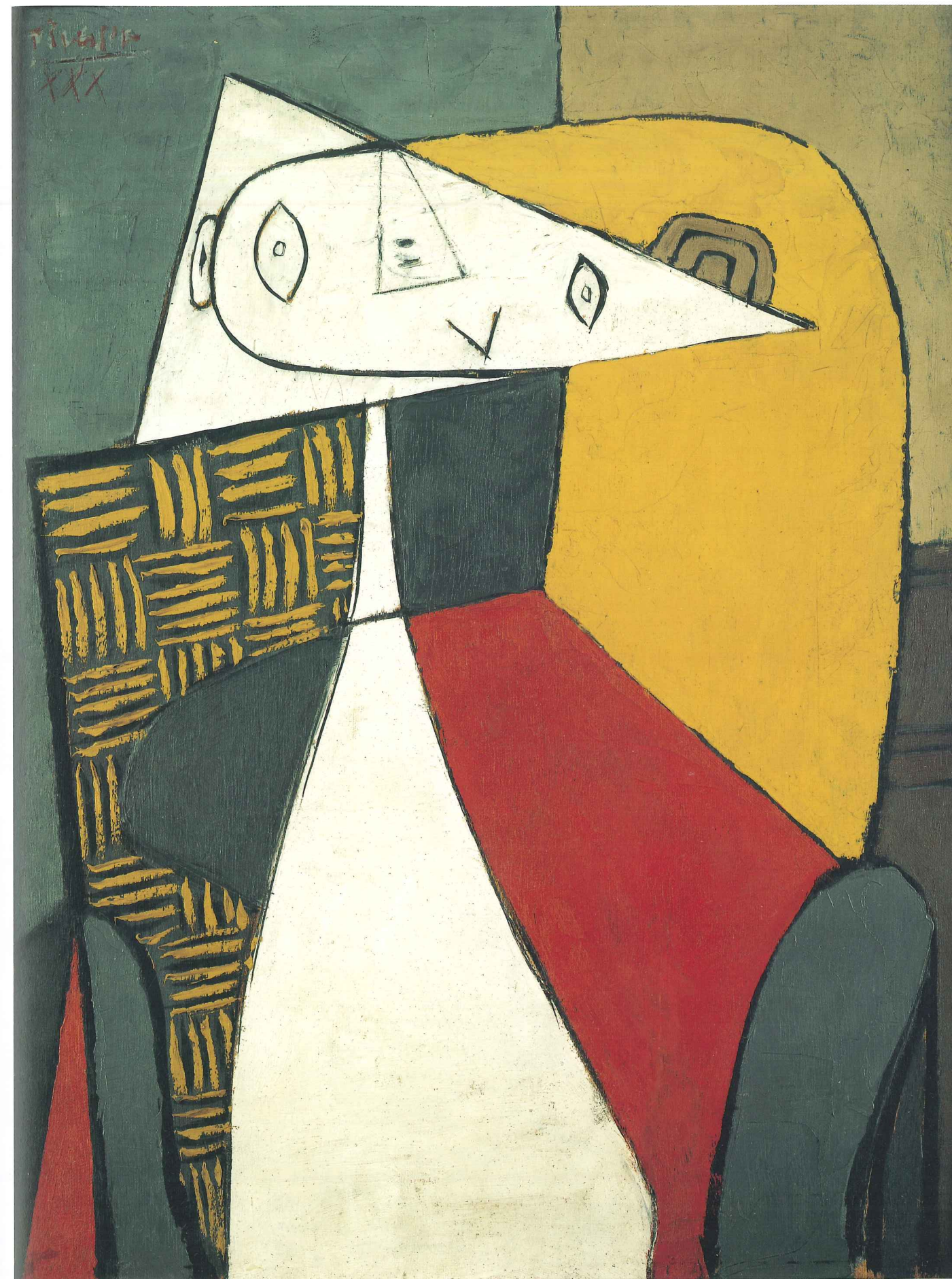
older artist as a transcendental beacon, whose cubist break with mimetic realism had inaugurated surrealist painting, and whose recent art represented a liberating evasion of reality. Discussing works such as *Composition with a Woman with a Mane of Hair* (1930) and the Beyeler *Figure (Woman Seated)* (1930), Leiris, an ex-surrealist himself, expropriated Picasso from Breton's 'chimerical heaven where the least desire becomes law'; rather, Picasso was pushing reality to its limit, agonistically producing strangely 'viable' creatures ('Recent Picasso Canvases', 2, 1930).

Breton poeticised Cubism as a river of light 'high above the summit of any mountain', an apparition of 'perfect resolution, of ideal reduction'.² As such he enlisted Picasso on the side of the surrealist idea of reconciled contradiction. Bataille would rupture this image. In a reading derived retroactively from an essay late in DOCUMENTS' lifespan, 'The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions' (8, 1930), Bataille has been portrayed as having 'relatively little confidence in art'³ – but at the beginning of DOCUMENTS Bataille could claim that 'the disappearance of academic construction in painting' opened the way 'to the expression (and thus the exaltation) of psychological processes maximally incompatible with social stability' ('Architecture', 2, 1929). For Bataille, the visual field was a domain continuous with politics and philosophy; thus, in his article on Salvador Dalí's *Lugubrious Game* (7, 1929), he uses Picasso to attack idealism:

'If the forms brought together by a painter on a canvas had no repercussion, and for example, since we are speaking of voracity – even in the intellectual order – if horrible shadows that collide in the head, if jaws with hideous teeth had not come out of Picasso's skull to terrify those who still have the impudence to think honestly, then painting at the very most would be good for distracting people from their rage, as do bars or American films. But why hesitate to write that when Picasso paints, the dislocation of forms leads to that of thought; that is to say, that the immediate intellectual movement, which in other cases leads to the idea, aborts.'

Bataille views Picasso's typical motifs of the late 1920s as a kind of intellectual terrorism: 'horrible shadows' refer to dark avatars of the death drive such as the profile at the right of *The Three Dancers* (1925); the 'jaws with hideous teeth' to the sort of grimacing female head, menacing the patriarchal subject, that we see in that picture's left-hand dancer.

Bataille specifically apprehends the terrors Picasso unleashes as afflicting 'honest' thought; the shadows and jaws have been expelled out of Picasso's skull as if he were an anti-Zeus, and his production anti-Athena, anti-wisdom. Naturally Picasso's attack on thinking takes place in the visual field; his *dislocation* of forms, a crippling violence, disarticulates thought itself. Then the remarkable phrase: 'that is to say, that the



B



A

immediate intellectual movement, which in other cases leads to the idea, aborts.' Bataille is (ab)using the metaphor of *conception* in the concept. The Oxford English Dictionary gives one sense of 'conceive' as 'grasp mentally; take in, comprehend; understand'. *Concevoir* is the same. When we look at Picasso's pictures, Bataille is saying, what we take in through our eyes into our mind damages the process of conceptualisation, the generation of the idea – and aborts, kills that embryonic idea. Picasso makes anti-meaning. There is something of this violence in the scribbles from his Dinard sketchbooks from the summer of 1928, similar to the images reproduced in the 'Homage to Picasso' special issue.

In his renowned yet seldom scrutinised contribution to that special issue, 'Rotten Sun' (3, 1930), Bataille explodes Breton's depiction in 'Surrealism and Painting' of Picasso as a 'powerful searchlight' leading the way towards surreality, 'bearing rays of light in each hand'; rather, Bataille equates Picasso's production with the 'horror emanating from a brilliant arc lamp', or the blinding, maddening sight of the actual noonday

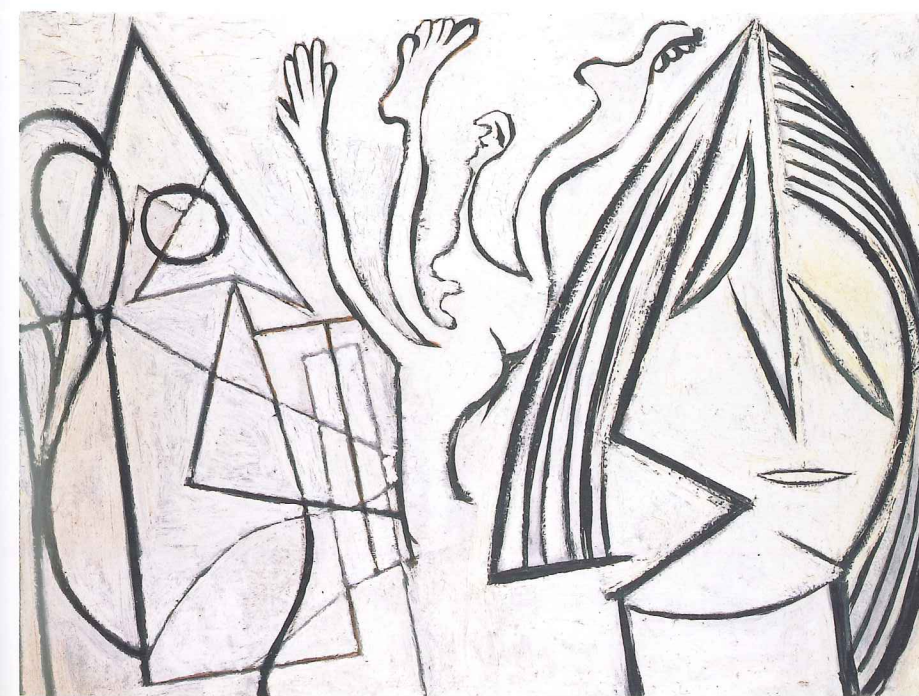
sun (as opposed to its metaphysical idealisation). Pointedly, the illustration opposite Bataille's piece was *The Three Dancers*, which had taken pride of place in the first instalment of 'Surrealism and Painting' in *La Révolution surréaliste* (3, 1930).⁴

'Rotten Sun' was Bataille's intervention in a critical poetics of fire and light that has fretted the Picasso literature – and which scorched the other DOCUMENTS texts, 'Picasso Meteor' and the poem 'Fire' (3, 1930). Bataille did not dispute Picasso's sovereignty, but exposed the repressed materiality of Breton's solar metaphor. For Bataille, Picasso forces us to see with what Friedrich Nietzsche called 'fearless Oedipus-eyes';⁵ as opposed to an enlightening contemplation of the idea, the viewer undergoes a sacrificial experience – he suffers a blinding excess of meaning comparable to the transgression of the border between sacred and profane. In fact Picasso and Bataille shared an interest in Nietzsche, whose reanimation of Dionysiac ecstasy we can detect in the Maenads of *Two Women Running on a Beach* and *The Three Dancers*, their heads thrown back as in classical depictions of Dionysus's female followers.

The violent contradiction without reserve of the 'Rotten Sun' communicates with a Picasso mythology quickened, like that of Bataille, by the problem of dualism. Yet DOCUMENTS' co-option of the artist was not one-way traffic. The virulent 1930 *Crucifixion*, for instance, dialogues with *The Apocalypse of Saint-Sever*.⁶

But there can be no facile iconographic correspondences between the *Crucifixion* and Bataille. The two meet in the sacrifice of signification. **CFBM**

ARCHAEOLOGY, BEAUX-ARTS, PICASSO METEOR



B

- A Pablo Picasso, *Two Women Running on a Beach*, 1928 (cat. 132)
 B Pablo Picasso, *Composition with a Woman with a Mane of Hair*, 1930 (cat. 136)



Pablo Picasso, *Bird on a Tree*, August 1928
(cat. 130)

HUMORAGE TO PICASSO

Roger Vitrac

Our pal Picasso,

Long live his brush-oh!

Pirate and corsair,

Here's to his horsehair!

[*Apollinaire*]

This star like a digit,
This tree like a tomb,
This sun like a mollusc,
Picasso, that's whom!

This nondescript newsprint,
Twin screw-clamp bazoom,
This gateau-crumb sawdust,
Picasso, that's whom!

This plant-pot with hair on,
Eyes like a bird's bum,
Top brass-knocker's knapsack,
Picasso, fo fum!

This soft stuff, this tough stuff,
Touched up with a broom,
Pump-grind it to lime-sludge,
Picasso, that's whom!

This topcoat, this back-stick,
This talk, spread like lipstick
On small buttered biscuit -
Picasstic!

This boneless sky, bare leafless view,
Beach-beauty like a lamb jigoo,
This horseflesh like a wooden shoe -
Picashoo!

This Socrates, stove-torso,
Splits diamond-ice from water
To prick a picture-pableau,
Picorso!

This matchstick pricking a mistake,
This scythe that imitates a rake,
To paint a laugh on Frou-Frou - who?
Picuckoo!

Last verse

Napoleon's fresh husk-oh,
Fresh husk on the nap-oh,
Fresh nap on the brush-oh,
Picasso!

*DOCUMENTS, 3, 1930. Translated from the French by
Timothy Adès*

PICASSO

Michel Leiris

With a whip-lash
 air slays the furniture and offers it in bloody slices
 to the maidservant running down
 saddened alleyways lost in a maze of innards
 like endlessly laddered stockings

Balls of wool drying out
 in the heights
 don't need an overseer's carriage
 to become hot-blooded mad women and fuck-me-with-an-oriental-slipper-why-don't-you?
 gutters lead straight to the pole
 at this hour when all hands are freezing
 in prison cells

Everyday implements
 excrete stars
 and the stars
 do the same right back

They clear their bowels
 of gutted fruits
 and bodies consumed on the off chance
 out of the cynical-eyed window
 whose damp woodwork spies

Specks of ivory Jugs⁽¹⁾ with lips of silk Automatic windows
 Falling carpets Shiftings of Cathedral winds
 horizons slowly raise themselves and abandon all their charm

And then stripped spikes appear
 crucifixion of a false-collared accountant on the columns of his balance sheet
 remains of a bedroom the mouldings stripped of gilt
 vertebrae dragged by the brackish tide
 rags of worn-out clothes, the warp thread showing through, lit up
 as fish-bones sometimes are in the cloudy waters of abysses

resonant bones transmit eddies
 and transform them pincer after pincer
 (*fresh water pincer*, isn't that a splendid instrument?)
 into gentle songs which nestle on these shelves
 stacked up by spangled hearts on the peak of riggings

DOCUMENTS, 3, 1930. Translated from the French by Susan de Muth





A

A Pablo Picasso, *The Painter and his Model*, 1927 (cat. 128)
 B Spread from DOCUMENTS, 3, 1930

FIRE

for Pablo Picasso

Jacques Baron

Pockets full of sunlight
 The day fades

Bodies of vitriol and anguish
 recover their stability
 teeth chattering the while

Pockets full of sunlight
 the painter strolls
 Earth floods with colour
 Eyes brooks of solidified light

The sea is frozen over
 The forest howls
 and gnawing birds
 gnaw at the earth's crust

All is light All is burning
 None can walk now so scorching is the earth
 The day of Autumn's intentions ended
 The season of fire's last burnings
 Last delirious laughings Let us live no longer
 in the barbaric light of your century
 Oh Picasso

DOCUMENTS, 3, 1930. Translated from the French by Susan de Muth

poils, un à un, on le fait. Mes caves de la rue du Bac sont si humides. Ah ! j'ai aussi trois convois de légumes et de fruits sur la Seine. Une banane, c'est comme un œuf. Un œuf ? On le touche, on le casse. Une banane ? On la touche, on la gâte. Et mes melons ? C'est mon Fils bien-aimé qui se charge des achats dans le midi. En ce moment il est à Rome, auprès du Pape. C'est comme le Théâtre du Châtelet (il le montre), j'en ai la surveillance générale. Eh bien, Monsieur, vous n'imaginez pas ce que c'est. »

Pendant que Dieu parle, je regarde sa maison sans murs, ni toit, ni porte, ni fenêtre, où tout est si bien rangé en plein air autour d'un seul arbre : les linges, les caisses, le parapluie lié d'une corde aux deux bouts, des gamelles, des passoirs enchaînés à un fil de fer que termine une grosse poêle : mais ce n'est pas là, comme on le pourrait croire, une batterie de cuisine : c'est le poste de T. S. F.

Sous le pont loge la garde-robe. Je vois une Croix de Pèlerin à la boutonnière d'une veste : — « Qu'est-ce là ? dis-je. Vous êtes dans la dévotion ? » — Non, Monsieur. Voyez plutôt le second pardessus avec la cocarde tricolore ; le troisième porte une immortelle rouge. C'est que je suis de toutes les religions. Selon que j'ai affaire à Pierre, à Paul ou à Jacques, je passe un autre pardessus. J'en ai dix. J'en devrais avoir cent. Avec vous, je sais bien lequel des cent je devrais mettre, mais pas vous avec moi. Cependant, comme je presentais votre visite, j'ai préféré d'être nu. C'était une autre façon de vous plaire. Ainsi, ne croyez pas que je sois dupe de vos compliments. C'est vous qui l'êtes des miens, ou nous le sommes tous les deux, si vous êtes le Diable. En attendant, je décampe ce soir et il vous sera bien difficile de remettre jamais la main sur Dieu-le-Père. »

Marcel JOUANDEAU.

FLAMMES

à Pablo Picasso

Les poches pleines de soleil
 Le jour se flétrit

Des corps de vitriol et d'angoisses
 regagnent leur demeure
 en claquant des dents

Les poches pleines de soleil
 le peintre se promène
 La terre est envahie par la couleur
 Ses yeux sont des ruisseaux de lumière solidifiée

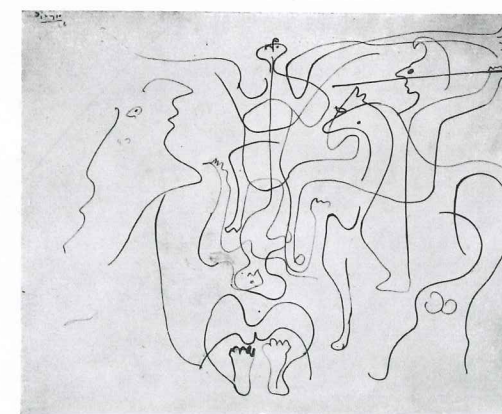
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B

La mer s'est pétrifiée
 La forêt hurle
 et les oiseaux rongeurs
 rongent l'écorce terrestre

Tout est lumière Tout est brûlure
 On ne peut plus marcher tellement la terre est bouillante
 Fin de journée des fins d'automne
 dernières brûlures de la saison des flammes
 Derniers rires délirants Finissons de vivre
 dans la lumière barbare de ton siècle
 O Picasso

Jacques BARON.



Picasso. [Crucifixion] dessin à la plume, 1926 (41 x 50 cm.). — Collection Ernst Collin, Berlin.

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APOCALYPSE

In the second issue of DOCUMENTS Georges Bataille glossed six illuminations from the Bibliothèque nationale de France's celebrated eleventh-century manuscript, the *Apocalypse of Saint-Sever* (2, 1929). The pictures, made for the Benedictine monastery at Saint-Sever-sur-l'Adour in the Landes in south-west France, illustrate the Spanish cleric Beatus of Liébana's influential eighth-century commentary on the Book of Revelation.¹ This was an appropriate topic for a medievalist with a fascination for Spain; he stressed that if the artist were French 'by blood', he was Spanish 'by painting', connecting the prevalence of 'adventist beliefs' in c.1000 AD Spain with the fact that, there, Islam 'directly threatened' Christianity. For Bataille the manuscript's 'Oriental' traits – on which scholars agree – were less conscious emulations of 'Arab' civilization than symptoms of a religious conflict so violent that its witnesses believed it to be the end of the world. The *Apocalypse of Saint-Sever* shows the clash of Occident and Orient hysterically in its style and metaphorically in its Apocalypse.

Bataille revelled in the Saint-Sever manuscript. Whereas Northern medieval illuminations tended to 'architectural and majestic' theology, the Saint-Sever Beatus, in the 'provocative bonhomie' with which it represented horrific disasters, correlated with medieval vernacular literature. Bataille wrote that the Saint-Sever Apocalypse and some popular literary forms shared a mode in which:

'...horror occasions no pathological pleasure; it simply plays the role of manure in vegetal growth – a manure without doubt of suffocating odour, but healthy for the plant. In effect there is nothing more tranquil – nor more perennial – than the beatitude, which one might even term senile, expressed by most of the figures reproduced here. One should not be surprised, moreover, at the beneficent value of dirty or bloody facts: in this regard, still to this day, one might easily note the physical optimism and enthusiasm for their work that characterises the killers of the abattoir and, in general, every member of the butchering trade.'

We can see this unsettling ambivalence in the contrast between the terrifying, monstrous 'locusts' of the Apocalypse and the 'ridiculous or charming' calm of their victims. **CFBM**





ANGELS

'The garments of angels are real garments, visible and palpable; they even change them...,' wrote Emmanuel Swedenborg, who together with William Blake and Michel Leiris heralded the descent of an unlikely choir of angels to the leveling scrutiny of DOCUMENTS' Critical Dictionary ('Angel', 6, 1930). One angel singled out for special attention by Leiris undoubtedly changed his garments frequently. He is manifest in the form of the actor Wesley Hill playing Gabriel in Mark Connelly's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *The Green Pastures* — a ground-breaking production featuring only African-American actors and actresses. Although later made into a film, the original play ran in New York, and it was through familiarity with the African-American press (notably *Opportunity* and W.E.B. du Bois's *The Crisis*) that *The Green Pastures* came to Leiris's attention. Reversing (and predating by several decades) the radical separatist contention that a white man's heaven is a black man's hell, *The Green Pastures* offers a sentimental, often comic vision of heaven populated entirely by black people and governed by 'De Lawd'. According to one reviewer at the time: 'Gabriel's desire to blow the fateful horn is one of the many bits of by-play that lend humor to *The Green Pastures*.'¹ SB

A Atelier Nadar: Félix Nadar (Gaspard Félix Tournachon) and Paul Nadar, *Mademoiselle Boroni*, 1876 (cat. 116)
B DOCUMENTS, 6, 1930



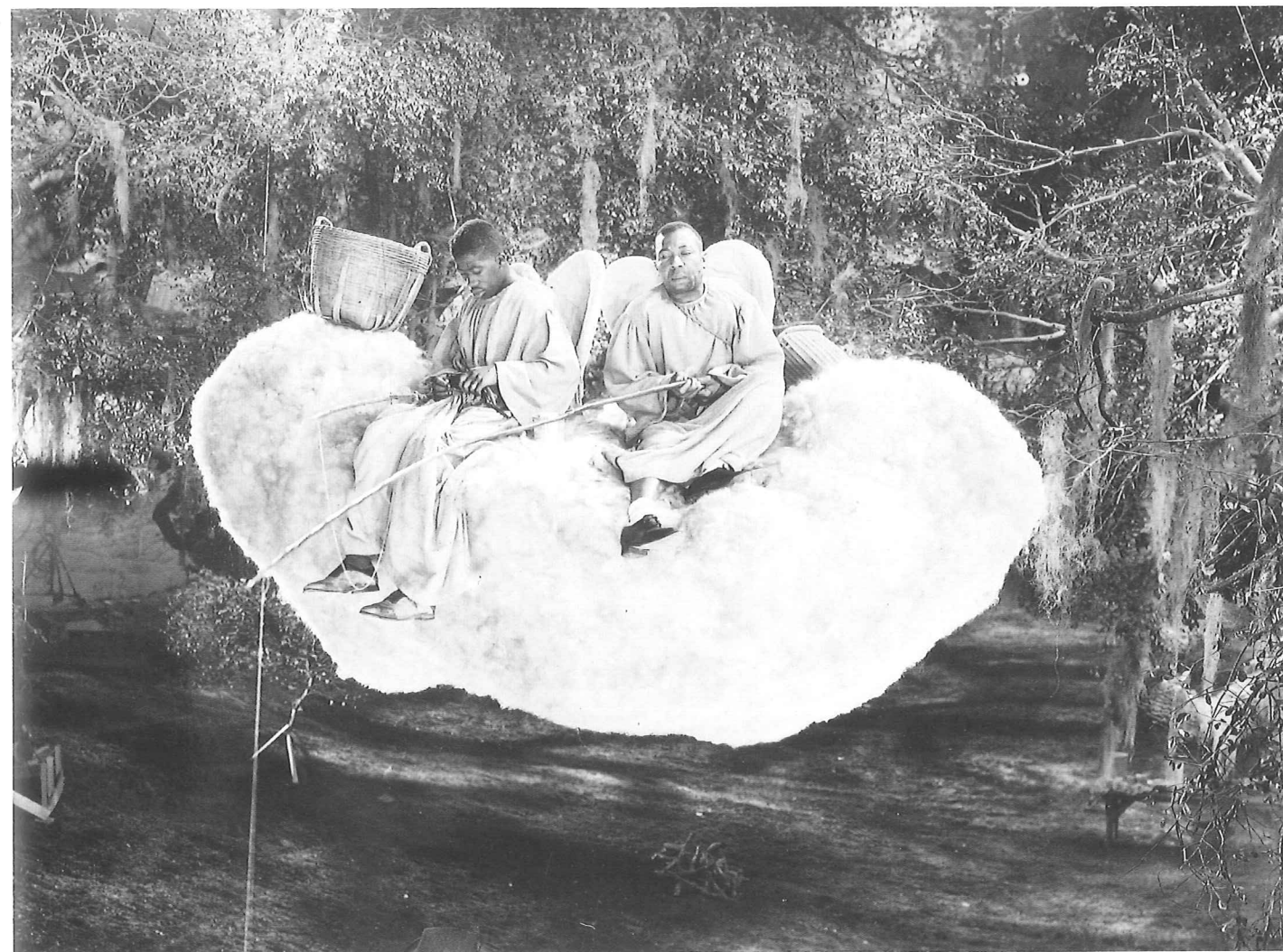
EN HAUT, A GAUCHE : L'ANGE GABRIEL, ÉCOLE ESPAGNOLE, XII^e SIÈCLE, FRAGMENT DE MINIATURE (CODEX VIGILANO, BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'ESCURIAL) ; A DROITE : L'ACTEUR NÈGRE WESLEY HILL, RÔLE DE L'ANGE GABRIEL DANS "THE GREEN PASTURES" (D'APRÈS "OPPORTUNITY", MAI 1930. — CF. "DOCUMENTS", N° 5, P. 306 ET N° 6, P. 376. — EN BAS : BESSIE LOVE DANS UN RÔLE D'ANGE.



A

A On the set of *The Green Pastures*, 1936
(fig. 21)

B William Keighley and Marc Connelly
(directors), *The Green Pastures*, 1936
(still) (cat. 184)



B

TRANSLATIONS

LE CHEVAL ACADÉMIQUE



MONNAIES GREQUES ET GAULOISES (AGRANDIES)
1. MACÉDOINE. - 2. LIMOUSIN - 3. ARTOIS

En apparence, rien dans l'histoire du règne animal, simple succession de métamorphoses confondantes, ne rappelle les déterminations caractéristiques de l'histoire humaine, les transformations de la philosophie, des sciences, des conditions économiques, les révolutions politiques ou religieuses, les périodes de violence et d'aberration... D'ailleurs, ces changements historiques relèvent en premier lieu de la liberté attribuée conventionnellement à l'homme, seul animal auquel on consente des écarts dans la conduite ou dans la pensée.

Il n'en est pas moins incontestable que cette liberté, dont l'homme se croit l'unique expression, est aussi bien le fait d'un animal quelconque, dont la forme particulière exprime un choix gratuit entre des possibilités innombrables. Il n'importe pas, en effet, que cette forme soit répétée identiquement par ses congénères : la prodigieuse multiplicité du cheval ou du tigre n'infirme en rien la liberté de la décision obscure en laquelle on peut trouver le principe de ce que ces êtres sont en propre. Seule reste à établir, afin d'éliminer une conception arbitraire, une commune mesure entre les divergences des formes animales et les déterminations contradictoires qui renversent périodiquement les conditions d'existence des hommes.

On trouve, liées à l'évolution humaine, des alternances de formes plastiques analogues à celles que présentent, dans certains cas, l'évolution des formes naturelles. Ainsi, le style académique ou classique s'opposant à tout ce qui est baroque, dément ou barbare, ces deux catégories radicalement différentes correspondent parfois à des états sociaux contradictoires. Les styles pourraient être ainsi tenus pour l'expression ou le symptôme d'un état de choses essentiel et, de la même façon, les formes animales, qui peuvent également être réparties en formes académiques et démentes.

Antérieurement à la conquête, la civilisation des Gaulois était comparable à celle des peuplades actuelles de l'Afrique Centrale, représentant ainsi, au point de vue social, une véritable antithèse de la civilisation classique. Il est facile d'opposer aux conquêtes systématiques des Grecs ou des Romains, les incursions incohérentes et inutiles des Gaulois à travers

THE ACADEMIC HORSE
Georges Bataille

There appears to be nothing in the history of the animal kingdom, a simple succession of confusing metamorphoses, to suggest the determinations characteristic of human history: the transformations of philosophy, sciences and economic conditions, political and religious revolutions, periods of violence and abnormality. Moreover, these historical changes arise principally from the freedom conventionally attributed to humanity, the only species allowed deviations in conduct or thought.

It is no less incontestable that this liberty, of which humanity believes itself to be the unique expression, is just as much the reality of an ordinary animal, whose particular form expresses a gratuitous choice between innumerable possibilities. It does not, in fact, matter if this form is identically reproduced by its fellow creatures: in no respect does the prodigious multiplicity of horses or tigers disprove the freedom of the obscure decision in which the essential quality of these beings can be found. It only remains to establish, in order to eliminate an arbitrary conception, a common measure between the divergences of animal forms and the contradictory determinations that periodically overturn the conditions of human existence.

Alternations of plastic forms, linked to human evolution, may be found that are analogous to those present, in certain cases, in the evolution of natural forms. Thus, since an academic or classical style is opposed to everything baroque, fantastic or barbarous, these two radically different categories sometimes correspond to contradictory social states. Styles could thus be considered the expression or symptom of an essential state of things just like animal forms, which can equally be divided in academic and fantastic forms.

Before the conquest, Gaulish civilization was comparable to the current peoples of central Africa, thereby representing, from the social point of view, a veritable antithesis to classical civilization. It is easy to contrast the incoherent and ineffectual incursions of the Gauls through Italy or Greece to the systematic conquests of the Greeks or Romans and, in general, the latter's constant organisation with the former's instability and doomed exhilaration. Everything that can make disciplined people aware of values and official organisation (architecture, statute law, secular science and the literature of lettered peoples) remained outside the consciousness of the Gauls who calculated nothing, conceiving of no progress and giving free rein to immediate suggestions and violent sentiment.

Data of a plastic order can be given as a direct response to this opposition. From the fourth century BC the Gauls, having used imported coins for their commercial exchanges, began to mint original issues as they copied certain Greek imprints and notably those bearing a representation of a horse on the back (like the gold staters of

Macedonia). But their imitations did not simply offer the usual barbarian imitations resulting from the clumsiness of the engraver. The fantastic horses imagined by various groups revealed not so much a technical fault as a positive extravagance, everywhere taking a first schematic interpretation to its most absurd consequences.

The relation between Greek and Gaulish expressions is all the more significant as it relates to the noble and correctly calculated form of horses, animals rightly considered to be among the most perfect and academic of forms. There is no reason to hesitate about pointing out that, as paradoxical as it might appear, the horse, situated by a curious coincidence at the origins of Athens, is one of the most accomplished expressions of the *idea*, just as much, for example, as Platonic philosophy or the architecture of the Acropolis. All representations of this animal during the classical age can be seen to extol, not without betraying a common arrogance, a profound kinship with Hellenic genius. Everything happened, in fact, as if the forms of the body as well as social forms or forms of thought tended towards a sort of ideal perfection from which all value proceeded; as if the progressive organisation of these forms sought gradually to satisfy the immutable harmony and hierarchy that Greek philosophy tended characteristically to ascribe to *ideas*, external to concrete facts. And the fact remains that the people most submissive to the need to see noble and irrevocable ideas rule and lead the course of things, could easily translate its dread by portraying the body of a horse: the hideous or comical body of a spider or of a hippopotamus would not have responded to this elevation of spirit.

The absurdities of barbarous peoples are out of step with scientific arrogance, nightmares with geometrical traces, and the horse-monsters imagined in Gaul with the academic horse.

The savages to whom these phantasms appeared, incapable of reducing a burlesque and incoherent agitation, a succession of violent and horrible images, to the great guiding ideas which give to ordered peoples the consciousness of human authority, were also incapable of discerning clearly the magical value of the regular forms presented on the coins that came their way. Yet a perfect casting and intelligibility, implying the impossibility of introducing absurd elements, were as little to their taste as police regulations are to the pleasures of the criminal classes. In fact, it was a question of what had necessarily paralysed the idealist conception of the Greeks, an aggressive ugliness, transports linked to the sight of blood or horror, cries of excess, in other words whatever has no meaning, no usefulness, introducing neither hope nor stability, conferring no authority: by degrees, the dislocation of the classical horse,

finally achieving the frenzy of forms, transgressed the rule and resulted in realising the exact expression of the monstrous mentality of peoples living at the mercy of suggestions. The ignoble equidae monkeys and gorillas of the Gauls, animals with unspeakable morals and ugly beyond compare, but also grandiose apparitions, staggering wonders, thus represent a definitive response of the burlesque and frightful human night to the platitudes and arrogance of idealists.

This opposition, apparently limited to the field of human activity, should be assimilated to equivalent oppositions apparent in the whole animal kingdom. It is, in fact, clear that certain natural monsters, like spiders, gorillas and hippopotami, display an obscure but profound resemblance to the imaginary Gaulish monsters in being equally odious to the propriety of academic animals, the horse among them. Thus the decaying forests and stagnant swamps of the tropics again assume the unspeakable response to everything on earth that is harmonious and ordered, to everything that seeks to give authority through its correct appearance. And the same thing goes for the cellars of our houses where spiders lurk and eat each other, among other haunts of natural ignominies. As if a polluting horror was the constant and inevitable counterpart of elevated forms of animal life.

And in this respect it is important to observe that palaeontologists accept that the present day horse derives from giant pachyderms, a derivation comparable to that of humanity in relation to the hideous anthropomorphic monkey. It is undoubtedly difficult to be certain on the subject of the exact ancestors of the horse or of man, at least as to their external appearance; yet there is reason to doubt the fact that, in relation to well-proportioned animals, certain present day animals (like the hippopotamus or the gorilla) represent primitive forms. There is reason therefore to consider the envisaged opposition of engenderer to engendered, of father to son, and to represent noble and delicate figures appearing at the mouth of a nauseous sewer as typical. If an objective value must be given to two such opposed terms, then nature, constantly proceeding in violent opposition towards one of them, must be represented in constant revolt against itself: sometimes the fright of what is formless and indecisive ends in precisions of the human animal or the horse; sometimes, in a profound tumult, the most baroque and nauseating forms succeed one another. All the reversals that appear properly to belong to human life would be only one of the aspects of this alternating revolt, a rigorous oscillation stirring itself with movements of anger and, if one arbitrarily pictures the successions of revolutions that have lasted without end, beating and frothy like a wave on a stormy day,

within a limited time frame.

It is undoubtedly difficult to follow the meaning of these oscillations through historical transformations. Only sometimes, as with great invasions, is it possible to see with clarity a hopeless incoherence get the better of a rational method of progressive organisation. But alterations of plastic forms often represent the principal symptom of great reversals: thus it might seem today that nothing collapses, if the negation of all principles of regular harmony did not bear witness to the necessity for change. There is no reason to forget, on the one hand, that this recent negation has provoked the most violent rage, as if the very bases of existence had been brought into question; on the other hand, that things have happened with a still barely suspected seriousness, an expression of a state of mind that is perfectly incompatible with the current conditions of human life.

Explanation of the images [see pp. 46-47, 87]:

1. Stater of Philippe II of Macedonia (359-336 BC). Biga driven by Nike. On the front, the head of Apollo. One of the most commonly found coins of Greek antiquity. Gold, actual size 17 mm.
2. Stater of the *Lemovice*, derived from the preceding coin. The two horses have been replaced by an androcephalic horse. On the front of the coin, the head of a wild boar identified with Ogmios, the Gaulish god of eloquence. Gold, actual size 19 mm.
3. Stater of the *Arebates* showing a complete dislocation with primitive data. On the front is a very indistinct head crowned with laurel. Gold, actual size 19 mm.
4. Variant of no 3, the same size.
5. Stater of the *Parisii*. Horse surmounted by a kind of net. On the front, a head crowned with laurel. Gold, actual size 28 mm.
6. Stater attributed to the *Verodunenses*: copies are found in eastern France. The horse's head turned to the right. On the front, a head crowned with laurel. Red gold, actual size 22 mm.
7. Celtic imitation of the Macedonian tetradrachma. Similar imitations are found in Transylvania. It is difficult to make out a rider; the horse has shackles on its feet. On the front, a head crowned with laurel. Silver, actual size 34 mm.
8. Silver coin of the *Blusates*. This coin apparently represents an imitation of the Greek drachma of Emporia (Spain), of the Pegasus variety. On the front, a formless head. Actual size 18 mm.

DOCUMENTS, 1, 1929. Translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijałkowski and Michael Richardson.

THE MODERN SPIRIT AND THE PLAY OF
TRANSPOSITIONS

Georges Bataille



PAPIER COLLANT ET MOUCHES. — PHOTO J.-A. BOIFFARD.

In denouncing the bankruptcy of the *modern spirit* in *L'Intransigeant* (17 March 1931), Roger Vitrac might still not have fully taken into account the definitive decline about which he spoke. It is not a matter here of haggling over the admiration of works which have arisen from this spirit but rather of marking the extent to which they are today situated back to front (*although nothing really new can yet replace them*). The very active and sometimes very disturbing impulses that gave birth to them have ceased to support them and it has become impossible to confuse them (as many of us often did until 1928) with much more unsettling images formed or deformed by real desires (this without ever letting those who are aware of them rest and especially without considering natural modesty or good taste). It may be thought that the works of the greatest modern painters belong to the history of art, perhaps even to the most brilliant period of this history, but it is of course necessary to pity anyone disinclined to bring infinitely more haunting images to life.

In its most accomplished form, the *modern spirit* (I am using the term here in its broadest but not at all unfavourable sense) developed from a misunderstanding such that it should normally have ceased to exist without a very long transition.

Somewhat independently of the will of theoreticians (whose responsibility is a lot less engaged than it seems because they had clear evidence of the inconsistency of free will), symbolic transpositions have been brought to the surface in every field with the most infantile persistence. The specific character of violent and *impersonal* emotions that symbols signify has been misunderstood in such a greatly inconsistent way that it has long been difficult to choose between the seductive character of such naivety and the spinelessness which the marked interest in the play of transpositions fundamentally represented.

It needs to be said that this spinelessness, this cowardice, very exactly conforms to human nature, for which hypocrisy is undoubtedly a vital aspect just as the skeleton is the most vital part of the body. But, on the other hand, the very mechanism of hypocrisy could equally well be represented as a simple backward movement taken in order to leap more effectively. No one today is interested in the *play of transpositions* other than by habit and in a more conventional and odious way than ever. It would seem that from now on we are reduced to leaping.

And this reduction occurs in the most ironic sense of the word, because no one has the slightest desire for it. It should moreover be recognised that nothing that might be proposed is of a nature even slightly to tempt us. Thus the photographs accompanying this article (brought together more by chance than by a will that might not be entirely

blind) probably reveal the extent of current powerlessness. The equality of the soul and human insipidity has always been offended by forms arranged to show, rather gratuitously it is true, the terror caused by death or decay, flowing blood, skeletons or insects which devour us. Who would take it upon themselves to make such a display in anything other than an entirely rhetorical way?

The relative paucity of interest the illustrations to these few pages represent, in my view, marks well enough the impasse into which those who today, for one reason or another, find themselves having to manipulate and transform the sad fetishes destined to move us. Thus, the way monks used the corpses of those who have preceded them - as florid decorations - could be given as the example of the vanity of all efforts pursued in the same sense. We are a long way from those savages who, at the time of their enormous festivals, suspend the skulls of their ancestors from masts of plenty, who press their father's shinbone into the mouth of a pig at the moment when the slaughtered beast vomits its flood of blood. We also play with endless shinbones and skulls; everywhere animal and human blood flows all around us. But we do not know how to use blood or bones to break the regularity of days which are lost to us like the contents of a badly made cask.

Human play and that of our own decay continue in the most dejected conditions without one ever having the courage to face the other. It is as if we could never find ourselves confronting the grandiose image of a decomposition whose risks, intervening at each breath we take, is nevertheless the very meaning of a life we prefer, without knowing why, to that of another whose respiration could survive us. We know this image only in its negative form, through the soap, toothbrushes and all the pharmaceutical products whose accumulation allows us each day a tedious escape from dirt and death. Every day we make ourselves the faithful servants of these meagre products which are the only gods modern man knows. This servitude is continued everywhere that normal people still go. We enter art galleries as we do the chemist's, seeking well-presented remedies for accepted sicknesses.

A certain public character - prematurely - disqualifies any kind of effort to escape this bankruptcy. What is really loved is loved mainly in shame and I defy any lover of painting to love a picture as much as a fetishist loves a shoe. I do not believe I am introducing absurd refinements here: my thinking accords with all those who have ever been sickened by an escape as spineless as it is common. Faced with the multiple horrors which compose the portrayal of existence, it is possible to encounter what one has always sought only in complete darkness.

It is the sudden will, intervening like a gust of nocturnal

wind that opens a window, to live, even if only for a couple of short minutes, by suddenly tearing open the hangings that hide what one should at all costs not see; it is a human will that loses its head, which alone can permit us to brave directly what others flee. Even in the best cases the *modern spirit* has never resulted in anything other than replacing this possibility of a humanity entirely suffocated by horror, *of no matter what* derivation, so that it enters, if necessary in the wrong way, into already established frames. The *modern spirit* has never put forward anything other than methods applicable to literature or painting. It is likely that whatever succeeds it will assume meaning only on a completely different plane.

Yet if it is impossible to attribute anything other than an episodic interest to some images, they can allow us vaguely to infer what would remain if all types of transposition were suppressed in stages. And if there is no question of really managing to represent this residue, if no one favours straightforwardly using it to respond to the necessities of artistic expression, it is no less true that any work which responded, for good or bad reasons, to these sad but ineluctable necessities, would be ranked naturally according to whether it contained a greater or lesser degree of what is horrific about such a residue. Not that this new point of view can ever be isolated: it can only as always be added to others. But since a commonplace work is addressed just as much to the taste of informed enthusiasts as to the most unfortunate or hidden emotions of humanity, it could easily be understood, without otherwise insisting on the point, that a completely different reason than the faculty of losing oneself in the most unheard of or marvellous play of transpositions has impelled the urge to paint or to write.

DOCUMENTS, 8, 1930. Translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson.



POISSON EN ÉVENTRANT UN AUTRE (1928). COLL. H. KAHNWEILER. — N° 50.

Cliché Galerie Simon

ANDRÉ MASSON, ÉTUDE ETHNOLOGIQUE.

Pour cette génération, ce sont les littérateurs qui boitent péniblement derrière les peintres.

Ceux-ci ont osé changer la grammaire reçue. Cependant les gratte-papiers pataugeaient avec une belle confiance dans les marécages de la syntaxe ; ils trouvaient une audace formidable dans le changement d'une nuance et imaginaient transformer quelque chose en poétisant des lieux communs crevés. Peut-être quelques sujets non encore officiels ont-ils été traités avec une syntaxe élégante et académique. A la rigueur, ils sont allés jusqu'à changer l'adjectif. Mais qui mettrait en question la hiérarchie des valeurs psychologiques et la logique même ? Ces écrivains sont prisonniers des mots.

Cette littérature s'est développée autour de véritables monts-de-piété. On s'est glissé derrière les peintres. Qu'il suffise de prononcer le nom de Picasso. Au lieu de parier leur tête, les écrivains croyaient à la langue.

In this generation the writers hobble pitifully behind the painters.

The latter have dared to change accepted grammar, while the scribblers still wallow, blissfully confident in the marshlands of syntax; they saw a shift in nuance as great audacity and envisioned that they could effect real transformations simply by turning exhausted commonplaces into poetry. Perhaps a few subjects still exempt from officialdom were expressed with an elegant and academic syntax. If absolutely necessary, they went so far as changing an adjective. But who dared challenge the very hierarchy of psychological values and logic itself? These writers are imprisoned by words.

This literature has grown up around a veritable pawnbroker's shop. They began to fall behind the painters. One need only mention Picasso. Instead of putting their heads on the block, the writers remained faithful to the tongue.

The time seems to have come to identify the crisis, not to offer support to things as they gain stability, given that we are surrounded by idlers living off private incomes who cheerfully go about exploiting outdated acts of rebellion that have been rendered naïve, surrounded by people who wish to live without being dead.

One thing really matters: to shake up what is called reality by means of unadulterated hallucinations, so as to change the hierarchies of values of the real. The hallucinatory forces will effect a breach in the order of mechanical processes; they will introduce chunks of 'a-causality' into this reality that had hitherto absurdly been considered as unified. The uninterrupted weave of this reality will be broken and we shall live in the tension of dualisms.

When the forces of religion were still active, imagination ruled supreme like an autonomous power. Not to have subordinated positive facts to mythical dominants would have constituted the most outrageous revolt. The real was justified as a worthless reversal, as a failed imitation of the supernatural.

Today we profess a set of opposing values oriented in a radically different way. If the hallucinatory forces were once the expression of a collectivity and its dogmatic position, now they only operate in a subjective manner, by breaking conventions. Formerly, the imaginative elements were of the same category as the absolute, and they determined consciousness and knowledge. A-logical affirmations prevailed and were never called into question amidst the battle of antinomies. Here was the 'Archimedes' point'. Subsequently those imaginative forces inconsistent with logical laws were rejected and accused of being mere tricks.

We are only beginning to take very small steps towards appreciating the imaginative as a dominant element. Nowadays it has ceased to be regarded as the origin of laws

and miracles, the sign of a perfect eternity, or the centre of a static system. Now it is the most mobile and mortal of things, but it would be a mistake to treat it as the sign of an arbitrary subjectivity: in fact, the imaginative originates in inevitable processes that are all but impossible to control.

This imaginative we are starting to conceive of, however timidly, is quite distinct from the religious imaginative. No attempt is made to copy examples of divine illumination, and today's visions are characterised by the fact that all historical givens are irrelevant. Submissiveness is no longer an option.

There has been much idle talk of the destruction of the object. It would be better to speak of the dissociation of consciousness; in fact, there is no congruity between the flow of ideas of the consciousness and the succession of hallucinatory signs. We see a division between the spontaneous and causality. The more causality permeates nature, the less nature is of any value from a psychological standpoint. We continue to appreciate causality and consciousness as excellent instruments but we see them as obstacles to spontaneous processes. The rationalist, for his part, finds chaos in all psychological processes. But it is precisely in this incongruity between the hallucinatory and the structure of objects that one tiny chance for freedom lies: in the possibility of changing the order of things. The mechanism that has become a veritable object of worship is cast aside and mnemotechnic repetitions are suspended. The flow of psychologically direct signs is maintained as far as possible.

Two means of expression are available to us through which it is possible to compensate for this rejection of associative memory and to maintain equilibrium. Firstly, we observe a tendency to identify the unconscious or hallucination with sexual activity, and thus guarantee a collective base. In other instances, the isolation resulting from the division has been compensated for by collectivist attitudes in politics. We need to be protected against isolation.

In the first situation, we might also speak of an idealisation of sexuality. In it a continuation of philosophical idealisation can be discerned: Nietzsche had already idealised the instincts in the same sense. We shall deal later with another way of protecting oneself from hallucinatory forces through the use of forms.

But we absolutely cannot concede the identity that it was thought possible to establish between the hallucinatory and the subjective. At most, imaginative elements might be proposed as subjective in relation to bourgeois conventions. Whatever the case, we must see precisely the signs of inevitable processes in these hallucinatory forms, in the course of which all egocentric reactions cease. Obsession represents one tiny chance for freedom.

We acknowledge the return of mythological creation,

the return of a psychological archaism in opposition to the purely imitative archaism of forms. Painting no longer seeks to describe given forms or the structures found within objects. In other words one eliminates and forgets in the same way as a religious devotee who attains ecstasy through concentration, forgetting all reality. This forgetting, this anaesthesia, is characterised by the fact that mythological strata are being discovered and set in motion. The retrograde kind of person attains infantile forms: he returns to certain typical events from his childhood which he reproduces with a few technical refinements. In this case we observe a split within the individual into two generations. A *child-double*, so to speak, is created under these conditions.

Consciousness is repressed as an obstacle and this fact constitutes what, from an external viewpoint, is referred to as the destruction of objects. Relationships with reality and history are henceforth accentuated in a negative way. This takes place under the sign of revolt: historically, this attitude assumes the value of an hallucinatory interval.

Two methods for producing sets of hallucinatory forms are suggested here. The possible compensations for isolation have already been discussed. Another autistic compensation may be possible, one consisting of the use of tectonic forms. The hallucinatory processes are limited by the obstructions of forms, and typical signs can be used which can transform an isolated creation into something of more general value.

But it is also possible to let oneself be carried along by the flow of dynamisms: in this way one arrives at a *psychogramme* (spontaneous writing) in which the creation of its equivalent at the same rate as psychological processes can be attempted. In the haste to produce figurative forms, the completed structure of space is relinquished. The *psychogramme* has no external order. The use of flat surfaces facilitates the ecstatic process.

Objects may be drawn by observation, or given a value as symptoms or elements of psychological processes. In this way the gap between subject and object narrows. The individual forms a unity with his or her objects, and we witness a totemic identification that can be signified as a magical or psychological archaism. The structure ceases to be determined by biological coherence, but conforms to processes of hallucinatory coherence. A dissociation of objects is attained in favour of autonomous psychological analogies. We have become weary of biological identity: figures of birds and fish have been the objects of totemic identification. The subject is no longer on the periphery of the construction: this very identification causes the motif immediately to become part of the soul itself. The object is no longer regarded as an interruption of the optical

process. The motif has become an immediate psychological function. One part of an object represents the totality, and what these paintings by Masson provoke is a mythical reaction, as if through a kind of infection. Given that the ego vanishes during ecstasy, we observe a syntonic attitude. This recalls the importance of transmutations in primitive times, and the exogamous need to enlarge identity. It is enough to cite the masked costumes inciting identification with animals, ancestors and so on. A different force, a different figure, replaces the visionary's occluded ego, while this occluded ego, having left the ecstatic individual's body, enters that of an animal, a vegetable or a stone.

Metamorphosis is totemism's classic drama and probably one of the most ancient dramatic motifs (the miming of animals, masked dances). Within these dramas the acquisition of new magical powers is celebrated and the animal dies as a substitute for man. It is thanks to the identification of man with beasts that the projection of self-sacrifice becomes possible. And it is in this identification that we find the origin of religious mediating figures and substitutes. This is how I propose we interpret the fish men, dying birds and animals made of foliage in Masson's paintings. These animals are identifications in which the events of death are projected, as a way of avoiding being killed oneself.

From the rational viewpoint the heterogeneous events merge in the course of a hallucination. We know the classic results of this process: chimeras, harpies, centaurs, the sphinx, driads, leopard men and crocodile men all stem from a totemistic identification of heterogeneous forms. Remarkable cases of identification between humans and plants, stars and rocks could also be mentioned. Masson has taken precisely this practice, this ecstatic training, to perfection.

The limits of objects have vanished. Man no longer observes. He lives in the orbit of objects that have become psychological functions. Optical simultaneity is replaced by analogies. It is possible to speak of a mystical anatomy. We discern Masson's dynamisms in this unfettered projection of an interior drama onto the structure of things, a projection through which opposing forms might be connected with a single function. And the drama of transmutation is what one perceives above all within this metamorphosis. Sometimes the speed of the hallucinations is such that only lines are used. In other paintings, forms find a tectonic order, so that the painter can find a means of defence and avoid being destroyed by the dynamism of his hallucinations. But our aim here is not an analysis of forms. We seek to define these paintings as psychological contractions through which hallucinatory speed is compelled to persevere.

DOCUMENTS, 2, 1929. Translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson.

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

Nous vivons à une époque de toutes manières très lourde, et le fétichisme qui, comme aux temps les plus anciens, reste à la base de notre existence humaine ne trouve que bien rarement l'occasion de se satisfaire sous une forme non déguisée. Adorateurs des maigres fantômes que sont nos impératifs moraux, logiques et sociaux, nous nous accrochons ainsi à un fétichisme transposé, faux semblant de celui qui profondément nous anime, et ce mauvais fétichisme absorbe la plus grande part de notre activité, ne laissant presque pas de place au fétichisme véritable, le seul qui vaille vraiment la peine, parce que tout à fait conscient de lui-même et ne reposant par conséquent sur aucune duperie.

C'est à peine si, dans le domaine des œuvres d'art, on trouve quelques objets (tableaux ou sculptures) capables de répondre à peu près aux exigences de ce vrai fétichisme, c'est-à-dire à l'amour — réellement *amoureux* — de nous-mêmes, projeté du dedans au dehors et revêtu d'une carapace solide qui l'emprisonne entre les limites d'une chose précise et le situe, ainsi qu'un meuble dont nous pouvons user, dans la vaste chambre étrangère qui s'appelle l'espace.

Dans la plupart des cas, ces objets, sortis pourtant de mains humaines, nous restent plus lointains encore que les productions naturelles, dont ils ne sont que le reflet servile en même temps que très affaibli, l'ombre falote et parodique, incapable de nous fournir un pôle à opposer au pôle interne de notre amour.

C'est à cause de ce manque de consistance, de cette absence d'autonomie, que la presque totalité des œuvres d'art sont épouvantablement ennuyeuses, *plus ennuyeuses que la pluie*, étant, somme toute, beaucoup moins proches de nous que les gouttes d'eau, jolies petites sphères liquides susceptibles au moins de nous rappeler la forme, sinon le goût, de nos larmes, et cette humidité, cette fluidité correspondant à la douceur qui coule dans nos membres, quand nous aimons ou bien quand nous nous sentons touchés.

A l'heure actuelle, peu d'artistes existent dont l'œuvre échappe à cet atroce ennui. Dans le passé, moins encore. Mais, parmi les rares contemporains qu'un spécial privilège exempte de cette règle, on peut citer Giacometti.

Il y a des moments qu'on peut appeler des *crises* et qui sont les seuls qui importent dans une vie. Il s'agit des moments où le dehors semble brusquement répondre à la sommation que nous lui lançons du dedans, où le monde extérieur s'ouvre pour qu'entre notre cœur et lui s'établisse une soudaine communication. J'ai quelques souvenirs de cet ordre dans ma vie et tous se rapportent à des événements en apparence futiles, dénués aussi de valeur symbolique et, si l'on veut, *gratuits* : dans une rue lumineuse de Montmartre, une négresse de la troupe des Black Birds tenant un bouquet de roses humides dans ses deux mains, un paquebot à bord duquel je me trouvais monté se séparant lentement d'un quai, quelques bribes de chansons murmurées au hasard, la rencontre dans une ruine de Grèce d'un étrange animal qui devait être une sorte de lézard géant... La poésie ne peut se dégager que de telles " crises ", et seules comptent les œuvres qui en fournissent des équivalents.

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

Michel Leiris

We live in a completely oppressive age, and that fetishism which, just as in the most ancient times, remains at the root of human existence has only the rarest occasion to find satisfaction in an undisguised form. As worshippers of those wispy ghosts that are our moral, logical and social imperatives, we thus cling to a transposed fetishism, counterfeiting the one that moves us so profoundly, and this wretched fetishism absorbs the greater part of our actions, leaving almost no space for the genuine fetishism which alone is truly worth pursuing because it is entirely conscious of itself and in consequence does not rely on any kind of deception.

In the field of art one can find scarcely any objects (paintings or sculptures) capable of responding in the slightest to the demands of this true fetishism, which is to say to the love — really *in love* — of each other, projected out from within and bearing a solid carapace that traps it between the limits of a precise thing and situates it, like a piece of furniture for us to use, in the vast unknown room we call space.

In most cases these objects, even though they are the product of human hands, remain even more distant from us than the natural creations of which they are merely the servile reflection, even if they are far feebler, just droll burlesque shadows, quite unable to offer us a pole of attraction as a counterpart to the internal pole of our love.

It is because of this lack of stability, of this absence of autonomy, that almost all works of art are terrifyingly dull, *duller than rain*, since they are, in the end, much less close to us than drops of water, those pretty liquid spheres that can at least remind us of the shape, if not the taste, of our tears, and that moisture, that fluidity corresponding to the sweetness that flows through our limbs when we love or else when we feel ourselves being touched.

At the present moment the work of few artists escapes this dreadful boredom. In the past there were fewer still. But Giacometti is among the rare contemporary figures who are exceptions to this rule.

There are moments one might call *crises*, and in any life they alone matter. In such moments the outer realm seems suddenly to respond to the summons we serve upon it from within, when the external world opens up so that a sudden communication is set up between it and our heart. I have a few such memories from my life, and they all relate to events that appeared meaningless as well as bereft of symbolic value and that came, one might say, unbidden: in a luminous Montmartre street, a negress from the Black Birds dance troupe holding a bouquet of damp roses in both hands, a liner on board which I found myself moving slowly away from the quayside, a few snatches of song murmured by chance, encountering a strange animal that must have

been some kind of giant lizard among ruins in Greece... Poetry can only arise from such 'crises', and the only works that count are those that offer their equivalent.

I like Giacometti's sculpture because everything he makes is like the petrification of such crises, the intensity of an adventure whose trail is swiftly intercepted and just as quickly turns cold, the milestone bearing witness to it. Yet there is nothing dead about this sculpture; on the contrary, like the real fetishes one might idolise (the true fetishes, in other words the ones that resemble us and are the objectified form of our desire), everything in it is prodigiously alive, with a gracious life keenly tinged with humour, the lovely expression of that sentimental ambivalence, that delicate sphinx we still cherish more or less secretly, at the centre of our being.

So do not expect me to talk sculpture exactly. I prefer to RAMBLE; since these beautiful objects I've been able to look at and feel ignite the ferment of so many memories in me...

Some of these sculptures are hollow like spatulas or hollowed-out fruits. Others are pierced and the air moves through them, like a mobile latticework placed between inside and out, sieves gnawed by the wind, that hidden wind that envelops us with its huge black tornado, at those extraordinary moments that make us lose our minds.

Giacometti was born on 10 October 1901, in Stampa in the canton of Grisons, Switzerland. He was the son of a painter.

He did not leave his village until he was 14 when, in 1915, he enrolled at secondary school, leaving four years later in order to become a painter or a sculptor, which had been his intention for several years. For six months he studied at the École des Arts et Métiers in Geneva, but this did not suit him. He spent the whole of 1920 in Italy, travelling everywhere. Nine months were spent in Rome. He first came to Paris in 1922. For the next three years he never stayed long, but since 1925 he has made it his home, with the exception of the two or three months he spends every year in his native country. At first he attended an academy so as to work from nature, but for the last few years he has been working alone.

Giacometti is thus a very young sculptor. It is always stupid to make predictions, and prophets are often nothing but birds of ill omen. But how can he not be given credit when we see these figures - so concrete, so self-evident, as absolute as the creatures we love - produced by his fingers and moulded in the fleeting and unbiting salt of the snow, the dust that comes from the fingernails as they are being polished - the impalpable ashes a lover would keep like a relic - the marvellous salt so many ancient seekers thought they could gather from the earth's womb, the saltiness of waves and stars since they too have their tides, and then the

salt of tears, tears of laughter, despair or madness, gentle and vaguely malicious tears, grotesque tears, or heavy tears full of the salt of bones and frozen carcasses, always drops of water, falling tirelessly, sometimes drilling a dazzling well into the silent rock of existence, concrete drops of water like the salt which will always inflame our hunger, sea salt, bitter salt, the salt of cracking phalanx bones, the salt of teeth, the salt of sweat, the salt of looks... Here at last are stone dishes, wonderfully alive meals of bronze, capable of awakening, of reviving our great hunger for a long time to come!

DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929. Translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijałkowski and Michael Richardson.

PICASSO METEOR

Georges Ribémont-Dessaignes



Picasso, 1927 (55 x 46 cm.)

PICASSO MÉTÉORE

C'est une étrange destinée que celle de la peinture. Jetée en pâture aux pires besoins des hommes alors qu'à l'origine elle était un élan de l'esprit, elle n'a cessé de siècle en siècle de rouler sa bosse dans une atmosphère de cuisine, avec des hauts et des bas, parmi les lâchetés, les flatteries, les vils mensonges et mille manies dont la plus dégoûtante est, certes, d'aplatir l'univers. Mais tout à coup, alors qu'on la croit toute entière occupée à faire le commerce des apparences, sous je ne sais quel reflet d'un soleil haut perché dans les domaines de l'idéal, elle donne un coup de reins, et présen-

The destiny of painting is a strange one. Put out to pasture just in case humanity really needed it after all when at its origins it was a leap of the mind, from one century to the next it has never stopped wandering around giving off an air of trickery, with its ups and downs, surrounded by the cowardice, flattery, foul lies and thousand and one fads the most disgusting of which, certainly, is to level out the whole world. But all of a sudden, just when one believed it to be totally taken up with selling itself on appearances, under who knows what glint of a sun perched high in the realms of the ideal, it gives a buck and, presenting a human face, rehabilitates itself in such a way as to incline one to forget its past crimes and consider only its current grandeur as valid. The very fact that Picasso lives is sufficient for painting in its entirety to cease being an art of the blind for the headless: you know what I mean. The eye of the painter is just an insignificant organ, devoted to its own vices in its moist orbit. The staggering ability to conceive and see resides elsewhere. When this *elsewhere* is revealed with the hallucinatory diversity that is Picasso's, humanity begins to believe in itself - 'Thanks, comrade' - and painting becomes an armour for ghosts that needs tending, rather than something that simply adds calm to an apartment or is a concern for dealers.

Nothing one can say about Picasso is definitive or could ever be. Describing one small part of it might provide a treasured pastime for those devotees of subjects whose principal virtue is to portend death. But this is a vain and pointless task. There are indeed those whose courage grows and who venture to add one part to another so as to create a greater expanse, the greatest possible expanse of Picasso. But before they have completed their analysis their subject is already going beyond them with a new creation that is tougher or more sweet-tasting than the others, until the blood rushes to their throat and they start coughing convulsively. What then would happen if they ever realised that everything Picasso has yet to produce, everything that they could never intuit and haven't the slightest inkling of, still lies within him? For this, it seems, is the phenomenal aspect of this man's genius: he contains all that people have created, but he is the one who teaches them to use it. He takes their toys and brings them to life. But what a life! Is he himself the master of it, once the work of enchantment is done? Perhaps he is, and until now we have seen him behave casually with his creatures; he has never given them the freedom to inhibit his subsequent actions.

I do not speak lightly of enchantment. It is not a question here of representation but of a magical practice, if magic is an action performed by man upon nature. There can be no possible doubt that a painting by Picasso places under arrest, within the precise borders defined by the four sides

of a frame, those external, known elements we evade every moment of our existence but which lie - always fleeting and unruly - behind the mocking laughter we are all familiar with. Suddenly apprehended, they plead their independence in vain, claim some or other obscure or wonderful paternity, as they are detained, and now for all eternity we can observe their serious voices or their rage. The eyes of family portraits that look straight through you and implacably follow you, wherever you walk in the polished or abandoned dust-filled drawing-room, do not express so much insistence, and do not bear witness to so much hidden life. I know someone who, so as to preserve his calm, only ever looked at these portraits by means of a keyhole. But they stared at him all the same, foiling his precautions. It is likely that through the keyhole is how Picasso's paintings stare at you; and I do not believe there is another painter today whose works have such power.

I do not know if painting has often in the past been afforded the luxury of such a rehabilitation, though one might say there were times when it was rehabilitated without previous condemnation. But, in all certainty, Picasso's case is as unique as the times in which we live. While one intellectual whirlwind, Dada, believed it had laid all to waste, or perhaps because it really had, all the problems sprang up anew, driven by the implacable mechanism of historical events. The question of materialism arises with subterranean intensity, and no-one can avoid it no matter how they respond. Perhaps the spectacle of Picasso might, at this level, activate the illumination that rationalist functionalism has merely dimmed. In my opinion the futility of asking such a question, and of opposing mind to matter, has never appeared so clearly. With Picasso, metaphysical materialism collapses. At the other extreme, the surrealists unjustifiably lay claim to a man who, for various reasons, acts as their beacon, their keel, their wind and even their ocean. Yet he appears with a force, by turns treacherous and tumultuous, which can only be resisted - as much rationally as irrationally - by the evident monism that is ultimately summed up by grammar in the conjugation of the verb TO BE.

DOCUMENTS, 3, 1930. Translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson

DICTIONARY NOTES

Places of Pilgrimage

- Chicago alone receives brief attention later in DOCUMENTS, in Bataille's review of *X Marks the Spot* ('Review of Publications', 7, 1930), 'a photographic history of the gangland wars of Chicago', although it is not announced in the context of a 'place of pilgrimage'. Immediately preceding his review are two photographs of New York skyscrapers, a fully intentional juxtaposition with the images of murder reproduced from *X Marks the Spot*. The public desire to see violent death, which 'overrides disgust or fear', is no less stupefying than the sight of the immoderate height of the skyscrapers. Awe, perhaps, at a tainted sublime is here the inverse of the idea of the modern pilgrimage represented by Hollywood, which also drew the eyes of the world but in another way.
- M. Leiris, 'De Bataille l'impossible à l'impossible "Documents"', in *Critique*, 195-196, August-September 1963. The church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris is the centre of a district of shops selling catholic devotional objects and icons.
- M. Leiris, *ibid.*
- The function of these metal staffs is uncertain; they were placed outside the doors of the houses of rulers.
- Gertrude Stein, quoted in E. Cowling, *Picasso: Style and Meaning*, p. 466.
- M. Douglas, 'Foreword: no free gifts', in M. Mauss, *The Gift*, p. ix.

Sacrifice

- M. Leiris, *L'âge d'homme*, pp. 58-59, translated by R. Howard as *Manhood: a Journey from Childhood to the Fierce Order of Virility*, p. 53. I should like to thank The Leverhulme Trust for supporting the project of which this short essay is a part.
- A. O. Letvin, *Sacrifice in the Surrealist Novel: The Impact of Early Theories of Religion on the Depiction of Violence in Modern Fiction*, pp. 75-77.
- The complete list of borrowings is reproduced in G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes, XII*, pp. 551-621. This theoretical trajectory was however complicated by his interest, at the same time, in existential phenomenology (especially Hegel) and in Marxism.
- Reprinted in *Oeuvres Complètes, I*, pp. 258-270.
- Ibid.*, p. 270.
- Cited in *Eli Lotar*, p. 16.
- For a reading of the masochism of the text see D. Hollier, 'À Pen-tête d'Holopherne', in *Les dépossédés*, pp. 139-152.
- G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, especially pp. 75-80 and pp. 112-115. A very different philosophical appraisal is given by Dennis King Keenan, who

suggests that, while the idea of sacrifice is marked by Western 'economics, sexism, and Christocentric evolutionism', Bataille's thinking belongs to a contemporary sacrificing of these very notions of sacrifice. See D. King Keenan, *The Question of Sacrifice*.

André Masson

- André Masson*.
- André Masson*, exhibition catalogue.
- André Masson*.

Making Marks

- For further discussion of Bataille and Luquet and the importance of 'Primitive Art' see Rosalind Krauss's entry '1930b' in H. Foster, R. Krauss, Y.-A. Bois and B. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900, Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, pp. 245-248.
- M. Griaule, *Silhouettes et Graffiti Abyssins*, 1930.
- G.H. Luquet, *L'Art et la Religion des hommes fossiles*, and G.H. Luquet, *Le Dessin Enfantin*.
- Translations from M.-A. Caws (ed.), *Surrealism*, pp. 211-213.
- Ibid.*
- M. Surya, *Georges Bataille, An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 96-99.

Ethiopia

- M. Griaule, 'Mythes, croyances et coutumes du Begamder (Abyssinie)', in *Journal asiatique*, CCXII, January-March 1928, p. 19. For Agnagnahou Engeda, see also Marcel Cohen's introduction to Griaule's edition of *Le Livre de recettes d'un dabbara abyssin*, Institut d'ethnologie, Paris, 1930, p. v. Griaule refers to him ('Agnagnahou Engeda, born in Mahdhara Maryam, Begamder') in 'Disposition de l'assistance l'office abyssin', in *Journal de la société des Africanistes*, IV, 1934, p. 274.
- M. Griaule, 'Peintures abyssines', in *Minotaure*, 2, 1933, p. 85.
- M. Griaule, 'Le Totem de l'aloés en Abyssinie', in *Revue d'ethnologie et des traditions populaires*, 1929, t. X, pp. 102-108, 109.
- Encyclopaedia Ethiopica*, p. 138. Back in Ethiopia in 1935, Agnagnahou Engeda described himself as 'a disciple of the French impressionists' (L. Farago, *Abyssinia on the eve*, p. 114).

Form

- K. Nierendorf, 'Art Forms in Nature', Introduction to K. Blossfeldt, *Art Forms in Nature*, pp. VI-VII.

Jacques-André Boiffard

- Michel Leiris, interview with the author, Paris, 13 June 1979. Desnos was the member of the

DOCUMENTS group who was most familiar with film and photography (he had a collection of photographs by Atget and was one of the first critics to write about his work). His reviews were collected in *Nowelles-Hebrides et autres textes 1922-1930*.

- For an analysis of Boiffard's photographs in *Nadja*, see I. Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris*, pp. 48-67.
- One of the men wearing a mask will later be identified as Pierre Prévert, but it's important for the original effect of the photographs that we don't know who the models are, just as we don't know who the big toes belong to.
- In R. Krauss and J. Livingston, *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, p. 62, the nude photograph is reproduced the other way around (i.e. the way that it was probably taken). The woman is Renée Jacobi.
- Bataille wrote a short (but apparently unpublished) review of this exhibition. Making exceptions for Atget and Man Ray, he expresses his preference for 'informational photographs or film-stills' and dismisses the 'technical acrobatics' of art photography. He then corrects himself to make a further exception for an 'admirable photograph' by Boiffard - presumably this nude (see G. Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes, II*, p. 122).
- For some of these images, see P. Sers (ed.), *Atelier Man Ray*, pp. 21-47. On pp. 38-39, however, the photographs for *Nadja* and for 'Pygmalion and the Sphinx' get completely muddled - interspersed with mismatched captions.

Omelettes

- Rivière is also renowned for launching the concept of the 'ecomuseum' now widespread across rural France. For further information on Rivière, see N. Gorgus, *Le magicien des vitrines: Le muséologue Georges Henri Rivière*, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, 2003.

Pablo Picasso

- Lévi-Strauss wrote this essay for the socialist Deputy Georges Monnet; see D. Hollier, 'The Use-Value of the Impossible', in *October*, 60, Spring, 1992, pp. 3-24, 6, n. 11.
- A. Breton, 'Surrealism and Painting', in A. Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, pp. 1-48.
- Y.-A. Bois, 'Figure', in Y.-A. Bois and R. Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, pp. 79-86.
- La Révolution surréaliste*, 4, 15 July 1925, p. 17.
- F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 180-181.

- R. Kaufmann, 'Picasso's Crucifixion of 1930', in *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXI, September 1969, pp. 553-561.

Picasso (poem)

- Les Cruches*, meaning jugs, was also a contemporary idiom for stupid people.

Apocalypse

- On the history of the *Beatus Corpus* see J. Williams, *The Illustrated Beatus: A Corpus of Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse*.

Angels

- An anonymous review published by N. Cunard in *Negro: An Anthology*.

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Paul Pelliot, A Few Remarks on 'Siberian' and Chinese Art Concerning the Bronzes of the David Weill Collection
Josef Strzygowski, 'Research on the Plastic Arts' and 'History of Art'
Georges Bataille, The Academic Horse
Carl Einstein, Logical Aphorisms
Carl Einstein, Pablo Picasso: 1928
Michel Leiris, Notes on Two Microcosmic Figures of the 14th and 15th centuries

Chronique:

- Georges Limbour, Paul Klee
Georges Henri Rivière, Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro
Jean Babelon, The Evangelistary of Saint-Lupicin
Hedwig Fechheimer, The Chinese Exhibition in Berlin
André Schaeffner, Igor Stravinsky, a Living Musician

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- Jean Babelon, A Macedonian Eldorado: 5th century BC
Georges Bataille, The Apocalypse of Saint-Sever
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Michel Leiris, Kalifala Sidibé Exhibition (Galerie Georges Bernheim)

English Supplement

Illustrations include photographs by Boiffard and Lotar (abattoirs) and works by Arp.

7, 1929

André Schaeffner, Igor Stravinsky's *Capriccio*
Michel Leiris, A Painting by Antoine Caron
Roger Vitrac, Gaston-Louis Roux
Dr Pierre Ménard, The Marquis de Sade's Handwriting
Georges Bataille, The 'Lugubrious Game'
The Doors of San-Zeno at Verona
Robert Desnos, Modern Imagery

Chronique:

Dictionary: Spittle 1) Marcel Griaule, Spittle-soul 2) Michel Leiris, Mouth Water; Michel Leiris, Debacle; Georges Bataille, Formless
Georges Henri Rivière, Six Eisenstein Conferences
Georges Henri Rivière, About Abraham the Jew
Robert Desnos, The 'Advanced' Cinema
Michel Leiris, Fox Movietone Follies of 1929
Carl Einstein, Exhibition of Modern Sculpture
Exhibition of French Modern Painting of the Museum of New York
The Child of the Frog
Novelties of the David-Weill Collection
Carl Einstein, Ekoi Ritual Dance Mask
Mosaics of the Thermes of Caracalla

English Supplement

Illustrations include photographs by Boiffard, sculptures by Laurens, Lipchitz, Brancusi, a stone 'found object' from Einstein's collection and Hollywood stills.

DOCUMENTS 1930

1, 1930

Georges Bataille, Base Materialism and Gnosticism
Marcel Griaule, Illustrated Legend of the Queen of Sheba
Jacques Baron, Jacques Lipchitz
Jiujiro Nakaya, Neolithic Figurines from Japan
Robert Desnos, Pygmalion and the Sphinx

Chronique:

Dictionary: Space 1) Georges Bataille, Questions of Propriety 2) Arnaud Dandieu, Foundations of the Duality of Space; Michel Leiris, Hygiene
Robert Desnos, Failure of the Unconscious
Marcel Griaule, Gunshot
Michel Leiris, New Records
Carl Einstein, Bapindi Masks
Carl Einstein, Landscape by Lorenzetti
Illustrated Covers of *Fantômas*, Georges Henri Rivière
A Georges Henri Rivière Conference at the Musée Guimet
Cézanne Exhibition (Galerie Pigalle), Carl Einstein

Illustrations include photographs by Boiffard and from the Keystone and Wide World agencies.

2, 1930

Michel Leiris, Recent Picasso Canvases
René Grousset, A Case of Regression Towards 'Barbarian' Arts: The Kafiristan Statuary
Georges Bataille, The Deviations of Nature
Marie Elbé, Manet and Contemporary

Criticism

Paul Jacobsthal, The Roquepertuse Heads
Georges Limbour, Aeschylus, Carnival and the Civilized

Chronique:

Dictionary: Michel Leiris, Pensum; Marcel Griaule, Threshold; Carl Einstein, Work
Concerning the Galerie Pigalle Exhibition

3, 1930

Homage to Picasso

Robert Desnos, Hello Mr Picasso
Henri-Charles Puech, Picasso and Representation
Roger Vitrac, Humorage to Picasso
Michel Leiris, Picasso
Léon Pierre-Quint, Doubt and Revelation in Picasso's Work
Georges Monnet, Picasso and Cubism
Georges Ribémont-Dessaignes, Picasso Meteor
Jacques Prévert, Homage-Homage
Carl Einstein, Picasso
André Schaeffner, The Man with the Clarinet
Marcel Jouhandeau, God-the-Father
Jacques Baron, Fire
Georges Bataille, Rotten Sun
Eugène Jolas, Eugène Jolas...
Dr Reber, Doctor Reber...
Maurice Heine, Maurice Heine...
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Camille Mauclair, The Homage of M. Mauclair...
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Georges Henri Rivière, Georges Henri Rivière
Documentary Notice
Official Opinions in Germany

4, 1930

Léo Frobenius, Cave Drawings in Southern Rhodesia
Carl Einstein, Léger: Recent Works
Henry-Charles Puech, The 'Jails' of Jean-Baptiste Piranèse
Roger Hervé, Human Sacrifices of Central America
Georges Bataille, The Nickel-Plated Feet (*Les Pieds Nickelés*)
Robert Desnos, The General Line
George Pudélko, Etruscan Art
Marie Elbé, The Courbet Scandal

Chronique:

Dictionary: Michel Leiris, Benga (Féral); Georges Bataille, Aesthete; Michel Leiris, Keaton (Buster); Marcel Griaule, Pottery
Georges Ribémont-Dessaignes, Hallelujah!, Film by King Vidor
Robert Desnos, Max Ernst's Hundred-Headless Woman
Georges Henri Rivière, Religion and the 'Folies-Bergères'
Carl Einstein, Joan Miró (Papiers collés at the Galerie Pierre)
Juan Gris Exhibition (Berlin, galerie

Flechtheim)

Carl Einstein, Exhibition of Collages (Galerie Goemans)
Georgette Camille, Italian Art Exhibition in London
Review of Publications

5, 1930

Paul Jamot, The Delacroix Exhibition
Michel Leiris, Man and his Interior
Carl Einstein, Juan Gris: New Text
Juan Gris, Answer to an Inquiry
Louis Clarke, Art of the Solomon Islands
Raymond Queneau, What a Life! London, 1911
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Sacheverell Sitwell, Mexican Baroque

Chronique:

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Michel Leiris, Drawings, Gouaches and Watercolours by Picasso (Galerie Jean Aron)
Michel Leiris, Theatrical Folklore
Michel Leiris, 'Liza', Operetta by Louis Douglas
'Green Pastures'
Georges Henri Rivière, Cinéma du Panthéon

Musical Chronique:

Georges Henri Rivière, Eddie South and his Alabamians
Georges Henri Rivière, Hayman Swayze Plantation Orchestra
Jacques Fray, 'Flying High'
Igor Markevitch
Review of Publications

Illustrations include paintings by Jean Hugo, Duchamp, Picasso and de Chirico.

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Emil Waldmann, The Schmitz Collection, French Art
Dr Eckart von Sydow, Janus Masks from the Cross-River (Cameroon)
Georgette Camille, Piero di Cosimo
Georges Ribémont-Dessaignes, Giorgio de Chirico
Valentin Mueller, Greek Sculpture of Minor Asia in the 6th century BC
Dr Ralph von Koenigswald, Heads and Skulls (Ancestors' Skulls and War Trophies of Primitive People)
Roger Vitrac, The Abduction of the Sabines

Chronique:

Dictionary: Michel Leiris, Angel; Marcel Griaule, Ju-Ju; Georges Bataille, Kali

Jacque Fray, Duke Ellington
André Schaeffner, Eddie South and his Singers
Michel Leiris, The Costes-Bellonte movie
Matisse-Braque-Picasso Exhibition (Berlin, Galerie Flechtheim)
Georges Bataille, The Discoveries in Louristan
Georges Henri Rivière, The Gallery of Living Art at New York University
Review of Publications

Illustrations include works by Grandville, Gaston Louis Roux, Miró, Picasso and Masson.

7, 1930

F. Adama Scheltema, The Sacred Feminine Centre
Maria Accascina, The Paintings of the Chiaramonte Palace in Palermo
Georges Bataille, Primitive Art
Georges Bataille, Joan Miró: Recent Paintings
Michel Leiris, The Ethnographer's Eye (concerning the Dakar-Djibouti Mission)
Henry-Charles Puech, The God Bes and Hellenistic Magic
Clive Bell, Constable and French Painting

Chronique:

Dictionary: Michel Leiris, Skyscraper; Zdenko Reich, Sun
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Pierre Bordessoul, Oriental Antiques Exhibition
G. Reusel, Léger Exhibition at the Paul Rosenberg Gallery

Illustrations include paintings by Miró and Léger.

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Heinrich Ehl, The Birth Hour of European Occidental Art
Georges Bataille, Sacrificial Mutilation and Vincent van Gogh's Severed Ear
Michel Leiris, The 'Caput Mortuum' or the Alchemist's Wife
Jean Bourdeillette, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt
Zdenko Reich, Pig Massacre
Carl Einstein, Neolithic Childhood
Erminnie A. Smith, An Iroquoian Legend: The Big Head

Chronique:

Varieties: Georges Bataille, The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions; Maurice Leenhardt, The Makishi Dance; Jacques Prévert, Cami's Stories

Illustrations include photographs by Boiffard and from the Institute of Micrography, and works by Arp.

NOTES ON TRANSLATIONS

Translations from DOCUMENTS within this book, unless the authors' own or newly translated in this volume, have been taken from the following sources:

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- © Editions Gallimard, Paris (Georges Bataille: Formless, Joan Miró: Recent Paintings, Places of Pilgrimage: Hollywood, The Academic Horse, The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions; Roger Vitrac: Humorage to Picasso; Jacques Baron: Fire: For Pablo Picasso)
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 Jacques Fraenkel (Robert Desnos: Max Ernst's Hundred-Headless Woman)
 Jean Jamin (Michel Leiris: Alberto Giacometti, Picasso (poem))

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18 x 13
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- 18** (pp. 94–95)
Anon
Saint Antony of Padua and the Infant Jesus, c.18th or early 19th C.
Oil on wood
83.8 x 25.4
Private collection, Douglas M. Parker
- 19**
Anon
Yuquot? with two totem poles, 1929
Photograph
23.5 x 18.4
Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, The British Museum
AM/B50/6
- 20** (p. 81)
Anon, Afghanistan: Kafiristan
Gandaho Funeral Effigy, 20th C.
Wood, stone
187 x 40 x 20
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris
70.2061.27.502
- 21** (pp. 148, 149)
Anon, Central Africa
Female Anthropomorphic Arched Harp with Five Strings, 19th C.
Wood, skin, pearls
81 x 17 x 32
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris
71.1901.35.30
- 22** (p. 140)
Anon, Ethiopia: Abyssinian
Magical Prayer Scroll, 17th–18th C.
Parchment with 3 folios
172 x 13.7
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Division Orientale, Ethiopien 487 (Griaule 179)
- 23** (p. 140)
Anon, Ethiopia: Abyssinian
Magical Prayer Scroll, 19th C.
Parchment with 3 folios
170.2 x 7.8
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Division Orientale, Ethiopien 435 (Griaule 127)
- 24** (p. 140)
Anon, Ethiopia: Abyssinian
Magical Prayer Book, 19th–20th C.
Bound with wood cover front and back, with 66 folios
10.3 x 13.5
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Division Orientale, Ethiopien 408 (Griaule 104)
- 25** (pp. 141, 142–143)
Anon, Ethiopia: Abyssinian
The Legend of the Queen of Sheba, c.1920–30
Oil on canvas
191 x 83
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris
71.1931.74.3482
- 26**
Anon, France
The Apocalypse of Saint-Sever, 11th C. (detail: folio 145v, Apocalypse, Locusts)
1943 facsimile of 11th C. Latin
Manuscript 8878 in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Division occidentale, Paris
39 x 30
The British Library
HMNTS L.R. 255.d.19
- 27**
Anon, France: Aisne, Notre-Dame-de-Liesse
Passion Bottle, n.d.
Glass, spun glass, water
22.5 x 9.2
Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Paris
1993.5.7
- 28** (p. 78)
Anon, France: Aisne, Notre-Dame-de-Liesse
Passion Bottle, late 18th – early 19th C.
Glass, mixed media
31 x 11.6
Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Paris
1956.41.1
- 29**
Anon, France: Artois, the Atrebatas
Stater, 4th C. BC
Gold (coin)
1.9 (w)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
BnF 8595
- 30**
Anon, France: Artois, the Atrebatas
Stater, 4th C. BC
Gold (coin)
1.9 (v)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
BnF 8597
- 31** (p. 129)
Anon, France: Charente, Roc de Sers
Rock with Engraved Bird, Solutrean, c.20,000 years old
Limestone
38 x 28 x 9
Musée des Antiquités Nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France
MAN 75 042
Photo: © MAN de Saint-Germain
- 32** (p. 129)
Anon, France: Dordogne, La Madeleine
Perforated Baton, late Magdalenian, c.15,000 years old
Reindeer antler
16 x 4 x 2
Musée des Antiquités Nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France
MAN 8163
Photo: © MAN de Saint-Germain
- 33**
Anon, France: Dordogne, La Madeleine
Perforated Baton, late Magdalenian, c.15,000 years old
Resin mold of baton: MAN 8163 (listed above)
16 x 8 x 0.5
Musée des Antiquités Nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France
MAN 8 163 M
- 34** (p. 129)
Anon, France: Dordogne, La Madeleine
Perforated Baton with Low Relief Horse, late Magdalenian, c.12,500 years old
Reindeer antler
16.8 x 5.5
Department of Prehistory and Europe, The British Museum
Sieveking 310
Photo: © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum
- 35** (p. 87)
Anon, France: Gers, Eauze, Elusates
Coin, 4th C. BC
Silver
1.8 (w)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
BnF 3587
- 36**
Anon, France: Limousin, the Lemovice
Stater, 4th C. BC
Gold (coin)
2 (w)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
BnF 4581
- 37** (p. 87)
Anon, France: Region of Paris, the Parisii
Stater, 4th C. BC
Gold (coin)
2.8 (w)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
BnF 7778
- 38** (p. 87)
Anon, France: Region of Verdun, attributed to the Verodunenses
Stater, France, 4th C. BC
Red gold (coin)
2.2 (w)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
BnF 8993
- 39**
Anon, Greece
Stater of Philippe II of Macedonia, 4th C. BC
Gold (coin)
1.7 (w)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
Luynes 1591
- 40** (p. 163)
Anon, Greece: the Cyclades
Female Figure with Folded Arms, Early Cycladic II; c.2700–2400 BC; Spedos Variety
Marble
21.6 x 6.2 x 3.3
Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, University of East Anglia
UEA 340
Photo: James Austin
- 41** (p. 163)
Anon, Greece: the Cyclades
Female Figure with Folded Arms, Early Cycladic II; c.2700–2400 BC; Spedos Variety
Marble
21.9 x 6.5 x 4.5
Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, University of East Anglia
UEA 339
Photo: James Austin
- 42** (p. 200)
Anon, Ivory Coast: Guéré/Wobé-style
Mask, 20th C.
Wood, hide, metal
30 x 21 x 16
Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, The British Museum
BM Af 1949, 22.1
Photo: © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum
- 43** (p. 200)
Anon, Ivory Coast or Liberia
Mask, late 19th – early 20th C.
Wood, metal, quills, pigment
21.6 x 17.5 x 10.5
Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, University of East Anglia
UEA 211
Photo: James Austin
- 44** (p. 80)
Anon, Nigeria
Osun Staff, late 18th – 19th C.
Iron
160 (h)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum
III C 8508
Photo: Martin Franken
- 45** (p. 80)
Anon, Nigeria
Osun Staff, late 18th – 19th C.
Iron
178 (h)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum
III C 8506
Photo: Martin Franken
- 46** (p. 80)
Anon, Nigeria
Osun Staff, late 18th – 19th C.
Iron
150 (h)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum
III C 9954
Photo: Martin Franken
- 47**
Anon, Nigeria: Benin
Osun Staff, c.19th C.
Iron
113.5 x 15 x 7.8
Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, The British Museum
Af1979.1.4477
- 48** (p. 201)
Anon, Nigeria: Cross River Region
Janus Mask, late 19th – early 20th C.
Wood, skin, metal, hair
39 x 26 x 37
Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, The British Museum.
Acquired by H. Charles, 1911
BM Af 1911, 1016.1
Photo: © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum

- 49 (p. 75)
Anon, Nigeria: Cross River Region, Ejagham or Anyang
Janus-faced, Skin-covered Helmet Mask, late 19th C.
Wood, leather, metal
115 × 41 × 45
Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg
568:06
Photo: © Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg; Brigitte Saal
- 50 (p. 201)
Anon, Nigeria: Ngbe society
Mask, 19th–early 20th C.
Wood, animal skin, bone, metal, hair
35 × 37
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum
III C 20086
Photo: Martin Franken
- 51 (p. 128)
Anon, North America: Blackfoot
Robe, Dress (with Painted Figures), 1820–65
Skin (buffalo), sinew
220 × 75
Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, The British Museum.
Acquired 1868
BM AM 917
Photo: © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum
- 52 (p. 88)
Anon, Roman Egypt
Bes Pantheistic, Magical Amulet, 3rd–4th C.
Onyx
2 (h)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
M 6600
- 53 (p. 88)
Anon, Roman Egypt
Cock-headed Anquipedes, Magical Amulet, 3rd–4th C.
Red jasper
1.5 (h)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
M 8003
- 54
Anon, Roman Egypt
Gods with Duck Heads, Magical Engraved Gem or 'Magical Amulet', 3rd–4th C.
Chalcedony
2.7 (h)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
Intaille 2180c
- 55 (p. 88)
Anon, Roman Egypt
Headless God, Magical Amulet, 3rd–4th C.
Lapis lazuli
2.5 (h)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
Intaille 2170
- 56 (p. 149)
Anon, Sudan: Bahr el-Ghazal region
Wooden Slit Drum, late 19th C.
Wood
271 × 80 × 60
Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, The British Museum
BM Af 1937, 1108.1
Photo: © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum
- 57
Anon, Transylvania: Celtic
Imitation of a Macedonian Tetrachma, 4th C. BC
Silver (coin)
3.4 (w)
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques
BnF 9613
- 58 (p. 153)
Hans Arp (1886–1966)
The Lips (Les Lèvres), 1926
Painted cardboard relief
40 × 42.5
Sammlung des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz für das Arp Museum
Rau 87
© DACS 2006
Photo: © Nic Tenwiggenhorn
- 59 (p. 154)
Hans Arp
Head (Tête), 1929
Painted wood relief
67 × 56.5
Private collection
Rau 179
© DACS 2006
- 60 (p. 157)
Hans Arp
Leaf (Feuille), 1929
String relief
73 × 59.7
STIFTUNG HANS ARP und SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP e. V., Rolandseck
Rau 182
© DACS 2006
Photo: Wolfgang Morell
- 61 (p. 156)
Hans Arp
Leaves and Navels (Feuilles et nombrils), 1929
Oil and cord on canvas
35 × 27.3
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase, 1940
1647.1940
© DACS 2006
Photo: © 2006. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York / Scala, Florence
- 62 (p. 153)
Hans Arp
Moustache-Head and Bottles (Tête-moustache et bouteilles), 1929
Relief, oil on wood
80 × 100 × 3
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle
AM 1370 S
© DACS 2006
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Jacques Faujour
- 63 (p. 155)
Hans Arp
Leaves IV (Feuilles IV), 1930
Relief, painted wood
19 × 34
STIFTUNG HANS ARP und SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP e. V., Rolandseck
Rau 209
© DACS 2006
Photo: Wolfgang Morell
- 64 (pp. 131–133)
Georges Bataille (1897–1962)
Untitled Drawings for Vitreous Sun (Soleil Vitré), n.d.:
a–c: Conté crayon and graphite on buff paper
29.2 × 22.2 each
SC608.1966. 1, 2, 3
d–e: Conté crayon on coloured paper
29.2 × 22.2 each
SC608.1966. 4, 5
f: Conté crayon and coloured pencil on buff paper
29.2 × 22.2
SC608.1966. 6
g: Crayon and ink on paper on lined notebook paper
22.5 × 17.5
SC608.1966. 7
h–j: Ink on lined notebook paper
22.5 × 17.5 each
SC608.1966. 8, 10, 12
k–l: Ink on lined notebook paper
22.9 × 17.8 each
SC608.1966. 9, 11
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Transferred to the Drawings Collection from the Eluard Dausse Collection, The Museum of Modern Art Library
Photos: © 2006. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York / Scala, Florence
- 65 (p. 90)
Georges Bataille
Manuscript of the article in DOCUMENTS, 2, 1930, 'The Deviations of Nature', 1929
Manuscript
23.8 × 16
Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits, fonds Georges Bataille, Boite 6 B (b)
- 66
Georges Bataille
Manuscript of the article in DOCUMENTS, 2, 1930, 'The Deviations of Nature', 1929
Manuscript
22 × 14.8
Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits, fonds Georges Bataille, Boite 6 B (n)
- 67 (p. 171)
Karl Blossfeldt
Bryonia alba (White Bryony), 1915–25
Silver gelatin print
29.7 × 23.7
© Karl Blossfeldt Archiv – Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich
- 68 (p. 170)
Karl Blossfeldt (1865–1932)
Dryopteris filix mas (Common Male Fern), 1915–25
Silver gelatin print
29.7 × 23.7
© Karl Blossfeldt Archiv – Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich
- 69 (p. 171)
Karl Blossfeldt
Azofina vidalii (Belle-flower), 1915–28
Silver gelatin print
29.9 × 23.6
© Karl Blossfeldt Archiv – Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich
- 70 (p. 172)
Karl Blossfeldt
Equisetum hiemale (Rough Horsetail), 1915–28
Silver gelatin print
29.7 × 23.7
© Karl Blossfeldt Archiv – Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich
- 71 (p. 173)
Karl Blossfeldt
Hordeum distichum (Barley), 1915–28
Silver gelatin print
29.8 × 23.8
© Karl Blossfeldt Archiv – Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich
- 72 (p. 176)
Jacques-André Boiffard (1903–61)
Big Toe, 30-Year-Old Male Subject (Gros Orteil, Sujet Masculin 30 ans), 1929
Silver gelatin print
31 × 23.9
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Gift of Mme Denise Boiffard (Paris) in 1986
AM 1985-123
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Bertrand Prévost
- 73 (p. 178)
Jacques-André Boiffard
Beneath the Mask, Pierre Prévost (Sous le masque, Pierre Prévost), 1930
Silver gelatin print
22.4 × 16.8
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Purchased from Mme Denise Boiffard (Paris) in 1984
AM 1984-148
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Philippe Migeat
- 74 (p. 178)
Jacques-André Boiffard
Beneath the Mask, Pierre Prévost (Sous le masque, Pierre Prévost), 1930
Silver gelatin print
29 × 21.7
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Gift of Mme Denise Boiffard (Paris) in 1986
AM 1984-119
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Philippe Migeat
- 75 (p. 179)
Jacques-André Boiffard
Carnival Mask (Masque de carnaval), 1930
Silver gelatin print
28.2 × 21.7
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Gift of Mme Denise Boiffard (Paris) in 1986
AM 1985-118
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Philippe Migeat
- 76 (p. 180)
Jacques-André Boiffard
Défense Nationale Monument by A. Bartholdi, Porte des Terres, Paris, c.1930
Silver gelatin print
30.5 × 24
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Gift in 2003
AM 2003-226
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Georges Meguerditchian
- 77 (p. 181)
Jacques-André Boiffard
Renée Jacobi, 1930
Silver gelatin print
23.8 × 18.8
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Purchased from Mme Denise Boiffard (Paris) in 1984
AM 1984-152
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Georges Meguerditchian
- 78 (p. 177)
Jacques-André Boiffard
Untitled (Sans titre), 1930
Silver gelatin print
22.7 × 16.9
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Purchased from Mme Denise Boiffard (Paris) in 1984
AM 1985-154
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Philippe Migeat
- 79 (p. 202)
Jacques-André Boiffard
Untitled (Sans titre), 1932–33
Silver gelatin print
24 × 18
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Purchased from Mme Boiffard (Paris) in 1984
AM 1984-145
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Philippe Migeat
- 80 (p. 158)
Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957)
Prometheus, 1911
White marble
13.7 × 17.8 × 13.7
Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950
1950-134-5
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006
Photo: Graydon Wood, 1988
- 81 (p. 159)
Constantin Brancusi
Wood Project or Prometheus (Projet bois ou Prométhée), c.1911
Silver gelatin print
26.9 × 15.2
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Gift of Constantin Brancusi in 1957
AM 4002-708
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Adam Rzepka
- 82
Constantin Brancusi
Stool (Tabouret), 1930
Oak plinth
58.5 × 26.5 × 29
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Gift of Constantin Brancusi in 1957
AM 4002-157
- 83 (p. 79)
Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978)
The Evil Genius of a King (Le mauvais génie d'un roi), 1914–15
Oil on canvas
61 × 50.2
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase, 1936
112.1936
© DACS 2006
Photo: © 2006. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York / Scala, Florence
- 84 (p. 96)
Salvador Dalí (1904–89)
Female Bathers (Baigneuses), 1928
Oil, sand and gravel on panel
52 × 72
Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg, Florida
© Salvador Dalí, Gala – Salvador Dalí Foundation, DACS, London 2006
Photo: © 2005 Salvador Dalí Museum, Inc.
- 85
Max Ernst (1891–1976)
The Hundred-Headless Woman (La Femme 100 têtes), 1930
6 original collages (cut and pasted engravings on cardboard)
a (p. 207):
The Landscape Changes Three Times (II) (Le paysage change trois fois (II))
Chapter 1, plate 6
10 × 14.6
AM 1999-3(5)
b (p. 206):
In Daytime, Angelic Caresses Flee to Secret Regions, Neighbouring the Poles (Pendant le jour, les caresses angéliques se retirent dans les régions secrètes, voisines des pôles)
Chapter 2, plate 28
18 × 15.4
AM 1999-3(10)
c (p. 204):
Could this Monkey be Catholic, Perhaps? (Ce singe, serait-il catholique, par hasard?)
Chapter 2, plate 33
20.7 × 22
AM 1999-3(11)
d (p. 207):
We Can See More than One Lawyer Dash Past Letting his Voice Drop to Time (On voit filer plus d'un notaire laissant tomber sa voix en cadence)
Chapter 3, plate 4
12 × 14.5
AM 1999-3(13)
e (p. 205):
The Third Mouse Seated, One Can See the Body of a Legendary Adult Fly (La troisième souris assise, on voit voler le corps d'une adulte légendaire)
Chapter 3, plate 42
14.3 × 17
AM 1999-3(14)
f (p. 206):
Physical Training or the Death of your Choice (Culture physique ou la mort qu'il vous plaira)
Chapter 3, plate 48
11.2 × 8.2
AM 1999-3(15)
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Gift of Carlo Perrone (Fontainebleau) in 1999
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006
Photos: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN, © Jacques Faujour
- 86 (p. 160)
Alberto Giacometti (1901–66)
Sketches on DOCUMENTS, 4, 1929. Oval Lamp, Man, Woman and Child? Variation, Candlestick (Applique ovale, variations Homme, femme et enfant, bougeoir), 1928
Crayon on paper
27.5 × 22.5
Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti
FAAG 1994-3462
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006
Photo: Marc Domage / © Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti

- 87 (p. 161)
Alberto Giacometti
Man and Woman (Homme et Femme), 1928–29
Bronze
40 × 40 × 16.5
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle. Donated in 1984
AM 1984-355
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Droits réservés
- 88 (p. 162)
Alberto Giacometti
Gazing Head (Tête qui regarde), 1929
Plaster
40 × 36.4 × 6.5
Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti
FAAG 1994-0439
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006
Photo: Marc Damage / © Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti
- 89 (p. 160)
Alberto Giacometti
Reclining Woman who Dreams (Femme couchée qui rêve), 1929
Bronze, painted white
23.7 × 42.6 × 13.6
Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2006
Photo: © Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti
- 90 (p. 199)
Juan Gris (1887–1927)
The Smoker (Le Fumeur), 1913
Oil on canvas
73 × 54
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid 1978.19 (567)
Photo: © Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
- 91 (p. 186)
Daniel Le Bossu (d. 1678), based on initial drawings by Amé Bourdon (c. 1636/38–1706)
New Anatomical Tables (Plate 1) (Nouvelles Tables Anatomiques – Table Première), 1678
Etching with burin on copper
108 × 81
Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Estampes
AA5 Le Bossu
- 92
Daniel Le Bossu, based on initial drawings by Amé Bourdon
New Anatomical Tables (Plate 6) (Nouvelles Tables Anatomiques – Table Six), 1678
Etching with burin on copper
108 × 81
Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Estampes
AA5 Le Bossu
- 93
Alphonse Liébert (1827–1914)
Victor Capoul, 1877
Albumen print on card
16.3 × 10.7
Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Estampes et de la Photographie
Na 250+
- 94 (p. 165)
Jacques Lipchitz (1891–1973)
Sculpture, 1915
Bronze
93.7 × 22 × 18.5
Marlborough International Fine Art
- 95 (p. 165)
Jacques Lipchitz
Standing Figure (Personnage Debout), 1916
Bronze
104.8 × 22 × 17
Marlborough International Fine Art
- 96 (p. 166)
Jacques Lipchitz
Musical Instruments (Instruments de Musique), 1925
Bronze
85.5 × 70 × 41
Marlborough International Fine Art
- 97 (p. 82)
Eli Lotar (1905–69)
André Breton, c. 1927
Silver gelatin print
9.3 × 7.9
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle
TEX 1995-108(2)
© M. et Mme Jean-Pierre Marchand
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Droits réservés
- 98 (p. 82)
Eli Lotar
Hair and Crown of Thorns (Cheveux et couronne d'épines), c. 1927
Negative: silver gelatin bromide on glass
9 × 6
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle
TEX 1995-108(1)
© M. et Mme Jean-Pierre Marchand
Photo: CNAC/MNAM Dist. RMN – © Droits réservés
- 99
Eli Lotar
La Villette Abattoir (Aux abattoirs de la Villette), 1929
Silver gelatin prints
a (p. 107):
32 × 25
TEX 1995-99 (1)
b (p. 110):
6.5 × 9
TEX 1995-99 (4)
c (p. 109):
25 × 32
TEX 1995-99 (5)
d (p. 112):
25 × 32
TEX 1995-99 (6)
e (p. 110):
25 × 33
TEX 1995-99 (7)
f (p. 111):
6.5 × 9
TEX 1995-99 (12)
g (p. 108):
9 × 6.5
TEX 1995-99 (13)
h (p. 111):
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