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Poussin’: The
Informe, Bataille
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Lenka Bydžovská is a researcher at the Department of Art of the 19th to the 21st Centuries at the Institute of Art History at the Czech Academy of Sciences. In this synthesis of formal analysis and art-historical investigation, Bydžovská explores the hitherto unexamined connections between Czech Surrealism and the influential French theorist Georges Bataille. The strategies of formal 'decomposition' practised by Czech artists Toyen and Vincenc Makovský are discussed with reference to Bataille's concept of the 'informe' or 'formless', a quantity that calls all categories into question. Bydžovská reveals the points of contact that the Czech avant-garde established with Bataille's renegade Surrealist circle, even as it oriented itself around the 'orthodox' Surrealism of André Breton. She traces particularly strong affinities between Bataille's thought and the work of Jindřich Štyrský, evident in a preoccupation with low or repulsive matter, scatology, bodily fragmentation, and the fluid boundary between 'civilisation and animality'. This essay first appeared in the Czech journal Umění in 1997.¹ (JO)

“Do You See Anything?” Asked Poussin: The *Informe*, Bataille and the Czech Surrealists

In Honoré de Balzac's story *The Unknown Masterpiece* (*Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, 1831), the young Nicolas Poussin longs to see a supposed crowning achievement by the old master Frenhofer, who 'sees higher and farther than other painters', but who, with his endless deliberations over colour and line, is also consumed by many doubts.² When, after a long effort, Poussin finally succeeds in gaining entry to Frenhofer's studio, together with the famous court painter Frans Porbus, both are astounded by the ravishing paintings which hang on the walls and which, to their amazement, the artist declares to be the errors of youth. But still they do not see the promised masterpiece, *The Beautiful Troublemaker*, even after examining, from every angle, the painted canvas that Frenhofer proudly shows them.

“Do you see anything?” Poussin whispered to Porbus.

“No. Do you?”

“Nothing”

Frenhofer first assumes that they are unable to distinguish this perfect picture, on which he has worked with complete dedication for ten years, from reality, but then his friends lose patience:

“The old fraud's pulling our leg,” Poussin murmured, returning to face the so-called painting.

“All I see are colors daubed one on top of the other and contained by a mass of strange lines forming a wall of paint.”

“We must be missing something,” Porbus insisted.

Coming closer, they discerned, in one corner of the canvas, the tip of a bare foot emerging from this chaos of colors, shapes, and vague shadings, a kind of incoherent mist; but a delightful foot, a living foot! They stood stock-still with admiration before this fragment which had escaped from an incredible, slow, and advancing destruction.³

Balzac's story would become subject to various interpretations in relation to key personalities of modern art, and notably in reflections by Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso.⁴ The story can also be connected to the 'undercurrents' of twentieth-century art: according to Balzac's description of the painting in question, it is indeed possible to see Frenhofer, who is 'as much a madman as a painter', as having unwittingly entered the realm of formlessness, in which the legibility of the world of perceptions and concepts disappears, and as thus having hazardously exceeded the existing boundaries of art.

If one were to look at Toyen's 1929 painting *Night Party* (*Noční slavnost*) from the point of view described by Balzac in *The Unknown Masterpiece*, it would also seem that there is no painting to be seen on the canvas: a dense, relief-like build-up of black, Parisian blue, and dark greens in many places hermetically covers over the original sequence of thick, coloured vertical lines, which are blurred by a transverse series of translucent stripes and seem to drown in the dark background



Fig. 19.1. Toyen, *Night Party* (*Noční slavnost*, 1929). Oil on canvas, 92 x 65 cm. Private collection.

(Fig. 19.1).⁵ The rule in Artificialist painting was for the picture’s title to guide the spectator’s flow of emotions and associations. In this case the title *The Night Party* refers to the favourite subject of fireworks displays, which had long been part of the Devětsil movement’s iconographic arsenal and had appeared in various fields of Devětsil activity, in poetry and visual art as well as in theory. Photographs of fireworks had been featured in the celebrated exhibition *The Bazaar of Modern Art* (*Bazar moderního umění*) in 1923; at the end of the 1920s Karel Teige reproduced these pictures in the journal *ReD*; in 1926, Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen emphasised the erotic subtext of this motif in their cover for Vítězslav Nezval’s poetry collection *The Lesser Rose Garden* (*Menší růžová zahrada*); and Teige, in his *Second Manifesto of Poetism* (*Druhý manifest poetismu*) from 1928, presented fireworks as one of his main examples of a dynamic poetry for sight, or liberated painting.⁶ While in Teige’s conception the image of fireworks stood for a joyous *féerie*

of light effects, for dematerialisation and an intoxicating upward movement, Toyen, in *The Night Party*, turned this motif into the exact opposite: a morass of dark formless matter seems to have spilled out across the radiant lines, and so, rather than the suggestion of a weightless ascent into the heavens, our main impression is of a descent into nothingness. The painting is distinguished by exceptional daring in its embrace of formlessness, though in this it was not alone among Toyen's works of this period.⁷

In 1927, at the height of her Artificialist period, she revealed the same tendency in *Solitude* (*Samota*), which resembles *Night Party* in its colouring. *Solitude* presents a confrontation between dark geometric forms and a disorganised world of spontaneous lines, indeterminate spots of colour and random brushstrokes. 'The luminescent swamp entices me...', wrote Vítězslav Nezval in a poem inspired by *Solitude*.⁸ He was speaking here for Toyen too, who in 1928 again employed a very free style—down to the pouring of paint over the canvas—in her remarkable picture *Swamp* (*Bažina*). From the beginning, Artificialism displayed a marked fascination with the element of water—with limpid lakes or ocean depths—and this was soon joined by an interest in mud, in its guise as all-consuming formless matter. In the work of both Toyen and Štyrský, these interests are evident in the paintings' very titles (for example, Štyrský's *Peat* (*Rašelina*), 1927, and Toyen's *Swamp* and *Mire* (*Močál*), 1931), and, in Toyen's case, they had further importance as inspiration towards new methods of expression. In many pictures from the late 1920s, which can be seen as depicting abstract landscapes or details of such, she trickled the paint across the canvas, mixed it with sand, added it in layers, like sediment, to form a relief effect, and generally heightened the works' haptic qualities. 'With closed eyes, oriented by statocysts, she pliantly feels the space around herself and commits murder', Nezval asserted.⁹ Though she did not at all limit herself to this tendency and again began to favour solid forms at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, from the point of view of her further development it is important to note that she had already experimented with the extreme possibilities of a form of painterly expression to which she returned in later years. She revived this approach with a new urgency in her Surrealist paintings from 1934, which were presented at Prague's first exhibition of Surrealism. They are generally characterised by an amorphous background, recalling tree bark or the weathered surfaces of walls. One of her most radical works, *Handclasp* (*Stisk ruky*, 1934), which in Nezval's poetic interpretation evoked the idea of a crushed and bleeding hand caught between two doors, shows an outright disruption of forms by the painterly gesture.

An independent parallel to the innovative activity of Toyen can be found in several reliefs by Vincenc Makovský from the first half of the 1930s. If an orientation towards formlessness can be risky in painting, the same is doubly true for sculpture. Nonetheless Makovský, who was at this time concurrently developing a number of expressive approaches from the most contemporary and avant-garde to a traditional sculptural style, embarked on experiments that had no counterpart in the European sculpture of this time. In a relief from 1933, known by the name *Woman with Vase* (*Žena s vázou*) (though Makovský originally exhibited and reproduced these works under the generic title *Relief*, thus omitting any reference to the initial figurative subject), he created a human figure composed, like its background, solely out of 'second-rate', banal materials (coloured cork, tar, pieces of corrugated cardboard, thin sackcloth, rags, twine, matchsticks, melted wax). He handled these with great freedom, smothering the original subject matter through a forceful emphasis on the materials used, their textures, colours, and, in places, their runniness. Favourably-minded contemporary critics characterised the work as 'a monstrous relief that really excels through its firm grasp of structure and matter', while conservatives claimed, with a certain justification, that 'it looks something like the corner of a scrapyards'.¹⁰ Makovský took a different but again surprising approach in a relief later known as *Female Figure with Footprints* (*Ženská postava se stopami kroků*, 1934), which has not itself been preserved but which was captured in a contemporary photograph and reproduced in Nezval's 1936 anthology *Surrealism* (*Surrealismus*), in a concluding pictorial section that juxtaposes work by members of the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group (Skupina surrealistů v ČSR) with the work of the most important foreign Surrealists. Jiří Šebek added a description of Makovský's picture in which he evoked associations with gravestones:

‘the delicate modelling, starkly outlining the torso of a crouching female nude, which strongly evokes Josef Šíma’s *Vampire (Upír)*, looks like it has been violently disturbed by the deep imprints of bare feet’.¹¹ The artist’s harsh intervention has made it impossible to gauge the relief’s real spatial orientation: based on a comparison with Šíma’s picture it seems that it should be presented width-wise, but in *Surrealism* it is reproduced length-wise. The imprints of the foot soles challenge our vertical perception of this relief, denying it the privileged status of the artwork hanging on the wall at eye level. The horizontal position seems to be the defining one here: the relief lies on the ground and the sculptor is able to step straight into it, carelessly vandalising his earlier composition. This negative imprint of human body parts on a sculpture also foreshadowed an important theme in modern art, one recently revisited by the exhibition *The Imprint (L’empreinte)*, which Georges Didi-Huberman organised for the Pompidou Centre.¹²

The examples above suggest how these two representatives of the avant-garde, Toyen and Makovský, here chose a different tactic from attacking the traditional fields of art with an external revolutionary gesture, such as Karel Teige had done in the early 1920s when, in a spirit of avant-garde iconoclasm, he had declared the liquidation of the traditional ‘tabular’ picture, to be replaced by new forms of creative activity. Instead, in their individual ways, Toyen and Makovský decomposed painting and sculpture from within, through the denial of form and subject matter. They reached a dangerous extreme, to which their own artistic field provoked them, but they did not pursue this point exclusively or without reservations (Toyen continued to work with this principle in several other works, and Makovský soon distanced himself completely from such adventures). Their approaches were distinct in character from the favoured techniques of Surrealism, such as frottage and later decalcomania, in which, by contrast, it was typical to try to read forms and stories into the heterogeneous surfaces or the random spots and marks, and thus to give to the latter a poetic value, to ‘elevate’ them artistically and save them from formlessness.¹³ In frottage the perceived form is graphically highlighted, or integrated into a determinate image, while decalcomania acquires meaning thanks to the interpretation of an accompanying verbal commentary.¹⁴

The tendency that we can trace in these works by Makovský and Toyen had no equivalent in Czech theory. This tendency arose at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, when the avant-garde found itself faced with a choice between two different conceptions of modern art. On the one side there was the purely modernist conception, founded on a logical development (‘progression’) of form and aiming towards pure opticality, a conception that had been developed in the Czech context by Karel Teige in his programmes of Poetism. On the other side, drawing ever more attention to itself, there was Surrealism, previously unassimilable for the Czech avant-garde, and representing an antithetical approach to modern art by means of its emphasis on content (in common with Symbolism and Expressionism) and its indifference to form. Within this situation of conflicting approaches, a situation open to the most diverse suggestions and stimuli, ‘unclassifiable’ works appeared that demanded a different method of interpretation. One possible way of conceptualising these works is offered by a particular alternative view of art history that Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois chose to refer to by Georges Bataille’s term *informe*, a concept first introduced in 1929 as part of a ‘Critical Dictionary’ published in the journal *Documents*.¹⁵

Appearing between the years 1929 to 1930, *Documents* formed an intellectual centre in which a group of excommunicated and rebel Surrealists collaborated with reputable researchers and art historians (one name that appeared in a list of the journal’s collaborators, published in the second up to the fifth issue of the first volume, was that of Vincenc Kramář, although he never published anything in *Documents*).¹⁶ Bataille, the journal’s co-founder and chief editor, contributed numerous articles, in which he worked out his theories for the first time (and, to the alarm of several ‘more conservative contributors’, ‘often violated the general orientation of the review’).¹⁷ As Denis Hollier has shown, *Documents’* campaign of anti-aestheticism was initiated by the ethnographers, who stressed that ethnography (like archaeology and the study of prehistory) should study everything that helps shape civilisation, and should not neglect any object, no matter how banal, primitive, or formless it is:¹⁸ ‘Just as the psychoanalyst must give everything

equal attention, just as the surrealist, in automatic writing, must let everything come through, so must the anthropological collector ... never privilege an object because it is “beautiful”, never exclude another because it seems insignificant, or repugnant’.¹⁹ *Documents*’ aforementioned ‘Critical Dictionary’, from December 1929, not only featured two short articles dealing with spit, by Michel Leiris and Marcel Griaule, but also included Bataille’s entry ‘Informe’, according to which the world resembles nothing and is formless, ‘something like a spider or spit’.²⁰ While the ethnographers wanted to create a continuum and reconstruct the contexts in which everything would seem to be in its right place, Bataille provocatively destabilised the distinction between the thing and the world, the part and the whole; he disrupted all hierarchies and any kind of system. As a concept negating the Aristotelian opposition between form and matter, the *informe*, for Bataille, is an operation that consists in ‘declassing’, calling into question, all categories and structures. According to Krauss the *informe* could be conceived not as the antithesis of form, but rather as an active possibility contained within form and capable of disrupting it from the inside, and thus as a kind of entropy within form.²¹

Czech authors knew of Bataille’s journal. The Paris-based Czech painter Josef Šíma had a particular connection to it, as the members of the *Le Grand Jeu* (*The Big Game*) group, to which Šíma belonged, were in contact with *Documents* and often published there. Like Bataille, the members of *Le Grand Jeu* were in disagreement with André Breton, even though they held different philosophical standpoints from Bataille. A reproduction of Šíma’s 1929 *Picture* appeared in the second volume of *Documents*, with reference to an exhibition of Šíma’s work at the Povolozky Gallery in Paris. This image, a highly abstracted landscape featuring indeterminate and unidentifiable shapes, was accompanied by a text by Roger Gilbert-Lecomte called ‘What Sima [*sic*] Sees and Makes Us See Today’.²²

In June 1929, Karel Teige wrote a report for the journal *ReD*, ‘From Paris’, in which he devoted considerable attention to the magazines that were responding to the current situation of the Surrealist movement (in particular the Belgian monthly *Variétés* (*Varieties*) and the Paris reviews *Le Grand Jeu* and *Bifur*). Yet *Documents*, which had been appearing since April of the same year, went without mention.²³ At the beginning of 1930, however, the fourth issue of *ReD* brought some stand-alone information about the magazine, accompanied by several reproductions of Alberto Giacometti’s work taken from it:

Documents, a new, big review from Paris—a journal for fine art, archaeology, ethnography and aesthetic curiosities, managed by a large editorial committee whose secretary is Georges Bataille—is in large part a focal point for those surrealists who have abandoned Breton and Aragon’s group. In this magazine we find essays and criticism signed by well-known names close to the surrealist movement, such as Robert Desnos, Roger Vitrac, Jacques Baron, M. Leiris, Hans Reichenbach etc., and reproductions of work by surrealist painters like Hans Arp, André Masson, Gaston-Louis Roux, Salvador Dali and the photographer Eli Lotar.²⁴

Teige then focussed specifically on Leiris’s study of Giacometti, whose work was then developing in close contact with the *Documents* circle.²⁵

Nezval included two items from *Documents* (both from the fifth issue of the second volume, where the article about Šíma also appeared) in the first issue of his monthly review *Zvěrokruh* (*Zodiac*) from November 1930. One of these involved a reproduction of Grandville’s drawing *First Dream: Crime and Atonement* (*Premier rêve: Crime et expiation*), which was originally published in 1847 in *Magasin Pittoresque* (*Picturesque Magazine*) and which Bataille had used as visual accompaniment for the entry ‘Eye’ in the ‘Critical Dictionary’. The commentary in *Zodiac* took from Bataille’s text a description of Grandville’s dream about ‘a hideous and all-seeing eye, which pursues a murderer to the bottom of the sea, where it turns into a monstrous fish and devours him’, a dream that also influenced Victor Hugo’s poem ‘La Conscience’.²⁶ Also briefly mentioned were Bataille’s comparisons of the drawing to the symbol of the eye in detective literature (specifically in the illustrated weekly *L’Oeil de la Police* (*The Eye of the Police*)) and to the famous opening scene of *An Andalusian Dog* (*Un Chien andalou*, 1929), in which an eye is sliced in half by a razor. Nezval further added a reference to Odilon Redon’s lithographs that take the

eye as their subject, which are described as ‘surréalisme avant la lettre’ (Nezval reproduced several of these in *Zodiac*). A kind of free postscript to this topic was offered by Jindřich Štyrský’s 1930 drawing *Eyes (Oči)*, which appeared in the second issue of *Zodiac*.

The second item that Nezval took from *Documents* concerned an English publication from 1911, *What a Life!*, which was illustrated with montages of engravings from a department store catalogue; in a foreword its authors noted that, among the catalogue’s ‘facts and prices’, they had found ‘a deeply-moving human drama’.²⁷ *Documents* had reprinted several pages from this book, with an accompanying text written by Raymond Queneau. Nezval chose one of these pages for his magazine, gave a brief summary of the information from *Documents*, and compared this nearly 20-year-old book with Marx Ernst’s 1929 collage novel *The Hundred Headless Woman (La Femme 100 têtes)*, from which an excerpt was also provided. Thus Nezval gave an early indication of his passion for collages created from various catalogues, something he expressed in *The Chain of Fortune (Řetěz štěstí)*, written in 1935 and published in 1936:

For years I have been including among my dearest memories of life several catalogues, which it is presumably not so difficult to find. Foremost among these is a catalogue of surgical trusses and, right behind this, a catalogue of seeds and one of musical instruments. Starting particularly from the times when I secretly wished to utilise them for the production of collages, there has not been a day when my thoughts would not come to dwell on them.²⁸

In the same period that Teige registered the existence of *Documents* as one more journal of the Paris avant-garde, and that Nezval perceived in it one of the many sources from which he could freely draw ideas without preserving their original contexts, there existed a journal in Prague that, while never explicitly mentioning *Documents*, devoted much more concentrated attention to its content and published translations of important texts from it, though of course without naming their source. This was the anthology *Kvart (Quarto)*, an unorthodox periodical open to various currents of thought.²⁹ In *Kvart*’s very first issue, published in spring 1930, one entry from the ‘Critical Dictionary’, ‘Crustaceans’ by Jacques Baron, appeared on its own, as though intended to pass by unnoticed, in a translation by Jan Zahradníček. The second issue, from the summer of 1930, followed this with the ‘Methodological Aphorisms’ of Carl Einstein. In the third issue, which appeared in 1931, this interest resulted in the publication of two essays from leading personalities of *Documents*: Bataille (erroneously referred to in *Kvart* as Charles rather than Georges) and Michel Leiris.³⁰ *Kvart* thus reprinted both Bataille’s key study ‘Base Materialism and Gnosticism’ (‘Le bas matérialisme et la gnose’, in Tříška’s translation titled ‘Hrubý materialismus a gnóse’), which opened the second volume of *Documents*, and Leiris’s essay ‘Man and His Interior’ (‘L’homme et son intérieur’, in Žantovský’s translation titled ‘Člověk a jeho vnitro’).

Bataille, in the text just mentioned, linked his concept of materialism to the gnostic understanding of matter as ‘an active principle’, which has ‘its own eternal autonomous existence as darkness’.³¹ He rejected a materialism founded on a visual notion of matter and not on bodily experience. Likewise, he refused the Classical, and also the modernist, fetishism of form, which was too dependent on visual distance:

The specific reactions of Gnosticism led to the representation of forms radically contrary to the ancient academic style, to the representation of forms in which it is possible to see the image of this base matter that alone, by its incongruity and by an overwhelming lack of respect, permits the intellect to escape from the constraints of idealism. In the same way today certain plastic representations are the expression of an intransigent materialism, of a recourse to everything that compromises the powers that be in matter of form.³²

In this approach to materialism lies one of the disagreements between Bataille and Breton. In his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism (Second manifeste du surréalisme)* from 1929, Breton responded to Bataille’s earlier ‘Materialism’ entry in *Documents*: ‘In M. Bataille’s case ... what we are witnessing is an obnoxious return to old anti-dialectical materialism, which this time is trying to force its way gratuitously through Freud’.³³

Bataille maintained the view that materialism (particularly of the dialectical sort) is usually fundamentally idealist: ‘Most materialists, even though they may have wanted to do away with

all spiritual entities, ended up positing an order of things whose hierarchical relations mark it as specifically idealist'.³⁴ Bataille was disdainful of the Surrealists' adoption of the Hegelian notion of transcendence.³⁵ He characterised Breton's Surrealism as an Icarus-like movement, seeking out heterogeneous and transgressive material only so as to transform it along idealist lines.

The antagonism between Breton and Bataille had other causes besides these intellectual disagreements. Breton clearly identified those causes in the conclusion of the *Second Manifesto*, in which he devoted a surprising amount of space to Bataille; surprising because Breton himself, in spite of all his quarrels and schisms, was at this point recognised as one of the most important personalities of the interwar avant-garde, whereas Bataille was still basically an unknown librarian working at Paris's Bibliothèque Nationale.³⁶ Yet the grouping of lapsed (apostate) and expelled Surrealists around the *Documents* journal confirmed Breton's suspicions that Bataille wanted to challenge him, as the leader of a rival group. Breton reproached Bataille for his hypocrisy, evident in the contrast between his vigorous defence of revolt against all conventions on the one hand and his 'staid' existence sitting for hours in a library on the other.³⁷ A further reason for this animosity was Breton's personal disgust with Bataille's pornographic and excremental obsessions: 'M. Bataille professes to wish only to consider in the world that which is vilest'.³⁸ As Denis Hollier has remarked, there was a gulf between the two men in terms of their life experiences and, specifically, in their relationship to psychoanalysis: while Bataille submitted himself to it as a patient under Adrien Borel, Breton put himself in the position of the psychiatrist, authorised to do so by his study of medicine, his experience as an orderly at the Saint-Dizier psychiatric centre during the war, and his trip to meet Sigmund Freud in Vienna in 1921.³⁹ When he criticised Bataille in his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, his wording made it sound like he was presenting a diagnosis.

Bataille, together with others who had been similarly attacked, responded to this with the excoriating pamphlet *A Corpse (Un Cadavre)*, which featured a prominent photographic montage comprising a portrait of Breton with closed eyes, originally from *The Surrealist Revolution (La Révolution Surréaliste)*, to which were added bloody tears and a crown of thorns. Here Bataille described Breton as a 'false revolutionary with the head of Christ', and Surrealism as a 'religious enterprise'.⁴⁰

The Czech avant-garde kept track of all these activities. A translation of the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* was published in *Zodiac* in December 1930, and just prior to this, in the November issue, Adolf Hoffmeister's article 'Autumn in Paris' appeared, in which he unequivocally took Breton's side: 'Breton is rearing his lion's head. He's no carcass! What an error this pamphlet [*A Corpse*] has made!'⁴¹ Karel Teige, at this time still retaining a critical distance towards Surrealism, summed up his view of Breton's polemic with the Surrealist 'apostates', and of the *Corpse* pamphlet, in his essay 'Surrealism and Le Grand Jeu', published in 1930 in *ReD*. The Paris controversies, on which he took no personal position, were considered as 'a case of the crystallisation of ideas and the classification of minds within the ranks of the international avant-garde'.⁴² He saw in these conflicts a clear parallel with 'the debates among the Prague avant-garde', which Jindřich Štyrský had provoked with his incendiary article 'A Generation's Corner' (and which had resulted in a split between Teige and Štyrský of several years).⁴³ The main problem both with Breton, and with the groups that had splintered off from his movement, was defined by Teige, from a political perspective, as their 'undefined opinions', in the sense that none of them had unequivocally embraced dialectical materialism.⁴⁴ Although Breton had referred in the *Second Manifesto* to Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin, Teige was (rightly) convinced that:

Surrealists of all shades, at their intellectual and temperamental core, are really Communist anarchists (rather than Marxists), and in many cases even romantic, individualist anarchists ... Whichever journal they are grouped around, whether this is *La Grand Jeu*, *Bifur*, *Variétés*, *Documents* or *La Révolution Surréaliste*, they are all romantics, and also revolutionaries, because, like all romantics, they are in irreconcilable conflict with the bourgeois world.⁴⁵

In Teige's opinion, however, 'cultural revolution cannot succeed simply through its romantic ideological arsenal, its protests and anarchistic proclamations!'⁴⁶

In the years that followed, Teige would re-evaluate his views about Breton's relation to

dialectical materialism and about Surrealism itself. A similar process occurred, though in a more dramatic fashion, with Štyrský and Nezval, who around 1930 went through a period of wavering and self-contradiction: while explicitly rejecting Surrealism in various verbal declarations, they were nonetheless influenced by it in several of their artworks. The shift towards Surrealism thus took place first at the level of artistic creation; only subsequently was it theoretically ‘justified’, although this justification had a retroactive reach. As soon as the Czech artists explicitly adopted Surrealism, they began reinterpreting their own artistic development during the 1920s. Poetism and Artificialism, which they had originally set in antithesis to Surrealism, were now recast, in the mid-1930s, as movements that, though autonomously created, had been a logical step on the road to Surrealism.⁴⁷

Czech Surrealism in the 1930s oriented itself firmly towards André Breton, with whom the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group maintained personal contacts that were further strengthened during Breton’s very successful lecture tour of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1935. Breton’s charismatic personality also won admiration from members of the younger generation who became interested in Surrealism during the 1930s. It is nonetheless evident that there was a range of different stimuli feeding directly into the work of the Czechoslovak Group’s protagonists, stimuli that in several cases had links back to Breton’s adversary, Georges Bataille.

The figure closest to Bataille’s opinions was Jindřich Štyrský. It seems almost symbolic that the complete cycle of Štyrský’s 1929 drawing series *Apocalypse (Apokalypsa)* was directly inserted, as a special supplement, into the translation of Bataille’s study in *Kvart*.⁴⁸ Štyrský’s texts from the early 1930s affirm his interest in the *informe*. In 1930 he declared that the contents of a spittoon can have greater value, as far as spectacle is concerned, than the panorama spreading out before a window in which pelargoniums are growing.⁴⁹ Around three years later he expressed his fascination with mould and putrefaction in his book *Emily Comes to Me in a Dream (Emilie přichází k mně ve snu)*, in which he described gazing at a sealed aquarium containing the remnants of beloved objects: ‘I looked with satisfaction at the putrefying state of my dreams, until its walls grew covered with mould and it was impossible to see anything’.⁵⁰ Likewise, Emily’s beauty has been created so that it can rot. Štyrský presented similar ideas in several photographs from 1934, for instance in a picture showing a recess or corner cluttered with cast-off items and dominated by a broken glass tank, whose murky front compounds the difficulty of identifying its bizarrely formless contents, or a photograph capturing the details on a gravestone, which bears the inscription *Růžka* and, inside an oval medallion, a woman’s portrait that seems to gradually disappear until it merges into the surface of the stone.⁵¹ Štyrský took a more expressive approach to the latter theme in his oil painting *Delicate Stuffing for a Coffin (Jemná nádivka do rakve)* from the same year.

Štyrský’s imagination drew to a significant extent on scatological themes, and thus on an area to which Breton overtly expressed his hostility but in which Bataille revelled. There is a story often cited in regard to this topic revolving around Salvador Dalí’s painting *The Lugubrious Game (Le Jeu lugubre, 1929)* and dating back to the time when Dalí first made contact with Breton’s group. Dalí himself, in both *The Diary of a Genius (Journal d’un Génie)* and *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí (La vie secrète de Salvador Dalí)*, described with relish (and probably a degree of exaggeration) how Éluard and Breton were shocked by the scatological and anal elements of the depicted subject, and commented ironically on several ‘taboos’ that had been established in line with the taste of the Surrealist group.⁵² Bataille was understandably enthused by the picture and wrote a celebrated study of it for *Documents*. Yet Dalí, for whom it was then more advantageous to side with Breton, at least temporarily, withheld his permission to reproduce the painting, so that ultimately the article was accompanied only by a specially drawn diagram of the work discussed.

In his book *Dreams (Sny)*, compiled shortly before his death, Štyrský himself included a specific section on scatological dreams, which was dated 1934. The section features no text, but contains a whole series of drawings and several paintings that obviously arose from the same inspiration: *The Liquid Doll (Tekutá panenka)*, *Man Carried by the Wind (Člověk nesený větrem)*, *Sodom and Gomorrah (Sodoma a Gomora)*. The degradation of the human figure in these works is often linked to the evocation of a violent act: *Man Carried by the Wind* suggests the image of



Fig. 19.2. Jindřich Štyrský, *The Liquid Doll* (*Tekutá panenka*, 1934). Oil on canvas, 110 x 59 cm. Bernard Galateau Collection, Paris.

a hanged man turning into excrement, while the runny mass of matter in *The Liquid Doll* has streams of blood trickling down it (Fig. 19.2). The first version of *The Liquid Doll*, as captured in Josef Sudek's photograph, strikingly resembles *Man Carried by the Wind* in its composition (indeed, the preparatory drawings for both pictures are almost interchangeable), for here the chosen scenario was narratively 'followed through' to the point of a further scatological element at the bottom of the painting; but in the picture's second—preserved—variation, this follow-through has been abandoned in the interests of a more abstract feeling for the work. Various, multicoloured, scatological motifs are scattered about in the background of the painting *The Head That Thinks* (*Hlava, která myslí*, 1934), which can be connected to the group of works just mentioned; from out of a strange, completely shrouded head, which more closely resembles an inanimate natural formation, there grow thin shoots topped off by amorphous coloured splotches.

Bataille's conception of scatology, as approximated in the work of Jindřich Štyrský, relates to the question set by Plato in his fictional dialogue between Parmenides and the young Socrates, during a famous passage in which Socrates accepts without hesitation the ideas of similarity, unity,

multiplicity, justice, beauty, and good, but doubts whether there also exist ideas of man, fire, or water. Parmenides then puts another question to him, concerning a series of ‘scatological things’:

“And would you feel equally undecided, Socrates, about things of which the mention may provoke a smile?—I mean such things as hair, mud, dirt, or anything else which is vile and paltry; would you suppose that each of these has an idea distinct from the actual objects with which we come into contact, or not?”

“Certainly not,” said Socrates; “visible things like these are such as they appear to us, and I am afraid that there would be an absurdity in assuming any idea of them...”⁵³

Socrates is afraid of falling into the ‘bottomless pit of nonsense’ to which such reflections may lead him, and prefers to occupy himself in thinking hard about those things that do have ideas, but Parmenides assures him that when philosophy takes a ‘firmer grasp’ of him and he stops paying attention to the opinions of others, he will realise that none of these things are really worthless. Thus, Parmenides, within Plato’s text, calls into question the evaluative conception of ideas. His mentions of mud and dirt can be compared with Bataille’s reference to spit and spiders in his entry on the *informe*.⁵⁴ Plato and Bataille both draw our attention to things that are trivial, laughable, or repulsive and which have nothing to do with visual, theoretical perception, but rather with direct physical context.



Fig. 19.3. Toyen, *Man of Glue (Muž z klišu)*, 1934). Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm. Private collection.

The Head That Thinks emerged in the same year as a František Hudeček's *Phaedrus and Socrates or On Beauty (Faidros a Sókratés čili O kráse)*, a relief made of rags which parodically refers to another of Plato's dialogues and formally approaches/resembles several scatological drawings by Jindřich Štyrský.⁵⁵ Yet despite the outward similarity we might note a difference in the basic approach. Hudeček, along with Gross and Zívř, was experimenting at this time with the most diverse refuse materials and decrepit objects, inventing special techniques in order to create, in a Bretonian spirit, striking lyrical metaphors from out of this heterogeneous material and to define anew the concept of beauty. Zívř's polychromatic plaster relief *Three Figures (Tři postavy, 1937)* relates to the practice of moulage, with its runny and fluid forms suggesting 'bodies hung up as though on a roasting spit, run through with a wooden dagger', and recalls both Štyrský's scatological pictures from 1934, particularly *Man Carried by the Wind*, and Toyen's *Man of Glue (Muž z klibu, also from 1934)* (Fig. 19.3).⁵⁶ According to the author's own account, the picture 'arose from a concrete imaginative experience, but subconsciously there was a philosophical subtext added to it in reaction to the Spanish Civil War'.⁵⁷ Štyrský and Toyen responded to the dramatic events of the end of the 1930s with different expressive means.

Further 'Batailleian' inspirations appeared in Štyrský's work, even if these were indirect and combined with other influences. As is demonstrated by a picture like *Palmette (Palmeta, 1931)*, Štyrský was working at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s with images of bodily fragments torn out of their original contexts, similarly to the way Bataille treated his entries in *Documents' 'Critical Dictionary'*, which were generally accompanied by Boiffard's photographs: each entry breaks down the body, isolates the organ or its parts, refuses to respect the hierarchy of relations, and gives precedence to the newly autonomous part, which cannot now be used to reassemble the original organic whole. The *informe* leads here to the distortion of the original form of the body, to an attack on the architecture of the body as man's first prison.⁵⁸ In Hollier's words, 'man's revolt against prison is a rebellion against his own form, against the human figure'.⁵⁹ Organs are liberated from their functions (just as words are liberated from their lexical order) and are considered in and of themselves, so that an eye, for instance, appears without reference to a system of seeing (it is now the eye that is seen and not the eye that sees). The subject of the eye, an exceptionally popular one among the Surrealists, from Ernst to Dalí and Buñuel, had a notable presence in Štyrský's work, culminating in the cycle *The Omnipresent Eye (Všudypřítomné oko)* from 1936 to 1941; Toyen also used the motif of eyes as independent elements grouped into new configurations, and the most striking example of this is *The Remainder of the Night (Zbytek noci, 1934)*, where the eyes have a heavily cracked surface.⁶⁰

As shown in Roland Barthes' 1963 study, Bataille's famous novel *The Story of the Eye (Histoire de l'oeil, 1928)*, which was published under a pseudonym, dethroned the eye from its privileged position within the hierarchy of the senses and linked it to objects and functions associated more with 'lower' human behaviour.⁶¹ Martin Jay refers to Bataille's critique of the superior status of vision with regard to Freud's thesis (still unpublished at this time, but already known among psychoanalysts) that within the development of human civilisation there is a connection between human beings' upright posture, linked to the raising of sight to the leading position, and the repression of the sexual and aggressive instincts, leading to a radical division of the 'higher' mental capacities from the 'lower' functions of the body.⁶² Bataille considered the refusal of our animal nature as a form of oppression. According to Bataille, man is split between two axes: the biological axis, created by the polarity of mouth-anus, is vertical, while the intellectual axis, as given by the field of vision, remains horizontal.

Fluctuations between civilisation and animality, as well as between a vertical and a horizontal axis, are evident, in a distinctive fashion, in a group of works by Jindřich Štyrský, which relate to his *Dream about a Bearded Head (Sen o vousaté hlavě)* from 1936. In the first of these studies, a strangely hirsute head hangs on a vertically-oriented construction of lines, stretched tight between the ground and a crooked tree. Another drawing shows a face that retains an anxiety-filled human expression and yet is covered with fur; it has an open mouth and is 'threaded' on a horizontal line, along with a female torso in drapery that appears to fit together with the face.



Fig. 19.4. Jindřich Štyrský, *Untitled (Oedipus) (Bez názvu, Oidipus, 1940)*. Oil on canvas, 26.5 x 20 cm. Benedikt Rejt Gallery, Louny.

What becomes clear on a closer examination, however, is the impossibility of any kind of harmonious fusion between the two fragments. Štyrský elaborated further on *Dream about a Bearded Head* in his 1937 painting *Tribute to Karl Marx (Hold Karlu Marxovi)*, which basically repeats the composition of the previous study, with the key difference that the formerly half-animal-like head now bears the features of the German philosopher.⁶³

The first study for *Dream about a Bearded Head* could be seen as a kind of obscured precursor to a small picture from January 1940—*Untitled (Oedipus) (Bez názvu (Oidipus))*—one of Štyrský’s final oil paintings (Fig. 19.4). Surprisingly, this painting on pasteboard has been mounted in a gilded rococo frame, whose ornamental decorativeness contrasts with the rawness, Primitivism, and drastic expressiveness of the painting itself. This juxtaposition at first evokes rustic depictions of the suffering Christ. The frontally-presented face, with its roughly-painted black hair and beard and its open mouth formed into a convulsive grimace, has two bleeding wounds in place of eyes, and the body is submerged in water beneath the shoulders. Bright red paint has been splattered in formless blotches over the whole head (the motif of dripping blood was especially typical of Toyen’s work, but it occasionally appeared in Štyrský’s work too, particularly dramatically in the first two versions of his drawing *Woman Frozen in Ice (Žena zamrzlá v ledu)* from 1939, in which a girl’s profile is marked by large gashes in the skin). Similar motifs were presented in well-known cinematic images of faces with bleeding eyes, whether it be Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin*

(*Bronenosets Potemkin*, 1925) or Luis Buñuel's *The Golden Age* (*L'Âge d'Or*, 1930). The mouth opened in an unarticulated scream of pain or ecstasy is also a motif with a rich iconographic background, one that includes Boiffard's photographs of opened mouths with protruding tongues, which accompany Bataille's entry in *Documents*. Among Štyrský's work of the 1930s it also appears in the painting *Palmette* (*Palmeta*, 1931), in his illustration for *May: Long Is My Journey, Calling in Vain* (*Máj. Dalekát cesta má! Marné volání!*, 1934–1936), and in the second study for *Dream about a Bearded Head*.⁶⁴ Štyrský's small picture from January 1940 shocks above all with its theme of blinding, which orients the image towards the Oedipal myth so popular among the Surrealists.

By means of deliberately-distorted allusions both to Christian iconography and to ancient mythology, and through a highly individual approach that oscillates between anxiety and frivolity, Štyrský addressed the subject of the victim in modern art, something with which Bataille had also concerned himself in his study *Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent Van Gogh* (*La Mutilation sacrificielle et l'oreille coupée de Vincent Van Gogh*), published in *Documents*.⁶⁵ Here Bataille explored the connection between painting and the mutilation of the body in the act of 'sacrificial madness', in the gesture that, in his opinion, fulfils the basic, archaic function of art. He considers self-mutilation as a painterly act, for painting is nothing if it does not attack the architecture of the human body (he judged the most intense form of the sacrifice to be Oedipal enucleation). According to Bataille's theory, when art first arose in the dark caves of prehistoric painters—the first occupiers of the labyrinth—it was not as 'an act of self-duplication', of mankind reproducing itself, but as a representation of sacrifice, a symbolic supplement to the self-mutilation performed on the human body.⁶⁶ Bataille points to the difference between the visual tradition, which was created after mankind had left the cave and begun painting 'in the clarity of sunlight', and the original tradition of the labyrinth, governed by darkness and the unknown.⁶⁷ In this account it is not Narcissus but the Minotaur who is present at the birth of art (it was indeed Bataille who in 1933 proposed to Tériade the name *Minotaure* for his new review).⁶⁸ From such a conception of the origins of art there are particular consequences that ensued for modern painting. In all his *Documents* texts, Bataille himself dealt with the issue of modern pictorial space, which, in the spirit of his critique of anthropomorphism, he characterises as the refusal and destruction of the human figure in action: the space of painting is the space through which he who, like Oedipus, has blinded himself feels his way.⁶⁹ In this context it is possible to see Štyrský's picture *Untitled* (*Oedipus*) as a disguised self-portrait and at the same time as an idiosyncratic response to Poussin's question.

Translated by Jonathan Owen

1 Lenka Bydžovská, "Vidíte něco?" zeptal se Poussin...: Informe, Bataille a čeští surrealisté, *Umění* 45/5, 1997, pp. 477–488.

2 Balzac, *The Unknown Masterpiece*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: New York Review of Books, 2000), p. 27.

3 Balzac, *The Unknown Masterpiece*, pp. 40–41.

4 Balzac's story became famous thanks to, among other things, Émile Bernard's 'Memories of Paul Cézanne', where it was set in opposition to Émile Zola's *The Work*: 'And one evening, when I spoke to [Cézanne] of [*The Unknown Masterpiece*] and of Frenhofer ... [h]e got up from the table, stood before me, and striking his chest with his index finger, he admitted wordlessly by this repeated gesture that he was the very character in the novel. He was so moved by this feeling that his eyes filled with tears. Someone who had lived earlier, but whose soul was prophetic, had understood him. Oh, there was a great distance between this Frenhofer, who was blocked by his very genius, and Zola's Claude, born without talent, whom Zola had unhappily seen in Cézanne himself!' Émile Bernard, 'Memories of Paul Cézanne', in Michael Doran (ed.), *Conversations with Cézanne* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 65.

Miloš Jiránek was so taken with the scene described by Bernard, that in 1908, in *Volné směry*, he gave a detailed retelling of Balzac's story, whose first Czech translation would only appear a year later. After making clear that Zola had actually drawn more on Manet than on Cézanne for his character, Jiránek ended his

article with the following words: 'For all the story's romantic allure, Balzac surmised more about modern art than Zola, an art critic and friend of the major impressionist painters, proved able to grasp some forty years later'. M. Jiránek, 'Honoré de Balzac, Neznámé arcidílo', *Volné směry* 12 (1908): pp. 275–276. Bohumil Kubišta also mentioned Balzac in his essay 'Nicolas Poussin', *Volné směry* 16 (1912): pp. 201–222.

The *Unknown Masterpiece* remained a topic of interest in later years. Critical literature often makes reference to Picasso's illustration for the story, falling as this does within the artist's obsessive theme of 'the artist and his model'. The illustration captures the painter observing his female model intently, as he converts the human body into an abstract tangle of lines on canvas. At the same time, Picasso was also interested in the opposite of this situation, in which the abstract figure of the painter converts an abstract model into a naturalistic image.

5 Toyen (born Marie Čermínová) exhibited *The Night Party* in March 1930 in Aventinská mansarda, Prague, and the following year she presented it as a wedding gift to Konstantin Biebl and his wife Marie. The picture appears in a photograph from the time showing the interior of the Biebls' flat in Louny, a flat designed in 1931–1932 by the Devětsil architect Josef Špalek. See: Rostislav Švácha, 'Devětsil Design: Five Interiors', in Rostislav Švácha (ed.) *Devětsil* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art/London: Design Museum, 1990), pp. 48–49.

6 In his book *Film*, Teige writes about the reflected light

- plays conducted at the Weimar Bauhaus: ‘The possibilities of this dynamic spectacle are broader than the limitations of the objectless tabular picture. This is modern fireworks and fireworks were always allowed to be abstract and objectless; they broke no conventions in being so...’. Karel Teige, *Film* (Prague: Václav Petr, 1925), p. 120.
- 7 Rita Bischof, who in her monograph on Toyen described pictures like *Swamp* and *The Night Party* (translated into German as *Feuerwerk*) as ‘Informel avant la lettre’, also saw *The Night Party* as a radically abstract portrait. In her opinion this picture unintentionally suggests the indistinct imprint of a face, thus recalling the Veil of Veronica, in whose name André Chastel discovered the words ‘vera icona’. See: Rita Bischof, *Toyen* (Frankfurt: Neue Kritik, 1987), p. 27. The nature of Toyen’s fine artworks of this period prove somewhat resistant to such interpretation, but Bischof is right to observe that in Toyen’s later works, produced within the context of Informalism, hints of figures and faces do emerge as though from cracks in the walls (in this regard we could compare *The Night Party* with, say, *A Look into the Void* (*Pohled do prázdna*) from 1934). As regards the connections pursued in the present article, it is worth noting that Bischof herself deals with Bataille in her oft-cited book *Souveränität und Subversion: Georges Batailles Theorie der Moderne* (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1984).
- 8 Vítězslav Nezval and Karel Teige, *Štyrský a Toyen* (Prague: Borový, 1938), p. 106.
- 9 Nezval and Teige, *Štyrský a Toyen*, pp. 12–13.
- 10 Adolf Hoffmeister and František Muzika, ‘Látka k úvaze o kritice’, *Vlně směry* 31 (1935): p. 102.
- 11 Jiří Šebek, *Ze sochařského díla národního umělce Vincence Makovského*, exhibition catalogue, Museum and Art Gallery of the Horácko Region (Nové Město na Moravě, 1970), p.21. See also: Karel Srp, ‘Sochařství dvacátých a třicátých let’, in Vojtěch Lahoda (ed.), *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění IV/2* (Prague: Academia, 1998), p. 376.
- 12 Georges Didi-Huberman, *L’empreinte* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997).
- 13 In this respect, Surrealist experiments related to pareidolic perception and link back to a long tradition of discovering specific forms in stains and marks, something that was mentioned by Pliny and which interested such artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Piero di Cosimo.
- 14 This was the position taken by Jan Mukařovský in his analysis of the ‘Decalomania’ cycle in Nezval’s collection *The Absolute Gravedigger* (*Absolutní hrobař*), in which Nezval reproduced his own decals together with poems interpreting them. Mukařovský stressed that in such cases the creation of meaning takes place only through the juxtaposition of picture (the decal) and poem: ‘the poem without a picture loses its purpose just as the picture does without a poem’. Jan Mukařovský, ‘Sémantický rozbor básnického díla: Nezvalův Absolutní hrobař’, *Slovo a slovesnost* 4 (1938): pp. 1–15.
- 15 Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *L’informe: mode d’emploi* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996). For more on Surrealist dictionaries, see: Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture*. (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 27–31.
- 16 Kramář was probably embraced by this circle of collaborators because he was an expert on, and collector of, the work of Picasso, one of the *Documents* group’s favourite artists. At the same time, Kramář’s work fitted in well with the trend towards the respectably scientific, in which *Documents* also partook to some extent.
- 17 Allan Stoekl, ‘Introduction’, in Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 11.
- 18 Denis Hollier, ‘La valeur d’usage de l’impossible’, in *Documents*, 1 (reprint) (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1991), pp. 7–34.
- 19 Denis Hollier, ‘The Use Value of the Impossible’, in Carolyn Bailey Gill (ed.), *Bataille: Writing the Sacred* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 142.
- 20 Georges Bataille, ‘Informe’, *Documents* 1 (1929): p. 382.
- 21 Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1993), p. 167.
- 22 Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, ‘Ce que voit et ce que fait voir Sima aujourd’hui’, *Documents* 2 (1930): pp. 301–302.
- 23 Karel Teige, ‘Z Paříže’, *ReD* 2 (1928–1929): pp. 322–323.
- 24 *ReD* 3 (1929–1931), p.107. Other members of the *Documents* circle included Artaud, Queneau, Callois, Boiffard, etc.
- 25 Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 43–85.
- 26 *Zvěrokruh* 1 (1930): p.43; Georges Bataille, ‘Eye’, in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, p. 19 (modified translation).
- 27 *Zvěrokruh* 1 (1930): p. 45.
- 28 Vítězslav Nezval, *Dílo* 32 (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1980), p. 205.
- 29 For more on the specific character of *Kvart*, see: Karel Nábělek, ‘Kvart – Sborník poesie a vědy’, *Umění* 44 (1996): pp. 74–92.
- 30 When Jindřich Chaloupecký presented texts from Bataille’s book *Le Coupable* in *Listy* after the Second World War (*Listy* 1 (1947): p. 526), he made the assumption that the French author was being translated into Czech for the first time. As an aside on the fate of Bataille’s Christian name in the Czech lands, we might further note that in the index to the third volume of a collection of Teige’s work he was alternatively given the name Gaston.
- 31 Georges Bataille, ‘Base Materialism and Gnosticism’, in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, p. 47.
- 32 Bataille, ‘Base Materialism and Gnosticism’, p. 51.
- 33 André Breton, ‘Second Manifesto of Surrealism’, in Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 183.
- 34 Georges Bataille, ‘The Language of Flowers’, in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, p. 15.
- 35 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 236.
- 36 Allan Stoekl, ‘Introduction’, in *Visions of Excess*, p. 11.
- 37 Breton, ‘Second Manifesto of Surrealism’, p. 183.
- 38 Breton, ‘Second Manifesto of Surrealism’, p. 183.
- 39 Hollier, *Against Architecture*, p. 108.
- 40 The pamphlet’s title referred to a pamphlet of the same name that Breton had published in 1924 on the occasion of the death of Anatole France. The crisis of 1929–1931 within the Surrealist movement is charted by Maurice Nadeau in *Histoire du surréalisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964).
- 41 Adolf Hoffmeister, ‘Podzim v Paříži’, *Zvěrokruh* 1 (1930): p. 35.
- 42 Karel Teige, ‘Nadrealismus a Vysoká hra’, *ReD* 3 (1929–1931): p. 253.
- 43 Karel Srp, ‘Ediční komentář’, in Jindřich Štyrský, *Každý z nás stopuje svoji ropuchu*, ed. Karel Srp (Prague: Thyrus, 1996), pp. 142–151.
- 44 Karel Teige, ‘Nadrealismus a Vysoká hra’, p. 253.
- 45 Karel Teige, ‘Nadrealismus a Vysoká hra’, p. 254.
- 46 Karel Teige, ‘Nadrealismus a Vysoká hra’, p. 254.
- 47 Růžena Hamanová, ‘Surrealistický most Praha- Paříž’, in Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp (eds.) *Český surrealismus 1929–1953* (Prague: Prague City Gallery/Argo, 1996), pp. 22–27, 94–105; Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, ‘Fragmenty snu’, in Bydžovská and Srp (eds.), *Český surrealismus*, pp. 28–47.
- 48 Josef Vojvodík examined the *Apocalypse* cycle in detail in his study “‘No Apocalypse, not now’: Symbolika a sémantika cyklu *Apokalypsa* (1929) Jindřicha Štyrského”, *Umění* 45 (1997): pp. 259–279.
- 49 Jindřich Štyrský, ‘Poznámka k výstavě Štyrského a Toyen’, *Musaion* 1 (1929–1930): p. 243.
- 50 Jindřich Štyrský, *Emilie přichází ke mně ve snu* (Prague: Edice 69, 1933), p. 7.
- 51 Karel Srp, ‘The Philosophy of the Recess’, *Umění* 44 (1996): pp. 41–52; Srp, ‘Images without Grammar’, *Umění* 43 (1995): pp. 551–567.
- 52 Salvador Dalí, *Deník génia* trans. Jan Vaněk (Olomouc: Votobia, 1994), pp. 16–19. Dalí, *Tajný život Salvadora Dalího*, trans. Ludmila Vaňková (Prague: NLN, 1994), pp. 246–254. See also: Dawn Ades, *Dalí* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1982), pp. 70, 74.

- 53 Plato, 'Parmenides', in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. and ed. B. Jowett (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 48.
- 54 Hollier, *Against Architecture*, p. 99.
- 55 For an interpretation of this work, see: Vojtěch Lahoda, 'Surrealismus z děř', in Bydžovská and Srp (eds.), *Český surrealismus*, pp. 239–240.
- 56 Jaromír F. Typlt (ed.), *Konfese Ladislava Živra* (Brno: Host, 1997), p. 45.
- 57 Typlt (ed.), *Konfese Ladislava Živra*, p. 45.
- 58 Hollier, *Against Architecture*, pp. 11–12.
- 59 Hollier, *Against Architecture*, p. 11.
- 60 For a discussion of the motif of the eye in Štyrský and Toyen in the context of international Surrealism, see: Bydžovská and Srp, 'Halucinatorní, virtuální a mentální objekty', in Bydžovská and Srp (eds.), *Český surrealismus*, pp. 154–159.
- 61 Roland Barthes, 'La métaphore de l'oeil', *Critique* 195–196 (1963): pp. 772–777.
- 62 Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, pp. 211–262.
- 63 Karel Srp, 'Slastná spojení: Krutosti koláží', in J. Machalický (ed.), *Česká koláž* (Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 1997), p. 116.
- 64 This drawing, which also has a painted version from 1935, is also interesting for the long, deep, backward tilt of the head, an ecstatic posture in which, according to Bataille, humanity's division between bodily axes is disturbed.
- 65 See: *Documents* 2/8 (1930): pp. 10–20.
- 66 Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p. 82.
- 67 Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 230.
- 68 Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p. 83.
- 69 Hollier, *Against Architecture*, p. 79.