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# Bloom Theory

Tiqqun

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up in the air, with our words on the one side and ourselves on the other, and with the remorse of separations.”

This text is a pact.

The protocol for an experimentation now open among deserters.

**Without anyone noticing,**

**Break ranks.**

**NOW**

and sending back to their desks all the learned *plans* and *projects* of liberation.

**A kind of Contestation  
whose authority  
and methods are not  
in any way distinct  
from experience.**

*Taking the possibilities that my situation contains all the way.*  
Revolutionary experimentation,  
*collective-revolutionary experimentation,*  
*revolutionary-experimental* collectivity carrying out the assumption of finiteness, separation and exposedness as the ecstatic coordinates of existence.

The life of he who  
knows that his appearance and his essence are identical to one another, but not identical *to him*,  
cannot be *in* the world without remembering that he is not *of* this world,  
cannot accommodate himself to a community which would be a simple amusement of his solitude in the face of death,  
— dancing, in total precision, *to the death* with time, which kills you —

THAT'S EXPERIMENTATION.

Language,  
words and gestures:  
that's the common home of the placeless.

The bond between those that cannot be reduced to the lie of belonging, to a certain plot of land, a certain birthplace.

A journey into dispersion and exile,  
communication  
that *acts upon*  
our essential separation.

“Once we've spoken, to remain as close as possible in line with what we'd said, so that everything won't be effectively

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

*“Milk for the pussens,” he said.*

*“Mrkgnao!” the cat cried.*

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

James Joyce, *Ulysses*

## At this hour of the night

The great watchmen are dead.

Doubtless THEY killed them.

The weak glow of their solitary stubbornness disturbed the party of sleep too much. That, at least, is what we think, we guess — we who've come so late — in light of the perplexity that their name still stirs up at certain times.

Every living trace of what they did and were has been erased, it seems, by the maniacal obstinacy of resentment. In the end, all that's left of them for this world is a handful of dead images that it still haloes with the villainous satisfaction of having conquered those who were better than it is.

So here we are, orphans of grandeur, marooned in a world of ice where no fires light the horizon. Our questions have to remain unanswered, the old ones assure us; then they say, all the same: “*there's never been a blacker night for intelligence.*”

## Who Are You Really?

The pretty, snow-blanketed countryside slips fast across the window. It won't be long now until the trip between V. and R., which in the old days would've been a matter of weeks, will be

over. For less than an hour, you've been the occupant of some seat or another in one of the twenty identical cars of this high speed train, one of so many. The regular — doubtless optimal — arrangement of the seats spreads out in an abstract harmony of gentle neon. The train follows along its rails, and in this train car, so seamlessly in harmony with the idea of order, it seems that human reality itself travels along invisible rails. A clean and polite indifference inhabits the space that separates you from the lady sitting in the seat next to you. Neither of you will have your trip disturbed by the superfluous need to even say a word, much less strike up a conversation. That would disturb your distraction, and, in the case of your neighbor, her applied study of the feminine press (“how to sleep with a guy without him knowing,” “soft flirting,” “gifts *with meaning*,” “is he a good lay?” “who are you REALLY?” etc.). And when her cell phone rings, the young woman doesn't think it necessary to get up, either: “hello? ... listen, what do you mean you're not there? ... are you shitting me? ... listen, I've been stuck with the kids for the past three weekends, I work all week, and it's already a bitch finding time to live, man... no, no, no, I just can't, that's all... deal with it, it's not my problem... everyone's gotta have their own social life; I've already wrecked mine enough... how many times do I have to tell you: I'm going out with Jerry this weekend, and that's all there is to it... oh yeah, is that so? With the kid putting me through his freak-outs all day, sniveling about “where's daddy?” ... well come on, 'cause you're his father! ... it's out of the question... I don't give a fuck, you're taking care of them this weekend... well too bad for her, all you had to do was find a little more of a peacemaker... I'm warning you, if there's no one there, I'm leaving them with the doorman... well hell yes; I'm being completely reasonable... that's all, then; ciao.”

The scene repeats itself in all its banality. More — obviously — of the same. It's like a slap in the face when it happens; it's brutal at first — but we should've been preparing for it for years, after all, considering how scrupulously we've worked to be-

All the elsewheres that we could have fled to have been liquidated;

we can only desert the situation *inwardly*,  
by reclaiming our fundamental non-belonging to the biopolitical fabric with a participation  
on a more intimate,  
and thus unattributable level,  
in the strategic community of the Invisible Committee,  
where an infiltration of society on all levels is being plotted.  
This desertion is  
a *metamorphosis*.

The Invisible Committee — the *concrete* space where our attacks, our writings, our acts, our words, our gatherings, our events circulate:

our desertion —  
transfigures the totality of what we'd accepted as a trade-off,  
of what we'd endured as our “alienations,”  
into a *infiltration strategy*.

The Other ceases to possess us:

and indeed,

possession itself is reversed  
and becomes gentle.

We will conceal our act

within a relationship

that our powers have not yet attained to.

#### A TONGUE-IN-CHEEK ACCESS TO EXPERIENCE

Experimentation:

*the practice* of freedom,

*the practice* of idleness,

opposing the design of

a process of emancipation separate

from the existence of men,

a pure power of subjectivation and desubjectivation, as an aptitude for experimentation.

Breaking with the old anxiety of “who am I really?” to the benefit of a real understanding of my situation and the *use* of it that I could possibly make.

Not just surviving in the constant imminence of a miraculous *departure*,

not forcing ourselves to believe in the jobs we do, the lies we tell,

but *starting from there*, to enter into contact with other agents of the Invisible Committee — through *Tiqqun* for example — and silently coordinate a truly elegant act of sabotage.

To detach from our detachment through a conscious, strategic practice of self-splitting.

#### BREAKING WITH THE WORLD, FIRST OF ALL INWARDLY.

The Invisible Committee:

an *openly secret* society,

a public conspiracy,

an instance of anonymous subjectivation,

whose name is everywhere and headquarters nowhere,

the experimental-revolutionary polarity of the Imaginary Party

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

a metaphysical territory of secession with all the magnitude of a whole world of its own,

the *playing area* where positive creation *alone* can accomplish the great emigration of the economy from the world.

#### IT'S A FICTION THAT'S MADE ITS REALITY REAL.

come perfect strangers to each other: blank existences, indifferent presences, no depth. At the same time, nothing in this situation could be so easily acceptable to everyone if we weren't *absolutely intimate* in this foreignness. So, that foreignness also had to become the figure of our relationship with ourselves; and really, from all angles — we are Blooms.

If Bloom is *also* found in a certain book, it's because all of us have already crossed paths with him in the street, then, later, in ourselves. This just confirms it.

One day you pay more attention than usual to the collective silence on a metro line, and are overtaken by a deep shiver, a primal horror, coming out from behind the shared fakery of contemporary morals and suddenly plain for all to see.

The last man, man of the street, man of the crowd, man of the masses, mass-man; that's how THEY represented Bloom to us at first: as the sad product of the time of the multitudes, as the catastrophic child of the industrial era and the end of all enchantments. But even there, no matter the name, there's still that shiver; THEY shiver before the *infinite mystery of ordinary man*. Each of us feels a *pure force* growing behind the theater of our qualities, hiding out there; a pure force that we're all *supposed* to ignore.

What's left is the necessary anxiety we think we can appease by demanding of one another a rigorous absence from each other's selves, and an ignorance of a force which is *common*, but is now unqualifiable, because it is anonymous. And the name of that anonymity is Bloom.

#### **Kairos [the right moment]**

In spite of the extreme confusion that reigns on its surface, and perhaps precisely because of that, our era is by its nature *messianic*.

What should be understood by this is that very old distinctions have now been effaced, and that many thousand-year-old divisions have now in turn been divided.

Our era is reducing itself to one single, basic reality, and to *amusement* in that reality. More and more visibly, our contemporary non-societies — those imperative fictions — endlessly populate themselves with pariahs and parvenus. And the parvenus are themselves merely pariahs that have *betrayed* their condition and would like to make it forgotten by all means — but it *always* ends up biting them in the ass. One might also say, following another line of demarcation, that there's nothing left of these times but idlers and the disturbed, and that the disturbed are in the end no more than idlers trying to *cheat on* their own essential inaction. Will the pursuit of “deep feelings,” of “intense life,” which seems to be so many desperate people's last reason to live, ever really distract them fully from the fundamental emotional tone that inhabits them: boredom?

The reigning confusion is the result of the planetary deployment of all these *false paradoxes*, under which our central truth nevertheless is born. And this truth is that we are tenants of an existence which is a kind of exile, in a world which is a desert, that we've been *thrown out* into this world with no mission to accomplish, with no place assigned us, and no recognizable filiation — abandoned. That we are at the same time *so little* and already *too much*.

True politics, *ecstatic* politics, begins there. With a brutal and all-enveloping laugh. With a laugh that *undoes* the pathos oozing out of the so-called problems of “joblessness,” “immigration,” “precariousness,” and “marginalization.”

There's no *social problem* in unemployment, just the *metaphysical fact* of our own *idleness*.

There's no *social problem* in immigration, just the *metaphysical fact* of our own *foreignness*.

.....

Theory is not  
about thought,

A certain quantity of coagulated,  
manufactured  
thought.

Theory  
is a *state*,  
a state of *shock*.

A Theory of Bloom,

Where Bloom is not the *object* of theory, where  
theory is but the most familiar activity, the *spontaneous*  
penchant of an essentially *theoretical*  
creature,  
of a Bloom.

Theory is WITHOUT END.  
thence  
the need  
to PUT AN END TO IT,  
***decisively***.

The weariness of speech

What's the way out of Bloom?

*The Assumption* of Bloom,  
for instance.

— You can only really liberate yourself from anything by  
reappropriating the thing you're liberating yourself from. —

What does the assumption of Bloom mean?  
Making *use* of the metaphysical situation defined by Bloom, the  
exercise of the self as a *prankster*.

Not fighting against the dominant schizoid state, against *our*  
schizoid state, but *starting from there*, and making use of it as



*content is erased, all causes and effects. Their soul is a blank slate upon which fate writes its absurd commandments. And said commandments are carried out blindly, in a reckless and pitiless manner. And that this impossibility becomes an act, that this blindness becomes illumination, that this cruelty is transformed into kindness — that's the real miracle, that's true grace.” (On Mental Poverty)*

But at the same time as these eruptions bear witness to an impossibility, they also, in their proliferation, announce a speedup of the flow of time. The universal disturbance, which tends to subordinate itself under ever greater quantities of ever more minute activities, brings to a glowing intensity in each man his need to make his *choice*. Already those for whom this necessity means annihilation speak of apocalypse, while the vast majority content themselves with living under it all in the swampy pleasures of the last days.

Only those who understand the meaning they themselves will give to the catastrophe will remain calm and retain the precision of their movements.

In the magnitude and the way in which a given mind gives itself over to panic, one can recognize its station, the ranks it falls in. And this is a mark that is valid not only ethically and metaphysically but also in praxis, and in time.

Etcetera.

*But the world that we're born into is a world at war, all the dazzle of which comes from its sharp division into friends and enemies. Naming the front lines in that war is part of crossing the line, but that's not enough to really do it. Only combat can really cross the line. Not so much because it gives rise to such grandeur, but more because it is the deepest experience of community, the one that permanently mingles with annihilation and only measures itself in extreme proximity to risk. Living together in the heart of the desert, with the same resolution to never reconcile ourselves with it; that's the proof, that's the light.*

Etcetera.

There's no *social problem* in precariousness or marginalization, just this inexorable existential reality that we're all alone, *dying of it alone in the face of death,*

that we are all, for all eternity, *finite beings.*

You decide what's serious about that and what's just social entertainment.

The era that opened in 1914, where the *illusion* of “modern times” completed its decomposition while simultaneously metaphysics completed its *self-realization*, saw the ontological burst out into history in its pure state and on all levels. Such tectonic upsurges of truth appear in those rare moments where the lie of civilizations starts to crumble. Our times are part of a curious constellation, which includes the decline of the middle ages and the first Gnostic centuries of our era. The same *Mood* [*Stimmung*] expresses itself everywhere, with the same radicalness: finiteness, perdition, separation. “Modern times” and the Christian west were *born* before that from such outbursts, *as a reaction.*

This kinship keeps us from considering the emotional tone that dominated the twentieth century as simple “malaise in civilization.” And it's not about subjective dispositions, nor some capricious propensity towards despair or disapproval: no, this tone is, on the contrary, the most *obvious* one of our era, one that THEY work ceaselessly to repress, at every stage in its advancement.

It's not that men have — negatively — “lost their bearings”; it's rather that they have *positively become Blooms.*

BLOOM IS THE FINAL UPSURGE OF THE NATIVE.

From now on there's nothing anywhere but Bloom and Bloom's *escape.*

*He saw no more future before him, and the past, in spite of all his efforts to consider it explainable, re-*

*sembled something incomprehensible. The justifications were scattered about like crumbs, and the feeling of pleasure seemed more exhausted every day. Travels and long walks, which long ago gave him a mysterious joy, had become strangely odious to him. [...] He was neither truly a man without a country, nor did he feel honestly and naturally at home anywhere in the world. He would have liked very much to have been an organ player, or a beggar, or a cripple, so as to have some reason to ask for men's pity and charity; but even more ardently than that he wished to die. He was not dead, and yet he was dead; he was not poor to the point of having to beg, and yet was indeed a beggar, though he did not beg; even now he still dressed elegantly, even now he still humbled himself before people like a mechanical, annoying girl, uttered clichés and got upset about and horrified by them. How atrocious his own life appeared to him, his soul false, and his miserable body dead, the whole world foreign, and the movements, things and events that surrounded him so empty.*

Robert Walser, *Short Essays*

## Stimmung [mood/tone]

Kafka's *characters* are in a fundamental sense the same *thing* as Kafka's *world*.

Understanding the *figure* of Bloom doesn't just require renouncing the classical idea of the subject, which is no big deal; it also requires abandoning the modern concept of objectivity.

The term "Bloom" doesn't in some exotic way fill the need for a word in the current lexicon to designate a new human type that has recently appeared on the surface of the planet that we should defend ourselves from.

diction whatsoever is capable of dealing with. Only weak and superstitious minds could give themselves up to believing that a verdict of life in prison or some orderly trial could suffice to sweep those facts into the limbo of null and void-ness. At the most, domination is free to attest to the Bloom condition, for instance by declaring an only slightly-disguised state of exception, as the United States did with its 1996 adoption of a so-called "anti-terrorist" law which allows the arrest of "suspects" on the basis of secret information, without any count of indictment or any limit to its duration. There's a certain physical risk to being metaphysically nil. Doubtless it was in anticipation of the truly glorious possibilities that such nullity was to give rise to that Unesco adopted the oh-so highly consequential "Universal Declaration of Animal Rights" on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1978, which stipulates in article 3: "1 — No animal should be subjected to mistreatment or to acts of cruelty. 2 — If it is necessary to kill an animal, it should be carried out in a manner that is instantaneous, painless, and does not cause it fear. 3 — Dead animals must be treated with decency."

**"Tu non sei morta, ma se'ismarrita  
Anima nostra che si ti lamenti."**

[you are not dead, but merely lost,  
o ever-lamenting soul of ours.]

Dante, *Convivio* [Banquet]

That Bloom's kindness still expresses itself here and there in acts of murder is a sign that the dividing line is near but has not yet been crossed.

In zones governed by nihilism in its final stage, where the ends are still lacking though the means abound, kindness is a mystical possession. There, the desire for an unconditional freedom gives rise to singular formations, and gives words a value full of paradoxes. Lukacs: "*Kindness is savage and pitiless, it is blind and daring, In the soul of a kind person all psychological*

*Anyone that has no community is sacer.*

Being nothing, remaining outside all recognition, or presenting oneself as a pure, non-political individuality, is enough to make any man at all a being whose disappearance is un-inscribable. However inexhaustible the obituary eulogies may be — eternal regrets, etc. — such a death is trivial, indifferent, and only concerns he who disappears; meaning, that is — in keeping with good logic — nobody. Analogous to his entirely private life, Bloom's death is such a non-event that anybody can eliminate him. That's why the expostulations of those who, sobs in their voices, lament the fact that Kip Kinkel's victims "didn't deserve to die" are inadmissible, because they didn't *deserve* to live, either; *they were outside the sphere of deservingness*. To the extent that they found themselves in the hands of Biopower, they were already the living dead, at the mercy of any sovereign decision-making, whether that of the State or of a murderer. Hannah Arendt:

*"Being reduced to nothing anymore but a simple specimen of an animal species called Mankind; this is what happens to those who've lost all distinct political qualities, and who have become human beings and that alone... The loss of the Rights of Man takes place at the moment when a person becomes just a human being in general — without profession, citizenship, opinion, or any acts by which he identifies himself and specifies himself — and appears as differentiated only in a general way, representing no more than his own and absolutely unique individuality, which, in the absence of a common world where it might express itself and upon which it might act, loses all meaning." (Imperialism)*

Bloom's exile has a metaphysical status to it; that is, it is effective in all domains. And that metaphysical status expresses his *real* situation, in light of which his *legal* situation has no truth to it. The fact that he can be shot down like a dog by a stranger without the slightest justification, or — parallel to that and conversely — that he is capable of murdering "innocents" without the slightest remorse, is a reality that no juris-

"Bloom," rather, is the name of a certain *Stimmung* [mood], a fundamental tonality of being.

This *Stimmung* doesn't come from the subject, like a kind of fog clouding perception, or from the object, as a liquefied version of the Spirit of the World; rather it is the *basis upon which* the subject and the object, the self and the world, could exist as such in the classical age, i.e., as clearly distinct from one another.

Because it's "how" every being is the way he or she is, this tonality is not something unstable, fleeting, or simply subjective; rather it is precisely what gives *consistency* and *possibility* to each being. Bloom is the *Stimmung* in which and by which we understand each other at the present time, without which these words would be no more than a succession of meaningless phonemes.

Historically, Bloom is the name for an uncommon *Stimmung*: one that corresponds to the moment the subject retreats from the world and the world from the subject, the moment when the self and the real are suddenly suspended, and just might have been abolished. For that reason Bloom is the general *stimmung* where *nothing but Stimmungen are apparent*, where the primacy of the *stimmung* over all other realities manifests itself as such.

Since it always impregnates beforehand all the conceptual instruments by which PEOPLE might claim to understand it, the *Stimmung* cannot be understood, circumscribed, or analyzed "objectively," no matter how much one might be able to feel it. The best we can draw out of it is the Figure that corresponds to it, in the sense where a Figure is a *human power to configure worlds*. What we're aiming at with this "theory" is therefore indeed a *Stimmung*, but we're doing so by seizing upon a Figure.

Bloom also refers to the spectral, wandering, sovereignly vacant humanity that can no longer rise to any other content besides that of the *Stimmung* that it ex-ists in, to that twilight

being for which there is no more real, no more I, only Stim-  
mungs.

## Mundus Est Fabula [the world is a fiction]

Because Bloom is he who can no longer separate himself from the immediate context containing him, his gaze is that of a man *that does not identify*. Everything blurs under the Bloom effect and is lost in the inconsequential wavering of objective relationships where life is felt negatively, in indifference, impersonality, and the lack of quality.

Bloom lives inside of Bloom.

Spread out all around us is a petrified world, a world of *things* where we ourselves, with our “I,” our gestures, and even our feelings figure in as things. Nothing can belong to us as truly our own in such a landscape of death. We are more and more like exiles, never sure of understanding what’s happening all around.

In spite of this gigantic relinquishment, in spite of the inexplicable suspended-animation that now strikes everything that exists, the overall mechanism continues to *function* like it was nothing, processing our isolation.

In this perpetually renovated empire of ruins, there’s nowhere for us to take refuge, and we don’t even have the ability to desert it all by withdrawing into ourselves. We’ve been delivered up, without appeal, to a finiteness with no landmarks to orient us, totally exposed across the whole surface of our being.

Bloom is thus that man whom nothing can save from the triviality of the world. A reasonable mind might conclude: “Well, then, in fact, Bloom is alienated man.” But no, Bloom is man so completely mixed up with his own alienation that it would be absurd to try to separate him out from it.

ing that the men of our times all participate equally in the unappealable crime that our times really are. But it refuses to recognize this as a *metaphysical fact*: as the case of the gas-chamber operators in Auschwitz shows, the fear of responsibility is not only stronger than conscience, it is in certain circumstances even stronger than the fear of death.

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

## Homo Sacer [sacred/accursed man]

“One day or another the bombs will drop, and people will finally believe what they’d always refused to admit; that words have a metaphysical sense to them.”

Brice Parain, *The Trouble with Choice*

The possessed of nothingness *begin* by drawing the consequences from their Bloom condition. And thus they expose the dizzying vertigo of it: Bloom is *sacer*, in the sense of the word used by Giorgio Agamben; that is, a creature that has no rights, who cannot be judged or condemned by men, but who anyone may kill without being considered to have committed a crime. Bloom is *sacer* to the exact extent that he knows himself to be *possessed* by bare life, to the extent that, like a *Muselmann* in the concentration camps, he is the simple witness to his own becoming-inhuman.

Insignificance and anonymity, separation and foreignness — these are not the poetic circumstances that the melancholic penchant of certain subjectivities may tend to exaggerate them as: the scope of the existential situation they characterize — Bloom — is *total*, and it is exceedingly *political*.

## The Era of Pure Guilt

Men don't have the option of not fighting; the only choice they have is which side they're on. Neutrality has nothing neutral about it; it is indeed the bloodiest side there is to take.

Bloom, both when he's the one that shoots the bullets and when he's one that succumbs to them, is certainly innocent. After all, isn't it true that Bloom is but dependence itself on the central farce? Did he choose to live in this world, whose perpetuation is the result of an autonomous social totality that appears ever more extraterrestrial to him every day? How could he do otherwise, stray Lilliputian confronting the Leviathan of the commodity? All he can do is speak the language of the spectacular occupier, eat from the hand of Biopower, and participate in his own way in the production and reproduction of its horrors.

This is how Bloom would like to be able to be understood: as a foreigner, as something external to himself. But in this defense, he only tacitly admits that *he himself is that fraction of himself that sees to it that the rest of his being will remain alienated.*

It matters little that Bloom can't be held responsible for any of his acts: he remains nonetheless responsible for his own irresponsibility, which he is *at every instant* given the opportunity to declare himself against. Since he has consented, negatively at least, to being no more than the predicate of his own existence, he is an *objective* part of domination, and his innocence is itself pure guilt.

The man of total nihilism, the man of "what's the point?" who cries on the shoulder of the man of "what can I do about it?" is indeed quite mistaken to believe himself free of fault just because *he hasn't done anything* and because so many others are in the same situation he's in.

The Spectacle, in so regularly admitting that the murderer was "an ordinary man," a "student like any other," is suggest-

Empty angels, creatures without a creator, mediums without a message, we wander among the abysses. Our path, which could easily have come to an end yesterday or years back, has no reason and no necessity outside of that of its own contingency. It's a wandering path, one that carries us from the same to the same on the road of the Identical; and wherever we go we carry within ourselves the desert that we're the hermits in. And if some days we might swear that we are the "whole universe," like Agrippa de Nettesheim did, or more ingenuously that we are "all things, all men and all animals," like Cravan, it's just that all we see in everything is the Nothing which we ourselves so totally are.

But that Nothingness is the absolutely real, in the light of which everything that exists becomes somehow ghostly.

## ωζμη [fragrance]

Nothing's more impenetrable to Bloom than those *men of the Ancien Regime* who claim to participate fully and immediately in life and have such a firm feeling of their present incarnation, of their existence, and of its continuity. For us, wherever we look, we never find this solid, massive "I," this substance of our own that we are so generously given as soon as we claim to exist.

In the same way as all harmonious moral philosophy which might have given consistency to the illusion of an "authentic" self is now lacking, everything that could have made one believe in the unambiguousness of life or in the formal positivity of the world has been scattered as well. In truth, our "sense of what's real" never ends up as more than a limited modality of that "sense of the possible which is the faculty of thinking through all the things that might 'as well' be and give no more importance to everything that is than one gives to what is not." (Musil, *The Man without Qualities*). Under commodity occupa-

tion the most *concrete truth* about everything is the truth of its infinite replaceability.

All the situations that we find ourselves engaged in bear, in their equivalence to one another, the infinitely repeated stamp of an irrevocable “as if.” We collaborate in the maintenance of a “society” *as if* we were not part of it; we conceive of the world *as if* we didn’t ourselves occupy a specific situation within it; and we continue to grow old *as if* we had to always remain young. In a word: we live *as if* we were already dead.

And that’s certainly the most painful paradox of Bloom’s existence: he can no longer hear the voice of his living body, the speech of his physiology. And this at the very moment that PEOPLE want at every instant to make them mean something sexual.

Whether Bloom’s flesh is the body of a woman or of a man, or even a body with indiscernible form, it is always the prisoner of the non-sensual sexualization it’s riddled with. But this sexualization, which is omnipresent and at the same time *never really lived*, is but the source of a deaf and persistent suffering, like amputees feeling their phantom limbs. From this comes the essentially spectral character, the sinister aura of contemporary mass pornography: it is never more than the presence of an absence. In Bloom’s world — a world made fully semiotic — a phallus or a vagina are but symbols referring to something else, to a reference that can no longer be found in a reality that never stops fading away. Bloom’s flesh is sad and has no mystery to it.

It’s not sex that has to be re-invented: we’re already living among the ruins of sexuality, and our bodies themselves are but relics therein. Bloom cannot transform the gender roles that he has inherited *due to the shortcomings* of traditional societies, frozen as he is in an unstoppable pre-pubescent phase. Both male Blooms and female Blooms thus go through the same old tired dance, to the tune of the classic gender roles. But their

world. “*I’m no longer acting out of sentiment*,” said Alain Or-eiller while executing his mother. There’s something calmly suicidal in the affirmation of so omnilateral a non-participation, indifference, and refusal to suffer.

Often the Spectacle uses this as a pretext to start talking about “gratuitous” acts — a generic qualifier with which it hides the purposes it doesn’t *want* to understand, all the while making use of them as a fantastic opportunity to reinject some life into one or the other of bourgeois utilitarianism’s favorite false paradoxes — as long as those acts aren’t lacking in hatred or reason. To prove this all one needs to do is watch the five video tapes that the “monsters of Littleton” filmed in anticipation of their operation. Their program appears in them quite clearly: “*We’re going to set off a revolution, a revolution of the dispossessed.*”

Here hatred itself is undifferentiated, free of all personality. Death enters into the universal in the same way as it emerges from the universal, and it has no anger about it.

This isn’t about giving some revolutionary significance to such acts, and it’s hardly even about treating them as exemplary. It’s about understanding what they express *the doom of*, and grasping onto them in order to plumb the depths of Bloom. And whoever follows this path to the end will see that Bloom is NOTHING, but that this NOTHING is a nothing that is sovereign, an emptiness with a pure potential.

The contradiction between Bloom’s isolation, apathy, powerlessness, and insensitivity on the one hand and on the other his dry and brutal need for sovereignty can only bring about more of these acts, absurd and murderous as they may be, yet still necessary and true. It’s all about knowing how to deal with them in the right terms in the future: like [in Mallarmé’s] *Igitur*, for instance: “*One of the acts of the universe has been committed there. Nothing else but the breath remained, the end of speech and gesture united — blow out the candle of being, by which everything has existed. Proof.*”

He who isn't just playing around with life has a need for acts, for gestures, so that his life can become more real to him than a simple game which can be oriented in any given direction. In the world of the commodity, which is the world of generalized reversibility, where all things merge and transform into one another, where everything is merely ambiguous, transitional, ephemeral, and blended together, only acts *cut through it all*. In the splendor of their necessary brutality, they carve an unsolvable "after" into what had been "before," which PEOPLE will regretfully have to recognize as *definitive*.

A gesture/an act is an *event*. It cuts open a wound in the chaos of the world, and installs at the bottom of that wound its shards of unambiguity/univocity. It is a matter of establishing so profoundly in their difference things that have been judged as different that what separated them out from each other can never have any possibility of being erased. If there's anything in Bloom that thwarts domination, it is the fact that even dispossessed of everything, even in all his nudity, man still has an uncontrollable metaphysical power of repudiation: the power to kill others and to kill himself. Death, every time it intervenes, rips a disgraceful hole in the biopolitical tissue. Total nihilism/nihilism fulfilled, which has really fulfilled nothing but the dissolution of all otherness in a limitless circulatory immanence, always meets its defeat right there: upon contact with death, life suddenly ceases to be taken for granted. The *duty to make decisions* which sanctions all properly human existence has always been in part tied to the approach to that abyss.

On the eve of the day in March 1998 when he massacred four Bloom-students and a Bloom-professor, little Mitchell Johnson declared to his incredulous schoolmates: "*Tomorrow I will decide who will live and who will die.*" This is as far from the Erostratus-ism of Pierre Riviere as it is from fascist hysteria. Nothing is more striking in the reports on the carnage brought about by Kipland Kinkel or Alain Oreiller than their state of cold self-control and total vertical detachment relative to the

gestures fall apart. Their dance is awkward. They stumble. And it's painful to watch.

A thing among things, Bloom keeps himself outside of it all with an abandonment identical to that of his world. He's alone in every kind of company, and naked in all circumstances. That's where he rests, in extenuated self-ignorance, away from his desires and the world, where life rolls the rosary-beads of his absence day after day. All lived content is indifferently interchangeable for him, as he passes through it in a kind of existential tourism.

We've unlearned joy like we've unlearned suffering; we've become emotional illiterates; we only perceive diffracted echoes of feelings. Everything's worn out, in our late-incoming eyes; even unhappiness. And that, in sum, is perhaps the real disaster: that nowhere do we find support, doubt, or certainty.

*Everything I do and think is but a Specimen of my possibilities. Man is more general than his life and acts. More possibilities than I could ever imagine fit perfectly into the expected. Mr. Teste says: My possibilities never abandon me.*

Valéry, *Monsieur Teste* [Mr. Head]

For a being who feels attached to life no more than by so tenuous a bond, freedom has such an incomplete and yet final meaning that it can no longer be taken away from him: the freedom to carry into his becoming a certain sense of the theatrical uselessness of everything, a terminal manner of spectatorship on the world, even of being a spectator of himself. In the eternal Sunday of his existence, Bloom's interests thus remain forever emptied of any object, and that's why Bloom is himself *the man without interest*. Here, *disinterestedness*, in the sense where we don't manage to have any importance in our own eyes, but also in the sense where the bourgeois category

of interest can no longer strictly account for any of our acts, is no longer an expression of individual idealism, but a mass phenomenon.

*Assuredly, man is something that's been transcended.*

*All those that loved their virtues have perished — at the hand of their virtues.*

## “Everyone is more foreign to himself than to anyone else.”

Bloom's fundamental experience is that of his own transcendence of himself, but this experience, in spite of how nice it sounds, is above all one of impotence, an experience of absolute suffering.

Whatever high esteem we'd like to hold ourselves in, we *are not* subjects, finished products, autarchic and sovereign even in our allegiances.

We evolve in a space that is entirely sectioned off and policed; a space *occupied*, on the one hand, by the Spectacle, and on the other, by Biopower. And what's terrible about this grid-ding, this occupation, is that the submission it demands of us is nothing that we could rebel against with some definitive break-away gesture, but something that we can only *deal with strategically*.

The regime of power that we live under in no way resembles that which could have run its course under administrative monarchy, that expired concept which up until recently, that is, even within biopolitical democracies, remained the only enemy *recognized* by revolutionary movements: a simple restriction mechanism, a purely repressive mechanism of coercion.

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

inclination, like many other things, remained among the surrealists a mere theory without practice, just like its contemporary practice is most often without theory).

These individual eruptions, which are doomed to proliferate among those who have still not fallen into the deep sleep of cybernetics, are indeed desperate calls for desertion and fraternity. The freedom that they affirm is not that of a particular man assigning himself a particular end, but the freedom of each, the freedom of the human race itself: a single man is enough to declare that freedom has still not disappeared.

The Spectacle cannot metabolize characteristics bearing so many poisons. It can report them, but it can never strip them entirely of the unexplainable, the inexpressible, and the terror at their core. These are the *Noble and Generous Acts* of our times, a world-weary form of propaganda by the deed, whose ideological mutism only increases its disturbing and somberly metaphysical character.

## Paradoxes of Sovereignty

*“I am NOTHING”: this parody of an affirmation is the final word of sovereign subjectivity, liberated from the influence that it would like to — or that it must — have on things... Because I know that I am, at bottom, this subjective, content-free existence.*

Georges Bataille, *Sovereignty*

In the Spectacle, power is everywhere; that is, *all* relations are in the final analysis relations of domination. And because of this no one is sovereign in the Spectacle. It is an objective world where everyone must first subjugate themselves in order to subjugate others in turn.

To live in conformance with man's fundamental aspiration to sovereignty is impossible in the Spectacle except in one single instant: the instant of the *act*.



## The Possessed of Nothingness

*"I'm sorry. Like Shakespeare says, Good wombs hath borne bad sons."*

Eric Harris, *Littleton*, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1999

There aren't many ways out from under the universal crush. We extend our arms but they don't find anything to touch. The world's been distanced from our grasp; PEOPLE put it outside our range. Very few Blooms manage to resist the disproportionate enormity of that pressure.

The omnipresence of the commodity's occupation troops and the rigor of their 'state of emergency' condemn most projects of freedom to a short existence. And so, everywhere that order appears to have firmly set in, negativity prefers to turn against itself, as illness, suffering, or frenzied servitude. There are some invaluable cases, however, where isolated beings take the initiative, without hope or strategy, to open a breach in the well-regulated, smooth course of disaster.

In them, Bloom violently liberates himself from the *patience* that PEOPLE would like to make him languish in forever. And since the only instinct that can tame such a howling presence of nothingness is that of destruction, the taste for the Totally Different takes on the appearance of crime and is experienced in a passionate indifference where its author manages to hold steady when confronted with it.

This manifests itself in the most *spectacular* way in the growing number of Blooms, big and small, who, for lack of anything better, lust after the charm of the simplest surrealist act (recall that "the simplest surrealist act consists in going out into the street, revolvers in hand, and firing at random, as much as possible, into the crowd. Whoever has not at least once had the urge to finish off in this way the wretched little system of degradation and cretinization in force belongs in that crowd himself, with his gut at bullet height." (Breton). Recall as well that this

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

The Spectacle is the kind of Power that wants you to talk, that wants you to *be someone*.

Biopower is benevolent power, full of a pastor's concern for his flock; the kind of Power that wants its subjects to be safe, that *wants you to live*. Caught in the vise of a kind of control that is simultaneously totalizing and individualizing, walled into a double constraint that annihilates us by the same stroke with which it makes us exist, the majority of us take up a kind of politics of disappearance: feigning an inner death and keeping our silence, like captives before the Grand Inquisitor. By subtracting all positivity and subtracting *itself* from all positivity, these specters steal from a productive power the very thing it might have exerted itself upon. Their desire to not live is all that they have the strength to counterpose to a power that intends to *make them live*. In so doing, they remain in Bloom, and often end up buried there.

So this is what Bloom means: that we don't belong to ourselves, that *this* world isn't *our* world. That it's not just that it confronts us in its totality, but that even in the most proximate details it is foreign to us. This foreignness would be quite enjoyable if it could imply an exteriority of principles between it and us. Far from it. Our foreignness to the world consists in the fact that the stranger, the foreigner, is *in us*, in the fact that in the world of the authoritarian commodity, we regularly become strangers to ourselves. The circle of situations where we're forced to watch ourselves act, to contemplate the action of a "me" in which we don't recognize ourselves, now closes up on and besieges us, even in what bourgeois society still calls our "intimacy." The Other *possesses* us; it is this dissociated body, a simple peripheral artifact in the hands of Biopower; it is our raw desire to survive in the intolerable network of miniscule subjugations, granulated pressures that fetter us to the quick;

it is the ensemble of self-interested contrivances, humiliations, pettiness; the ensemble of *tactics* that we *must* deploy. It is the whole objective machine that we sacrifice to inside ourselves.

#### THE OTHER IS THE *ECONOMY* IN US.

Bloom also means that each person knows for himself that he *is not* himself. Even if momentarily, faced with such and such a person — and most frequently in anonymous interactions — we might get an impression to the contrary, we still retain at bottom that feeling that this is an inauthentic existence, an artificial life. The internal presence of the Other takes shape on every level of our consciousness: it's a slight and constant loss of being, a progressive drying-out, a little death doled out continually. In spite of this, we persist in assuming the external hypothesis of our identity with ourselves; we *play* the subject. A certain shame accompanies this shredding process and evolves with it. So we try evasion; we project ourselves ever more violently to the outside, towards wherever is as far away as possible from this terrifying internal tension. We feel the need to let nothing about it appear, to glue ourselves to our social "identity," to remain foreign to our foreignness: TO KEEP AN AIR OF COMPOSURE before the field of ruins.

*This lie is in our every gesture.*

That's the essential thing.

It's no longer time to make literature out of the various combinations of disaster.

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

### Ens Realissimum [the most real being]

*The Ptolemean*, when looking inside of himself, only found "two phenomena: sociology and emptiness." And we must begin there: not from what we think we are — sociology — but

To the extent that the desolate forms we are intended to be contained within tighten their tyranny, some strikingly curious manifestations come about.

Runners-amok, for instance, adapt to existing in the very heart of the most advanced societies, in unexpected forms, and take on new significance.

In the territories administered by autonomous Publicity, such disintegration phenomena are rare things that expose the true state of the world nakedly, *the pure scandal of things*.

And at the same time as they reveal the lines of force within the reign of apathy, they show the dimensions of the possibilities we're living in. That's why — even in their very distance — they are so familiar to us.

The traces of blood that they leave behind in their trail mark the last steps taken by a man who made the mistake of wanting to escape *alone* from the grey terror in which he had been detained at such high cost. Our tendency to conceive of that is a measure of what life is left in us.

The living are those who understand *for themselves* that at the moment when fear and submission attain, in Bloom, to their ultimate figure as a fear and submission that is *absolute* because it has no object, the liberation from *that* fear and *that* submission means an equally absolute liberation from *all* fear and *all* submission. Once he who had indistinctly feared everything passes such a point, he can *never fear anything again*. There is, beyond the most far-flung wastelands of alienation, a zone of total clear and calm where man becomes incapable of feeling any *interest* in his *own* life, nor even the slightest hint of attachment to his place in the world.

All freedom, present or future, which departs in some way or other from that detachment, from that serene calm/ataraxy, can hardly do any more than expound the principles of a more *modern* servitude.

knows to be unknown, singularized as an “anybody,” who has no name, no face, no epic history of his own, who resembles nothing, but is present under his camouflage everywhere in the order of possibilities — domination’s disquiet becomes more and more clearly paranoid. The dedication it has now undertaken to carrying out its decimation, even in its own ranks and against all odds, appears to the detached viewer as rather a comedic spectacle.

There’s something *objectively terrifying* about the sad forty-year-old who, up to the moment of the outbreak of total carnage, had been the most normal, the flattest, the most insignificant of average men. No one had ever heard him declare his hatred for the family, work, or his petty-bourgeois suburb, up until that fine morning when he wakes up, takes a shower, and eats his breakfast, with his wife, daughter and son still sleeping, and then loads his hunting rifle and very discreetly blows all their brains out. Confronted by his judges, or even by torture, Bloom will remain silent about the motives of his crime. Partly because sovereignty doesn’t need to give reasons, but also because he senses that the worst atrocity he could subject this “society” to would be to leave his act unexplained.

And thus has Bloom managed to insinuate into all minds the poisonous certainty that in each and every man there is a sleeping enemy of civilization. Quite apparently he has no other purpose than to devastate this world — indeed, it’s his destiny, even — but he’ll never say so. Because his strategy is to produce disaster, and around himself to produce *silence*.

**“Because what crime and madness objectivize is the absence of a transcendental homeland.”**

Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*

from what we intimately feel ourselves to *lack*, because that’s the most real thing, the *ens realissimum*. Bloom doesn’t mean that we’re failed subjects compared to the classical subject and its superb sufficiency; rather it *reveals* that there is a principle of incompleteness at the very basis of human existence, a radical insufficiency. What we are is precisely *this failure*, which *can*, if it so desires, choose to put on the *mask* of subjecthood.

What’s certain is that we’re nothing, nothing but the nothingness around which spins the movement of our ideas, our experiences, our miseries, and our feelings. What’s certain is that we are the empty axis of this pit without walls, an axis that does not exist in and of itself, but only because every circle has its center. But this hopeless deficiency itself can be understood as an ultimate positivity, which is expressed as follows:

I AM THE INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN WHAT I  
AM

AND WHAT I AM NOT.

Bloom is indeed such an intermediary, but he’s a *passive* one; he’s the *witness* to his own desubjectivation, to his endless becoming-otherwise. He conceals within him a primordial differentiation: knowing that we are not what we are, and that none of our particular attributes can really exhaust our potential.

Incompleteness is the mode of being of everything that remains in contact with potential; the form of existence of everything devoted to *becoming*.

## The Most Disturbing Guest

Because he is the emptiness in all substantial determinations, Bloom is indeed the most disturbing guest within man, the one who goes from being a simple invitee to becoming the master

of the house. Ever since he took up residence inside us, we've found ourselves saddled with a purely sartorial being. Whatever we undertake to try to buy back some substantiality, it ends up only ever being just something contingent and inessential relative to our selves. Bloom is thus the name of a new, ageless nudity, the properly human nudity that disappears under every attribute and nonetheless bears it, which precedes all form and renders it possible.

*Bloom is masked Nothingness.* That's why it would be absurd to celebrate his appearance in history as the birth of a particular human type: that there are such men without qualities *is not* a certain quality of mankind; but on the contrary this is *mankind as such, as mankind*; the final realization of a generic human essence which is precisely a deprivation of essence, pure exposedness, pure availability: *larva*.

The bourgeois republic can flatter itself that it was the first historical expression of any magnitude of this controlled ecstasy, and in the end the model for it. In it, in an unprecedented manner, the existence of man as a singular being finds itself *formally* separate from man's existence as a member of the community. Thus, in the bourgeois republic, where man is an acknowledged, veritable subject, he is abstracted from all qualities specific to him, and is a figure with no reality to it, a "citizen"; and where in his own eyes, as in the eyes of others, he passes for a real subject — in his everyday existence — he is a figure with no truth, an "individual." The classical era has in a way established the principles whose application has made man what we know him to be: the aggregation of a double nothingness: that of a "consumer," that *untouchable*, and that of a "citizen," that pathetic abstraction of impotence.

But the more the Spectacle and Biopower perfect each other, the more autonomy is obtained by appearances and the basic conditions of our existence, the more their world detaches from men and becomes foreign to them; and the more Bloom draws back into himself, deepening and recognizing his inte-

"feeling of insecurity" had not been *ontologically* assigned to Bloom!

A socialist cop, high up in the bureaucracy of some Japanese teachers' union, expresses in the following passage his disturbance about the little Blooms under him: "*The phenomenon is all the more concerning because the authors of these violent acts have often always been such 'good kids.' We used to get problem children; but today the kids don't revolt, they just ditch out of school. And if we punish them, their reaction is totally disproportionate: they just explode.*" (Le Monde, Friday April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1998). An infernal dialectic is at work here, one that will tend to make such "explosions" become ever more frequent, fortuitous, and ferocious as the massive and systematic character of the control necessary for their prevention is ever more emphasized. It is a rarely disputed fact: we know from experience that the violence of explosions grows in proportion to excessive confinement.

In Bloom, domination, which thought it prudent to impose the economy as a *morality* so that commerce could make men soft, predictable, and inoffensive — we've seen a number of centuries' worth of this now — sees its project flipping over into its opposite: to wit, it appears that "homo economicus," in his perfection, is also what makes the economy outdated; and he makes it outdated as that which, having deprived him of all substance, has made him *perfectly unpredictable*.

The man without content, has, in the final analysis, the hardest time of anyone trying to contain himself.

## The Unavowable Enemy

*In which every Bloom, as a Bloom, is an agent of the Imaginary Party.*

Faced with this unknown enemy — in the sense that we can speak of an Unknown Soldier, that is, a soldier that everyone

ment war against Bloom's opacity, as well as the deferred character of the existence that arises from it.

As a first response to this situation we see appearing among Blooms not only a certain taste for anonymity, but at the same time a certain defiance towards visibility, a hatred for *things*. There's a metaphysical hostility coming back again, a hostility towards that which exists, and it threatens to burst at every moment and in every circumstance.

At the origin of this instability is a disorder, a disorder that comes from unused strength, from a negativity that can't eternally remain unemployed, on pain of *physically* destroying those experiencing that negativity.

Most often, that negativity remains silent, though as a result of its being so bottled up it constantly manifests itself in a hysterical formalization of all human relationships. But here already we are looking at the critical zone of totally disproportionate backlash against repression. An ever more compact mass of crimes, of *strange acts* comprising a "violence" and destruction "with no apparent motive," besieges the everyday life of biopolitical democracies — in general, the Spectacle calls "violence" everything that it intends to handle by force, everything that it would like to be able to wield all its arbitrary power against; and this category only has any validity within the commodity mode of disclosure, which itself has no validity, and which always hypostatizes the means relative to the ends, which here is all activity itself, even to the detriment of its immanent significance.

Incapable of preventing them and even more incapable of understanding them, commodity domination claims to be committed to not allowing any such attacks on the social control of behavior. So it broadcasts its habitual saber-rattling about video-surveillance and "zero tolerance," the repression of "uncivil behaviors" and of the "feeling of insecurity," as if the surveillers themselves didn't need to be surveilled, as if the

rior sovereignty relative to objectivity. And as he detaches ever more painlessly from his social decisions and from his "identity," he gets stronger as a pure force of negation, beyond all effectiveness.

The condition of *exile* in the unrepresentable that men and their common world are in coincides with the situation of *existential clandestinity* which befalls them in the Spectacle. That condition is a manifestation of the absolute singularity of each social atom as the absolutely anonymous, ordinary social atom, and its pure differentiation as pure nothingness.

It is assuredly true that, as the Spectacle never tires of repeating, Bloom is *positively nothing*. But as to what this "nothing" means, interpretations vary.

— Having come to this point, all sane minds would conclude from all this that it would be constitutionally impossible to come up with any kind of a "Theory of Bloom" and would leave this path, as they should. The cleverest will probably cough up some fallacious reasoning like "Bloom is nothing; there's nothing to be said about nothing, and therefore there is nothing to be said about Bloom, QED" and will then surely regret having wasted their time on the present writing to the neglect of their fascinating "scientific study of the French intellectual world." For those of you who in spite of the obvious absurdity of our topic of discussion here continue to read on, you should always keep in mind the necessarily vacillating character of all discourse regarding Bloom. Really dealing with the human positivity of pure nothingness can only mean exposing the most perfect lack of qualities as itself being a quality, and exposing the most radical insubstantiality as substance, even at the risk of ending up giving a face to something that's invisible. Such a discourse, if it does not wish to betray its object, must let its object emerge only so as to let it disappear once more the very next instant, *and so on ad infinitum*. —

## A Small Chronicle of Disaster

*The I has a content that distinguishes it from itself, because it is either pure negativity or a splitting movement; it is consciousness. This content, in its differentiation, is also the I, because it is the movement of self-suppression or that same pure negativity which is I.*

— Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*

Although Bloom is the fundamental possibility that man never ceases to *contain*, the *real* possibility of possibility, and has for that reason been described, felt out, and practiced many times over the centuries — both by the Gnostics in the first centuries of our era and by the heretics of the end of the Middle Ages (the brethren of the Free Spirit, the kabbalists, or the Rhenan mystics), by Buddhists as much as by Coquillards [large bandit groups of 1450s France] — Bloom nevertheless only appears as the dominant figure within the historical process at the moment when metaphysics reaches its completion, that is, in the Spectacle.

The generation that perceived the face of the Gorgon, squinting through the steely storm — the generation of expressionism, futurism, constructivism, Dada, surrealism — was the first to bear this terrible secret all together at once. There it experienced *some thing* whose radicalness and white-hot calcination could not find any *suitable* expression even in all the vertigo of the 1920s. The whole history of the century can be interpreted on that basis as a succession of *reactions* against what was perceived at that point and *in which* we still remain. Because since 1914 it's not that "civilizations" have come to know that "they are mortal," as PEOPLE have said: it is *commodity civilization*, as it has been spread from the West to the rest of the world, that *knows that it is moribund*.

Parallel to this, the processes of subjectivation and desubjectivation become more and more violent and their control more and more measured to the millimeter. And since this control can't operate other than in a strict economy of time, in a synchrony, Bloom is henceforth regularly exhorted to be "proud" of this or that, proud of being homo or techno, second-generation north African, black, or even a gang-member. No matter what, Bloom absolutely must *be something*, anything, rather than nothing.

## Mene, Tekel, Peres.

[your kingdom's days are numbered;  
it has been weighed and found wanting;  
and it is divided.]

Adorno speculated, in his work *Prisms*, that "*those men that no longer exist except through others, being the absolute zöon politicon, may certainly lose their identity, but they would at the same time escape their grip on self-preservation, which ensures the coherence of the 'best of worlds,' as well as that of the old world. Total interchangeability would destroy the substance of domination and show some promise for freedom.*"

Meanwhile, the Spectacle has had all the time in the world to test out the truth of such conjectures, but has at the same time victoriously applied itself to wrecking the fulfillment of that incongruous promise of freedom. Naturally, that wouldn't work out too well without taking a tougher stance, and the commodity world thus had to become ever more implacable in the exercise of its dictatorship.

From "crises" to "recoveries," from "recoveries" to depressions, life in the Spectacle has since 1914 never ceased to become ever more stifling. A look of terror hangs on all gazes, even in would-be popular celebrations. The planetary watchword of "transparency" explains the present context of perma-

the heavy labor that the perpetuation of this total separation among people requires.

The impersonal 'THEY' decides in advance on what is comprehensible, and what must be rejected for its incomprehensibility. Bloom and his ecstasy are incomprehensible; they must be rejected. His poverty is also reputed to be a pretty shady thing in alienated Publicity — it is quite true that capitalism has done all it can to make poverty identical to misery at its heart, the property of a given thing always being essentially *the right to deprive others of its use*. PEOPLE are even ready, in order to keep Bloom *shameful* of his poverty, to allow Bloom to subjectivize himself in this shame. The executive failure will thus, in the panoply of fashionable writers, find a lot to identify with and be reassured by: yes, "abject man" is indeed on its way towards becoming an honorable form of life. Otherwise, he may turn towards Buddhism, that nauseating, sordid, corny spirituality for oppressed wage workers, which sees as already quite the excessive ambition the idea that it might teach its fascinated and stupid faithful flock the art of wading in their own nullity. It is of absolutely primary importance from domination's perspective that we never recognize ourselves as having all the traits of Bloom, that we appear to ourselves and each other as opaque, terrifying objects. At all costs Bloom must be given ideas, desires, and a subjectivity by the impersonal force of PEOPLE. THEY give him everything he needs so that he can remain that mute man in whose mouth the Spectacle puts the words it wants to hear. THEY aren't even averse to wielding Bloom against Bloom, turning his own impersonality against him, precisely by personifying him, in "society," "the people," or even "the average joe."

All this converges in a social sum that always puts an ever more exorbitant price on "being yourself," that is, it all converges in a strict assignment to a residence within one of the identities recognized by autonomized Publicity.

In reality it's been more than a century — basically since our exposure to the fall-out plume of symbolist radiation — that Mr. Bloom has been the near-exclusive "hero" of all literature, from Jarry's character Mr. Sengle to Michaux's Mr. Plume, from Pessoa himself to the *Man without Qualities*, from *Bartleby* to Kafka, of course forgetting Camus' *The Stranger* and the New Novel, which we'll leave to the undergrads. Even though he was most precociously approached by the young Lukacs, it was only in 1927, with the treatise *Being and Time*, that Bloom, dressed in the transparent rags of *Dasein*, became the central non-subject of philosophy — it's legitimate, one way or another, to see vulgar French existentialism, which had an impact that came much later and went much deeper than anyone could have suspected by looking at how short a time it was in vogue, as *the first thinking made exclusively for the use of Blooms*.

PEOPLE have been able to ignore for a long time now the massive evidence of Bloom in all these manifestations, writing it off as *simply a literary* phenomenon, as a *purely philosophical* exaggeration. For the rest, PEOPLE still train themselves to do so: it relaxes the atmosphere. It's just that, in passing, PEOPLE would like to forget what THEY are *politically* the contemporaries of, to forget that Bloom first appeared in literature at the very moment when literature as an institution was disrupted, and in philosophy at the moment when it began to crumble *as a system of truth*.

In other words, when Valery wrote: "*I felt, with a bitter and bizarre pleasure, the simplicity of our statistical condition. The quantity of individuals absorbed all my singularity, and I became indistinct and indiscernible,*"

he was not adding another supplementary object to the venerable contemplation of Aesthetics: he was expressing *politically* what it means to be just one more body in the aggregate of a *population* managed by Biopower.

## Uprooting

Every new stage in the development of commodity society requires the destruction of a certain form of immediacy, the lucrative separation of what had been one and united into a *relationship*. It is this split that the commodity then takes over, mediates, and extracts profit from, clarifying a little more each day the utopia of a world where every person will be, in all things, exposed on the one market. Marx admirably described the first phases of this process, though only from a labor bureaucrat's perspective, the perspective of Economy: "*The dissolution of all products and all activities into exchange value*," he wrote in *Grundrisse*, "*presupposes the decomposition of all frozen (historical) relationships of personal dependence within production, as well as the universal subjugation of producers to one another. ... The universal dependence of individuals indifferent to each other constitutes their social bond. And this social bond is expressed in exchange value.*"

It would be perfectly absurd to consider the persistent devastation of all historical attachments and of all organic communities as a short-term defect in commodity society, one that it would only take the good will of men working for reform to deal with. The uprooting of all things, the separation into sterile fragments of each and every living totality and the autonomization of those fragments within the circuits of value are precisely the essence of the commodity, the alpha and omega of its movement. The highly contagious nature of this abstract logic takes on the form of a real "uprooting sickness" among men, which makes the uprooted ones throw themselves into an activity that always tends to uproot those who are still not uprooted or are so only partly, often by the most violent of methods; *whoever has been uprooted will uproot others*. Our era has the dubious prestige of having brought to its apex the proliferating and multitudinous feverishness of this "destructive character."

come to *want* what he is and reappropriate his inappropriateness.

This "society," that is, the set of situations that it authorizes, fears nothing more than Bloom, that "condemned man that has no business, no feelings, no attachments, no property, and not even a name of his own." (Nechayev). It must be considered, even in the most miserable of its details, as a formidable apparatus set up with the exclusive purpose of eternalizing the Bloom Condition, which is a condition of *suffering*. In principle, entertainment is no more than the *politics* devoted to such ends; eternalizing Bloom's condition starts by distracting him from it. Thence, as if in a cascade, come certain absolute necessities — the necessity of containing all manifestations of the general suffering, which presupposes an ever more absolute control over appearances, and the necessity of painting pretty makeup on the all-too-visible effects of that suffering, to which the totally disproportionate inflation of Biopower is the response. Because at the confused point things have gotten to now, the *body* represents, on a generic scale, the last performer of the irreducibility of human beings to total alienation. It's through the body's illnesses and dysfunction, and *only* through them, that the demand for self-knowledge remains an immediate reality for each person. This "society" would never have declared such an all-out war on Bloom's suffering if it didn't constitute in itself and in all its aspects an intolerable attack on the empire of positivity; if it didn't go hand in hand with an immediate revocation of all the illusions of participation in its flowery immanence.

Maintaining in everyday life the use of representations and categories that long ago became inoperative; periodically imposing the most ephemeral but renovated versions of the most gappy asses' bridges of bourgeois morality; maintaining, beyond the intense obviousness of their falsehood and expiration, the sad illusions of "modernity"; such are just a few chapters in



carries within his deceptive integrity, in an atavistic manner, the repression of communication, or the need for its artificiality. The ecstatic opening of mankind, and specifically of Bloom, that I that is a THEY, that THEY that is a I, is the very thing that the fiction of the individual was invented to counter.

Bloom does not experience a particular finiteness or a specific separation; he experiences an ontological finiteness and separation common to all men. Furthermore, Bloom is only alone *in appearances*, because he is not alone in his being alone; all men have that solitude *in common*. He lives like a foreigner in his own country; non-existent and on the margins of everything — but all Blooms inhabit *together* their fatherland: Exile. All Blooms belong indistinguishably to one and the same world, which is the world of forgetting — forgetting the world. And so, the Common is alienated, but only *in appearances*, because it is even more alienated *as the Common*; the alienation of the Common only refers to the fact that what is common to them *appears* to men as something particular, something of their own, something private.

And this Common, issued from the alienation of the Common and formed by it, is none other than the veritable and unique Common among mankind, its primordial alienation: finiteness, solitude, exposedness. Here the most intimate coincides with the most general, and the most “private” is the most shared.

#### Did You See Yourself When You Were Drunk?

*“They say he’s dead since he has no taste for earthly things.”*

Meister Eckhart

As PEOPLE can easily see, all this sketches out a *catastrophic* possibility for commodity domination, the realization of which it must ward off by all means: the possibility that Bloom might

## Somewhere Out of the World

“Be like passers-by!”

— *Gospel of Thomas*

Bloom appears inseparably as the product and the cause of the liquidation of all substantial *ethos* as a result of the eruption of the commodity into all human relationships. He himself is thus *the man without substantiality*, the man who has *really* become abstract, because he’s been effectively cut off from all milieus, dispossessed of all belonging, and then thrown out to wander. We have come to know him as such, as that undifferentiated being “that does not feel at home anywhere,” as that monad who comes from no community at all in a world “that only gives birth to atoms” (Hegel). Naturally, to admit the universality of the pariah status, of *our* pariah status, would mean admitting too many comfortable lies, both for those who claim to be part of this “society” and for those who integrate themselves into it while claiming to criticize it. The famous doctrine of the “new-middle-classes” or alternatively of the “vast-middle-class” has for the past half-century corresponded to the denial of our bloomitude, its total perversion. PEOPLE would thus like to try to reapproach the *total dissolution of all social classes* in terms of social class. Because Bloom is not only today’s neo-bourgeois, who has so pathetically failed the confidence of his bourgeoisie; he is also today’s proletarian, who now no longer even has the slightest vestiges of a proletariat behind him. At the extreme limit, he is the planetary petty-bourgeoisie, the orphan of a class that never even existed.

In fact, in the same way as the individual resulted from the decomposition of the community, Bloom results from the decomposition of the individual, or, to put it plainly, that of the *fiction* of the individual — the bourgeois individual has only ever existed on the freeways, and there are still accidents there. But we would be mistaken to see the *human radicalness* that

Bloom sketches out by seeing him merely in light of the traditional concept of the “uprooted” person. The suffering that all true attachments/commitments now expose one to has taken on such excessive proportions that no one can even allow themselves to feel any *nostalgia* for their origins. In order to survive it’s been necessary to kill that off too. And so Bloom is, rather, the *man without roots*, the man who gets the feeling that he’s at home in his exile, who has laid down his roots in the absence of a place, and for whom the idea of uprooting doesn’t evoke any kind of banishment, but on the contrary an ordinary situation. It’s not the world that he’s lost, it’s his *taste for the world* that he’s had to leave behind.

*A totally new kind of poverty has swooped down upon men with the colossal development of technology... What good is all our cultural heritage now if no experience ties us to it? The last century’s horrible mish-mash of styles and visions of the world showed only too clearly where hypocrisy or abuse in such matters gets us in order for us not to consider it honorable to own up to our misery. So, then, let us confess it: this poverty of experience is not just the poverty of private experiences, but a poverty of human experiences. So is it a new kind of barbarism? In effect. And we declare it to be such in order to introduce a new concept, a positive concept of barbarism. Because where does a poverty of experience lead the savage barbarian? It brings him to begin at the beginning, to start over from the start, to pull himself out of it with the little he has, to build with the little he has, and in so doing to look neither to his right nor to his left... We have become poor. We have sacrificed the heritage of humanity, bit by bit, and often we have pawned it off for a hundredth of its value in order to receive in return the petty coin*

*whereas for the sleepers each turns away from it towards their own.”*

Heraclitus

*Tiqqun* goes to the root of things. It is still only crossing through purgatory. It carries out its work methodically. *Tiqqun* is the only possible outlook for revolution. Not the revolution that *must be waited for*, much less the revolution that *we can prepare*: but the revolution that *is taking place* according to its own invisible pulsations, in a temporality operating internally within history.

*Tiqqun* is not a determinable point in the future, with a validity period more or less short, even if it is also that, but rather it is the “real movement that abolishes the existing state of things.”

*Tiqqun is always already there*; that is, it is but the *manifestation process of what exists*, which also entails the *annulment* of that which does not exist.

The fragile positivity of this world has to do precisely with the fact that it is nothing, nothing but the *suspension of Tiqqun*. This epochal suspension can now be felt everywhere. And there really isn’t anything else that can truly be felt at all anymore.

Bloom is a part of *Tiqqun*. Precisely because he is the man of full-fledged nihilism, his fate is either to make his escape from nihilism or perish. The intuition of the proletariat, for Marx, aims at that, but its trajectory ends up warped before it reaches its target. So we read, in *The German Ideology*: “*The productive forces are confronted by the great mass of individuals, from whom these forces have been torn, and who, all the real substance of their lives having been frustrated, have become abstract beings, but precisely for that reason are able to establish relationships with one another as individuals.*”

But it is precisely to the extent that *he is not* an individual that Bloom establishes relations with his peers. The individual

always-similar, we stagnate just as much in jail as we do at Club Med: life is everywhere identically absent.

That's why it's so important to domination for prisons to become places of prolonged torture, and for that to be well known by everyone.

But it is the economy itself, and with it all notions of utility, credit, or instrumental rationality, that Bloom has above all made a thing of the past. That's the reason for the well planned and public constitution of a *lumpen-proletariat* in all the nations where late capitalism reigns: the lumpens are there to dissuade Bloom from abandoning his essential detachment by the abrupt but frightening threat of hunger. Because from the economic point of view, this "non-practical man" (Musil) is a disastrously clumsy producer, and a totally irresponsible consumer. Even his egoism itself is in decline: it is an *egoism without ego*.

If Bloom hasn't failed to devastate classical politics in its very principles, it's in part only by default (there can be no more imaginable establishment of equivalence between everything within the universal than there can be senatorial elections among rats — each rat is an equal and inalienable representative of his species, *primus inter pares* [first among equals]) but also in part by excess, because Bloom moves spontaneously within the un-representable, which is Bloomness itself.

So; what can we think, then, of the troubles that this ungrateful son causes the Spectacle, from under which all characters and all roles slip out with a little murmur saying "I would prefer not to?"

## Tiqqun

*"For the awakened ones, there is a world that is one and common to all,*

*of "what exists" ... Humanity is preparing itself to survive culture if need be. And the essential thing is that it's doing so while laughing about it. It is highly possible that here or there such laughter might have a really barbaric sound to it. That's great. So couldn't individuals thus give up, some time or another, a little bit of their humanity to the masses, which would one day pay it back plus interest on capital and interest on the interest?*

Walter Benjamin, *Experience and Poverty*

## The Loss of Experience

As an observable *Stimmung*, as a specific affective tonality, Bloom is in touch with the extreme abstraction of the conditions of existence that the Spectacle fleshes out. The most demoted, and at the same time the most characteristic concretization of the spectacular *ethos* remains — on a planetary scale — the metropolis. That Bloom is essentially the metropolitan man in no way implies that it might be possible by birth or by choice for him to remove himself from that condition, because there is *no outside* of the metropolis: the territories that its metastatic extension does not occupy are always polarized by it; that is, they are determined *in all their aspects* by its absence.

The dominant trait of the spectacular-metropolitan *ethos* is the *loss of experience*, the most eloquent symptom of which is the formation in it of the very category of "experience" in the restricted sense where one *has* "experiences" (sexual, sporting, professional, artistic, sentimental, ludic, etc.). Everything about Bloom flows from this loss, or is synonymous with it. Within the Spectacle, as they are within the metropolis, men never have the concrete experience of events, but only of conventions, rules; a wholly symbolized, entirely constructed second nature. There, what reigns is the radical split between the in-

significance of everyday life — called “private” life — where nothing happens, and the transcendence of a frozen sphere called “public” which no one has access to.

But all this looks is starting to look more and more like ancient history. The separation between the Spectacle’s lifeless forms and the “formless life” of Bloom, with its monochromatic boredom and silent thirst for nothingness, moves aside at numerous points to make way for indistinguishability. The loss of experience has finally attained to such a degree of generality that it can in turn be interpreted as the primordial, original experience, as the *experience of experience as such*; as a clear disposition, that is, towards Critical Metaphysics.

## The Metropolises of Separation

Metropolises are distinct from the other grand human formations first of all because the greatest proximity, and usually the greatest promiscuity, coincide in them with the greatest foreignness. Never have men been gathered together in such great number, and never have they been so totally separate from one another.

In the metropolis, man experiences his own negative condition, purely. Finiteness, solitude, and exposedness, which are the three fundamental coordinates of this condition, weave the décor of each person’s existence in the big city. Not a fixed décor, but a moving décor; the amalgamated décors of the big city, due to which everyone has to endure the ice-cold stench of its non-places.

The *hip, plugged-in* metropolis-dwellers here comprise a rather remarkable type of Bloom not only in terms of intensity but also in the numerical extent of their legions: Bloom’s imperialist fraction. The *hipster* is the Bloom that offers himself up to the world as a tenable form of life, and to do so constrains himself to a strict discipline of lies.

Bernardo Soares, *The Book of Disturbances*

At the same time, one thing’s for sure — Bloom carries within himself the destruction of commodity society. In Bloom we find that same ambivalent character seen in all the realities in which *the transcendence of commodity society on its own terrain* manifest itself.

In this dissolution, it is the foundations themselves, which have for a long time now been deserted, rather than the great edifices of the superstructure that are the first to be attacked. The invisible precedes the visible, and the basis of the world changes imperceptibly.

Bloom bears the end of the world within himself, but does not declare its abolition; he just empties it of meaning and reduces it to the state of a left-over husk awaiting demolition. In this sense one might affirm that the metaphysical upheaval that Bloom is a synonym for is already behind us, but that the bulk of its consequences is yet to come.

With Bloom, for whom all the self-intimacy that gave rise to private property is lacking, the latter has lost all substance: what is really left that is truly *proper* to anyone, that is really anyone’s own? What is left, a fortiori, that is private, in the proper sense? Private property now subsists merely in an empirical manner, as a dead abstraction gliding along above a reality that escapes it ever more visibly.

Bloom doesn’t contest the law, he *lays it down*. And how could the law not have been definitively outdated with the appearance of this being who is not a subject, whose acts bear relation to no particular personalty at all, and whose behaviors are no more dependent on the bourgeois categories of interest and motivation than they are on passion or responsibility?

Faced with Bloom, thus, the law loses all its competence to deliver justice — what could justice mean to a totally indifferent being? — and it is only when PEOPLE leave it strictly to police terror that it can be applied at all. Because in the world of the

sonality would be impossible without a certain *labor* on the part of individual persons.

Naturally what is reinforced with the originality that PEOPLE give to Bloom is never his singularity, but the impersonal “PEOPLE”-ness itself, in other words, poor substantiality. All recognition *within* the Spectacle is but recognition *of* the Spectacle.

Without Bloom, therefore, the commodity would be no more than a purely formal principle deprived of all contact with becoming.

## I Would Prefer Not To

*I walked amongst them as a foreigner, but none of them saw that I was one. I lived among them as a spy, but none of them — not even me — suspected that I was one. All of them took me for one of their relatives: no one knew that there'd been a change-out when I was born. And so I was a peer of the others that in no way resembled them, the brother of each and all but without being from any of their families.*

*I came from vast lands, from landscapes more beautiful than life itself, but I never mentioned these countries. My footprints on the theater-floors and pavements were similar to theirs, but my heart was far away, all the while beating quite near, the fictive master of an exiled, foreign body...*

*No one really knew me underneath this mask of similarity, no one even knew that I was wearing one because no one knew that there are masked beings here in this world. No one ever dreamed that there was always someone else standing beside me, which in the final analysis was actually me. I was always believed to be identical to myself.*

The final consumer of existence, stricken by a definitive incredulousness concerning both people and language, the *hipster* lives on the horizon of an endless experimentation *on himself*. He has circumscribed the volume of his being and has decided to never get out of it, if not to ensure the self-promotion of his own sterility.

Thus, he has replaced the emptiness of experience with the experience of emptiness, while waiting for the adventure he's always ready for but never comes: he's already written out all the possible scenarios. In a deceived ecstasy, the solitary crowd of *hipsters*, always-already disappeared, always-already *forgotten*, pursue their wandering path like a raft full of suicides, lost in a depressing ocean of images and abstractions. And that crowd has nothing to communicate, nothing but conventional formulas for absent enjoyment and a life with no object within a furnished nothingness.

The metropolis appears, moreover, as the homeland of all freely selected mimetic rivalries, the sorry but continuous celebration of the “fetishism of little differences.” PEOPLE play out all year-round a tragicomedy of separation: the more people are isolated, the more they resemble one another; the more they resemble one another, the more they detest one another; and the more they detest one another the more they isolate themselves. And where men can no longer recognize each other as the participants in building a common world, everything only further catalyzes a chain reaction, a collective fission.

The teachings of the metropolis show, from different angles, the extent to which the loss of experience and the loss of community are one and the same thing. It must however be taken into account, in spite of the nostalgia that a certain romanticism so enjoys cultivating even in its enemies, that before our era there had not, and had never been, any community. And these are not two contradictory affirmations. Before Bloom, before “separation perfected,” before the unreserved abandon that is ours — before, then, the perfect devastation of all sub-

stantial *ethos*, all “community” could be but a hummus of falsehoods — a false “belonging,” to a class, a nation, a milieu — and a source of limitation: and anyway, if it were otherwise *it would not have been annihilated*. Only a radical alienation from the Common was able to make the primordial Common burst forth in such a way that solitude, finiteness, and exposedness — that is, the only *true* bond between people — could also appear as the only *possible* bond between them. What PEOPLE call a “community” today, while gazing out upon the past, obviously shares in this primordial Common, but in a reversible way, because it’s just second-hand. And so it’s up to us to have for the first time an experience of real community, a community based on *the honest assumption of our separation, exposedness, and finiteness*.

Following Bloom’s example, the metropolis simultaneously materializes the total loss of community and the infinite *possibility* of regaining it.

*The elucidation of the possibilities contained in our times depends exclusively on whether we consider the Bloom figure. Bloom’s eruption into history determines, for “our party,” the need to completely rebuild our foundations, both in theory and practice. All analysis and all action that does not absolutely take Bloom into account will damn itself to eternalizing the present exile, because Bloom, since he’s not an individuality, doesn’t let himself be characterized by anything he says, does, or manifests. Each moment is for him a moment of decision. He has no stable attributes whatsoever. No habits, no matter how far he pursues his repetition of them, are susceptible to conferring any being upon him. Nothing adheres to him, and he doesn’t adhere to anything that may seem to be his, not even “society,” which would like to support itself upon him. To cast a light on these times, we must consider that there is on the one hand the mass of Blooms and on the other the mass of acts. All truth flows from this.*

people; as separate beings, finite and exposed. It is then not rare to see perfect strangers show us their common humanity, by protecting us from some danger, by offering us their whole pack of cigarettes instead of just the one cigarette we’d asked for, or by spending a quarter-hour helping us find the address we’d been looking for when otherwise they are usually so stingy with their time. Such phenomena are in no way explainable by an interpretation using the classical ethnological terms of gift and counter-gift like a certain kind of bar-room sociality, on the contrary, might indeed be. No hierarchical rank is in play here. There’s no glory being sought after. The only thing that can explain it is the ethics of *infinite gift*, which, in the Christian tradition, and specifically the Franciscan, is known as *agapê*.

*Agapê* is part of the existential situation of man that has *informed* commodity society in this, its final age. And that’s the state commodity society has left mankind in, by making it so foreign to itself and its desires. In spite of all indications to the contrary, and as disturbing as it may be, this society is coming down with a serious kindness infection.

**“Be Different — Be Yourself!”**

(an underwear ad)

In many respects, commodity society can’t do without Bloom. The return to effectiveness of spectacular representations, known as “consumption,” is entirely conditioned by the mimetic competition that Bloom’s inner nothingness impels him towards. The tyrannical judgments of the impersonal, of what “PEOPLE” will think, would remain just another item in a universal mockery if “being” did not, in the Spectacle, mean “being different,” or at least making an effort to. So it’s not so much, as good old Simmel put it, that “a person’s personal, special importance comes about through their having a certain impersonal trait,” but rather that the special importance of imper-

Bloom is the man in whom everything has been socialized, but socialized *as private*. Nothing is more exclusively common than what he calls his “individual happiness.” Bloom is ordinary and characterless even in his desire to stand out as a singular individual. For Bloom, all substantial differences between him and other men has been *effectively* abolished. All that remains is a pure difference without content. And everything, in the world of the authoritarian commodity, aims to maintain this pure difference, which is pure separation. And so Bloom may still answer to a particular name, but that name no longer means anything.

All the misunderstandings regarding Bloom have to do with the depth of the gazes that people allow themselves to stare at him with. In any case, the award for blindness has to go to the *sociologists*, who like Castoriadis talk about “a retreat into the private sphere” without clarifying that this sphere itself has been *entirely socialized*. At the other extreme we find those who have let themselves go so far as even to go *into* Bloom. And the stories they bring back all resemble in one way or another the experience that the narrator of *Monsieur Teste* had upon discovering what that character was like “at home”: “*I’ve never had a greater impression of the ordinary. It was an ordinary, characterless dwelling, similar at any given point to the theorems, and perhaps just as useful. My host’s existence took place within the most general home, the most common of interiors.*” Bloom is, indeed, the man that exists in the “most common of interiors.”

It is only in those places and circumstances where the Spectacle’s effect is temporarily suspended that the most intimate truth about Bloom comes out: that he is, at bottom, in *agapê*. Such a suspension arises in an exemplary manner in uprisings, but also at the moment when we talk to a stranger in the streets of the metropolis, and in the final analysis anywhere that people must recognize themselves, beyond all specifics, as simply

## A Genealogy of Bloom-Consciousness

Bartleby is an office employee.

The diffusion of mass intellectual labor within the Spectacle, in which conventional knowledge counts as exclusive competency, has an obvious relationship with the form of consciousness that is proper to Bloom. So much so that except in situations where abstract knowledge dominates over all vital milieus, outside of the organized sleep of a world produced entirely as a symbol, Bloom’s experience never attains the form of a lived continuum which he might add onto himself; rather it just starts to look like a series of inassimilable *shocks*.

Thus he has had to create an organ to protect him against the uprooting that the currents and discordances of his external milieu threaten him with: instead of reacting with his sensibilities to this uprooting, Bloom reacts essentially with his intellect, and the intensification of consciousness that the same cause produces ensures its psychic preponderance. Thus the reaction to these phenomena is buried in the least sensitive psychic organ, the one that is most distant from the depths of being. His pure consciousness is, then, the only thing that Bloom manages to recognize as his own, but it is a consciousness that has become autonomous from life, that no longer feeds it but merely observes it, and in its lapse, muzzles itself.

Bloom cannot take part in the world in an inner way. He only ever goes into it in exception to himself. That’s why he has such a singular disposition towards distraction, towards *dejavu*, towards clichés, and above all why he has such an atrophy of memory that confines him in an eternal present; it’s also why he’s so exclusively sensitive to music, which alone can offer him *abstract sensations* — we should here mention speed and “sliding,” which are also bloomesque enjoyments but this time only insofar as they are *abstraction itself* arising *as sensation*.

Everything that Bloom lives, does, and feels remains something external to him. And when he dies, he dies like a baby,

like someone who's never learned anything. With Bloom, the relations of consumption have extended themselves over the totality of existence, and over the totality of what exists. In Bloom's case, commodity propaganda has so radically triumphed that he effectively conceives of his world not as the fruit of a long history, but like a primitive man conceives of the forest: as his natural surroundings. A number of things become clear about Bloom when he's looked at from this angle. Because Bloom is indeed a primitive man, but he's an *abstract primitive*. It would be enough to summarize the provisional state of the question in a formula: *Bloom is the eternal adolescence of humanity*.

## The Replacement of the "Worker" Type by the Bloom Figure

The recent mutations in the modes of production within late capitalism have done much to move things towards universal bloomification. The period of the *classical proletariat*, which ended at the dawn of the 1970s, itself made a proud contribution to this bloomification. Statute-regulated, hierarchical wage labor in effect slowly replaced all other forms of social belonging, in particular replacing all the organic, traditional ways of life. It was also then that the dissociation of singular man and his social being began: all power being no more than simply *functional* therein, that is, delegated anonymously, each "I" which attempted to affirm itself never affirmed anything but its anonymity. But although there was in the classical wage system only power deprived of a subject and subjects deprived of power, the possibility remained — because of the relative stability of employment and a certain rigidity in the hierarchies — that the subjective totality of a large number of men could still be mobilized.

That's why wealth, in the world of the authoritarian commodity, has become something grotesque and incomprehensible, merely a cluttered form of miserable poverty.

Wealth is now merely something that possesses *you*; something PEOPLE restrain you with.

## Agapê [non-erotic, benevolent love]

...ja wohl, alles scheisse! [yes sir-ee! It's all shit!] *Your conscience is clean. "We were right, all you've got to do is take a look at them!" You are more mystified than anyone, and by us, we who are taking you to the endpoint of your error. Relax, we aren't going to set you straight; we'll just take your outrageous remarks to their necessary conclusions. We'll let ourselves go along with it even to the death, and you'll see the vermin dying.*

*We don't need to wait for the liberation of bodies or count on them to be resurrected for us to be right. Our reasoning triumphs now, living and like waste. It's true that it isn't plain to see. But we're just as right as you are unlikely to understand anything about it, anything at all. Not only do we have reason on our side, we are the right thinking that you've pushed into a clandestine existence.*

*And thus less than ever can we admire any of these apparent victories. Understand this well: you have transformed reason into conscience. You have remade the unity of man. You have manufactured the most diehard conscience. You can never again hope to manage to make us simultaneously take your place and remain in our own skin, which would condemn us. Nobody here will ever become his own SS.*



## Let Us Share Our Poverty, Not Our Misery!

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

Eventually dispossessed and deprived of everything, mutely foreign to his world, and as ignorant of himself as of what surrounds him, Bloom realizes, at the heart of the historical process and in all its fullness, the truly metaphysical magnitude of the concept of *poverty*.

Indeed, they needed every bit of the dense tackiness of an era where economy has served as metaphysics in order to make an economic notion out of poverty (now that this era is coming to an end, it becomes obvious once again that the opposite of poverty is not wealth, but misery, and that of those three, only poverty has any perfection about it. Poverty means the state of he *who can make use of anything*, having nothing specifically his own, and misery means the state of he *who cannot make use of anything*, whether because he has too much, or because he doesn't have the *time*, or because he has no community).

Thus, everything that the idea of wealth has been able to carry through history, all the bourgeois tranquility, all the *domestic* bliss, all the immanent familiarity with the readily perceived reality here below, is something that Bloom can appreciate, out of nostalgia or simulation, but that he cannot experience. For him, happiness has become a very old idea, and not only in Europe. Together with all interest, and all *ethos*, the very possibility of use *value* has been lost. Bloom only understands the supernatural language of exchange value. He gazes upon the world with eyes that see nothing; nothing but the nothingness of value. His desires themselves are only roused towards absences, abstractions, not the least of which is the YoungGirl's ass (2). Even when Bloom appears to want something, he never ceases to not-want, since he wants emptily, since he wants emptiness.

After the 1970s, the relative guarantee of stable employment, which allowed commodity society to impose itself as the replacement for a particular social formation — the traditional order — whose primary virtue was this guarantee of stability, lost all necessity upon the annihilation of its adversary. So then a process of introducing greater flexibility into production began, of giving the exploited an ever more precarious status; this is a situation we are still in and which has even today still not attained to its final limit. It has now been almost three decades that the industrialized world has been in an autonomic involution phase where the classical wage system is dismantling itself step by step, and *driving itself on the basis of such dismantlement*. We have since then been watching *the abolition of wage society on the wage society's own terrain*, that is, within the domination-relations that it commands. “Work here ceases to carry out its function as a powerful substitute for the objective ethical fabric, and no longer holds the place of the traditional forms of ethics, which anyway have for a long time now been emptied out and dissolved.” (Paolo Virno, *Opportunism, Cynicism, and Terror*). All the intermediary screens between the “atomized individual,” owner of no more than his “labor power,” and the market — where he must sell it — have been liquidated to such an extent that now each person stands in total isolation before the crushing autonomous social totality. Nothing from then on could prevent the so-called “post-fordist” forms of production from becoming generalized, and with them flexibility, tense flow, mobility, “project based *management*” and “enhanced tasks” for “polyvalent agents.” Such an organization of labor, the efficiency of which rests on the inconsistency, “autonomy,” and opportunism of the producers, has the merit of making impossible any kind of identification on the part of men with their own social function; in other words, it is highly Bloom-generative.

Born of the acknowledgement of a general hostility towards wage labor that manifested itself after 1968 in all industrial-

ized nations, the present organization of production was devised to work on the basis of *that very hostility*. And so, while its flagship-commodities — cultural commodities — are born of an activity which is foreign to the narrow-minded framework of wage labor, getting it into a totally optimal state requires tricking everyone; that is, it rests upon the indifference, the repulsion, even, that people feel towards their activity — Capital's present utopia is a society where the totality of surplus value comes from a generalized "coping" phenomenon. As you can see, it's labor's alienation itself that's been *put to work*.

In this context, a *mass marginality* begins to take shape where "exclusion" is not, as PEOPLE would have us believe, the short-term drop in status of a certain fraction of the population, but *the fundamental relationship that each person has with his own participation in social life*, and above all the one the producer has with what he produces. Work has now ceased to be bound up with man as something specific to him; it is now only perceived by Blooms as a contingent form of the general social oppression. Unemployment is but the visible concretion of the foreignness of each person to their own existence in the world of the authoritarian commodity.

Bloom thus also appears as the product of the quantitative and qualitative decomposition of wage-labor society; Bloom is the humanity that corresponds to the mode of production of a society that's become *definitively asocial*, and one that none of its members feel in any way connected to anymore. The fate prepared for him, to have to adapt himself without respite to an environment in constant upheaval, is also his apprenticeship in an exile in this world, which he must nevertheless *act like* he's participating in, in the absence of anybody really participating in it at all.

But beyond all his forced lies, he discovers himself little by little to be *the man of non-participation*, as well as *a creature of non-belonging*.

*them dropping like dominoes.'*  
*Drained out of the abscess of having to be someone,*  
*I'll drink of life-giving space once more...*

...  
*With ridicule, by debasement (what is debasement?),*  
*bursts, emptiness, and with a total dissipation-*  
*derision-purging, I will expel from myself the form*  
*in which I was believed to be so attached, made*  
*up of, coordinated by, and well-matched to my*  
*entourage and my peers, so worthy, my ever so*  
*worthy peers.*

*Reduced to a humility evoking catastrophe, a perfect*  
*leveling like after being intensely frightened.*  
*Brought back immeasurably to my true rank, the*  
*lowly rank that I don't know what idea/ambition*  
*made me abandon.*  
*Annihilated in my haughtiness, my esteem,*  
*lost in a far away place*  
*(or not even), with no name, no identity.*  
*A CLOWN, tearing down in roaring laughter, guff-*  
*faws, and grotesqueness*  
*the sense of my own importance that I had*  
*in spite of my seeing myself in such a clear light;*  
*I will take the plunge,*  
*with no stipend, into the underlying*  
*Infinity-mind open to all,*  
*and myself open to a new*  
*and incredible dewdrop*  
*because of my being null*  
*and blank,*  
*and laughable...*

Henri Michaux, *Paintings*

*in the place of those who do not wish to suffer for money. The greedy are mystics! Everything they do is done in view of pleasing an invisible God whose visible and so laboriously sought-after simulacrum showers them in tortures and ignominy.”*

If the capitalist is similar to the mystic in his activity, Bloom is similar to the mystic in his *passivity*. And in fact, nothing resembles Bloom’s existential situation better than the *detachment* of the mystics. His reified consciousness effectuates upon it a definite propensity towards contemplation, whereas his indifference corresponds to that “honorable detachment (that is) none other than the fact that the mind remains immobile in the face of all the vicissitudes of love and suffering, honor, shame, and outrage.” Until paralysis sets in.

In the end, Bloom reminds one of Meister Eckhart’s God, a God that is defined as “he who has no name, who is the negation of all names, and has never had a name,” like the pure nothingness for whom all things are nothingness.

Under its perfection, Bloom’s alienation conceals a truly primordial alienation.

#### CLOWN

*One day.*

*One day, maybe soon.*

*One day I’ll pull up the anchor*

*that keeps my ship far from the high seas.*

*With that kind of courage*

*one needs to have in order to be nothing and nothing but nothing,*

*I will let go of everything that had seemed to be so indissolubly close to me.*

*I’ll cut it off, I’ll overturn it,*

*I’ll smash it, I’ll make it collapse.*

*Disgorging in one fell stroke my miserable prudishness, my miserable passwords and sequences, ‘with*

To whatever extent the crisis of industrial society heats up, the livid figure of Bloom peeks out from under the titanic magnitudes of the Worker.

## The World of the Authoritarian Commodity

*“One drives the beasts out to pasture with whip lashes.”*

– Heraclitus

For domination — and by this term we cannot properly understand anything other than the symbolically mediated relations of *complicity* between the dominators and the dominated — in proportion to the autonomy that the Blooms acquire relative to their assigned social positions, there is a strategic need to extract ever more appropriations, and to constantly carry out new *subjugations*.

Maintaining the central mediation of everything by commodities thus demands that ever larger sections of humanity’s being need to be brought under control. From this perspective, one cannot fail to note the extreme diligence with which the Spectacle has burdened Bloom with the heavy duty of Being, the prompt solicitude with which it has taken charge of his education, and of defining the complete panoply of conforming personalities — in sum, one cannot fail to notice how it’s been able to extend its grip over the totality of what may be said and seen, and the codes according to which all relationships and identities are to be built. The development of Biopower since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a development whose qualitative leap took place with the Total Mobilization of 1914, can only be understood strictly in light of this. The taking of control over men as living beings within biopolitical democracies, the application of the social forces of integration *even to bodies*, the ever tighter management of the *conditions* of our existence, comprise domination’s response to the *disintegration of individuality*, to the

erasure of the subject within Bloom. Its response, in sum, to the fact that it has *lost its grip*.

The productive character of power as it circulates in the world of the authoritarian commodity can be illustrated, among other ways, by the manner in which the control of behaviors *operates* therein: most often it is enough simply to master the organization of public space, the arrangement of décor, the material organization of infrastructure so as to maintain order; and to maintain order by the simple power of coercion that the anonymous mass exerts *over each of its elements*, so as to make that mass respect the abstract norms in force. In a downtown street, a metro train aisle, or among a team of *collaborators*, the perfection of the apparatus of surveillance resides precisely in the *absence of any surveillance watchmen*.

Panoptical control is only all the more operative when it's faceless. In the final analysis, it doesn't care at all whether its subjects reject it or accept it, as long as they submit to it *outwardly*.

## Militarization of Disaster, Concentration of Domination

Since 1914, commodity domination has only been able to respond to the enormity of its disaster with the use of Total Mobilizations. It intends, with the use of a state of exception — sometimes manifest, sometimes latent, but always *permanent* — to contain the overflowing flood of its inconsistencies.

The first of these inconsistencies has to do with the fact that its development demands in the same movement both the production of ever more extensive possibilities and the general prohibition against making them real. Commodity domination must thus simultaneously produce both an overabundance of resources and the overabundance of *terror* necessary in order that no one make use of them. Bloom is the man of this terror,

And this is also what makes Bloom fundamentally a free *spirit*, because he is an empty spirit.

**“Whoever would thus leave himself behind shall truly be returned to himself”**

Meister Eckhart

The ecstatic “essence” of Bloom is expressed as follows:

IN EVERYTHING THAT HE IS,  
BLOOM IS *OUTSIDE OF HIMSELF*.

In the empire of Biopower and autonomous publicity — the tyranny of the impersonal, of what PEOPLE say, do, or think — the ecstatic structure of human existence becomes manifest in the form of a generalized schizoid state. Each person now distinguishes between his “true self,” something pure, detached from all objectifiable manifestations, and the system of his “false self,” social, acted, constrained, inauthentic.

In each of his determinations — in his body, in his “qualities,” in his gestures, in his language — Bloom clearly feels that he is leaving himself behind, that he *has left* himself behind. And he *contemplates* that egress. And he *is* that wandering among those attributes, in that contemplation.

His becoming is a becoming-foreign.

Léon Bloy, in his time, compared the capitalist to the mystic; his *The Blood of the Poor* dedicates a good number of pages to a rather free interpretation of the “fetishistic character of the commodity”:

*“This money, which is but the visible figure of the blood of Christ circulating through all his limbs,” “far from loving it for its material enjoyment, which he deprives himself of, (the greedy man) adores it in spirit and in truth, like the Saints adore the God that gives them their duty of penitence and their martyrs’ glory. He adores it for the sake of those who do not adore it; he suffers*

## The Inner Man

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

Bloom is that being who has taken up into himself the emptiness that surrounds him.

Hunted out of any place of his own, he *himself* has become a place.

Banished from the world, he has *become* a world.

It was not in vain that Paul, the Gnostics, and later on the Christian mystics drew a distinction between the inner man and outer man, because in Bloom this separation has taken place *historically*.

The marginal condition of those who, like Ruysbroeck the Admirable's inner man, feel "more inwardly inclined than outwardly inclined," who live "anywhere at all, and among anyone at all, in the depths of solitude... sheltered from multiplicity, sheltered from places, sheltered from men," has since then become the *common* condition.

However, it is a rare person who, having experienced it *positively*, has had the strength to *want* it. Pessoa:

*"To create myself, I destroyed myself; I exteriorized myself so totally within myself that inside myself I only exist outwardly. I am the living stage over which various actors pass, playing various theater pieces."*

But for the time being if Bloom resembles this inner man it's most often only in a negative manner. The non-essential interior of his personality hardly contains more than the feeling that he's found himself to be pulled along on an endless fall towards an underlying dark and all-enveloping space, as if he were ceaselessly jumping off into himself while disintegrating. Drop by drop, in uniform beads, his very being oozes, rushes away, and bleeds out. His interiority is less and less a space or a substance, and more and more a *threshold* and its passage.

the one that spreads it and the one that suffers through it: he is the *collaborator*.

The recent period, over the course of which brutal crises of control have claimed to put whole sectors of what exists into step with a categorical imperative of transparency and traceability, is marked by a rapid movement of the *concentration of domination*.

Only a minority of conformed subjectivities, from whom PEOPLE require a new fusion between life and work, personality and function, are co-opted into the really vital positions, which meanwhile have become ever fewer. The formation of this Praetorian Guard of Capital, whose elements are not interchangeable (contrary to the situation of the large mass of wage workers), is part of this concentration of domination, which is inseparable from the militarization of disaster. As for the excess people, they essentially are set to work *keeping each other busy*, reciprocally dispossessing one another of their idleness, which indeed takes some real effort.

At the moment of domination's general restructuring, Bloom finds himself hunted down everywhere and in everyone, since he is just as much the idle person as he is the foreigner or the pariah. That's why he has to camouflage himself under so much artificiality, because *Bloom is the civil figure at the heart of the universal militarization of disaster*.

## Poor Substantiality

"All that you are, you are through me; everything that I am, I only am through you."

Hitler

Bloom lives in a state of terror, above all in the terror of being recognized as Bloom.

Everything happens as if the mimetic hell we suffocate in was unanimously judged preferable to our encountering ourselves.

Biopower organizes itself ever more visibly as a directed economy of subjectivations and resubjectivations.

There is, thus, a certain inevitability about the feverish enthusiasm for the industrial production of personality-kits, of disposable identities and other hysterical temperaments. Rather than really examining their central emptiness, the majority of people recoil before the vertigo of a total absence of *ownership*, of a radical disinclination, and thus, at root, they recoil before the yawning chasm of their freedom. They prefer to be engulfed ever more deeply in poor substantiality, towards which everything pushes them, after all. And so it must be expected that, hidden in some unequally latent depression they will discover some buried root or other, some spontaneous belonging, some incombustible quality. French, outcast, woman, artist, homosexual, Briton, citizen, fireman, Muslim, Buddhist, or unemployed person — anything's fine as long as it lets one moo out that miraculous "I AM..." in some tone or another, eyes glazed over and gazing off into the infinite distance.

It doesn't matter what empty and consumable particularity gets taken on, or what social role is at hand, because it's only all about warding off your own nothingness. And since all organic life fails in light of these pre-chewed forms, they never take long to quietly reenter the general system of commodity exchange and commodity equivalence, which reflects and pilots them.

Poor substantiality thus means that PEOPLE have put all their substance on record within the Spectacle and that the latter operates as the universal *ethos* of the celestial community of spectators. But a cruel ruse makes it so that in the end all this does is accelerate even more the process of the collapse of all substantial forms of existence. The man of poor substantiality's primary non-resolution inexorably spreads itself out

him. He is the neutral core that casts a light on the analogical relationship between the highest point and the lowest point. His lack of interest can comprise a great opening to *agapê*, or the desire to simply operate like a gear in a technocratic extermination enterprise, for instance. In the same way, an absence of personality can prefigure the transcendence of the classical petrified personality, as well as the terminal inconsistency of the metropolitan *hipster*.

There is the "*me ne frego*" [I don't give a damn] of fascism, and there is the "*me ne frego*" of the insurgent. There is the banality of evil, and there is also the *banality of good*. But in circumstances of domination, Bloom's banality always manifests itself as the banality of evil. Thus, for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bloom would have been Eichmann much more than Elser (1); as for Eichmann, Hannah Arendt tells us, "it was obvious to everyone that he was not a 'monster,'" and that "one couldn't help thinking that he was really a *clown*." It should be mentioned in passing that there is *no* difference in their nature between Eichmann — who identified *purely and completely* with his criminal function, and the *hipster* who, unable to assume his fundamental non-belonging to the world, nor the consequences of an exile situation, devotes himself to the frenetic consumption of the *symbols* of belonging that this society sells so expensively. But in a more general sense, everywhere PEOPLE talk about "economy," the banality of evil prospers. And it is there peeking out from under the allegiances of all kinds that men swear to "necessity," "doin' alright," to the "that's the way it is" by way of "all work is honorable."

And it is there that the extreme reaches of unhappiness begin, when all commitments are replaced by the commitment to surviving. And commitment / attachment is thus stripped naked. With no object but itself. Hell.

Historically speaking, it's in the figure of Bloom that alienation from the Common attains to its maximum degree of intensity. It's not so easy to imagine the extent to which the existence of man as a singular being and his existence as a social being have *in appearances* had to become foreign to one another in order that it become possible to speak of "social bonds," that is, to grasp man's being-in-common as something objective, as something exterior to him, and as something confronting him.

The true front lines pass right through the fine milieu of Blooms, and determine their schizoid neutrality. The militarization of disaster spreads out like a final warning, given to him so that he will choose sides: he must either endorse in an unconditional manner *whichever* social role, *whichever* servitude, or starve to death.

We are dealing here with a kind of urgent measure taken quite ordinarily by regimes in desperate straits; one that simply allows Bloom to be hidden, but not suppressed.

But, for the time being, that's good enough. The essential thing is that the eye that sees the world in a different way than the Spectacle does can be sure that PEOPLE have never seen any such thing this side of the Pyrenees — "what's that you say? A what? A Bloom???" — and that it's just a metaphysician's chimera; and thus that will make its critiques on that basis. All that matters is that bad faith can become a clear conscience, and that it can counterpose to us its time-stamped improbabilities. For the rest, how could that which PEOPLE have essentially dispossessed of all appearance ever appear *as such* in the Spectacle?

It is Bloom's fate to never be *visible* except to the extent that he participates in poor substantiality, that is, only to the extent that he disowns himself as Bloom.

All the radicalness of the figure of Bloom is concentrated in the fact that the choice he finds himself permanently faced with has on the one side the best and on the other side the worst, with no transition zone between the two accessible to

underneath the waltz of dead identities, where he always successively leads the dance. What should mask a lack of individuality not only fails to do so, it also increases the mutability of what could have lived off it.

Bloom triumphs above all in those who flee from him.

## Bloom is the Positive Reality Pointed Towards by the Empire of Simulacra

It is vain to claim substantiality within the Spectacle. Nothing in the final analysis is less authentic or more suspect than "authenticity." Anything that claims to have a *name of its own* or claims to adhere to itself can only be usurpation or stupidity.

By imposing upon each living singularity the need to consider itself as specific — that is, from a formal perspective, from a point of view outside of itself — the Spectacle tears it apart from inside, and introduces an inequality, a difference into it. It forces the I to consider itself as an object, to reify itself, to understand itself *as an Other*. Consciousness thus finds itself pulled into a flight without respite, into a perpetual split stimulated by the imperative — for anyone who refuses to let himself be won over by a lethal 'peace' — to detach itself from all substance. By applying to all the manifestations of life its tireless work of denomination, which is thus a work of anxious reflexivity, the Spectacle wrenches the world out of its immediacy with continual blasting. In other words, it produces and reproduces Bloom: the *thug* that knows he's a *thug* is no longer a *thug*, he's a Bloom *playing* the *thug*.

Many of the things that we call by names that are thousands of years old ceased to exist long ago. We don't need neologisms to replace the old words: we should just replace them all with "Bloom." For instance, there's no such thing anymore as that supposedly substantial reality that used to be called "the family." There aren't even any more fathers, mothers, sons or sis-

ters; there's nothing but Blooms playing family, Blooms playing dad, mom, son or sister. And these days one finds so few philosophers, artists, or writers: there's hardly anything but Blooms anymore in these extras' roles, just Blooms producing cultural commodities and striking the standard poses becoming of their position. To top it off, even farmers themselves have ended up by deciding that they'll have to play "farmer." It just seems like that would be more profitable.

It's forbidden to us under the present regime of *things* to durably identify ourselves with any specific content, only with the *movement of tearing ourselves away from it*.

*Man is the indestructible being  
that can be infinitely destroyed.*

Blanchot

*The Indestructible is one; it is each man in full,  
and all of us have it in common.*

*It is the unchangeable cement  
that bonds men forever.*

Kafka

*Ah, this night of the world,  
this empty nothingness that contains  
everything in its abstract simplicity,  
this form of pure disquiet...*

Hegel

## Sua Cuique Persona [to each his own mask]

In the present reality, the question of who's masked and who isn't is moot. It's simply grotesque to claim to establish oneself outside of the Spectacle, outside of a mode of disclosure in which everything manifests itself in such a way that its appearance becomes autonomous, that is, as a *mask*. Its costume, *as a costume*, is the truth of Bloom; that is, *there's nothing behind*

*it*, or rather — and this unveils much more casual horizons — behind it is *the great Nothing*, which is a potential power.

That the mask comprises the general form of appearance within the universal comedy from which only hypocrites still think they can escape doesn't mean that there's no more truth, just that truth has become something quite subtle and biting.

The figure of Bloom finds its highest and most contemptible expression in the "language of flattery," and in this ambiguity there's no room for whimpering or rejoicing, just for fighting.

*"Here the Self sees its certainty of itself as such become the thing most emptied of essence; it sees its pure personality become absolute impersonality. The spirit of its gratitude is thus just as much the sentiment of this profound abjection as it is that of the most profound revolt. Since the pure I sees itself outside itself, and all torn to shreds in this shredding of everything that has any continuity and universality to it, what we call Law, Good, and Rights is disintegrated in one fell swoop and falls into the abyss."*

(Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*)

The reign of travesty always just slightly precedes the final death of a given reign. We'd do wrong to take off domination's mask, since it's always known itself to be threatened by the element of night, savagery, and impersonality that are introduced when masks are worn. What is *evil* about the Spectacle is rather that faces *themselves* are petrified until they become like masks, and that a central authority sets itself up as the *master of metamorphoses*.

The living are those who are able to fathom the words of the maniac tremblingly proclaiming: *"Happy is he who in his disgust for empty, satisfied faces decides to cover himself with a mask: he will be the first to rediscover the raging drunkenness of all that dances to its death over the waterfall of time."*

***"Alienation also means being alienated from  
alienation."***

Hegel