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The Fictional and Theoretical Writings of
Pierre Klossowski

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Contents.

Acknowledgements -		i
Abstract -		ii
Abbreviations -		iii
Introduction -	‘La persistance d’un nom’.	1
Chapter One -	Sade.	9
	I) Being without Eternity.	37
	II) The Triumph of Perversion.	59
	III) Writing on the Limit.	81
Chapter Two -	Nietzsche.	101
	I) Klossowski on Nietzsche.	101
	II) <u>La Vocation suspendue</u> and the play of parody.	118
	III) Translating Nietzsche.	139
	IV) <u>Le Bain de Diane</u> and the mythological image.	169
Chapter Three -	Roberte.	193
	I) On Writing and Painting ‘le phantasme’.	193
	II) Writing.	201
	III) Seeing.	235
	IV) Exchange.	260
Conclusion -	The Persistence of Parody.	298
Bibliography -		302

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Abstract.

This thesis gives an extended account of the fictional and theoretical works of writer, essayist and painter Pierre Klossowski. Through a close analysis of the relationship between his essayistic and novelistic writings it considers the way in which Klossowski comes to theorise the nature of the literary artefact as a space of *theatre* or *spectacle* and how such a formulation questions received notions of identity and traditional distinctions between the literary and philosophical *per se*.

The first chapter is devoted to Klossowski's writings on Sade. This involves a short account of the articles he wrote in the 1930s but also a comparison of the 1947 and 1967 editions of his full-length work on Sade entitled Sade mon prochain. This is followed by a discussion of his later reading of Sade its relation to writings on Sade by Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot. Through this the crucial shift in Klossowski's conceptions of the Self and of identity that occurs between his earlier and later writing has been traced.

The second chapter looks at Klossowski's writing on and relationship to Nietzsche. This relationship is articulated under the motifs of *parody*, *translation*, and *myth*. The sense of these motifs in relation to Nietzsche's texts is analysed with reference to a number of works by Klossowski (La Vocation suspendue (1950), Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux (1969), and Le Bain de Diane (1956)). From this discussion Klossowski's emphasis on the fortuitous character of the Self and on writing as *spectacle* has been highlighted.

The third and final chapter examines Klossowski's trilogy of novels Les Lois de l'hospitalité, and in particular the figure of Roberte, and concludes by arguing that the truly transgressive force of his writing lies in the way in which it overturns the notion of origin and with that the concept of identity and self-sameness.

List of Abbreviations.

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis :

Works by Pierre Klossowski.

<u>SMP47</u>	<u>Sade mon prochain</u> (1947 edition).
<u>SMP67</u>	<u>Sade mon prochain</u> (1967 edition).
<u>VS</u>	<u>La Vocation suspendue.</u>
<u>SFD</u>	<u>Un Si Funeste Désir.</u>
<u>BD</u>	<u>Le Bain de Diane.</u>
<u>LH</u>	<u>Les Lois de l'hospitalité.</u>
<u>N</u>	<u>Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux.</u>
<u>R</u>	<u>La Ressemblance.</u>
<u>RG</u>	<u>Roberte et Gulliver.</u>
<u>CNAP</u>	<u>Pierre Klossowski</u> (Centre National des Arts Plastiques).

Articles by Klossowski

<u>PA</u>	'Protase et Apodose'.
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Journals

<u>RP</u>	<u>Recherches Philosophiques.</u>
<u>RFP</u>	<u>Revue Française de la Psychanalyse.</u>
<u>E</u>	<u>Esprit.</u>

Works by other authors.

<u>KOJ</u>	Alexandre Kojève, <u>Introduction à la lecture de Hegel.</u>
<u>KSA</u>	Friedrich Nietzsche, <u>Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe.</u>

Introduction - 'La Persistance d'un nom'.

Toute l'œuvre de Klossowski tend vers un but unique : assurer la perte de l'identité personnelle, dissoudre le moi, c'est le splendide trophée que les personnages de Klossowski rapportent d'un voyage au bord de la folie.¹

Gilles Deleuze, Logique du sens.

The essays and fiction which bear the name Pierre Klossowski form a strange and paradoxical body of writing, a body of writing obsessed with bodies themselves and the intersection of bodies with proper names. Klossowski's work bears witness to a proliferation of names, both historical and fictional, all of which become the object of repeated questioning or obsessive fascination : Sade, Nietzsche, Roberte, Octave, Ogier, Gulliver and others; all proper names designating bodies of work or images of bodies. Each of these names suggests a figure, a personal history or a recognisable œuvre and yet, paradoxically, each name also simultaneously marks a distinct point in a body of writing which seeks to void the proper name of its identity, to overturn the notion of a stable self which would allow names to name, to properly designate a body or bodies.

Throughout Klossowski's œuvre the proper name articulates a double and paradoxical movement; it both designates a figure with an apparent identity, history and coherence (Sade, Nietzsche, Roberte etc.), yet at the very same time it marks the abolition or suspension of identity, history and coherence. This double movement is the key aspect of Klossowski's writing which I will seek to analyse, elaborate upon and question in the chapters which follow. Such a paradoxical movement has also structured my own general methodological approach to the corpus which is itself signed with the name 'Pierre Klossowski'. In commenting on

this body of writing one is confronted with two opposing and seemingly incompatible demands. In the first instance to read Klossowski's œuvre properly is to place it within a context, a historical narrative and to address the propriety of a name (i.e. the concerns of Klossowski's works, their content and how the issues raised relate to the works of others associated with Klossowski). Yet to do this properly in Klossowski's case is to challenge the very logic of such properness, since his work as a whole turns, as Deleuze suggests, around the dissolution of identity, and around the abolition of any propriety associated with the proper name : 'Pierre Klossowski'. This means that, properly speaking, one should situate Klossowski's work within a particular history in order to understand it, but at the very same time to understand his work properly is to understand the way in which it overturns the very concepts both of 'history' and of 'work' (in the sense of a unified body with a name proper to it). So how have these two opposing demands been met?

Throughout this thesis I have sought in the first instance to situate Klossowski's writing within a historical perspective, tracing the development of his own thinking from the period before the Second World War through to the late sixties. I have also sought to trace the numerous associations that can be made between Klossowski's writing and that of other key thinkers during this time (e.g. Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot). A summary of his career would run as follows. Born in 1905, Klossowski began writing in the 1930s, publishing articles in a number of journals, which varied from the psychoanalytic (La Revue Française

¹ Gilles Deleuze, 'Klossowski ou les corps-langage', Logique du sens (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 325-50, (p. 329).

de la Psychanalyse²) to the philosophical (Recherches Philosophiques³), and including hybrid journals such as Esprit⁴ (centred around religious and political concerns) and Acéphale⁵ (centred around Bataille's project of the sacred). Already in this period Klossowski was reading and commenting upon the works of two figures which came to dominate his own writing in the following decades : Sade and Nietzsche. In 1947 he published his first full-length work Sade mon prochain⁶. He published four novels in the decade that followed : La Vocation suspendue, Roberte ce soir, La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes and Le Souffleur and also an extended essay on myth Le Bain de Diane⁷. From the late 1940s onwards Klossowski published numerous articles in journals as diverse as Critique, Les Temps modernes, Paru, 84, Le Mercure de France and La Nouvelle Revue Française⁸ (many of which are collected in the 1963 volume of essays Un Si Funeste Désir⁹). In the 1960s he continued publishing in numerous journals (such as Les Cahiers du Chemin and Change as well as many others), he brought out a collected edition of Roberte ce soir, La Révocation, and Le Souffleur entitled Les Lois de l'hospitalité (1965)¹⁰ and published his final novel Le Baphomet also in

² 'Éléments d'une étude psychanalytique sur le marquis de Sade', Revue Française de Psychanalyse, 6 (1933), 458-74.

³ 'Le Mal et la négation d'autrui dans la philosophie de D.A.F. de Sade', Recherches Philosophiques, 4 (1934-35), 268-93 and 'Temps et agressivité', Recherches Philosophiques, 5 (1935-36), 100-11.

⁴ 'Qui est mon prochain?', in Esprit, 25 (December 1938), 402-23.

⁵ 'Le Monstre', Acéphale, 1 (24 June 1936), non-paginated; 'Création du monde', Acéphale, 2 (21 January 1937), non-paginated and 'Don Juan selon Kierkegaard', Acéphale, 3-4 (July 1937), reprinted in SMP47, pp. 135-52.

⁶ Sade mon prochain (Paris: Seuil, 1947), revised edition 1967.

⁷ La Vocation suspendue (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), Roberte ce soir (Paris: Minuit, 1954), La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes (Paris: Minuit, 1959), Le Souffleur ou le Théâtre de société (Paris: Pauvert, 1960) and Le Bain de Diane (Paris: Pauvert, 1956), Gallimard, 1980.

⁸ A full bibliography of all these books and essays is given at the end of this thesis.

⁹ Un Si Funeste Désir (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

¹⁰ Les Lois de l'hospitalité (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).

1965¹¹. After publishing his extended work on Nietzsche in 1969¹², Klossowski went on to produce further essays or collections of essays namely a volume on Roman antiquity, Origines cultuelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines¹³, a book inspired by his reading of Sade and Fourier, La Monnaie vivante, and a collection of essays on writing and painting La Ressemblance¹⁴. He was also a prolific translator, translation being, it would seem, his principle source of income throughout his career¹⁵. Klossowski translated texts from both German and Latin including Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Heidegger from the German or Virgil and Tertullian from the Latin¹⁶. Alongside his literary and intellectual activities he began working as a painter in the 1950s and this became his main preoccupation in 1972 when he gave up the writing of fiction and began to exhibit widely in a number of countries¹⁷. Such a summary of Klossowski's work is by no means exhaustive but already gives some indication of the way in which such a very diverse oeuvre might in itself challenge any notion of a coherent whole and also the way in which it intersects with a number of different genres and intellectual engagements.

This is matched by the diversity of his engagement with other figures who have been prominent in French literary and philosophical circles both before and after the Second World War. Klossowski was introduced to Gide by Rilke (his

¹¹ Le Baphomet (Paris: Mercure de France, 1965). Surprisingly Klossowski published a rewrite of this novel in theatrical form in 1995 (at the age of 89!); see L'Adolescent immortel (Paris: Lettres Vives, 1995).

¹² Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux (Paris: Mercure de France, 1969), reprinted 1990.

¹³ Origines cultuelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1968), reprinted 1986.

¹⁴ La Ressemblance (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1984).

¹⁵ Biographical information on Klossowski is generally rather sketchy. For the best biographical sketch available see Alain Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski (Paris, Seuil, 1990), pp. 181-91. All biographical references throughout this thesis are derived from this summary.

¹⁶ Again, for a full bibliography of these translations see the end of this thesis.

¹⁷ All of Klossowski's exhibitions are likewise listed in the bibliography.

mother's lover) in the early twenties and went on to meet Bataille in the 1930s with whom he collaborated on the review Acéphale and in the Collège de sociologie¹⁸. After the war Klossowski met Maurice Blanchot (probably via Bataille) and was closely associated with both Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault in the 1960s and early 1970s. Throughout this thesis I have sought to locate the development of Klossowski's writing within the various stages of his publishing career and also in relation to the thought of the above thinkers. The first chapter in particular adopts this historical perspective. It traces Klossowski's commentaries on Sade as they develop from the thirties onwards, relating his own idiosyncratic reading of the Divine Marquis to that of the Surrealists in the first instance and then in more detail to the readings of Sade given by Bataille and of Blanchot. More specifically this first chapter has sought to contrast Klossowski's pre-war commentary on Sade, comprising a number of writings collected as a whole in the 1947 Sade mon prochain, with his post-war commentary which is given in the 1967 re-edition of that work. By comparing the first and second editions of Sade mon prochain the key shifts in Klossowski's pre- and post-war thinking (namely in his relationship to Catholicism) have been made clear.

The second and third chapters of this thesis continue to explore the relationship of Klossowski's writing to the thought of Bataille and Blanchot but have also attempted to situate his post-war output in relation to the work of Gilles Deleuze and to a lesser extent to that of Jean-François Lyotard. The second chapter is devoted to Klossowski's writings on and around Nietzsche, the third to Klossowski's trilogy of novels collected in the volume Les Lois de l'hospitalité. However these two later chapters mark a stronger engagement with what has been

¹⁸ See Denis Hollier, ed., Le Collège de sociologie (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), revised edition 1995.

termed here the second demand of commenting on Klossowski's œuvre. This second demand turns around the need *not* simply to situate the body of work bearing the name 'Klossowski' within a historical schema or set of relationships, but rather to examine the way in which such a body of work undermines itself as a coherent unity and questions the very concept of history itself (as a linear narrative). As an œuvre which undermines its own coherence and unity Klossowski's corpus is not an entity to which either a historical framework or the name Klossowski can properly be applied (it is, on its own terms, not a discrete self-same entity). The second approach of this thesis has therefore been to highlight the resolutely paradoxical status of Klossowski's texts and the implications of such a paradoxical mode of writing for questions of literature and subjectivity in general.

Throughout my thesis this paradoxical mode of textuality is something that has been traced both in its historical development (mostly in chapter one) and examined in the way it abolishes any possibility of constructing a history or unity (the second and third chapters). Properly speaking each of these approaches always overlaps the one with the other. Other commentaries or full-length works on Klossowski have largely adopted one approach to the exclusion of the other. Anne-Marie Dardigna in her book on Klossowski Les Châteaux d'Éros ou les infortunes du sexe des femmes¹⁹ seeks to locate his work within a history of erotic texts by male writers which reify and do violence to the female body (thus she locates him within a very specific and polemically constructed history). Carolyn Dean devotes part of her book The Self and its Pleasures²⁰ to analysis of Klossowski's earlier and later view of Sade, seeking to locate Klossowski's commentaries in much the same

¹⁹ Anne-Marie Dardigna, Les Châteaux d'Éros ou les infortunes du sexe des femmes (Paris: Maspéro, 1980).

way as does my own chapter one. Other discussions provide an intertextual, non-historical reading of Klossowski's œuvre, which situate his work principally within the textual networks set up in the writing of Bataille and Blanchot and which turn most centrally around the dissolution of identity within these networks. First and foremost amongst these are Daniel Wilhem's Pierre Klossowski : le corps impie²¹ and Jane Gallop's Intersections²². Most of the other full-length books devoted to Klossowski focus more centrally on themes and motifs within his work (e.g. the 'signe unique', the 'simulacre', or the figure of Roberte); these include principally Jean-Pol Madou's Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski²³ and Alain Arnaud's Pierre Klossowski²⁴. This thesis differentiates itself from all these works cited insofar as it seeks very self-consciously to combine the two opposing approaches outlined above and to examine the paradoxical relationship between them²⁵.

To do this I have focused my discussion around the question of the proper name. In this context the double nature of Klossowski's texts parallels the dual argumentation of this thesis. Just as the persistence of proper names in Klossowski's work acts (paradoxically) as proof of the dispersion of the name in its very propriety, so a historical reading of that corpus signed 'Klossowski' shows that, as a corpus, it is founded upon the abolition of any logic which would allow

²⁰ Carolyn Dean, The Self and its Pleasures, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 170-87.

²¹ Daniel Wilhem, Pierre Klossowski : le corps impie (Paris: UGE : 10/18, 1979).

²² Jane Gallop, Intersections : Readings of Sade with Bataille Blanchot and Klossowski (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1981); see in particular pp. 67-112.

²³ Jean-Pol Madou, Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski (Paris: Klincksieck, 1987).

²⁴ Alain Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski.

²⁵ The list of secondary material here is by no means exhaustive. A full bibliography is given at the end of this thesis. In particular I have omitted any mention of commentaries on Klossowski's work by those with whom he was associated e.g. Bataille, Blanchot, Foucault Deleuze and Lyotard. Again these references are given in full in the bibliography. Specific

such a historical reading to take place. It is this persistence of proper names which has given my discussion its form, a form centred around three names, around three decisive figures : Sade, Nietzsche, and Roberte.

Chapter One - Sade.

on fout dans tous les cas, cher amour, parce que nous sommes nés pour foutre, que nous accomplissons les lois de la nature en foutant, et que toute la loi humaine qui contrarierait celles de la nature ne serait faite que pour le mépris

Sade, La Philosophie dans le boudoir.¹

In 1947 Klossowski's Sade mon prochain was one of the first full-length literary and philosophical studies of de Sade's work to be published in French². The next year Gilbert Lély brought out his biographical work D.A.F. de Sade³ which was followed two years later by Maurice Heine's Le Marquis de Sade⁴. After over a hundred years of censorship the two decades leading up to the publication of Klossowski's book and those immediately following it mark an unprecedented interest in Sade's work amongst French artists, writers, psychoanalysts and philosophers alike. André Breton and Paul Éluard, Jean Paulhan, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Philippe Sollers and Roland Barthes have, along with many others, discussed, interrogated, analysed, promoted or

¹ Sade, Œuvres complètes, 16 vols in 8 (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1962-67), vol. III (1966), p. 410.

² The full-length works on Sade which precede that of Klossowski emphasise more the medico-psychological import of the Marquis' writing; see for example Dr. Cabanès, Le Marquis de Sade et son oeuvre devant la science médicale et la littérature moderne, par le docteur Jacobus X... (Paris: Carrington, 1901). However there are more general accounts of Sade's life and works; for instance in 1933 Klossowski's himself published a translation of a German text by Otto Flake, Le Marquis de Sade (Paris: Grasset, 1933).

³ Gilbert Lély, D.A.F. de Sade (Paris: Seghers, 1948).

⁴ Maurice Heine, Le Marquis de Sade, with preface by G.Lély (Paris: Gallimard, 1950).

resisted the writing and thought of the 'Divine Marquis', making him one of the essential points of reference for modern French literary and philosophical culture⁵.

Klossowski's response to Sade has proved to be extremely influential in setting the terms of debate for the French reception of the libertine writer during the years after the Second World War. Alongside Bataille and Blanchot, Klossowski was one of the first to see Sade's work as philosophically important and relevant to an understanding of the transgressive potential of literary texts. It is important to note from the outset that Klossowski's Sade is not just the author of pornographic or shocking novels. His readings seek to engage with a complex logic of transgression which underpins the discourse of the Sadeian libertine. The transgressive force of Sade's texts, Klossowski argues, involves a paradoxical play with limits, with the limits set by moral categories and interdictions but also with those of language, of thought and of meaning. Within this general framework Klossowski's reading of transgression in Sade's work undergoes a crucial shift, one which is marked by the considerable changes he makes to the 1967 re-edition of Sade mon prochain. Broadly speaking this shift is characterised by Klossowski's movement from a Christian endorsement of moral categories (which he attributes to Sade also) in 1947 to a post-

⁵ A bibliography of twentieth-century French commentary on Sade would be very extensive. Here, however, are a few key references : Maurice Blanchot, Lautréamont et Sade (Paris: Minuit, 1949), revised edition 1969, Simone de Beauvoir, Faut-il brûler Sade? (Paris: Gallimard:Idées, 1955), André Breton, L'Anthologie de l'humour noir (Paris: Pauvert, 1966), p. 52, Jean Paulhan, 'Le Marquis de Sade et sa complice', in Œuvres complètes (Paris: Au Cercle du livre précieux, 1967), Michel Foucault, Les Mots et les choses (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 221-224, and Roland Barthes, Sade, Fourier, Loyola (Paris: Seuil, 1971). Georges Bataille, of course, engaged with Sade's work in a sustained way throughout his career most notably in his essay 'La valeur d'usage de D.A.F. de Sade' (1930), La Littérature et le Mal, (1947) and also in the later L'Érotisme (1957). All these texts are gathered in Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, 12 vols. (Paris, Gallimard, 1970-88) and will be discussed in further detail (with full references) later on in this chapter.

Christian position in 1967 which affirms the aspects of sexual perversion to be found in Sade's writing against *all* normative values and structures (both moral and rational).

Klossowski's reading of transgression has made its mark in particular on the discussions of Sade by figures such as Foucault, Barthes, and groups such as Tel Quel⁶. The emphasis placed by such groups and thinkers on transgression as the delimiting of structures of meaning and of the Self can be traced back to Klossowski's reading of Sade. It is not the simplistic and straightforward overturning of sexual taboos in Sade's work that these writers value, rather he is perceived to be engaged in a profoundly important philosophical and literary enterprise (and not an author interested simply in moral turpitude or intent merely on shocking the bourgeoisie). It is the originality of Klossowski's commentaries on Sade which make these later readings possible.

In what follows I will trace the development of Klossowski's reading from his early analyses in the thirties and their culmination in the 1947 publication of Sade mon prochain, through to the revised re-edition of this work in 1967. Klossowski's engagement with Sade spans the length of his writing career and by examining the shifts his reading undergoes between the two editions of Sade mon prochain a general outline of his development as a writer can be traced. Reading these analyses of Sade alongside those of Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot shows how far Klossowski

⁶ Klossowski published an essay on Sade in Tel Quel in 1967, 'Signe et perversion chez Sade'. The entirety of this issue was devoted to Sade; other contributors included Roland Barthes, Philippe Sollers, Hubert Damish and Michel Tort. See Tel Quel, 28 (1967), 3-22. Klossowski's essay subsequently became the introductory piece of the revised version of Sade mon prochain, 'Le philosophe scélérat'.

is central to an understanding of a burgeoning need (after 1945) to think about Sade differently and to think differently issues of literature, violence and immorality.⁷

Even today in this, the liberal late twentieth century, Sade's novels make shocking reading. From the depiction of rampant coprophagy and rape to the detailed descriptions of torture and murder, Les Cent-vingt journées de Sodome, La Philosophie dans le boudoir and the stories of Justine and Juliette appear to leave no perversion unexplored, unrepresented or unjustified. Indeed, the ability of French writers to raise an apologist for murder and an apostle of sexual violence to the status of hero might seem to many to be a fact as shocking and remarkable as the novels

⁷ For a more detailed history of the reception of Sade in France see Marcel Henaff, Les Ages de la lecture sadienne, RIDS, 68 (Copenhagen: Copenhagen University Press, 1979) and particularly Carolyn Dean The Self and its Pleasures (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 170-99. For a selection of responses to Klossowski's reading of Sade, see the following: Aimé Patri, 'Notre frère damné', L'Arche (March 1947), 152-57 and Georges Bataille, La Littérature et le mal, Œuvres complètes, 12 vols, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-88), vol 9, (1971), pp. 245-53. As will become clear Bataille's reading represents quite a highly critical response to Klossowski's construction of a Christian Sade in the first edition of Sade mon prochain (which itself contained an appendix with a negative critique of Bataille's Acéphale project). For more recent responses to Klossowski's writing on Sade see Dean, The Self and its Pleasures, pp. 177-86, Jane Gallop Intersections (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1981), pp. 67-112 and also the introduction to the English edition of Sade mon prochain by Alphonso Lingis, Sade my Neighbour, translated by Alphonso Lingis (London: Quartet, 1992), pp. 5-8. In general these three later critiques are sympathetic to Klossowski's engagement with Sade. Dean's commentary focuses on Klossowski's analysis of Sade in relation to the negation of God and moral categories and the difference between the first and second editions of Sade mon prochain (more will be said of this later). Gallop is interested in situating Klossowski's commentaries on Sade within the intertextual networks set up by the analyses of Sade carried out by Bataille and Blanchot (and herself); again this will be discussed later at greater length. Perhaps the most idiosyncratic commentary is provided by Alphonso Lingis who examines the manner in which Klossowski's reading of Sade in 'Le Philosophe scélérat' sets up a paradigm for the way rational projects necessarily undermine themselves (the fact, for instance, that the project of scientific progress can lead to the possibility of total annihilation in the invention of nuclear weapons). It is interesting to note that nearly all the full-length works written on Klossowski which will be cited or referred to in this thesis give little sustained attention to his reading of Sade, preferring rather to discuss his engagement with Nietzschean and theological discourses or to focus on the figure of Roberte in the trilogy Les Lois de l'hospitalité. This may testify to a general unease with Klossowski's Sadeian engagement (for sexual political reasons?), one which is perhaps revealed by the fact that *both* editions of Sade mon prochain are omitted from the nearly full bibliographical survey of Klossowski's works which is given at the back of his most recent publication L'Adolescent immortel (Paris: Lettres Vives, 1995).

themselves⁸. The very remarkable nature of this engagement with Sade's writing begs the question as to why, after over a hundred years of censorship and clandestine circulation, his work began, from the 1920s onwards, to be published and in turn discussed by so many major figures in the French artistic and intellectual community. One reason was that the philosophical and literary preoccupations of that community had themselves changed. Indeed as will become clear from the following discussion Sade's work in the twentieth century is being read within contexts which post-date the time in which it was originally written. Whilst Sade's principal terms of philosophical reference might have been say, Holbach or la Mettrie, for his modern commentators they are most likely to be Hegel, Nietzsche or Freud. When Klossowski published his first article on Sade in 1933⁹ in a psycho-analytic journal he was writing in an intellectual and artistic context which had been revolutionised by the reception of Freudian theory on the one hand and by the cultural event which was Surrealism on the other. It is with these two moments, therefore, that this discussion will begin.

⁸ See Nicholas Harrison, Circles of Censorship : Censorship and its Metaphors in French History, Literature and Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). See in particular Harrison's discussion of the Surrealist appropriation of Sade pp. 121-71.

⁹ 'Éléments d'une étude psychanalytique sur le Marquis de Sade' published in Revue Française de la Psychanalyse, 6 (1933), 458-474. All references to this article will be to this issue prefaced with the abbreviation **RFP**.

Sade after Freud.

'The history of human civilisation shows beyond any doubt that there is an intimate connection between cruelty and the sexual instinct; but nothing has been done towards explaining that connection, apart from laying emphasis on the aggressive factor in the libido'

Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.¹⁰

Published first in 1905 and then expanded in subsequent editions up until its final version in 1925, Freud's Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality make crucial observations about the place and nature of sexuality in human experience, observations which transform conventional perspectives on Sade's theories¹¹. What might have been perceived to be the pathological ranting and (albeit highly literary) self-justifications of a sexual deviant become lucid thoughts on the nature and truth of human desire. Freud like Sade insists that the basis of human experience lies in instinctual drives. In the Three Essays Freud defines an instinct or drive as the 'psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation, as contrasted with a "stimulus", which is set up by single excitations coming from without'¹². It will become clearer throughout this discussion that the Freudian emphasis on the instinctual or libidinal basis of experience marks a shift away from the classical model of the Cartesian subject (based on the *cogito* and the primacy of reason) toward a new

¹⁰ Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, edited and translated by James Strachey, 24 Vols, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-74), Vol. VII (1953), p. 159.

¹¹ Late nineteenth-century sexologists such as Havelock Ellis and Kraft-Ebing had begun the process of rereading Sade but he had been viewed essentially as a cataloguer of perversions not as a thinker of textuality (which is what he becomes after Freud). For a perspective on Ellis's treatment of sexual deviance see Havelock Ellis, Sexual Inversion (London: Wilson Macmillan, 1897).

¹²Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Vol. VII, p. 168

conception of the Self whose thought and action have their foundations in the movements of desire.

Also and perhaps more importantly, Freud, like Sade, insists on the at once violent and sexual nature of the instincts. Sade gives his name to the perversion which Freud describes as 'The most common and most significant of the perversions'¹³. What could once be considered as the most marginal and aberrant of human sexual preferences now becomes a universal truth of human motivation, and in particular, Freud claims, of human male motivation :

The sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of *aggressiveness* - a desire to subjugate; the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing.¹⁴

Such an observation can be compared to Dolmancé's claims in the third dialogue of La Philosophie dans le boudoir :

la cruauté, bien loin d'être un vice, est le premier sentiment qu'imprime en nous la nature. [...]

La cruauté est dans la nature; nous naissons tous avec une dose de cruauté que la seule éducation modifie.¹⁵

So Sade's thoughts on humanity, once so unacceptable, can take on the status of luminescent insights when re-read through the lens of Freudian theory. From that perspective it is possible to conflate the former's use of the term 'instinct' or drive with the latter's constant reference to the impulses of 'la nature'. Implied here too is an equivalence between Freudian 'aggressiveness' and Sadeian 'cruauté'. In both cases violent sexual impulses are considered to be part of the natural organisation of human

¹³ Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Vol. VII, p. 157.

¹⁴ Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Vol. VII, pp. 157-158.

¹⁵ Sade, Œuvres complètes, Vol. III (1966), p. 437.

life rather than exceptions from the norm. The rights and wrongs of such a conflation of terms is not at issue here. What is important is the fact that from the twenties onwards such a reading of Sade became possible. If this comparison is maintained then Sade's theories not only take on a universal significance but Sade himself becomes one of the single most important forerunners of psychoanalysis.

André Breton and the Surrealists who championed both the 'Divine Marquis' and a certain idiosyncratic reading of Freud made just such a claim. When Breton listed a whole host of figures as predecessors in his first 'Manifeste du surréalisme'¹⁶ of 1924, Sade was amongst them and this promotion of the libertine philosopher continued throughout the history of Surrealism¹⁷. In his late work Anthologie de l'humour noir Breton says of Sade's work :

psychologiquement elle peut passer pour la plus authentique devancière de Freud et de toute la psychologie moderne.¹⁸

Such a comment makes explicit the assumptions which underpinned the Surrealist championing of Sade from the twenties onwards. Yet Sade was not valued by the Surrealists for his theoretical insight into the human mind alone, but also for his contestatory attitude towards human law and society. After claiming Sade's work as a

¹⁶ André Breton, Manifestes du surréalisme (Paris: Gallimard/Folio, 1985). It is interesting to note that even though Breton championed Freud, Freud himself expressed some reticence as to the value and meaning of the surrealist project. See Les Vases communicants (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) and the exchange of letters between Freud and Breton published at the end of this volume, pp. 173-179. Breton's reading of Freud has been much criticised by later commentators; see for example Marcelin Pleynet, Art et littérature (Paris: Seuil, 1977), pp. 237-62. Pleynet offers his own account of Sade and modernity, pp. 147-160.

¹⁷ For a more detailed survey of the surrealist's views on Sade see Sade dans le surréalisme by Svein Eirik Fauskevåg (Paris: Éditions Privat, 1986).

¹⁸ André Breton, Anthologie de l'humour noir (Paris: Pauvert, 1966), p. 52. The view that Sade is a precursor to Freud has been challenged by Freudians most notably by Lacan in his paper 'Kant avec Sade', Écrits, (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 765-90. Again, what is significant here is not that this view may be correct but that such a comparison was made, and that it led to a certain promotion of Sade's work.

precursor to that of Freud in the quotation cited above, Breton immediately adds :
 'socialement elle ne tend à rien moins qu'à l'établissement, différé de révolution en révolution, d'une véritable science des moeurs'¹⁹. In the 1920s it was the transgressive and revolutionary aspect of Sade's writing which the Surrealists sought to harness to their own ends and over and above the reference to Freud, this was what they sought to harness in the figure of Sade himself.

In the Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality Freud emphasises all those forces which inhibit the expression of the sexual instinct or libido and act to repress it.

Writing of the 'perversions' in general Freud comes to the following conclusion :

Our study of the perversions has shown us that the sexual instinct has to struggle against certain mental forces which act as resistances, and of which shame and disgust are the most prominent. It is permissible to suppose that these forces play a part in restraining that instinct within the limits which are regarded as normal.²⁰

Freud's theory of repression is taken up by the Surrealists and conflated with social oppression (which is what enables Breton to construe dream and reality, i.e. psychic and social reality, as interconnecting chambers, the two 'vases communicants' of his famous essay). The Surrealist aspiration to total human revolution involves a descent into and recuperation of psychic material. This material has been repressed by the conscious mind but for the Surrealists this means first and foremost that it has been repressed by rational thought structures which are socially or culturally determined. Breton affirms this idea of recuperation most explicitly in the 'Second manifeste du surréalisme' of 1930 :

¹⁹ André Breton, Anthologie de l'humour noir, p.52.

²⁰ Freud, The Complete Psychological Works : Standard Edition, Vol. VII, p. 162.

l'idée du surréalisme tend simplement à la récupération totale de notre force psychique par un moyen qui n'est autre que la descente vertigineuse en nous, l'illumination systématique des lieux cachés et l'obscurcissement progressif des autres lieux, la promenade perpétuelle en pleine zone interdite.²¹

Sade, insofar as he was a systematic exponent of violent sexual desire, affirmed, perhaps more than any writer in history, : 'la promenade perpétuelle en pleine zone interdite'. His constant rejection of human law and value systems, his persistent violation of every possible taboo would seem to make him the ideal figure of revolt for the Surrealist project. For the Surrealists, Sade's championing of violent sexuality make him into a social revolutionary.

Man Ray's famous imaginary portrait of Sade where the Marquis stands sculpted in the stonework of the Bastille as the fortress goes up in flames embodies this view of him as a revolutionary icon. According to this view of Sade he is both a victim of social oppression and a social liberator. In his article published in La Révolution Surréaliste²² Éluard claims that Sade suffered imprisonment in the Bastille and general persecution because he was honest enough to recognise the truth of human instincts (the link between sex and violence). Defending Truth, he also becomes, in Éluard's view, a defender of Justice because he denounces the 'déraison' of Christian morality and value systems :

pour avoir redonné à l'homme la force de ses instincts primitifs, pour avoir voulu délivrer l'imagination amoureuse et pour avoir lutté désespérément pour la justice et l'égalité absolue, le Marquis de Sade a été enfermé pendant toute sa vie.²³

²¹ André Breton, Manifestes du surréalisme, p. 86.

²² Paul Éluard, 'D.A.F. de Sade : écrivain révolutionnaire et fantastique', La Révolution Surréaliste, 8 (1926), 8-9. For a commentary on Éluard's critique of Sade see Nicholas Harrison, Circles of Censorship, pp. 159-60.

²³ Paul Éluard, 'D.A.F. de Sade : écrivain révolutionnaire et fantastique', La Révolution Surréaliste, 8,

Maurice Lever has justly remarked on the bad faith of Éluard's pronouncements on Sade and his attempt to make him compatible with a revolutionary cause²⁴. The arbitrariness of the libertine's power over his victims as it is demonstrated in the closed-off world of Les Cent vingt journées or in the many encounters of Justine in Les Malheurs de la vertu quickly reveal the extent to which Éluard's comments manipulate the nature of Sade's thought.

Many critics have commented on the way the Surrealists and others have used Sade to their own ends and have tended perhaps to obscure the reality and unpleasantness of the Sadeian text itself²⁵. One has the sense that, although Surrealists like Breton and Éluard might seek to champion Sade as a revolutionary, they showed little desire to engage with any detailed reading of Sade's work itself. Breton's comments on sex and love in Les Vases communicants show just how far his position was in reality removed from that of the Divine Marquis. He has, he claims, never indulged in the 'enivremments vulgaires' of prostitution, because, he adds : 'je n'ai jamais aimé [...] une prostituée'. Love, he goes on, is a most serious matter and 'il me paraîtrait indigne par-dessus tout de vouloir chasser l'image d'un être aimé par celle d'un être ou de plusieurs êtres non-aimés'²⁶. If one compares this with the pronouncements of one of Sade's libertine heroes from La Nouvelle Justine the gulf

²⁴ See Lever's biography, Le Marquis de Sade, (Paris: Fayard, 1991). English edition The Marquis de Sade translated by Arthur Goldhammer (London: Flamingo, 1995). For Éluard's comment see p. 390 of the English edition (all references to this text will be to the English translation since this is by far the easiest edition to access). Éluard, Lever argues, censored the sexually violent details of Sade's work so that he would appeal to a Marxist revolutionary audience.

²⁵ Again see in particular Carolyn Dean's book The Self and its Pleasures. See also Xavière Gauthier, Surréalisme et sexualité (Paris: Gallimard/Idées, 1971).

²⁶ Les Vases communicants, p. 82.

that separates these two writers becomes clear. Clément, the monk, tells his captive

Justine :

comment put-il venir dans la tête d'un homme raisonnable que la délicatesse eût quelque prix en jouissance? Il est absurde de vouloir soutenir qu'elle y soit nécessaire; elle n'ajoute rien au plaisir des sens : je dis plus, elle y nuit; c'est une chose très différente que d'aimer ou que de jouir; la preuve en est qu'on aime tous les jours sans jouir, et qu'on jouit encore plus souvent sans aimer.²⁷

It is clear that in the libertine's world, where pleasure is never reciprocal and is virtually always at the expense of the victim, there is no place for love. Breton's promotion of monogamous love and of moral standards generally and his absolute rejection of both dissolute lifestyles and debauched thinking has been well documented, particularly as it manifests itself in his polemical exchanges with Georges Bataille²⁸. Bataille's engagement with Sade and the relation of his reading to that of Klossowski will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

However the reality and specificity of Sade's text is not of central importance within the context of this discussion. Sade, for Surrealism, was more an icon of the Surrealists own making than a writer to be read. In violating the taboos which inhibit sexual expression of whatever kind he has become an anti-bourgeois revolutionary. Sade, in his sadism, has become myth.

It is against this background of Breton's unwillingness to actually read Sade (an unwillingness that is characteristic of the Surrealists as a whole) that the importance of Klossowski's contribution to this debate becomes clear. Klossowski is

²⁷ Sade, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. VI (1962), p. 396.

²⁸ For an exposition of this polemic and an account of Breton's attitude toward sexuality see Michel Surya's biography of Bataille, *Georges Bataille, la mort à l'oeuvre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992). See in particular pp. 142-74.

one of the first writers to read Sade seriously and in a sustained manner rather than annexing him as an icon or mythical figure.

At the same time the Surrealists, through the lens of their particular interpretation of Freud, have set the stage for a reading of Sade which involves the interplay of two opposing forces. The forces of sexual desire are set up in opposition to the strait-jacket of social convention and rational thinking (embodied in conventional schema of meaning and form). In advocating the liberty of desire, Sade, for the Surrealists, becomes an advocate of all liberty in general. That the true horror and violent nature of Sade's text's appears to have been suppressed seems not to have perturbed the Surrealists greatly²⁹. It is this context, opened up initially by the Surrealists, which allows Klossowski to read Sade as a writer who is philosophically important and who has an important contribution to make. Klossowski builds upon the Surrealist reading but moves beyond it in such a way as to avoid the more simplistic mythologisation in which they are engaged. His commentary on Sade focuses on this interplay between the opposing principles of desire and social constraint in a different and much more philosophically complex manner. Indeed one of the most important virtues of Klossowski as a commentator of Sade was that he was one of the first, in the wake of surrealism, actually to begin to read the text of Sade itself.

²⁹ Bataille, however, was extremely critical of what he saw as the surrealist idealisation of Sade. These views are expressed in his polemical pamphlet 'La Valeur d'usage de D.A.F. de Sade', Œuvres complètes, vol.II (1970), pp. 54-69. This pamphlet will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Thirties.

Klossowski's articles of the 1930s, many of which went on to be included in Sade mon prochain after the war, lay the foundations for his reading of Sade. What they reveal, however, is that the perspectives he brings to bear on the Sadeian text are extremely diverse. The names of Saint Augustine, Hegel, Nietzsche, and of course Freud signal only the most obvious terms of reference which inform his interpretation of Sade's work and life. This diversity of perspective is reflected in the variety of journals in which he chose to publish throughout the thirties. Beginning his career with an article in the psychoanalytic journal La Revue Française de la Psychanalyse Klossowski then went on to publish in Recherches Philosophiques³⁰ and then in the late thirties published in Esprit³¹ as well as collaborating with Bataille on Acéphale³²

³⁰ Edited by A. Koyré, H-Ch-Puech and A. Spaier Recherches Philosophiques was a philosophical journal set up in 1931 with a view to encouraging new and original explorations in contemporary philosophy and was largely experimental in character. The 'Avertissement' which headed the first issue described the 'Recherches' contained within it in the following terms: 'Elles font le départ entre originalité voulue et l'expression d'une remarque que l'on croit justifié par la nature des choses' and went on to add: 'En principe, rien n'est placé ici sous le signe de violences autonomes et de critères absolues', Recherches Philosophiques, 1 (1931-32), vii and viii. Contributors to Recherches Philosophiques included, in the earlier issues, Jean Wahl and Martin Heidegger (1931-32) and later Caillois, Bataille, Levinas and Bachelard (1935-36). The experimental nature of this journal would no doubt have been very attractive to Klossowski interested as he was in looking at the philosophical import of a controversial œuvre like Sade's.

³¹ Esprit was a Catholic-orientated review published under the direction of Emmanuel Mounier which promoted the doctrine of Personalism. Essentially this was an anti-totalitarian doctrine which was also very much against parliamentary democracy in the form that was current at the time. The doctrine of Personalism also rejected the power of the state in favour of 'organic' communities based upon the sovereignty of the individual. For a history of the review Esprit and other reviews close to it (Ordre Nouveau, Jeune Droite) see Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, Les Non-Conformistes des années trente (Paris: Seuil, 1969). See also John Hellman's Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

³² Pierre Klossowski, 'La monstruosité intégrale' in Acéphale, 1 (June 1936), non-paginated, 'La création du monde' in Acéphale, 2 (January 1937), non-paginated, and 'Don Juan selon Kierkegaard' in Acéphale, 3-4 (July 1937), non-paginated. In this latter edition Klossowski also published a review of Karl Löwith's Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkunft des Gleichen, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1956) in which he discusses the Nietzschean doctrine of Eternal Return for the first time. The article on Nietzsche will be discussed in the following chapter.

and in the Collège de sociologie. Much of the material included in the 1930s articles is reproduced in Sade mon prochain and will therefore be discussed in detail at a later stage. In all these articles, however, Klossowski is reading Sade within the perspectives opened up by the Surrealists and Freudian psychoanalysis. Yet unlike the Surrealists, his arguments focus far more directly on the question of violence and aggression. They explore the possibility that violence and aggression might be the fundamental realities of human existence and seek to uncover the way Sade's text articulates this. At the same time Klossowski's articles of the period testify to a strange combination of affiliations. Such a diversity of affiliation (for instance publication in both the Catholic Esprit and Bataille's Acéphale) is indicative of divisions and tensions within Klossowski's thought in the years prior to the appearance of Sade mon prochain. A brief survey of his early articles shows that it is in the very existence of divisions and tensions within the mind of Sade himself that Klossowski begins to recognise the author of Justine as 'mon prochain'.

La Revue Française de Psychanalyse.

In 1930 Klossowski went to work as a secretary for the Parisian psychoanalyst René Laforgue. Laforgue's clientele was drawn largely from the Parisian bourgeoisie and he posed as a defender of homosexuality³³. Klossowski's employer was perhaps not as liberal as he seemed, however, for when his young secretary published his 'Éléments d'une étude psychanalytique sur le Marquis de Sade' in 1933 he was scandalised and dismissed Klossowski immediately³⁴. This very early reading of Sade, which Klossowski includes in the 1947 work (with a footnote disavowing the position

³³ See Alain Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski (Paris: Seuil, 1990), p. 186.

adopted), bears witness to a close engagement with, but also to a divergence from, Freud's psychoanalytic thinking.

Klossowski attempts, in this article, to trace Sade's thought back to a psychical conflict within the mind of the Marquis himself. Sade's conflict, claims Klossowski, has its roots in the Oedipus complex. Yet Sade's sadism, insofar as it is directed against women, reflects this complex in an inverted form and here Klossowski diverges from Freudian orthodoxy in a rather singular manner. Klossowski writes :

Chez Sade nous nous trouverions donc en présence d'un complexe œdipien négatif non pas déterminé, comme c'est le cas d'un grand nombre de névrosés par une inhibition de l'inceste procédant de l'angoisse de la castration - mais dû au regret d'avoir voulu sacrifier le père à cette fausse idole, la mère (**RFP**,459).

The repeated torture and murder of women in general and of mother figures in particular (e.g. Mme de Mistival in La Philosophie dans le boudoir) represents, according to Klossowski, an attempt to escape from the mother; it is the manifestation of a 'lutte désespérée pour dégager son être de son enveloppe originelle' (**RFP**,461).

This destruction of maternity, Klossowski argues, is carried out in favour of the promotion of an opposing principle : that of paternity. If motherhood is identified with caring, rearing, socialising, then for Sade the law of paternity embodies everything that runs counter to this. All the sexually violent and transgressive acts of the Sadeian text according to Klossowski affirm the power of the father over that of the mother :

La sodomie et l'inceste, voilà ce que Sade exalte comme les attributs de la paternité : le père doit briser les chaînes conjugales qui l'empêchent de jouir physiquement de ses enfants : aucune loi naturelle ne s'oppose pourtant à cela (**RFP**,467).

³⁴ Arnaud, p. 186.

The opposition here between the maternal and the paternal implies an opposition of a broader nature, the former being associated with social bonds ('chaînes conjugales') and the latter being founded on the force of nature ('loi naturelle').

It is at this point that Klossowski begins to assimilate Sade's psychic conflict into a wider philosophical perspective. Paternity and Maternity become identified with a myth of two distinctive forms of humanity, the one masculine, the other feminine. The one is derived from nature and embodies humankind's aggressive animal instincts, the other founds the social dimension of human life and implies the existence of God and moral Law :

ce qui semble surtout ressortir de cette vision mythologique de deux humanités, l'une naissant directement de la nature, l'autre de la femme, c'est l'idée que l'introduction de la maternité dans le monde établit la loi de la reconnaissance de la créature envers le créateur (idée de Dieu), de la reconnaissance de la progéniture envers la mère, et qu'ainsi se trouva inauguré le règne des contrats indissolubles donnant aux uns les moyens moraux de se soumettre et d'enchaîner les autres (RFP,470)³⁵.

Although the aim of Klossowski's article is to trace Sade's philosophy back to the original psychical conflict which sacrifices the mother in favour of the father, he concludes his discussion with a detailed elaboration of the philosophy itself, a discussion in which psychology seems to be of secondary importance. Klossowski's interest, it seems, lies not in tracing the philosophy back to the original psychical conflict but rather in the way in which that conflict allows him to elaborate the

³⁵ Klossowski's interpretation of 'reconnaissance' and its relation to debt and moral law appears to owe much to Nietzsche's reading of the origin of morality in The Genealogy of Morals. See La Généalogie de la morale, translated by Isabelle Hildenbrand and Jean Gratién (Paris: Gallimard/Folio, 1971) Section II, Paragraph 20, pp. 101-102. Throughout this thesis all references to Nietzsche are to the French translation. This, as will be made clear in the next chapter, is because of the focus of my argument on a specifically *French* reception of this German thinker in which Klossowski plays a key role. Already his bias towards a Nietzschean vision is making itself apparent.

philosophical vision itself. Klossowski has inverted the Œdipus Complex so that he can develop a Nietzschean critique of morality which opposes an order of 'reconnaissance' (debt/moral law) to an order of aggression which overturns and transgresses moral

Law :

La conclusion philosophique qu'implique cette attitude négative vis-à-vis de l'ordre *maternel* sera donc l'affirmation de la loi antérieure à cette ordre, *la loi de l'ingratitude*, laquelle est proprement la loi de la nature (RFP,470).

Klossowski's psychological reading of Sade concludes in a philosophical interpretation which is centred around the hypothesis of two orders of being. The primary order of being is founded upon the egocentric and aggressive nature of man, the secondary founded upon his social and moral being. Sade, Klossowski argues, transgresses the latter in favour of the former.

At this stage one can already see that Klossowski's argument broadly a restates the Surrealist reading of Sade. Where the Surrealists posited an opposition between the movement of sexual desire and oppressive forces of rational thought and social constraint, Klossowski posits his two orders of being, the maternal order of morality and indebtedness as against the paternal order of natural aggression.

Klossowski's apparent preference for drawing philosophical conclusions from Sade's texts rather than championing the more psychological insights of the Surrealists is borne out by the fact that his next publication appears in a philosophical rather than a psychoanalytic journal. It is this preference for a more philosophical approach and a more Nietzschean bent which ultimately differentiates Klossowski's reading of Sade from that of Breton and his associates.

Recherches Philosophiques.

Klossowski published two articles in this journal. The first of these was entitled 'Le Mal et la négation d'autrui dans la philosophie de D.A.F. de Sade'³⁶ and subsequently went to make up the main section of Sade mon prochain, 'L'Esquisse du système de Sade'. This article represents Klossowski's second attempt to give an account of Sade's system as a whole and represents a further shift away from the psychoanalytic context in which he began³⁷. The second article to be published in this review entitled 'Temps et agressivité'³⁸ is less a discussion of Sade's thought proper than an attempt to elaborate a theory of the experience of the Self in its relation to temporality. Although this article post-dates 'Le Mal et la négation d'autrui', it does however provide an insight into the theoretical and philosophical framework which informs Klossowski's reading of Sade's system in the earlier article (and therefore in the 'Esquisse du système de Sade' of Sade mon prochain 1947).

The two opposing orders which Klossowski posited in his first publication are shown in this article to be subject to a complex interaction. This interaction, in turn, founds the experience of the Self in time. By this point Klossowski has abandoned any reference to paternity and maternity in his elaboration of the primary and secondary orders of being. The former is now associated solely with Nature, the latter solely with

³⁶ Pierre Klossowski, 'Le Mal et la négation d'autrui dans la philosophie de D.A.F. de Sade', Recherches Philosophiques, 4 (1934-35), 268-93. The general theme of this issue was 'Les Attitudes de la réflexion'. Interestingly Klossowski's article was published alongside an article by Karl Löwith whose book on Nietzsche Klossowski later came to review in Acéphale.

³⁷ Since this article is reproduced in its entirety in the 1947 work it will not be examined until the discussion of Sade mon prochain in the next section.

³⁸ Pierre Klossowski, 'Temps et agressivité', Recherches Philosophiques, 5 (1935-36), 100-11. All references to this article will be to this volume giving the page number prefaced with the abbreviation RP. As has already been indicated this issue included articles by Caillois, Bataille,

moral and social law. Klossowski reproduces Sade's theory of Nature as the perpetual movement of destruction, a concept which is of key importance throughout Sade mon prochain. He describes this view of Nature thus :

Le spectacle des phénomènes de la Nature nous donne à penser qu'à l'origine elle eût voulu *une fois pour toutes* parvenir à son accomplissement total : dans cet effort, elle a produit les trois règnes, elle a produit les espèces; elle a donc échoué puisqu'elle n'a jamais créé que des forces rivales; pour recommencer, il ne lui reste qu'à les détruire (RP,101).

This desire of Nature to destroy its own creation manifests itself in human aggressiveness, the violent nature of the primal Self. When Klossowski refers to Nature in the thirties and in the first edition of Sade mon prochain he is really referring to human aggressiveness and to the primacy of this function. Yet, Klossowski recognises, humans also exist in a world populated with other humans where contracts, both social and moral, regulate interaction and delimit the expression of aggression. As in the earlier article two principles are opposed to each other, a principle of aggression derived from Nature (which is perceived to have a primary function) and a principle based upon moral contracts which provides the basis of human social interaction.

The Self is experienced over time, asserts Klossowski, only in the interaction between aggressive desire and the moment of encounter with others³⁹. When the aggressive Self encounters another human being moral conscience is born and the second order of being (that of moral law) is affirmed. Klossowski states :

Levinas and Bachelard all of which were gathered together under the heading 'Méditations sur le Temps'.

³⁹ This formulation borrows heavily from Kojève's reading of Hegel and the Master/Slave dialectic of the Phenomenology of Spirit. See Alexandre Kojève, Introduction à la lecture de Hegel, edited

au moment où elle s'apprête à affronter le monde extérieur, le monde des autres, l'agressivité se mue en conscience (**RP**,103).

This moment where conscience is born in the moment of encounter with other human beings is of crucial importance to Klossowski's interpretation of Sade's system. The self-reflexivity and self-awareness of the Self is founded upon the moment when primary aggression is halted in its movement and turned back towards itself under the force of moral censure :

La conscience procéderait donc du mouvement de l'agressivité qui, s'attardant auprès de son objet, se retourne contre elle-même au lieu d'obéir à la nécessité aveugle de la destruction (**RP**,103).

Dans le retour de l'agressivité sur le moi, le sujet faisait l'expérience de sa permanence comme de sa personnalité totale. Et le remords serait dans ce cas le retournement contre lui-même de sa propre agressivité, que le moi affectuerait pour se retrouver égal à lui-même dans le temps (**RP**,104)

The way in which this encounter with other human beings is lived determines the way the Self experiences its own sense of permanence over time. Self-consciousness is maintained through obeying the dictates of moral conscience. By implication any attempt to circumvent moral conscience also has consequences for the experience of self-consciousness. The Sadeian libertine's desire to annihilate his victim in favour of his own aggressive drives becomes an all-important moment in the context of this view of the Self. This fate of the Self in this moment of encounter becomes the primary theme of Sade mon prochain in 1947.

What Klossowski's argument in 'Temps et agressivité' has revealed is his belief that the foundations of human experience are to be located entirely within the movements of aggressive desire. A human is not a creation of Reason but one whose

by Raymond Queneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1947). Klossowski attended Kojève's seminars in the 1930s and his engagement with this important thinker will be discussed in more detail later.

experience of reality and of Self is founded upon the manner in which : '*les êtres et les choses viennent à lui et le rejoignent à travers les sentiments qu'il en a dans l'attente de leur venue*' (RP,105). Our experience of and relation to others is not primarily one of moral or rational consideration but rather one where aggressiveness is directed either outwards (in a violent act) or inwards (in a feeling of moral conscience) : '*C'est dans le reflux de sa propre agressivité sur lui-même que les choses et les êtres viennent au moi*' (RP,105). This emphasis on aggression as the primary foundation of human experience recapitulates Freud's insights into the importance of sadism in the Three Essays. But, more explicitly, it is a repetition of Nietzsche's assertion that the censure of moral conscience is only ever a turning in of aggression towards the Self⁴⁰. Clearly Klossowski is working within a post-Freudian context when he posits aggressive desire as the foundation of human experience but the critique of conscience and moral law that can be seen to emerge here (based upon debt and 'reconnaissance') owes far more to a reading of Nietzsche.

As he develops this position, Klossowski is diverging considerably from the Surrealist position. Breton's idealisation of 'surréalité' as that level of experience or world where 'la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement'⁴¹ (i.e. where all oppositions are fused into a unity) could not be further from Klossowski's assimilation of the Nietzschean concept of aggression.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche makes this point in his discussion of aggression and moral conscience in The Genealogy of Morals. See La Généalogie de la morale, II, 16, p. 94. Deleuze repeats this point in his discussion of Nietzsche's theory of 'mauvaise conscience' in Nietzsche et la philosophie (Paris: P.U.F., 1963), p. 146.

⁴¹ André Breton, 'Second manifeste du surréalisme', Manifestes du surréalisme, pp. 72-73.

Where the former posits a space of fusion 'above reality' as we conventionally know it, the latter finds our experience in the animality of aggressive desire. It alludes to what should rather be called a 'sous-réalité'. The Surrealists aestheticise sexual desire, Klossowski emphasises its fundamental violence. It is this interrogation of, and perhaps even fascination for, a kind of primary violence which separates both Klossowski's and Bataille's reading of Sade from that of the Surrealist movement as a whole.

This brief analysis of 'Temps et agressivité' reveals that Klossowski's interest in Sade lay, first and foremost, in his interrogation of the relationship between Self and Other. More particularly he investigated the complex manner in which the Self relates to the Other given that violence and desire are a primary fact of human existence. It is the problematic raised by this form of questioning which gives rise to the ethical and political considerations of Klossowski's articles in the late 1930s. In a decade characterised by the revolutionary zeal of those on the left and the anti-humanist, virile and often anti-Semitic rhetoric of those on the right (often with National Socialist leanings), the question of the nature of violence was of crucial importance. Despite his assimilation of Nietzsche such a problematic, ultimately, leads Klossowski to adopt an explicitly Catholic position in the years immediately before and after the Second World War.

Esprit and Acéphale.

It might seem quite remarkable that Klossowski should be publishing work in Bataille's review Acéphale throughout 1936 and 1937 and then in the Catholic Esprit in 1938. The former review, devoted to Bataille's project of founding an atheistic

'religion du sacré' (based upon a particular conception and advocacy of sacrifice) was a forum whose aims were hardly compatible with that of the Catholic Esprit, founded as it was to promote a specifically Christian spiritual response to the political and social debates of the thirties. Yet this strange combination of allegiances reflects exactly the tensions within Klossowski's thought throughout this period. The exact drama of this tension, between Nietzschean vision on the one hand and a Catholic theological perspective on the other will be explored fully in the discussion of Sade mon prochain.

Klossowski's article 'Qui est mon prochain?' published in Esprit in December 1938⁴² is interesting insofar as it is Klossowski's only overt contribution to political debate that he makes throughout the thirties. It is interesting also because it addresses the question of the relation between Self and Other that was seen to be his central concern in 'Temps et agressivité'. His main point of consideration in this discussion goes to the heart of what is at stake in his reading of Sade, namely that of :

l'élémentaire besoin de remettre en question l'existence d'autrui pour accroître d'autant le sentiment de l'existence propre (E,404).

'Temps et agressivité' affirmed the way in which the consciousness of the Self was determined in its encounter with others. Here Klossowski restates this position. 'Qui

⁴²Pierre Klossowski, 'Qui est mon prochain', Esprit, 75 (December 1938), 402-23. References to this article will be to this volume giving the page number prefaced with the abbreviation E. This issue devoted itself to the highly topical, and extremely thorny question of the origins of French fascism under the title 'Le Préfascisme français'. The opening article by Emmanuel Mounier himself, entitled 'Les Deux Sources du préfascisme', defined fascism as : 'une subordination totale de la personne aux appareils, politique ou technique'. Seeing this 'subordination totale de la personne' (323-34) as a phenomenon common to both Left and Right Mounier rejected the possibility of a French fascism in favour of 'une démocratie personnaliste'. Klossowski's article appears under the general heading 'Les Forces de la haine' and should be understood within the overall context of the December issue and its attempt to analyse the genesis of fascism. Other

est mon prochain?', however, develops this argument in order to integrate it into the political debate surrounding the nature of Fascism and the future of democracy. The National Socialists of Germany have succeeded, argues Klossowski, in forming a community based upon a fixed identity of the Self (the racially pure German) by negatively constructing and then violently excluding the Other (the impure Jew). He explicates this process with some prescience as follows :

quand les membres d'une communauté politique se veulent limiter aux liens raciaux, ne peuvent-ils vivre la fraternité de ces liens dans la simple affirmation; ils ne le peuvent qu'en devenant une communauté de négation d'autrui; ainsi que les terroristes de 1793, c'est peut-être dans l'extermination même d'une minorité sociale et raciale que les nationaux-socialistes ont scellé une fraternité (E,415).

The Nazi constructs a fixed and communal identity for him or herself only in and through the negation of the Jew and, as Klossowski points out, this negation involves a very real violence and even perhaps annihilation. The name of Sade is not mentioned throughout the length of 'Qui est mon prochain?'. However, the point Klossowski makes here raises an issue that dominates debates around Sade in the post-war period; namely the question of whether or not Sade and his thought can be called Nazi⁴³. The Sadeian libertine's ruthless annihilation of his victims has often been compared to the cruelty of the death camps. However, Klossowski's particular form of Catholic response to the phenomenon of Nazism in 'Qui est mon prochain?' is a precursor of his Christian interpretation of Sade in the first edition of Sade mon prochain. This

contributors to this issue included Jacques Madule, François Perroux, A. Rossi and P. Henri Simon.

⁴³ The history of this debate about Sade in the decades after the Second World War is related by Maurice Lever in his biography. See Lever pp. 392-392. The question of the complicity of figures like Sade and Nietzsche with Nazism was already a question before the war however. Bataille's revue Acéphale devoted an issue to this question entitled 'Nietzsche et les fascistes'

response founds his complete refusal of any identification between the philosophy and writing of the Marquis and the tenets of National Socialism.

The Christian cannot, Klossowski maintains, demonise and negate the Other in the way that the Nazi does the Jew. This is essentially because of the doctrine of Original Sin. According to this doctrine we are all, as humans, guilty of evil in the eyes of God, but at the same time we all are given the possibility of Redemption. Within this context it makes no sense to brand another human being or group of human beings as evil or inferior and one's own Self as good or superior because we all partake equally of Sin. Of the Christian Klossowski asserts as follows :

tout crime ou tout malheur d'autrui, il le reconnaît alors pour symptôme de sa propre culpabilité; toute vertu d'autrui, il l'accepte comme une chance de sa propre rédemption (E,408).

Any qualities one might be able to locate in others are always ultimately possibilities or potentialities of oneself. In negating the Other one is only ever refusing a set of possibilities which are in fact already one's own. Klossowski expresses this view as follows :

L'"ennemi" répond donc à l'ignorance plus ou moins concertée où je suis à l'égard de l'une de mes virtualités propres, virtualité que je reconnais d'autant moins au dedans de moi comme une différence d'avec moi-même que je crois davantage l'éprouver comme une différence d'avec un être extérieur à moi (E,410).

Klossowski, departing from the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin, elaborates here a plural view of the Self. The infinity variety of others expresses, in reality, the infinite possibility and multiplicity of my own identity. Or put another way, because Catholic doctrine excludes no human from sin, it must include all humans within its community.

which sought to defend Nietzsche in particular against his appropriation by National Socialist

The Nazi, Klossowski argues, is wrong to negate the Jew in order to fix his own identity, for in doing so he is only ever negating his own possibility. The Nazi is only ever refusing a difference within himself rather than affirming a difference with the Jew because ultimately we are all equally guilty, all equally besmirched with the stain of Original Sin. The refusal of this difference within himself and its projection onto the Other can lead only to the violent and bloody negation of the Other. The conclusion to which Klossowski comes as a result of this formulation is that an affirmation of Catholic doctrine is the only response to the question of the difference between Self and Other (implying as it does in his reading of Original Sin that the Self is always a plural potentiality and is as such already different from itself). Through Christianity, Klossowski argues, we must recognise that whatever we are, we are all an expression of the infinite possibility within ourselves and thus tolerate and indeed love all the differences of others. We are all infinitely guilty and can only be redeemed through love of Christ and union in the breast of the One Church. To the question 'Qui est mon prochain?' Klossowski replies 'mon prochain, c'est moi' (my phrase).

The argument of this Esprit article is important because it shows firstly Klossowski's Christian view that the Other cannot be negated in any successful way (this will be of crucial importance to his reading of Sade). Secondly it shows that, even from within a Christian perspective, he is articulating a plural view of the Self. Because of Original Sin and the shared guilt of mankind the Self is constructed as being essentially divided from itself, infinite in its potentiality and possibility. The only hope of unity offered to humanity is redemption through God and Jesus Christ. God

functions within these early writings to affirm unity and totality over all possible divisions but only insofar as the doctrine of universal guilt allows us first to recognise that those divisions are only ever within ourselves and not between one group and another.

Crucial here is the extent to which this Christian line of thought informs Klossowski's view of Sade as figure whose own conscience is divided from itself. The Sadeian libertine, in his unsuccessful attempt to negate any relationship to the Other, represents for Klossowski a consciousness which is torn between Christian and atheistic perspectives. In these articles of the thirties Klossowski shows himself to be very much divided between a Nietzschean affirmation of 'agressivité' as the foundation of experience and a Christian view of Sin, Guilt and possible Redemption in the love of God. In the same way, Klossowski will argue, Sade is divided between an assertion of aggressive desire which negates God on the one hand and the ultimate impossibility of his negation on the other. At the end of 'Qui est mon prochain?' Klossowski writes :

Des hommes en lutte au dedans d'eux-mêmes pouvaient se reconnaître comme semblables, comme frères (E,422).

To the question 'Qui est mon prochain?' Klossowski in 1947 gave a definitive answer. Sade as he writes, Klossowski will argue, bears witness to a lengthy and complex struggle within himself. This is a struggle which Klossowski recognises as his own and which gives him the title for his work : Sade mon prochain.

Being without Eternity : the 1947 edition of *Sade mon prochain*.

Quelque accoutumé que l'on soit au forfait, il est rare que la nouvelle de son accomplissement n'effraie celui qui vient de le commettre. Cette terreur fait rentrer un instant la vertu dans ses droits que lui ravit bientôt le crime.

La Nouvelle Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu⁴⁴.

In Sade's novels rape, torture and murder are committed in the name of unbridled pleasure. Sade himself spent over twenty years in prison as the result of sexual crimes he committed⁴⁵ and, after the Revolution, as a result of the obscenity of his writing in general. Yet this apostle of murder and all manner of violent crime, this man who claimed that he would gladly be martyred for his atheist creed⁴⁶, is, Klossowski argues, a Christian. Klossowski's first edition of Sade mon prochain⁴⁷ has as its central thesis the argument that all the thousands of pages of sexual violence that fill Sade's novels and all the atheistic, materialistic justifications which accompany them throughout his œuvre are the result of bad conscience (what Klossowski will call 'la mauvaise conscience'). Sade's unflinching rejection of Christianity, maintains Klossowski, conceals a profound affirmation of God's existence.

The surprising nature of this thesis might lead one initially to view Klossowski's position as rather eccentric and misguided. This indeed was the view adopted by Bataille in 1947 in his review of the work later incorporated in La

⁴⁴ Sade, Œuvres complètes, Vol. VII (1967), p. 240.

⁴⁵ Many biographers have argued over the seriousness of the incidents in which Sade was known to have been involved. For instance Gilbert Lély described the scandal of Sade's alleged abduction of Rose Keller as a mere 'spanking' and alluded to the insubstantial nature of the 'crime'. For an assessment of this incident and Lély's reaction see Lever's biography pp. 150-156.

⁴⁶ See Lever, The Marquis de Sade, p. 451.

Littérature et le mal⁴⁸. Yet the idiosyncrasy of Klossowski's thesis is more apparent than real; for he is not alone in reading Sade in order to discern certain forces at work beneath the surface of the Marquis's text. The anti-rationalist surrealists transformed the rationalist Sade into a hero to serve their own ends. Both Bataille and Blanchot also place a question mark over Sade's apparent rationalism. Also, Klossowski is not alone in suggesting that Sade's atheism does not run as deeply as its very virulence might suggest. Huysmans in A rebours suggests a reading of Sade which is potentially very close to that of Klossowski⁴⁹ (and which therefore implies that Klossowski's reading is not quite so strange and unique as it might at first seem). For both Klossowski and Huysmans the claim that Sade is a Christian rests on two assumptions: firstly that the rationalism of Sade's text is superficial because untenable and secondly that his professed atheism is more a form of sacrilege which serves to confirm what it so virulently denies, i.e. the existence of God. For his part Klossowski constructs his argument affirming Sade's Christianity within the framework of a surprising number of perspectives, at once Catholic, Hegelian and also Nietzschean. Yet most importantly his argument centres on the problematic of violent desire insofar as this desire structures the encounter between Self and Other. This problematic, so crucial to all of

⁴⁷ Sade mon prochain (Paris: Seuil, 1947). All references to the 1947 edition of this text will be to this volume giving the page number prefaced by the abbreviation **SMP47**.

⁴⁸ In his review Bataille suggests that 'dans son "Esquisse du système de Sade" Pierre Klossowski a donné de l'auteur de *Justine* une image un peu construite', Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 9, p. 247. This review was published originally Critique, 15-17, (1947).

⁴⁹ The narrator of A rebours writes of sadism: 'En effet, s'il ne comportait point un sacrilège, le sadisme n'aurait pas de raison d'être; d'autre part, le sacrilège qui découle de l'existence même d'une religion, ne peut être intentionnellement et patiemment accompli que par un croyant, car l'homme n'éprouverait aucune allégresse à profaner une foi qui lui serait ou indifférente ou inconnue'. A rebours (Paris: Fasquelle, 1961), p. 202.

Klossowski's articles in the thirties, leads him to discern in Sade a complex interaction of forces which underpins the professed atheism of Sade's libertine heroes.

Throughout the first edition of Sade mon prochain, but in the 'Esquisse du système de Sade' in particular, Klossowski traces this interaction of forces through numerous successive phases or moments which can be located within the Sadeian text. As was suggested earlier this shift towards a close analysis of the dynamic of Sade's writing itself articulates a movement away from the lionising of Sade by Breton (and the failure of surrealism to read the works themselves). What follows will show that, ultimately, it is the highly paradoxical character of Sade's writing that makes the eighteenth-century libertine philosopher a figure of such key significance to Klossowski, the twentieth-century writer, translator and painter. What Klossowski's reading does is to identify Sadeian paradox as a figure of thought working at the limit of thought itself. In this focus on paradox Sade ceases to be some kind of iconoclastic hero involved in a project of moral subversion, but rather becomes a philosopher and writer of the limit.

'L'Esquisse du système de Sade' - Sade's dialectic.

The philosophical discourses of the Sadeian libertine make a constant appeal to the light of reason and self-evidence yet do so in order to justify the most extreme forms of irrational desire. Klossowski opens the central essay of Sade mon prochain 'Esquisse du système de Sade' by making just this point. Sade's writing, asserts Klossowski, reproduces the 'terminologie reçue' (SMP47,48) of the rationalist Enlightenment, but at the same time has as its foundation that very different moment where : 'des forces obscures se lèvent au-dedans d'un homme' (SMP47,47). This is the

first paradoxical moment which Klossowski locates in Sade's writing. The language of reason is being deployed to justify and promote the highest form of unreason that of violent and deviant sexual desire. Klossowski initially views this paradox as indicative of the extent to which Sade is a prisoner of his time. Sade was a prisoner, asserts Klossowski, not just in the Bastille and other prisons, but a prisoner also of the language of his epoch, a prisoner

au nom de la raison et de la philosophie des lumières, parce qu'ayant voulu traduire dans les termes du sens commun ce que ce sens doit taire et abolir pour rester commun, sous peine d'en être lui-même aboli (SMP47,48).

Klossowski's concern is to show that Sade's thought, whilst it may seem to affirm some form of rationalist materialism, is clearly far more preoccupied with the irrational and irrationally violent basis of experience. This is a crucial step in the movement towards constructing a Christian Sade because it undermines the rationalism with which Sade seeks to deny the importance of morality, and in particular the Christian categories of moral value. Sade's dismissal of moral restraints may appeal to the rational materialist philosophies of Holbach or La Mettrie (SMP47,52) but ultimately what is at stake in the denial of morality is not the demands of Reason but rather those of 'des forces obscures'.

Klossowski develops this reading in such a way as to show that whilst Sade's text might strive towards some form of materialist a-morality and a liquidation of Christian moral categories, it always in fact begins from, and ultimately remains within a position which is deeply complicit with them. Sade's heroes, however much they might try to justify their actions or promote the pleasures and vices of Crime, are never entirely freed from Christian values. The entirety of Klossowski's argument centres

around the encounter between Sadeian libertine and his victim. The essay 'Temps et agressivité' showed the way in which the Self as a morally self-aware being was determined in the moment of 'rencontre' with the Other. In his analysis of Sade Klossowski takes libertine and victim as a model for what is at stake in this 'rencontre'. In order to torture and murder his victim the libertine must deny any moral contract with others and to do so must also deny God and the existence of God's law. 'Temps et agressivité', borrowing from Nietzsche, developed the thesis that violent desire was directed either outward to negate the Other or inward in the form of moral conscience. In the 'Esquisse du système' Klossowski develops this thesis further by giving it a Christian emphasis. If the Self restrains its natural aggression in the encounter with others then it is submitting to moral imperatives and is constituted in moral conscience, characterised in Catholic terms by a knowledge of Original Sin and therefore by guilt (i.e. the negative feeling of guilt is, precisely, that turning inwards of aggression). With this God's Law is affirmed (and hence His existence). If, on the other hand the Self unleashes its aggression in order to annihilate the Other (the Sadeian moment), then it denies both God's Law and therefore also the existence of God. Within this framework the existence of others, moral categories and God are mutually interdependent; the affirmation or recognition of one implies an affirmation and recognition of the others.

This means that the libertine's straightforward denial of morality is not satisfactory : he must still confront his victim and therefore confront his own moral conscience and with that God's existence :

Sade, s'il adhère au début à la négation du Mal, ne se satisfait pas encore de cette négation. C'est que le *prochain* se trouve mis en cause; et, tant que le *prochain* existe pour l'*égo* il lui révèle la présence de Dieu (SMP47,57).

What this shows is that Sade, for all his supposed rationalism, is not an atheist "'de sang-froid'" (SMP47,59). The presence of other people implies limitations on the assertion of aggression and therefore moral restraints, which in turn implies the presence of God. Each attempt to murder or torture a victim must first involve a prior encounter with the victim as other and therefore an implicit affirmation of both moral categories and God. As long as Sade's heroes commit their Crimes with reference to moral values they are secretly recognising God's existence.

Klossowski's assertion of Sade's Christianity is based upon the ultimate impossibility of negating a moral relationship to others and therefore the impossibility of negating God Himself. This assertion relies upon a twofold perspective which goes beyond the Nietzschean construction of 'conscience' as an inward turn of aggressive energy. The first is a traditional doctrine of Catholic theology, namely that a denial of God or a transgression of God's Law is always ultimately also a recognition of and appeal to His presence⁵⁰. Sade's promotion of crime and more importantly of Evil for the sake of evil offers an example of this. Klossowski writes :

Aussi la conscience du débauché sadique maintient-elle avec les catégories morales le libre arbitre, en croyant pouvoir faire le mal (SMP47,61).

By promoting Evil, the libertine affirms moral categories even in the very process of seeking to negate them and therefore also affirms God. Klossowski places this into an explicitly theological context relating it to 'l'analyse du Mal pour le Mal de Saint Augustin dans ses *Confessions*' (SMP47,61). The second perspective is more

⁵⁰ This doctrine is put forward by Augustine to whom Klossowski refers explicitly at various moments throughout Sade mon prochain. See Augustine's Confessions (Oxford: OUP, 1991) p. 32. Augustine comments on supposed unbelievers : 'Yet they put themselves at distance from you

contemporary and involves a more complex play of affirmation and negation than the theological construction just outlined. The libertine and his victim as a model of Self in its encounter with the Other also stages the dialectical struggle between the Master and the Slave as it is elaborated by Hegel in the Phenomenology of Spirit⁵¹.

The key figure in this assimilation of Hegel for both Klossowski and many others throughout the thirties (most particularly Bataille) is Alexandre Kojève⁵². From 1933 through to 1939 Kojève gave a weekly seminar translating and commenting on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. Klossowski, along with many other figures who came to prominence after the Second World War attended this seminar. These included Bataille, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty and also Sartre⁵³. A more explicit connection between Klossowski and Kojève is their joint participation in the 'Collège de sociologie' founded by Bataille, Caillois and Leiris in the winter of 1937⁵⁴. Bataille's pronouncements within this forum draw, in particular, on Kojève's reading of Hegel. Both Kojève himself and Klossowski gave papers at the meetings of the Collège⁵⁵. Kojève's elaboration of the Hegelian Master/Slave dialectic emphasises the way in which the Self is constituted as a discrete entity in the struggle for mastery which occurs in its encounter with others. For Hegel-Kojève all action is negation, a

and exalt themselves against you. But even by thus imitating you they acknowledge that you are the creator of all nature and that no place can entirely escape from you'.

⁵¹ See G. W. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit, translated by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), pp. 111-19.

⁵² For a short account of Kojève's relations with Bataille throughout the thirties see Michel Surya's biography of Bataille Georges Bataille, la mort à l'oeuvre, pp. 229-33 and pp. 318-30. For a more detailed account of Kojève's life and work see Dominique Auffret's book Alexandre Kojève, La philosophie, l'État, la fin de l'histoire (Paris: Grasset, 1990).

⁵³ See Carolyn Dean, The Self and its Pleasures, p. 5.

⁵⁴ See Surya, Georges Bataille, la mort à l'oeuvre, pp. 322-24.

⁵⁵ These are gathered together and commented by Denis Hollier in Le Collège de sociologie (Paris: Gallimard/Idées, 1979 [Revised edition 1995]).

destruction of an existing state of affairs in the name of something else. In this context all recognition of the Other is thus necessarily an abolition of the Other and vice-versa i.e. an attempt at abolition necessarily also entails a form of recognition. Klossowski's Sade behaves in much the same way : when the libertine hero seeks to annihilate his victim, he also necessarily recognises the reality of that victim (and therefore of moral contracts). Because the Hegelian dialectic of the Master and Slave posits recognition as a form of negation and therefore also negation as a form of recognition this parallel between Master/Slave and Sadeian libertine/victim can be drawn. At the same time, Kojève's formulation of this dialectic parallels (though with different implications) the Nietzschean formulation of the 'rencontre' between Self and Other (explicated in 'Temps et agressivité') insofar as it stresses that Desire (Kojève's capitalisation) rather than Reason founds the self-consciousness of the Self.

In a text dating from 1939⁵⁶ in which he offers a detailed commentary of Hegel's text Kojève writes : 'C'est le Désir (conscient) d'un être qui constitue cet être en tant que Moi' (**KOJ**,11). Not only is it the movement of desire which founds the Self but also that movement of Desire as it confronts another Desire :

En effet, l'être humain ne se constitue qu'en fonction d'un Désir portant sur un autre Désir, c'est-à-dire - en fin de compte - d'un désir de reconnaissance. L'être humain ne peut donc se constituer que si deux au moins de ces Désirs s'affrontent (**KOJ**,14).

⁵⁶ See Introduction à la lecture de Hegel, edited by Raymond Queneau (Paris: Gallimard/Tel, 1947), pp. 11-34. All references to this commentary will be to this volume giving the page number prefaced with the abbreviation **KOJ**.

The reality of the Self, the presence of the Self to itself, is founded upon a struggle for the recognition of mastery between two forces of Desire⁵⁷. This struggle for mastery is resolved in the 'négation' of one desire by the other. In principle this negation of one Desire by the other results in the death of one or other of the participants. Yet in the death of one of the participants the desiring Self would find itself alone and would lack the recognition needed to constitute itself as Self. This means that in the struggle for mastery between two confronting forces of Desire the victor must negate, but at the same time conserve the opponent in order to gain recognition of its victory. This negation, which is also a form of conservation, Kojève calls a 'suppression dialectique', a term which translates Hegel's *Aufhebung* :

"Supprimer dialectiquement" veut dire : supprimer en conservant le supprimé, qui est sublimé dans et par cette suppression conservante ou cette conservation supprimante. L'entité supprimée dialectiquement est annulée dans son aspect contingent [...] : mais elle est conservée dans ce qu'elle a d'essentiel (**KOJ**,21).

The interdependence of those three elements : moral categories, recognition of the Other and the existence of God has already been elaborated upon. However it is this Hegelian/Kojévian notion of dialectical suppression which structures the interaction between Sadeian libertine and his victim (and therefore the interaction of these three elements) throughout the 'Esquisse du système'. Kojève's reading of the Master/Slave dialectic provides the framework for what Klossowski calls the 'drame dialectique' of Sade's system.

⁵⁷ It is not possible to enter here into a detailed analysis of Klossowski's account of Hegel's dialectic of Master and Slave. However it is important to retain certain elements of Kojève's formulation in order to understand Klossowski's reading of Sade in the 'Esquisse du système'. Judith Butler in Subjects of Desire (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) discusses the Master/Slave dialectic and its importance through Kojève's seminar to twentieth-century French thought in general. See also Michael Kelly, Hegel in France (Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 1992).

The opening essay of Sade mon prochain 'Sade et la Révolution' was given as a paper at the Collège de Sociologie in February 1939 and explicitly situates the relationship between libertine and his victim within this Hegelian framework of the encounter between Master and Slave. The eighteenth-century 'Grand Seigneur', argues Klossowski, denies both God and therefore the Divine Right of the King. With this he denies also the entirety of the feudal hierarchy and the rights and obligations that accompany it (and regulate interaction between individuals). With this overturning of the moral contracts which underpin the Divine and feudal order :

la loi de la jungle rentre en vigueur : les conditions de l'antique rapport du fort et du faible, du maître et de l'esclave sont rétablies (SMP47,24).

Once the social hierarchy, which finds its legitimisation in the existence of God is abolished (and along with this the moral codes of duty and obligation) a prior order characterised by violence and appropriation is reinstated. This, of course, reiterates Klossowski's formulation of two orders of Being in his articles of the early 1930's (in La Revue Française de Psychanalyse and Recherches Philosophiques).

Yet although Klossowski begins his book by evoking the relationship between Master and Slave as the principle which structures the encounter of Sade's heroes and their victims, his use of dialectics in the 'Esquisse du système' is problematic. Klossowski's sketch of Sade's system is based upon what he calls the 'mouvement dialectique' of the Sadeian consciousness. This movement, as has already been indicated, is based on Sade's attempt to liquidate moral categories (therefore both the Other and God). However such a movement, claims Klossowski, passes through a number of dialectical phases in which moral categories are both negated and yet

maintained. The Hegelianism of Klossowski's analysis has been questioned in particular by Georges Bataille in his review of Klossowski's work in Littérature et le Mal.

Bataille writes that Klossowski's analysis is 'très hégélien, mais sans la rigueur d'un Hegel'⁵⁸. A summary account of Klossowski's argument reveals the following phases :

- I. Sade's heroes promote Evil for Evil's sake and in so doing conserve moral categories (SMP47,60).
- II. Evil is justified by reference to an Evil creator God 'l'Etre suprême en méchanceté', who as 'l'Agresseur originel' has violated all moral contracts from the outset. Yet this argument for Evil : 'a recours aux catégories morales comme à un pacte que Dieu aurait violé' (SMP47,65).
- III. The notion of an Evil God is rejected in favour of a conception of Nature as a Demonic force. Yet Nature as a ferocious power of destruction conserves the idea of Good and Evil because it is constructed as a notion : 'toujours en se plaçant au point de vue des catégories morales' (SMP47,78).
- IV. This is the final phase in the attempt to liquidate moral categories and is based upon the conception of Nature as a perpetual movement of creation and destruction. This movement is one of a blind necessity which transcends individual consciousness. It is a universal, impersonal desire for destruction which founds human passions and : 'si l'homme croit se satisfaire en leur obéissant, il ne satisfait en réalité qu'une aspiration qui dépasse son individu, (SMP47,81).

It is not entirely clear how one phase of this process follows on from or supersedes the other by the operation of a mediating term (as a strictly Hegelian dialectic would demand) and it is for this reason that one might, like Bataille, question the rigour of Klossowski's formulation. Although there is a transition from one phase to another there is no clear indication that the movement is one of ascension or one of an ever greater synthesis. Rather each phase seems to repeat the same contradictory moment in a different form. Yet it is clear that the importance of this process for the author of Sade mon prochain lies in this repetition, in Sade's constant reference to moral

⁵⁸ Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 9, p. 247.

categories and his inability to think without them. The outcome of this 'mouvement dialectique' in the final phase is the key moment of Sade's system and involves a return to the point with which the process began, namely the relation between libertine and victim and the impossibility of the former being able to destroy the latter.

The notion of Nature as a perpetual movement of creation and destruction was used by Klossowski from his very first article on Sade in 1933. From the outset his interest in this notion is focused on the impossibility of total destruction⁵⁹. If one recalls the formulation in 'Temps et agressivité', Klossowski emphasised that Nature desiring to '*une fois pour toutes* parvenir à son accomplissement total' (**RP**,101) failed insofar as it created only competing forces. Rather than a stable and finished totality the spectacle of Nature offers a multiplicity of interacting phenomena each trying to assert itself as a totality : 'elle a donc échoué puisqu'elle n'a jamais produit que des forces rivales; pour recommencer, il ne reste qu'à les détruire' (**RP**,101). This means, for Klossowski, that the movement of Nature is condemned to maintain itself in perpetuity because whenever it destroys it also creates yet whenever it creates it is moved also to destroy. Creation and destruction mutually imply each other, the one always gives rise to the other. The relationship between Sade's heroes and their victims parallels this play of creation and destruction in Nature :

⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that, when in the 1940's, in works such as L'Expérience intérieure and La Littérature et le droit à la mort, Bataille and Blanchot are investigating the limits of the Hegelian dialectic, it is in the impossibility of total destruction (and subsequent reintegration within the dialectic) that both find testimony to the limits of dialectical thought. As a result death endures as an (impossible) experience of impossibility for both Bataille and Blanchot. As will become clear, what Klossowski refers to here as the impossibility of total destruction is not far removed from what Bataille calls the impossibility of dying (ecstasy) and Blanchot the *il y a* (borrowed from Levinas). This gives an initial indication of the convergence between the positions of Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski in the post-war years. This will be examined further at the end of this chapter.

la conscience sadiste va découvrir dans cette dualité son propre conflit et peut-être y entrevoir sa solution finale. Le problème de la *création-destruction* de ses créatures qui se pose à la Nature, n'est-ce pas le problème de la réalité d'autrui qui se posait à la conscience sadiste...? (SMP47,85).

The final phase of Sade's thought, the affirmation of Nature as an amoral movement of creation and destruction returns Sade's libertines to the initial conflict of their situation. The libertine may seek to annihilate his victim but must first also recognise the reality of the victim. On one level Kojève's translation of Hegelian *Aufhebung* as 'suppression dialectique' is particularly useful here. Cruelty towards or the destruction of one particular victim always involves a recognition of the Other at the same time it seeks to negate it. The destruction of an individual victim is a 'suppression conservante' or a 'conservation supprimante' of the world of others. The other person may be dead, the Other remains and as long as the world of others remains so does moral conscience : 'le monde des autres a placé en chacun de nous son redoutable représentant : la conscience morale. Et ce n'est pas à l'extérieur, c'est en nous-même que le monde des autres doit être détruit pour ne plus avoir d'empire sur nous' (SMP47,91). Yet on another more profound level this moment marks a crucial break from the Hegelian dialectic. This is because the return of moral categories is a repetition of the *same* moment rather than a sublation or a progression to a higher level of synthesis. Paradoxically, Nature as a perpetual and amoral movement of creation and destruction does not signal the libertine's final escape from the categories of Christian moral values. Rather it necessitates the infinite return of moral conscience⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ Sade's libertines are always aware of this propensity of moral feeling to return after a crime has been committed. For instance at the beginning of *Juliette M^{me} Delbène* speaks of the need to strive ceaselessly to : 'éteindre totalement en soi cette voix confuse qui, dans le calme des

So the final phase of Sade's dialectic is subject, in perpetuity, to the affirmation of God through the inevitable return of moral conscience. Yet the drama of Sade's system does not end here, even if its dialectical movement does, for in response to this situation the libertine develops what Klossowski terms the 'ascèse' of 'apathie'. If moral conscience is the 'espion du monde des autres' which always returns as long as another human being breathes on the earth then :

Pour dépister cet espion, il faudrait que l'*ego* sût maintenir son agressivité dans une sorte de mobilisation permanente, dans l'état de mouvement perpétuel qui lui est propre, car c'est dans le repos, dans le calme, que l'agressivité disponible revient à nouveau alimenter la conscience morale (SMP47,92-3).

Moral conscience, since it is formed when aggression turns in on itself in the encounter with the Other, can only be overcome once and for all by directing aggression continually outwards in a movement of endless repetition. Nature, as perpetual creation and destruction, necessitates the perpetual recapitulation of the sadistic act in order to ward off moral conscience. Sade's heroes, then, must proceed from victim to victim in a seemingly endless repetition of cruelty and murder. Because they can never properly succeed in negating the Other they must move repeatedly to negate each individual other being as it crosses their path.

Sade's dialectical drama, however rigorously dialectical its various phases may be, has its outcome in the failure of the dialectic, in the repetition of the same moment ad infinitum. A properly Hegelian dialectic would offer a teleological history, ascending towards a moment of absolute knowledge or totality. Sade's dialectic, however, collapses into this infinite repetition. The pages upon pages of Sade's novels

passions, vient encore réclamer contre les égarements où elles nous ont portés', Sade, Œuvres complètes, Vol. VIII (1967), pp. 27/28.

where tableau after tableau of torture unfold have at their root a movement where negation always implies an affirmation and therefore always necessitates a further negation and so on ad infinitum. Sade's ascetic of apathy is an affirmation of aggression and an overturning of God's law but only insofar as that movement of aggression can be perpetually recapitulated without ever attaining the total annihilation it desires. What the 'Esquisse du système' has shown is the difficulty of maintaining Sade's atheism as a straightforward and unproblematic doctrine. Sade's consciousness is always deeply divided and deeply involved in an engagement with God and God's Law. The ascetic of apathy, and the practice of *delectatio morosa* to which this discussion will now turn, are all motifs of this repetition which constitutes the final outcome of Sade's dialectic. The remaining essays of Sade mon prochain, however, argue that repetition is an impossible mode of Being, one that demonstrates once and for all, according to Klossowski in 1947, the impossibility of living without God.

Delectatio Morosa and the ruination of Being.

The chapter which follows 'L'Esquisse du système de Sade' consists of three parts and makes explicit Klossowski's assertion of Sade's Christianity by being entitled 'Sous le masque de l'athéisme'. Once again the implication is clear : Sade is not what he seems to be; his text hides other forces beneath its apparently rationalist surface. The first two parts of the essay offer perhaps Klossowski's most singular approach to Sade, an approach which he specifically disavows in a footnote to the 1967 revision of his work. In the parts entitled 'Destruction et pureté' and 'Hommage à la Vierge', Klossowski places Sade's thought within the context of the early Christian heresies of

Gnosticism⁶¹. Sade, Klossowski argues, is engaged in a never-ending attempt to destroy the material world, created by the evil Demiurge, in favour of the non-material purity of the 'Dieu des Esprits'. This allows Klossowski to reach the perhaps surprising conclusion that the libertine's liquidation of his victim is a result of his quest not for evil but purity.

Although Klossowski's interest in Gnosticism runs throughout his career as a writer and essayist (and is developed, in particular, in Le Baphomet), the shifts in emphasis which his engagement with this particular form of early Christian heresy undergoes will not be discussed in any detail here. What is important to note at this point is that the attempt by the Sadeian libertine to destroy matter in favour of the purity of non-matter is highly paradoxical. As such it proves resistant to any progressive dialectic. The desire for purity, Klossowski argues is centred on the figure of the Virgin (embodied in the character of Justine). In desiring the Virgin, the libertine expresses his desire for purity. Yet this desire is founded on an impossibility, since the desire for purity is itself inherently impure (being rooted in the flesh and therefore the material world). The libertine finds himself in the position of having to say :

Je suis exclu de la pureté, parce que je veux posséder celle qui est pure. Je ne puis ne pas désirer la pureté, mais du même coup je suis impur parce que je veux jouir de l'injouissable pureté (SMP47,109).

This is a recapitulation in a different form of the impossibility of destruction as it was elaborated at the end of the 'Esquisse'. Just as suppression of the Sadeian victim

⁶¹ For an introduction to Gnostic thought see E.C. Blackman, Marcion and his influence (London: SPCK., 1948), and E. Filoramo, A History of Gnosticism, translated by A. Alcock (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990). See also Hutin, Les Gnostiques (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959). Klossowski focuses on the dualism of Gnostic cosmology : the Evil of a fallen material world as opposed to the Good of the universe of Spirits. Two Gods accompany this cosmology :

implied its conservation, so here purity always implies its opposite, impurity. This failed attempt to possess purity once more necessitates the endless repetition of the same act or what Klossowski describes here as 'l'acharnement inlassable sur la même victime' (SMP47,108) (again Justine provides the ideal model for this moment of Sade's text as she is subject over and again to rape and abuse). However at this point a greater emphasis is placed on the fact that it is failure which founds the need for repetition. Repetition only ever occurs because of impossibility and inevitable failure (be it the failure to negate moral conscience or to possess purity) and this is the failure Klossowski goes on to call 'exaspération'. The exasperation to which the repeated acts of Sade's heroes give rise finds its fullest expression in the experience of 'Delectatio morosa'.

Klossowski explicitly draws the notion of 'delectatio morosa' from Catholic theology and signals the derivation of this term from the writing of Thomas Aquinas in a footnote to his text (SMP47,119-20). Klossowski defines this notion as follows :

La délectation morose consiste dans ce mouvement de l'âme par lequel elle se porte volontairement vers les images d'actes charnels ou spirituels prohibés pour s'attarder à leur contemplation (SMP47,120-1).

'Delectatio morosa', which is a propensity of the mind towards libidinal reverie, is a direct consequence of the paradoxical relationship between the libertine and his victim. Because the Other can never be truly destroyed or truly annihilated (but subjected only to a 'suppression conservante') the libertine has recourse to a phantasy image of destruction which carries with it the force of an infinitely repeated act of destruction. The return of moral conscience in the aftermath of the sadistic act necessitates its

infinite repetition in the 'ascèse' of apathy. Delectatio morosa lives out this infinite repetition in an image of phantasy :

Les personnages de Sade prennent ainsi l'habitude de *perdre fictivement* en s'attardant auprès de leur victimes : *je veux que tu cesses éternellement d'exister pour que je puisse éternellement te perdre, éternellement te détruire* (SMP47, 118).

This represents an attempt to break with the cycle of creation and destruction which underpins the 'ascèse' of apathy and which means that moral categories always return : instead of negating the Other and thereby affirming its reality, the libertine imagines a moment where the Other has *always already* been negated and is *always already* subject to perpetual destruction. Delectatio morosa represents the infinite aggression of the sadistic act staged within the mind of the libertine himself and held within a single moment. The return of moral conscience is warded off by a paradoxical affirmation that that Other one seeks to destroy has always already been destroyed (whilst at the same time secondarily only ever having been there in order to be destroyed). Delectatio morosa stages a fantasy possession/dispossession in which the world of 'autrui' has always been subject to a primary act of negation⁶².

This devotion to a certain kind of libidinal reverie has serious consequences for the libertine's apprehension of reality as a whole. If one recalls the phrase from 'Temps et agressivité' where Klossowski asserts of the Self that : 'les êtres et les choses viennent à lui et le rejoignent à travers les sentiments qu'il a dans l'attente de leur

second phase of the 'Esquisse') and the Good God of the Spirits.

⁶² Fantasy or 'le phantasme' becomes a key term in Klossowski's later writing. He does not use the term specifically in this context, however. 'Delectatio morosa' refers to a mental scene or image which is largely a wish fulfilment (of the paradoxical desire to both possess and destroy) and so can be linked to Klossowski's interest in Freudian analysis. His later use of the term is based more explicitly upon his engagement with Nietzsche and will be discussed later in this thesis.

venue' (RP,105) then the deeper implications of this phantasy become clear. Delectatio morosa, in staging the infinite reprise of the same act within the mind of the libertine, overturns his apprehension of both the presence of others and of time in general. The experience of the present becomes a form of 'attente' in which others are encountered in their absence rather than in their presence. Because the Other is subject to a primary negation, because it is already nothing, it can only ever be encountered as an absence or as Klossowski puts it : 'ce n'est pas dans la *présence* mais dans l'*attente des objets absents* que l'on jouira de ces objets' (SMP47,129). What this means is that the infinite repetition that constitutes the ascesis of apathy is not lived as a simple reprise of the same act. Rather the apathy has as its outcome an attitude of mind which ruins the apprehension of reality as presence. The presence of the Other and the experience of the Self as a cohesive entity over time is replaced by an experience of absence lived as the eternal repetition of the same moment. Delectatio morosa constitutes the ruination of Being and Time.

This is the conclusion that Klossowski comes to in the first edition of Sade mon prochain namely, that any attempt to live without God results in the ruination of Being through infinite repetition. Only in God, argues Klossowski, can Being be experienced as plenitude and as the Self-sameness of the Self with the Self. Klossowski identifies three modes of being : the Christian, the Romantic and the Sadistic. The first is characterised by the love of God and one's neighbour, the second by nostalgia for a lost unity, the third by exasperation (the impossibility of destruction). In this formulation only the Christian mode of existence is tenable :

L'âme chrétienne se donne à Dieu, l'âme romantique à sa nostalgie, l'âme sadiste à son exaspération; mais en se donnant à Dieu, l'âme sait que Dieu se donne à l'âme. Par contre la nostalgie ni l'exaspération ne peuvent restituer l'âme que dans l'état permanent de nostalgie et d'exaspération (SMP47,123).

Both the romantic and the sadistic attitude result in an experience of the insufficiency of Being and of repetition. By giving ourselves to God the human soul experiences the repose which comes from unity with the Divine; by turning away from God the human soul experiences that ceaseless restlessness and exasperation which Sade's writing exemplifies⁶³. This, for Klossowski, is the ultimately Christian lesson of Sade's œuvre. Through the many thousands of pages of his novels the Divine Marquis's aim is to show how '[l'âme sadiste] se détourne donc de l'éternel, de son fond divin, pour se livrer toute entière à la rêverie, à une contemplation rêveuse du temps qui ruine les êtres et les choses' (SMP47,126). *Delectatio morosa* is the final term of Sade's thought and reveals the impossibility of an existence which is not grounded in a recognition of God and of God's Law. Without such a recognition, asserts Klossowski, existence will always be condemned to a futile repetition which has its root in an irreducible sense of lack or absence. Sade's atheism, his rationalism and his justifications of rape, torture and murder cannot be taken at face value. What the ceaseless repetitions of the Sadeian text reveal is 'l'expérience de la déficience de l'être et du temps sans éternité' (SMP47,118-19), they show that any attempt to live without an affirmation of God's presence results in the futile infinity of repetition and in the ruination of Being. Sade,

⁶³ Again Klossowski is drawing from Catholic theology here. That repose and unity can be found only through God is a central thought of Augustine's Confessions. Augustine writes addressing God directly : 'For you are supremely "the self-same" in that you do not change. In you is repose which forgets all toil because there is none beside you, nor are we to look for the multiplicity of other things which are not what you are. For "you Lord have established me in hope by means of unity" (Ps,4:10)' Confessions, p. 162.

then, is a Christian, but only because his work reveals the impossibility of Being without God, of Being without Eternity.

Klossowski's early writings on Sade show the way in which, from the publication of 'Le Mal et la négation de l'autrui' in 1934 onwards, he is engaging with a complex logic of the Self and of experience. What Sade's writing bears witness to is the fact that human experience is founded in an economy of desire characterised by violence and aggression. The tradition of Western thought which locates the sovereignty of humankind in the faculty of Reason and a capacity for free will is rejected. The reality of the human Self is located more centrally in the expression of 'l'égoïsme primaire', in a Nietzschean aggression which Klossowski reads through the lens of the Hegelian Master/Slave dialectic. Sade's writing bears witness to the fact that, as Kojève puts it, : 'l'être humain ne se constitue qu'en fonction d'un Désir'. Yet crucially, for Klossowski, the negation of violent desire and of violent transgression as they are expressed in Sade's texts leads 'la conscience sadiste' into an impasse of paradox and impossibility. The attempt to base human action and thought on the promotion of violent desire and on the transgression of moral law leads to an impossible mode of Being. For the Klossowski of 1947 this impossibility ruins Being, condemns the aggressive subject to a futile repetition which can only be redeemed through an acceptance and affirmation of God's Law⁶⁴. An emphasis on both the violence of desire and on the impossibility of desire lies at the heart of Klossowski's

⁶⁴ In his essay 'Le Corps du néant' included at the end of 1947 version of Sade mon prochain Klossowski offers a critique of Bataille which follows his critique of Sade. Bataille's Church of the Sacred, he argues, is without the head of God, condemned to be 'néant', steeped in an insufficiency of Being which can only lead to futile repetition. See pp. 153-183. In the 1967 edition of the work this explicitly Christian polemic against Bataille's project was excised.

early readings of Sade. His formulation of this impossibility of Sadeian transgression shifts in the years after the war when Klossowski's rejection of Catholicism engenders a different reading of Sade and a different conception of impossibility.

The Triumph of Perversion - The 1967 version of *Sade mon prochain*.

The 1967 version of *Sade mon prochain*⁶⁵ is in many ways a very different book from the one which appeared twenty years earlier. Two essays, 'Le corps du néant' and 'Don Juan selon Kierkegaard' have been dropped from the text entirely whilst the essay 'Le philosophe scélérat' (first published in Tel Quel in early 1967⁶⁶) has been added to the front of the new edition. 'Sade et la révolution' remains unaltered except for an additional note, and parts of the 'Esquisse du système de Sade' have been entirely rewritten. The three parts of 'Sous le masque de l'athéisme' remain unchanged in the new version but Klossowski effectively disowns them in the 'Avertissement' at the very beginning of the volume, rejecting (as he puts it) their 'pieuse intention' (SMP67,14).

The very opening line of this new version of *Sade mon prochain* signals an important shift from the 1947 Christian position :

En m'éloignant d'un état d'esprit qui me faisait dire : *Sade mon prochain*, tant s'en faut que je me sois rapproché de ceux qui n'ont de cesse d'insister sur le caractère foncier de l'athéisme de Sade pour preuve de la vertu *libératrice* d'une pensée libérée. Libérée de *Dieu* que l'athéisme déclare n'être *rien*, cette pensée se serait donc libérée de *rien*? Sa liberté serait-elle aussi pour... rien? (SMP67,11).

The original title of the work arose directly from the assertion that Sade was a Christian. Sade, like Klossowski throughout the thirties and forties, was shown to be torn between two opposing positions, the one Nietzschean and atheist, the other

⁶⁵ *Sade mon prochain* (Paris: Seuil, 1967). All references to this edition will be to this volume giving the page number prefaced with the abbreviation SMP67.

⁶⁶ 'Signe et perversion dans l'oeuvre de Sade', Tel Quel, 28 (May 1966), 3-22 (special edition devoted to Sade).

Catholic and Christian. Now, however, Klossowski is not seeking to make any claims for Sade's Christianity : Sade's atheism is 'foncier'. Yet this is not the rationalist atheism which Klossowski's earlier readings of Sade revealed to be untenable. The atheism that Klossowski uncovers in the 1967 version of Sade mon prochain just as paradoxical and impossible. What has altered is Klossowski's response to the very notion of paradox and impossibility. The changes Klossowski makes to the 'Esquisse du système' reveal this shift in Klossowski's thinking in the years which separate the two versions of Sade mon prochain.

The changes to the 'Esquisse du système de Sade'.

The changes to the main body of the 'Esquisse' are for the most part stylistic ones but the end of the essay (section V) is almost entirely rewritten in such a way as to radically alter its emphasis. This alteration centres on the final phase of Sade's 'drame dialectique' discussed earlier. It will be remembered how, in the 1947 text, the doctrine of Nature as a perpetual movement of creation and destruction gave rise to situation where the moral conscience of the libertine returned ceaselessly in the moments after his sadistic act of passion and needed to be warded off by the infinite repetition of that act. The asceticism of apathy, as Klossowski called it, was founded on the impossibility of annihilating the Other; every suppression of the libertine's victim was also always a conservation and recognition of the victim's reality as another human being. The failure of this attempt to destroy the Sadeian victim and the endless return of moral conscience that this implies is described in the fifth section of the 'Esquisse du système'. In both the '47 and the '67 editions of Sade mon prochain the

fifth section begins by returning to the paradoxical relationship between the Sadeian libertine and his victim (one of creation and destruction/suppression and conservation) and describes it in terms of a love/hate relationship.

According to the Kojévian Master/Slave dialectic the Master needs the victim to recognise his mastery and this is recognition which necessitates the conservation of the victim as well as its suppression. It is this need for recognition which means that the libertine loves (desires to conserve) as well as hates (desires to destroy) his victim. The love/hate relationship between libertine and victim is based on the need of the former to compare his own good fortune (at being Master) with the bad fortune of the latter. The change that Klossowski makes to this opening part of section V can best be illustrated with two lengthy quotations. The first is from the 1947 text :

Si la comparaison avec le malheureux, indispensable à la conscience libertine pour se sentir heureuse, supposait l'existence du prochain, la première démarche à faire dans le sens d'une *renaturalisation* de la cruauté sera donc de nier la réalité du prochain - de vider la notion du prochain, la notion d'autrui de son contenu. En impliquant le prochain, le plaisir de comparaison impliquait le mal : *l'amour du prochain*, cette "chimère" dont Sade est hanté, la conscience libertine commettait l'erreur de le convertir en *amour-haine* du prochain : l'amour-haine du prochain ne saurait être qu'une étape sur le chemin de la liquidation de la réalité d'autrui amenant le règne intégral du désir.

Sade revient alors à l'égoïsme primaire. Le premier effet de cette dose de cruauté dont la nature a pourvu plus ou moins chaque individu est de lui faire croire qu'il peut disposer à son gré du monde et des autres créatures (SMP47,86-7).

In 1967 Klossowski revised these lines as follows :

Si la comparaison avec le malheureux, indispensable à la conscience libertine pour se sentir heureuse, supposait l'existence du prochain, la première démarche à faire dans le sens d'une *renaturalisation* de la cruauté sera donc de nier la réalité du prochain - de vider la notion du prochain de son contenu. En impliquant le prochain, le plaisir de comparaison impliquait le mal : *l'amour du prochain*, cette "chimère" dont Sade est hanté, la conscience libertine commettait l'erreur de le convertir en *amour-haine* du prochain. L'amour-haine

du prochain ne saurait être qu'une étape sur le chemin de la liquidation de la réalité d'autrui et de soi-même.

Comment la conscience sadiste pourrait-elle jamais renoncer à son objet, donc à autrui pour accepter de détruire en toute pureté, selon sa représentation d'une Nature libérée du besoin de créer? En renonçant non seulement à autrui, mais encore à sa condition individuelle en tant que *moi* (SMP67, 129).

The argument of the first edition is clearly put forward in the first quotation here : Sade's libertines seek to liquidate moral conscience in favour of an aggressive Self whose movements of violent desire will find no restraint. The modification which Klossowski's text has undergone in the second quotation makes clear the shift in emphasis which has taken place between the two texts : the reality of others is not negated in order to abolish moral Law and allow the aggressive Self a free expression of its 'égocentrisme primaire', but rather the reality of the Self is suppressed *along with* the world of others. In the 1967 edition of Sade mon prochain both Self and Other are abolished in the same movement.

This point is one that is made by Jane Gallop in her book Intersections⁶⁷ in which she surveys and resituates the intertextual networks traced in the readings of Sade by Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski. However, whilst Gallop highlights the emphasis on the abolition of the Self in Klossowski's later reading of Sade, her particularly playful approach to intertextuality leaves out any detailed account of the exact logic which would explain this change in Klossowski's thinking. In order to throw light on the logic of this change a restatement of the theological position of the earlier text is necessary.

⁶⁷ Jane Gallop, Intersections (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1981) p. 102-105.

Klossowski's earlier argument centred on the interdependence of three realities: that of the Other, moral categories and God Himself. Yet implicit in this formulation and underpinned by all the others is a fourth reality that of the Self as such. The Self has an existence as a discrete entity only insofar as it is structured by the reflexive movement of moral conscience (which combines an acceptance of God, God's Law and a relation to others in one moment). Drawing from Nietzsche Klossowski had described the birth of moral conscience, and therefore the birth of the Self as taking place at that moment when aggression is turned inwards in response to the encounter with the world of others. The Kojévian dialectic of the Master and Slave also stated that the reality of the Self was constituted only in and through the encounter with the Other (and the struggle for mastery). If, as Klossowski argues, the reality of the Self is founded upon the existence of both moral conscience and the 'rencontre' with 'le monde des autres' it is necessarily dependent also on the existence of God. Klossowski makes this explicit in his essay on Kierkegaard, 'Don Juan selon Kierkegaard'. The Self he maintains only has a reality in the awareness of its own guilt and therefore in the awareness of God :

l'existence au sein du péché, c'est la naissance du moi individuel - avec ses affres, avec ses joies et ses douleurs - la naissance du moi sous le regard inquisiteur, terrible et aimant de Dieu (SMP47,142).

The failure of the Sadeian libertine to escape moral categories and thus to live out an integral form of atheism is rooted in the fact that the libertine is seeking to abolish both the Other and God in order to affirm the mastery of his own aggressive Self (his 'égocentrisme primaire'). In affirming his own mastery he necessarily affirms the reality of his victim and therefore that of moral categories and God (because he cannot

escape the Kojévian dialectic in which the mastery of the Self is founded upon a suppression of the Other which is always also a conservation).

In 'Don Juan selon Kierkegaard' Klossowski identifies this reversion to an aggressive Self not with the Master of the Master/Slave dialectic but rather with the Nietzschean doctrine of Will to Power and of the 'surhomme'. The appeal to the aggressive ego of the 'surhomme' is in this context the only way to maintain the reality of the Self after the Nietzschean proclamation of the Death of God (since the 'moi' has a life only under the watchful eye of God). What cannot deny the existence of God (as Sade's heroes seek to do) without abolishing also the reality of the Self :

La mort du Dieu de l'individuation exigera la naissance du surhomme : car, si Dieu meurt, le moi individuel ne perd pas seulement son Juge, il perd son Rédempteur et son éternel Témoin : mais s'il perd son éternel Témoin, il perd aussi son identité éternelle. Le moi meurt avec Dieu (SMP47, 140).

So it is clear here that even in the first edition of Sade mon prochain Klossowski maintains that the successful negation of the Other (moral conscience/God) would also entail the destruction of the Self. Yet because Sade (and Nietzsche in the doctrine of the 'Surhomme') is always seeking to affirm the Self in its 'égocentrisme primaire', he also necessarily affirms the existence of his victim and of God. By this logic the only successful way to break out of the Kojévian dialectic in which a suppression of the Other is always also its conservation is to suppress the aggressive Self along with the Other. The relationship between the libertine and the victim is no longer characterised as a struggle for mastery through *recognition*, but rather the abolition of any Self/Other distinction at all. This, Klossowski maintains in the revised edition of Sade

mon prochain, is the price of 'l'athéisme foncier' : not only the Death of God and but the Death of the Self too.

What the first version of Sade mon prochain shows is Klossowski's belief, Catholic in origin, that the identity and propriety of the Self are dependent upon the existence of God. This propriety of the Self is preserved in the earlier version because any denial of God is always constructed in terms of the unleashing of a Nietzschean aggression which ironically always ultimately proves the necessity of God's existence. What the changes made to 1967 version of the 'Esquisse' show is Klossowski's abandonment of this reliance on 'agressivité' as a covert or negative proof of God's existence. The emphasis on 'agressivité' implied a unity of the Self (most clearly expressed in Klossowski's use of the term 'égoïsme primaire') which is abandoned in the later text. This can be seen most clearly by a close comparison of the two texts. Klossowski quotes from volume three of La Nouvelle Justine as one of Sade's libertines proclaims the nothingness of the world of others in comparison to the necessity of his desire :

Que sont, je vous le demande, toutes les créatures de la terre vis-à-vis d'un seul de nos désirs? et par quelle raison me priverais-je du plus léger de ces désirs pour plaire à une créature qui ne m'est rien et qui ne m'intéresse en rien...(Cited SMP47,87-8/SMP67,130).

Klossowski immediately adds to this in the two versions respectively :

Sade est donc amené, près d'un siècle avant Nietzsche, à développer une morale de l'agressivité - de l'agressivité considérée comme l'état normal, l'état de santé de l'homme (SMP47,88).

and :

De là il résulte que si l'autre n'est *rien* pour moi, non seulement je ne suis plus *rien* pour lui, mais *rien* non plus à l'égard de ma propre conscience, et tant s'en faut que la conscience soit encore *miennes*. Car si je romps avec autrui sur le

plan moral, j'aurai rompu sur le plan de l'existence même avec ma propriété : à tout instant je puis tomber à la merci de l'autre qui ferait la même déclaration (SMP67,130).

The term 'agressivité' is suppressed in the 1967 version and the emphasis on violence has shifted. The text is no longer centrally concerned with the problem of the Self in the moment when its primal aggression is directed towards others. Rather the later version is concerned with a kind of violence which is directed towards the Self at the very same moment as it directed elsewhere. Aggressive desire is working to dissolve the unity of the ego rather than centre it and affirm its mastery.

In the 1967 text both Self and Other become 'rien' as the libertine attacks his victim. Klossowski is no longer trying to maintain that Sade's rationalist atheism always results in Christian theism. Sade's atheism has become 'integral' because Klossowski follows through the logic of the earlier edition whereby the Death of God always also implied the Death of the Self. Yet Sade's integral atheism as it is portrayed in the transformed 'Esquisse' and in the essay 'Le Philosophe scélérat' does not abandon the play between negation and affirmation, suppression and conservation which had its outcome in paradox and repetition in the 1947 work. The propriety of the Self is not abolished once and for all in an unproblematic movement of destruction. The essay 'Le Philosophe scélérat' reproduces the structure of suppression and conservation but modifies it so that it becomes something quite different. This modification is expressed in a rewriting of the notion of apathy (the final term of the 'drame dialectique' in the earlier version). In section V of the new 'Esquisse' the 'ascèse' of apathy has been entirely reformulated. However, since this section is reproduced in

'Le philosophe scélérat' with many of the sentences found in exactly the same form in both essays it is to this new inclusion that one can now turn.

'Le Philosophe scélérat' - Integral atheism.

In this new essay Klossowski identifies two kinds of atheism at work in the Sadeian text : rationalist atheism on the one hand and what he calls 'l'athéisme intégral' on the other. In the first version of Sade mon prochain the superficial rationalism of Sade's text concealed beneath its surface an appeal to 'forces obscures' and an ultimate affirmation of Christianity. In the second version these two principles (rationalist atheism and Christianity) are no longer placed in opposition to each other. According to the Klossowski of 'Le Philosophe scélérat' both rationalism and Christian monotheism function to preserve the identity and propriety of the morally responsible Self. The promotion of the one Truth of Reason (rather than that of God) is not substantially different from asserting the one Truth of monotheistic belief :

Pour Sade cet athéisme-là n'est encore rien d'autre qu'un monothéisme inversé et apparemment purifié d'idolâtrie, qui le distingue à peine du déisme, puisqu'au même titre que la notion de Dieu il garantit le moi responsable, sa propriété, l'identité individuelle. Afin que l'athéisme se purifie lui-même de ce monothéisme inversé, il faut qu'il soit intégral (SMP67,20-21).

The rational ego is responsible in the same way as the Christian Self individuated before God. This allows Klossowski to conflate rationalism and theism by constructing the former as an inversion of the latter. Because they institute a responsible Self, both guarantee the norms and institutions which regulate human thought and conduct (norms which were referred to as 'catégories morales' in the earlier text) and both therefore guarantee human identity as self-same over time. Atheism can only become

'integral' when it abolishes *all* the norms which flow originally from monotheism, including - above all - that of the rationally responsible ego.

Klossowski does argue, however, for one significant difference between rationalism and monotheism. Reason overturns the notion of God insofar as it seeks to explain existence in rational terms alone without any appeal to transcendent or supernatural forces. Yet in doing so Reason also undermines its own foundations. Klossowski in 1967, although no longer a Catholic, still insists that norms of any kind, be they rational or moral, require some form of transcendent foundation which the existence of God (or some comparable theological principle) alone is able to guarantee. This means that rationalism cannot be sustained because it does away with the very principle which founds its possibility (i.e. God). Rationalist atheism can, therefore, only be a stage in a necessary movement from monotheism to integral atheism : 'l'athéisme, acte suprême de la raison normative, doit instituer le règne de l'absence totale des normes' (SMP67, 19). In this respect, Klossowski's analysis of Sade's rationalism has shifted between the two editions of Sade mon prochain. In the earlier edition Sade was shown to have a necessary recourse to the language of the Enlightenment as a form of disguise or mask (he was a 'prisonnier' of rational language). In 'Le Philosophe scélérat' Klossowski focuses on the untenability of Reason itself. Sade's rationalism shows the way in which Reason is not a self-sufficient principle and will always carry within it that which undermines Reason thus leading to the generalised overturning of norms under the reign of integral atheism.

This emphasis on the insufficiency of Reason provides the linchpin for Klossowski's analysis of Sade in 'Le Philosophe scélérat'. The belief in the insufficiency

of Being without God, which informed Klossowski's earlier position, has been abandoned in favour of an argument about the unsustainability of rationalism. This changes his formulation of 'la conscience sadiste' and the way he reads the libertine's relationship with his victim. Where before the sadistic act was constructed as an attempt to negate the Christian moral categories, in the later version the sadistic act is understood primarily as an attempt to affirm the singularity of *sexual perversion*.

Perversion is the key term of reference for Klossowski's 1967 reading of Sade. In this context, perversion is no longer a negation or transgression of God's moral Law. Rather perversion, as a sexual act which is not subject to the ends of procreation, represents a transgression against the norms of the human species. In the first version of Sade mon prochain the aggression of 'égocentrisme primaire', which denied God, was opposed to the constraints of moral conscience which affirmed God. In 'Le Philosophe scélérat' perversion embodies a certain singularity of desire which is placed in opposition to the generality of human life as it is regulated by the norms of the social collective. Perversion is, as Klossowski terms it, a form of 'contre-généralité' (SMP67, 19). In this sense Klossowski's use of the term 'les normes de l'espèce' means that moral conscience no longer implies the existence of God but rather exists only as a function of the institutions of human society as a collective whole. The Self, which has its life in moral conscience, is no longer a structure which is underpinned by the existence of God but rather is a construction of social and institutional norms.

The social collective has as its foundation, Klossowski argues, the regulation of sexuality by certain norms that subordinate all sexual activity to the goal of procreation. Procreative sex and all the institutions which ensure its functioning within

society (e.g. marriage, property laws, naming of children etc.) guarantee the cohesion of the social whole. For Klossowski in 1967 the sadism of Sade's libertines is no longer specifically a matter of denying God, but rather of asserting the singularity of perversion against the procreative norms of human institutions. Perversion overturns all norms, both rational and moral and therefore is the only possible expression of integral atheism (based as it is upon 'le règne de l'absence des normes')⁶⁸. What becomes clear is that Sade's integral atheism, founded upon the perversion of Sadeian sexuality, is no longer a revolt against God but rather an act of social subversion.

Yet integral atheism also entails a dissolution of identity and the propriety of the Self. Perversion violates the structures of individuality just as it does violence to the integrity of the social collective. The result of this is what Klossowski terms 'la prostitution universelle des êtres. Celle-ci n'est elle-même que la partie complémentaire de la monstruosité intégrale reposant sur l'insubordination des fonctions de vivre, en l'absence d'une autorité normative de l'espèce.' (SMP67,25). The universal prostitution of beings undermines any possibility of propriety within Being. The concept of the individual and all that can be said to be proper to it is overturned. Any possible distinction between Self and Other becomes untenable as the Self is suspended (along with all moral norms) in the ecstasy of the perverted act. The notion of universal prostitution also carries with it the sense that the Self as Self is only ever a social and linguistic fiction and has the arbitrary character of a disguise or mask. The full implications of this contention will be investigated in the subsequent two

⁶⁸ One might immediately object, here, that perversion itself is very much dependent upon the norms it seeks to overthrow (just as transgression was seen to affirm God's moral law in Klossowski's argument of 1947). This point is recognised by Klossowski and is discussed below.

chapters, particularly in the context of Klossowski's readings of Nietzsche. At this point it is important only to note the interconnection between the terms integral atheism, perversion and universal prostitution; terms which appear in 'Le Philosophe scélérat' and were not present in Sade mon prochain 1947. Integral atheism, perversion and the resultant 'prostitution universelle des êtres' all refer to that moment when the Sadeian libertine as he attacks his victim attacks also all those structures which guarantee the cohesion of both society and Self.

Yet perversion clearly does not abolish all norms in any straightforward way once and for all and it is here that Klossowski returns to the play of suppression and conservation which structures the dialectical movement of his earlier work. In 1947 Klossowski analysed the way in which the mastery of the libertine was founded upon the need to preserve his victim at the same time as he sought to annihilate it. By the same token a perversion of a norm requires the maintenance of that norm in order to have any value at all as perversion or as Klossowski puts it : ' La perversion [...] ne tire sa valeur transgressive que de *la permanence des normes*' (SMP67,26)⁶⁹. Likewise, as Klossowski clearly acknowledges, the notion of 'la prostitution universelle des êtres' depends upon the structures of identity and propriety to have any sense or transgressive force as prostitution :

Ainsi la prostitution universelle n'a de sens qu'en fonction de la propriété morale du corps individuel. Sans cette notion de de propriété la prostitution perdrait de sa valeur attractive : l'outrage tomberait à vide (SMP67,25).

In the first edition of Sade mon prochain moral conscience was always negated (or transgressed) but also affirmed in the sadistic act. Moral conscience always returned in

the calm of the passions. Here it is the institutional norms which guarantee the Self which are subject to a constant return. Once more a transgression of the Law also implies a prior recognition and therefore an affirmation of that same Law. The morally responsible Self returns as it did in the earlier version but again this return is constructed differently. This difference can be seen in Klossowski's reformulation of the 'ascèse' of apathy.

Apathy was originally conceived of as a practice of self-discipline in which aggression must be maintained at a constantly high level in order to ward off the return of moral conscience. 'Agressivité', as has been indicated, is no longer a term of reference in the reworked version of Sade mon prochain. In 'Le Philosophe scélérat' it is not the vicissitudes of aggression which underpin the practice of apathy but rather the fluctuations in the intensity of what Klossowski now calls 'forces impulsionnelles'. These forces serve to unify or disaggregate the Self according to their level of concentration :

Telle que Sade le suggère, la pratique de l'apathie suppose que ce que l'on nomme "âme", "conscience", "sensibilité", "coeur", ne sont que les diverses structures qu'affecte la concentration des mêmes forces impulsionnelles. Elles peuvent élaborer la structure d'un organe d'intimidation sous la pression du monde institutionnel, comme celle d'un organe de subversion sous la pression interne de ces forces, cela toujours d'une manière instantanée (SMP67,38).

The life of the Self is constituted in a play between two types of pressure, one exerted from the outside in, and the other from the inside out. Either impulsionnal forces are at a low concentration and succumb to the intimidation of institutional structures (the formation of the Self and moral conscience) or they are at a high level of

⁶⁹ The implications of this 'permanence des normes' will be discussed in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

concentration, exert an outward pressure, and subvert or disrupt institutional structures. This, it is clear, is a reworking of the play of 'agressivité' (directed either outwards or inwards) as it was elaborated in Klossowski's early writing in the thirties. There are two important differences however. Firstly, the structures of the Self and of moral conscience are the result only of social constraints which are arbitrary in the sense that they are culturally relative and are no longer, as Klossowski argued they were, guaranteed by and transcendent principle (such as the existence of God). Secondly, the notion of force itself has been more radically pluralised. In the 1930s and 40s the 'forces obscures' of the instincts (sexual and violent) manifested itself in the more unitary 'agressivité' of 'égocentrisme primaire'. Violence was a function of the ego in its attempt to assert itself. In the 1960s the violence of 'forces impulsionnelles' can no longer be harnessed by the aggressive Self: instinctual forces, violent though they still are, only ever serve to dissolve the Self, to abolish norms and institute 'la prostitution universelle des êtres'⁷⁰. A crucial shift has occurred. Klossowski's thinking in the years before the war centred on questions of the aggressive Self (questions which were of great topical relevance at the time). After 1947 Klossowski focuses his attention much more clearly on a type of violence which is prior to thought and intentionality.

For Klossowski apathy now involves a movement where impulsional forces reach their highest intensity and concentration in the Sadeian act of perversion and so overturn norms and subvert institutional structures. As before however, in the

⁷⁰ The origins of this notion of 'forces impulsionnelles' and the way they overturn identity will be examined in detail in the next chapter within the context of Klossowski's post-war reading of Nietzsche.

aftermath of passion, these structures regain their power to intimidate, turn impulsionnal forces back inwards and reassert institutional norms (thus reforming the Self). The fluctuations of impulsionnal force means that norms are transgressed but that they are also then affirmed and maintained To this extent Klossowski can be seen to be still adhering to the same logical structure as in the earlier version of Sade mon prochain. The subversive movement of integral atheism, like that of the 1947 Sade, has as its outcome the necessary repetition of the same act. Because 'forces impulsionnelles' (like 'agressivité' before it) will always assert either an outward or an inward pressure, conscience will still always be subject to a ceaseless return :

si maintenant la réitération du même acte doit "anéantir" la conscience, c'est qu'à chaque fois aussi ce sont les mêmes forces qui par leur inversion la rétablissent. Inversées en censure, elles provoquent l'acte de *nouveau* (SMP67,40).

Once more apathy is constituted in the endless reprise of the sadistic act in an attempt to ward off the return of moral (and now also rational) consciousness. Sade's integral atheism is held on the level of integrality only through infinite repetition. The life of the Sadeian Self is subject to ceaseless dissolution and ceaseless reformation⁷¹.

Yet this reversion to repetition carries with it a different emphasis than the one it was given by the Christian Klossowski immediately after the war. In Klossowski's 1947 text 'delectatio morosa' heralded the ruination of Being and, in the final instance, a recognition of the impossibility of the Death of God. For the post-Christian Klossowski repetition itself, rather than God, is the final term of affirmation in the Sadeian text. This is because the return of the Self and moral conscience no longer imply God's existence (they are after all only institutional structures with no

transcendent foundation). More importantly, Klossowski's interest in this later essay is primarily to demonstrate the way in which rational and normative structures always necessarily engender that which undermines those structures. Perversion may transgress and thereby affirm 'les normes de l'espèce'. Yet, even though these norms are thereby maintained, what Sade's text shows conversely is that norms necessarily imply their own transgression. Just as perversion has sense only by reference to the norm, so the norm exists only insofar as it represses the perverse. Perversion, according to Sade, Klossowski argues, is therefore not secondary, as the perspective of the norm suggests, but primary. Indeed any normative system relies on the repression of 'forces impulsionnelles' in order to institute itself and this act of repression will necessarily give rise to a contestatory reaction. This means that perversion has, in a sense, an existence which is both prior to and in excess of 'les normes de l'espèce'. This is why Sadeian apathy, although it bears witness to the infinite return of moral conscience, now ultimately affirms the necessity of perversion rather than that of the Law :

Sade pense la contre-généralité déjà implicite à la généralité existante; non pas pour critiquer les institutions, mais pour démontrer que d'elles-mêmes elles assurent le triomphe des perversions (SMP67,34).

Klossowski, as will become clear later in this discussion, is reworking a Bataillian motif here. Between the two editions of Sade mon prochain one can discern a movement between two types or two concepts of transgression (or rather to ways of understanding a particular logic of transgression). The first type transgresses the Law (moral categories) but at the same time ultimately affirms the Law (it is sacrilegious

⁷¹ Again the full implications of this formulation will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

and relies on the primacy of that which is transgressed). The second type (elaborated in 'Le Philosophe scélérat') transgresses the Law but affirms the primacy of the forces of transgression (i.e. perversion as a prior condition of the Law). This slippage between two types of transgression is a central motif in all Klossowski's writings, particularly in the trilogy Les Lois de l'hospitalité and I shall return to it in more detail in the final chapter.

There is one final major shift in emphasis in Klossowski's 1967 analysis of Sade's text which is worth mentioning. 'Les normes de l'espèce' refer to structures which are at once moral, rational, institutional as well as sexually normative, and all function to underpin the experience of the Self as a coherent entity. Importantly for Klossowski, they also refer to linguistic structures, or more accurately, to the normative structure of language in general. This is why Klossowski for Klossowski Sade's attempt to affirm integral atheism in the writing of his œuvre necessarily brings into question the very act of writing itself. In Klossowski's later reading of Sade the transgression of the norms of the human collective is also at the same time a transgression of language. This focus on language offers a key perspective on the importance of Klossowski as a reader of Sade and on his own turn to novel writing in the 1950s.

Writing perversion.

If integral atheism is the overturning of all norms, Klossowski argues, it is also the overturning of language itself and the very possibility of communication. Language and communication rely upon shared concepts, words, and meanings. They are a

product of generality which is in principle the opposite of the singularity of the perverted libertine. Sade's attempt to write perversion must be necessarily paradoxical therefore because it represents an adherence to the generality of language in favour of the singularity of perversion. As Klossowski puts it in 'Le Philosophe Scélérat' :

Le fait proprement humain d'écrire suppose une généralité dont un cas singulier revendique l'adhésion et par là se comprend soi-même dans l'appartenance à cette généralité (SMP67,18).

The paradox of writing perversion is the same as that of the perverted sexual act itself : the norm is both negated and yet affirmed in a movement which has no outcome other than in repetition and a moment of aporia where the same gesture is re-iterated ad infinitum. If writing is founded upon generality, then the singularity of perversion is, properly speaking, incommunicable. Writing perversion is thus an impossible enterprise :

pour le pervers qui parle, l'obstacle n'est pas d'être singulier, mais d'appartenir à la généralité dans sa singularité propre (SMP67,35).

The paradoxical impossibility of writing the sadism of Sade could not be more pronounced. What makes the writing of perversion possible (i.e. the existence of Sade's novels) is the generality of language. Yet it is just this generality which at the very same time renders the writing of perversion impossible (since perversion is radically singular and excluded in the general). Writing both allows the transgressive text to be and yet at the same time makes transgression itself impossible. Sade's text, insofar as it seeks to write perversion, is made possible by the generality of language but only as it is also made impossible⁷².

⁷² This notion of a foundational impossibility will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

Because the norms of language are affirmed in the same moment as the writing of perversion seeks to overturn them, the pattern of repetition which structured the Sadeian act is once again instituted. Just as the Sadeian libertine must repeat his act of impulsional intensity over and over again, so Sade the writer must ceaselessly write perversion in order to maintain the transgressive force of perversion. In this sense, Klossowski claims, Sade's language itself becomes a space of transgression : 'le langage logiquement structuré par lequel Sade s'exprime, devient pour lui le *terrain* de l'outrage, au même titre que les normes' (SMP67,51). Writing, insofar as it seeks to write that which by definition escapes expression, has become the ultimate mode of Sade's insurrection against institutional norms. Writing has also become an impossible event, an event which in its very impossibility is subject to infinite repetition. Sade's words, writes Klossowski, represent the echoes of knocking on the door of language; a constant tremor of the outside of language within language itself. That outside cannot ultimately be an object of commentary because : 'Le dehors est précisément ce qui par soi-même se passe de commentaire' (SMP67,53).

Klossowski's 1967 rewriting of Sade mon prochain reveals Sade to be still an exemplary figure. Yet he is no longer an example of the failure to affirm the Death of God. Rather he becomes exemplary of the Self in the moment of its self-transgression, its self-abolition. The Sadeian text bears witness to the fact that the structures which give a common shape and form to human experience are perpetually fragile : even as they always reaffirm themselves, so they constantly undermine their own authority. Sade's text is, above all, a writing of the impossible, where the singularity of perversion paradoxically seeks to articulate itself within the generality of language,

where abolition of limits is proclaimed from within the space delimited by those limits. Sade's text affirms that structures of meaning and Selfhood are fortuitous but it can do so only with recourse to those very structures. In 1947 the impossibility of Sadeian transgression lead Klossowski to affirm the necessary existence of God. In 1967 Sade's thought is seen to affirm paradox and impossibility as a necessary outcome of rational discourse itself. Rational discourse insofar as it abolishes God abolishes also its own foundations; when carried to its term it always necessarily transgresses itself in an impossible and paradoxical movement⁷³. Sade's writing is exemplary of that moment when writing itself comes face to face with its own impossibility. In the Sadeian text writing and thought are returned to the perversity of 'forces impulsives'. Yet this is a movement of negation whose paradoxical nature gives rise to infinite repetition. In his later reading of Sade Klossowski has embraced the death of God and the death of the Self but with that has affirmatively embraced also a logic of paradox and repetition. In 1947 paradox and repetition revealed the insufficiency of an existence which denied God and the norms embodied in God's Law. In 1967 paradox and repetition reveal the insufficiency of all normative and rational structures because, Klossowski argues, such structures perpetually undermine themselves just as they seek perpetually to sustain themselves.

⁷³ Carolyn Dean comments on the difference between the two editions of Klossowski's work in the following terms : 'In *Sade mon prochain*, Klossowski in fact substituted for the paradox of an 'absent God' - [...], the notion of what might be called an absent text'. This formulation does not quite express the specificity of the transformation which Klossowski's text undergoes. As I have argued, Klossowski substitutes the paradox of *trying* to render God absent with the paradox of trying to overturn the norms of discourse. In both cases 'God' and discourse always reassert themselves. In the later edition Klossowski does not seek 'an absent text' but rather an *absence of discourse*, i.e. an abolition of the norms which underpin textual discursivity. See Carolyn Dean, *The Self and its Pleasures*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 185.

This is a movement which, as the ensuing chapters will show in more detail, is common to Klossowski's own highly individual fictional and essayistic enterprise. But it is important to note that his reformulation of Sade in 1967 has not occurred in isolation. Throughout the whole period between 1933 and 1967, Klossowski was not reading Sade alone, but was doing so alongside both Bataille and Blanchot.

Klossowski's later reading when taken together with the commentaries of Bataille and Blanchot show the importance of Sade for a more general debate around the nature of writing and transgression which took place in France in the decades after the Second World War.

Writing on the limit - Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski.

En soi-même, en vérité, parler de Sade est de toute façon paradoxale,
Georges Bataille, 'Sade et l'homme normal', L'Érotisme.

Idiosyncratic though Klossowski's approach to Sade appears, the issues his account of Sade raises are far from peripheral to the more general debate taking place in France after 1945 regarding the question of literature itself, its transgressive potential, and its relation to thought as such. That this is so is clear from the relationship between Klossowski's writings on Sade and the work of Bataille and Blanchot during the same period.. The question of transgression which has mostly preoccupied this discussion until now is also, of course, a question of limits : the limits of the Self and the limits of writing. The problem of the limit and the possibility of its violation within the wider context of Klossowski's writing (i.e. his fiction or essays on Nietzsche) will occupy the remainder of this thesis in one form or another. This point of intersection with Bataille and Blanchot through a certain reading of Sade represents a moment where the singularity of Klossowski's writing as a whole comes most clearly into contact with a debate which is essential to any understanding of modern French literary and philosophical culture.

The limits of the Self - Klossowski and Bataille on Sade.

Klossowski's association with Bataille dates back to 1934 and continued throughout the years after the Second World War. Although they collaborated on a number of projects in the late thirties (Acéphale, Le Collège de sociologie) it has already been indicated that Klossowski's Christian stance in the years leading up to the

publication of Sade mon prochain marked a critical break from Bataille's strictly non-theistic position. It is not possible to give a full analysis of the relation between these two writers here. But given Klossowski's critique of Bataille in 'Le corps du néant' (a conference given originally in 1941 and then published in Sade mon prochain) in 1947 and Bataille's negative response to Sade mon prochain (in 'Littérature et le Mal') it is clear that they were also, at times, intellectual opponents as well as accomplices⁷⁴.

Nor, indeed, will it be possible to give any proper account of Bataille's work in general. However, by focusing on the detail of Bataille's reading of Sade alone, what follows will show to what extent Klossowski in 1967 borrows - while also developing it in individual ways - Bataille's concern with the whole question of the limit.

Bataille's writing on Sade dates back to just before Klossowski's career began when in 1930 he wrote an open letter attacking André Breton and the surrealist appropriation of the Divine Marquis⁷⁵. 'La valeur d'usage de D.A.F. de Sade'⁷⁶ is both a statement of Bataille's thinking as it stands in 1930 and an exposition of the central importance of Sade to his project of 'heterology'. Bataille is first and foremost highly critical of what he sees as the surrealist poeticisation and idealisation of Sade's work.

⁷⁴ Klossowski's published two further essays which were explicitly devoted to Bataille's work, 'La Messe de Georges Bataille', in 84 (September 1950), 77-81 (then in Un Si Funeste Désir (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), pp.121-132) and 'A propos du simulacre dans la communication de Georges Bataille', in Critique (August-September 1963), 742-50 (then in La Ressemblance (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1984), pp. 21-33). The former commentary generally repeats the argument of 'Le corps du néant', namely that Bataille's project maintains an inevitable reliance on '*le nom de Dieu*' (Un Si Funeste Désir, p. 132), although is less polemical than the earlier piece. The latter commentary is far more sympathetic to Bataille's project and Klossowski's analysis is very much in line with his own 1967 reading of Sade.

⁷⁵ This was part of a more extended polemic with André Breton. All the documents relating to this exchange are republished in volume 2 of Bataille's Œuvres complètes. It is not altogether clear whether the open letter here in question was actually circulated. See Surya, Georges Bataille : La Mort à l'œuvre, p. 632.

⁷⁶ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 2, pp. 53-69.

As was indicated earlier, the surrealist promotion of Sade lacked any real engagement with the more unpleasant or challenging detail of his writing itself. For the surrealists, Sade was a name and a myth to be used as a polemical weapon not a body of writing to be engaged with in its full horror. As Bataille puts it :

Dans les cas les plus favorables, l'auteur de *Justine* est en effet traité ainsi qu'un *corps étranger* quelconque, c'est-à-dire qu'il n'est l'objet d'un transport d'exaltation que dans la mesure où ce transport en facilite l'excrétion (l'exclusion péremptoire).

La vie et l'œuvre de D.A.F. de Sade n'auraient donc plus d'autre valeur d'usage que la valeur d'usage vulgaire des excréments, dans lesquels on n'aime le plus souvent que le plaisir rapide (et violent) de les évacuer et de ne plus les voir.⁷⁷

For Bataille it is precisely this excremental character of Sade's work that makes it so centrally important to his own project. The value of Sade's thought lies in its very status as a 'corps étranger', in the fact that it embodies all that is prohibited, horrific, vile, shameful and disgusting. This is just what causes the surrealists to expel Sade's thought as quickly as it has been assimilated and Bataille to retain it and champion the Marquis's oeuvre as the ultimate excrement of all human creation.

Bataille's position in this pamphlet is made quite clear : human existence, and in particular human social organisation, can be divided into two spheres each characterised by a different principle, the one existing in direct opposition to the other. These 'deux impulsions humaines polarisées'⁷⁸ Bataille calls 'l'EXCRÉTION et l'APPROPRIATION'⁷⁹. Understanding the way Bataille constructs these two opposing principles offers the key to an understanding of his reading of Sade both in this pamphlet and throughout his career. *Excretion* is the governing principle of all that is

⁷⁷ Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 2, p. 56.

⁷⁸ Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 2, p. 58.

subject to any kind of taboo or interdiction within the social whole. It defines all that is unassimilable or unacceptable to the social whole and that must be regulated either by a straightforward exclusion (the censorship of Sade for example) or an inclusion within the realm of the sacred (and therefore the untouchable)⁸⁰. Bataille defines the 'excretory' as follows :

L'activité sexuelle, perversie ou non, l'attitude d'un sexe devant l'autre, la défécation, la miction, la mort et le culte des cadavres [...], les différents *tabous*, [...] présentent ensemble un caractère commun en ce sens que l'objet de l'activité (excréments, parties honteuses, cadavres etc...) se trouve traité comme un corps étranger⁸¹.

Excretion, therefore, refers to all that is radically other, to all that is in excess of the normal, the familiar, the acceptable. By the same token, *appropriation* refers to all that is the same, to the everyday. *Appropriation* is the principle which governs social life in its normal functioning : it is the principle of civil organisation, politics, industrial and commercial activity. It always accrues elements to build a stable and unified totality, whilst excretion always expends and entails dissolution into multiplicity :

Le processus d'appropriation se caractérise ainsi par une homogénéité (équilibre statique) de l'auteur de l'appropriation et des objets comme résultat final alors que l'excrétion se présente comme le résultat d'une hétérogénéité et peut se développer dans le sens de l'hétérogénéité de plus en plus grande, en libérant des impulsions dont l'ambivalence est de plus en plus accusée⁸².

Bataille opposes the multiplicitous and violent disorder of all that is excessive and other (the free play of the sexual instinct, death, decay, faeces and urine) to the regulated sameness and order of social organisation. Moreover he argues that the

⁷⁹ Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 2, p. 58.

⁸⁰ Bataille's thinking here is very much influenced by his engagement with anthropology and in particular with the studies of Marcel Mauss. Bataille first encountered the work of Mauss through his friend Alfred Métraux in 1925. See Surya, *Georges Bataille : la mort à l'œuvre*, p. 623.

⁸¹ Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 2, p. 58.

latter is founded upon a violent suppression of the former⁸³. For Bataille human existence is never anything other than the interplay between two kinds of violence : the primary violence of *excretion*, of the instincts represented in the intertwining of sex, death, decay etc. and the repressive violence of *appropriation* which excludes all that is other in favour of all that is the same.

Bataille's project of heterology seeks to affirm the former process against the latter and it is in this respect that Sade becomes for Bataille a figure of such great importance. Against the repressive violence of appropriation Bataille advocates the 'déchaînement' of aggressive instincts, the affirmation of all that is base and vile, the 'nécessité de provoquer l'excitation violente qui résulte de l'expulsion des éléments hétérogènes'⁸⁴. Sade's rape and torture, his promotion of the criminal and the perverted make him an exemplary figure for such a project. Sade, in this very first commentary by Bataille, is a hero of the heterogeneous, of all that is excluded from or in excess of the limits which constitute the norm. The fact that Sade's work was censored for so long, the fact that his writing is so unassimilable (and even unreadable) lies in its thoroughly excremental character and it is just that quality which makes it so fascinating for Bataille. Sade, as the most excremental thinker, is a hero of transgression but in a far more radical manner than he was for the surrealists, concerned as they were more with the 'merveilleux' than the 'merdeux'. Sade, Bataille

⁸² Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 2, pp. 59-60.

⁸³ It is in this context that the significance of the terms *subservience* and *sovereignty* within Bataille's thought can be situated. Put very simply the world of *appropriation* represents an enslavement of man's chaotic reality and multiplicitous instincts; it represents their subjection to ends which are not their own (it is therefore a world of *subservience*). The principle of *excretion* represents the violent disorder of man's life as it attains to sovereignty; disorder is expressed as disorder

would argue, embodies all that is always rejected and must always be rejected by a social order in its need to preserve itself.

Even at this early stage Bataille is clearly not engaging with limits as moral categories which have some transcendent foundation (i.e. implying the existence of God as they do for Klossowski). The taboos and interdictions of social organisation are rather an anthropological phenomenon. As such taboos are universal to human beings (differentiating them from animals), but they are constructed as a necessity of human social life (the principle of *appropriation*) rather than of God's existence. Klossowski's later reading of Sade repeats this position as he abandons his Catholic point of view. In 'Le philosophe scélérat' it became clear that 'les normes de l'espèce' no longer had the theological significance of 'catégories morales' but referred to structures which were social and institutional.

In this context Klossowski's later reading of Sade has shifted and has come closer to what is a constant of Bataille's thought. Bataille's belief in the universality of the taboo as an anthropological phenomenon is expressed throughout his career from the earliest writing through to the more systematised formulations of La Part maudite and L'Érotisme. Yet, like Klossowski in 1967, Bataille, from the beginning of his career, asserts that any human rationalised structure (be it a social institution or philosophical body of thought) is insufficient in itself and will always engender that which is in excess of and opposed to it. Such a structure always carries within it the necessity of its own transgression. The social body or the structures of human thought

and is not subject to any goal outside itself, because, precisely, it is without goal, it is excess and useless expenditure.

⁸⁴ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 2, p. 68.

may be constituted in and through the institution of limits, but those limits necessarily must first themselves be de-limited. The notion of the limit always implies an excess which is subject to limitation but which then always necessarily exceeds that limitation.

Bataille makes this point explicitly in a celebrated essay from 1933 'La notion de dépense'⁸⁵ which dates from 1933 :

la vie humaine ne peut en aucun cas être limitée aux systèmes fermés qui lui sont assignés dans des conceptions raisonnables. L'immense travail d'abandon, d'écoulement et d'orage qui la constitue pourrait être exprimé en disant qu'elle ne commence qu'avec le déficit de ces systèmes : du moins ce qu'elle admet d'ordre et de réserve n'a-t-il de sens qu'à partir du moment où les forces ordonnées et réservées se libèrent et se perdent pour des fins qui ne peuvent être assujetties à rien dont il soit possible de rendre des comptes.⁸⁶

This is as clear a statement as one might hope to find of Bataille's theory of expenditure and of his belief in the insufficiency of reason and of rational structures. The violent disorder of *excretion* or of 'dépense' are primary processes upon which the order of *appropriation* is dependent. The limits, interdictions and taboos of social organisation are only possible because of the prior reality of violent disorder. Because they are founded upon disorder, upon the shifting plural chaos and 'travail d'abandon' of human life (which, precisely, is without foundation), the systems which regulate human life can never know closure or stability. This formulation is represented in a different fashion in Klossowski's 'Le Philosophe scélérat' when he insists that the contra-generality of perversion is always implicit in the generality of norms themselves

⁸⁵ Published originally in *La Critique sociale*, 7 (January 1933). Reprinted in Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 1 (1970), pp. 302-20.

⁸⁶ Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 1, p. 318.

and that therefore the generality will always guarantee 'le triomphe des perversions' (SMP67,34)⁸⁷.

Another point of contact between Bataille's reading of Sade and Klossowski's 'Le Philosophe scélérat' is centred once more around the fate of the libertine and his victim. From the very earliest of Klossowski's writings it has been clear that Sade's sadism was being read as a paradigm or model for the relationship between Self and Other. In the later edition of Sade mon prochain the encounter between the libertine and his victim became a paradigm of the abolition of any distinction at all between Self and Other in the ecstasy of the perverted act. This moment of abolition, where all the limits which institute any distinction between Self and Other are abolished, is, of course, a central moment for Bataille throughout his writing and likewise Sade is taken as paradigmatic. This point is made explicitly by Bataille in La Littérature et le mal when he is trying to show the fundamental identity between Sade and Hegel, for whom absolute knowledge is a merging of subject and object (in the dialectical process of thesis (Self), antithesis (Other) and synthesis (merging of both)) :

Sade (en quoi il diffère du simple *sadique*, qui est irréfléchi) eut pour fin d'atteindre la conscience claire de ce que le "déchaînement" atteint seul (mais le "déchaînement" mène à la perte de la conscience), à savoir de la suppression de la différence entre le sujet et l'objet.⁸⁸

The difference between Sade and Hegel, argues Bataille, is that Hegel arrives at absolute knowledge while Sade is at the stage of a suspension of knowledge. For Bataille the Sadeian moment is not a fusion of Self and Other into a greater unity (as it

⁸⁷ Bataille makes this point explicitly once more in L'Expérience intérieure when he writes : 'il n'est pas de composition sociale qui n'ait en contrepartie la contestation de ses fondements' Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 5, p107.

⁸⁸ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 9, p. 249.

is for Hegel and also for Breton). Rather it is a decomposition of both into a chaotic play of heterogeneous forces (of excretion). Where Bataille opposes the unleashing of chaotic energy to the limits and taboos of social organisation, Klossowski opposes the singularity of perversion to the generality of the norms of the species. In both cases Sade is seen as an icon of that moment when chaotic energy or perverted desire is unleashed in order to transgress limits and norms and so to destroy the Self.

Yet Klossowski's writings on Sade have shown that any attempt to violate normative structures can never be straightforward or unproblematic. Such an attempt appears always to be paradoxical or end in an impasse or aporia. The final parallel one can draw between the Bataillan and the Klossowskian reading of Sade lies in the way they come to terms with the paradox of writing on the limit. Sade's writing exists *on* the limit in the sense that the limit itself is never negated (traversed) without also being affirmed (one remains inside the limit) such that negation and affirmation are opposed to each other (without mediation or synthesis) in an infinitely repeated moment. This is a question, in part, of the status of Bataille's or Klossowski's own discourse or commentary.

Sade, it is clear once again, has become an exemplum of the Self as it transgresses itself and is restored to the violence and disorder of its primary instincts. Yet at the same time he has become an exemplum of the Self in the moment of its dissolution, in that moment when the disorder of his instincts decompose the unity of the Self. The libertine writer has become a universal figure of Selfhood insofar as his writing reveals the way in which Selfhood is destroyed by forces which are always in excess of any unified structure. Yet this exemplarity and universality of Sade's writing

is founded on a fundamental paradox. He becomes exemplary only because his sadism embodies the anomaly and singularity of 'déchaînement' or perversion. It is his very singularity which makes him universal. How, might one ask, can the absolutely anomalous or the perversion of the norm ever be universal? The very importance of Sade is that his scandalous particularity transgresses and overturns the structures of universality ('interdits' or 'les normes de l'espèce'). Sade is an impossible exemplum. Klossowski's 'Le Philosophe scélérat' shows that the value of Sade lies in his overturning of generality itself by an appeal to the contra-generality of perversion. Yet the notion of an exemplum relies on a relation between the particular and the general, where the particular embodies or is representative of the general. Klossowski and Bataille appeal and seek to champion Sade's singularity but can only do so within a discourse which remains within the conceptual arena of generality (i.e. the concept of the exemplum). Once again the limit is being paradoxically negated and yet also at the same time affirmed without any resolution or rational outcome to this impossible moment of impasse. The paradox of Bataille's and Klossowski's readings of Sade lie in the fact that they read him as an exemplum of that which destroys the very foundations of exemplarity.

The paradox of Sade's writing, then, engenders readings which are themselves paradoxical. Klossowski focused the argument of 'Le Philosophe scélérat' on Sade's attempt to plead the case of anomaly from within the language of generality. In his essay 'Sade et l'homme normal' in L'Érotisme Bataille also underlines this gesture of Sade's text which results in a moment of aporia or irreducible contradiction. Sade's language, he argues, seeks to give voice to a fundamental violence which would

abolish all the clear distinctions and limits which underpin both the world of society and the life of the Self. Yet in so doing he seeks to give voice to a violence which abolishes the possibility of language itself :

La violence porte en elle cette négation échevelée, qui met fin à toute possibilité de discours.⁸⁹

As in Klossowski's 1967 Sade mon prochain Sade here is perceived to be speaking on behalf of that which necessarily escapes speech; he speaks 'au nom de la vie silencieuse'⁹⁰. His writing affirms that which abolishes meaning at the same time as it affirms meaning (by virtue of its status as meaningful language). This moment of aporia or paradox which underpins Sade's writing (speaking the unspeakable, pleading the case of anomaly through structures of generality) parallels the paradoxical nature of Bataille's and Klossowski's readings (making an example of that which undermines exemplarity). Sade's singularity is being affirmed through its incorporation into a universal discourse of the Self; his singularity is being universally affirmed but only insofar as it overturns universality. Sade speaks the unspeakable; Bataille and Klossowski exemplify the abolition of exemplarity.

This repetition of paradox in the commentary itself is a necessary consequence of writing or commenting on the limit at all. If Sade's text seeks to articulate singularity from within the limits prescribed by generality, so any attempt by a commentator to speak about that singularity must perform the same gesture (since commentary also is bound by the generality of language and meaning). Reading Sade with Bataille and Klossowski highlights that moment of aporia which underpins both

⁸⁹ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 10, p. 187.

⁹⁰ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, Vol. 10, p. 187.

the novelistic text *and* its commentary. Discourse itself is brought to this paradoxical limit point where logical progression is suspended, rational comment overturned and where there is no issue other than in the repetition of the same moment (an instance of irreducible paradox). The commentaries of Bataille and Klossowski do not uncover the 'Truth' of Sade's text as such, they repeat it, they reiterate its impossible gesture.

Yet at the same time what these readings also assert is that such a moment of aporia does not constitute the triumph of the norm. Reading Sade with Klossowski and Blanchot shows that it is exactly that moment of aporia, which characterises the encounter (or non-encounter) with the limit, which constitutes the radically transgressive gesture of the Sadeian text.

The limits of writing - Klossowski and Blanchot on Sade.

For Maurice Blanchot writing, and the writing of the literary text in particular, is irreducibly paradoxical. In the two essays which he devotes entirely to Sade, 'La Raison de Sade'⁹¹ and 'L'Insurrection ou la folie d'écrire'⁹², Blanchot focuses directly upon the paradoxical nature of the Sadeian text. The argument of the first essay 'La Raison de Sade' parallels Klossowski's reading in 'L'esquisse du système de Sade' insofar as it highlights a movement of affirmation and negation which passes through a number of phases. Sade's text is dialectical argues Blanchot in its 'prétension essentiellement sadique de vouloir fonder la souveraineté raisonnable de l'homme sur un pouvoir transcendant de négation'⁹³. For Blanchot, however, what is crucial about

⁹¹ In *Lautréamont et Sade* (Paris: Minuit, 1949); revised edition 1963, pp. 15-49.

⁹² In *L'Entretien infini*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

⁹³ *L'Entretien infini*, p.327.

this transcendent power of negation in Sade's writing is that it is the same as that exercised by literature itself in its negation of the world thus making Sade the 'écrivain par excellence' (this will be discussed further in due course in relation to the essay 'La Littérature et le droit à la mort'⁹⁴). The Sadeian text, for Blanchot, embodies a movement whereby total destruction is a principle of total affirmation and in this sense it is in the last instance far from dialectical. Unlike Klossowski Blanchot does not uncover a dialectic of recognition between the sadist and his victim. In Klossowski's analysis such a play of recognition meant that the negation of the victim was always also an affirmation of the victim. For Blanchot that moment of affirmation is only a superficial and temporary moment of validation (of the victim's existence) which is subject ultimately to an overriding negation :

Cette négation, tour à tour il [Sade] s'est servi des hommes, de Dieu, de la nature, pour l'éprouver. Hommes, Dieu, nature, chacune de ces notions, au moment où la négation la traverse, paraît recevoir une certaine valeur, mais si l'on prend l'expérience dans son ensemble, ces moments n'ont plus la moindre réalité, car le propre de l'expérience consiste justement à les ruiner et annuler les uns par les autres.⁹⁵

Blanchot does not detect any dialectical movement at work in Sade's text, rather the question of negation and affirmation in literature depends crucially on its global, total nature which means that it is unlike 'work' in the Hegelian sense of a process of progressive synthesis or 'Aufhebung'. As I argued in the discussion of Sade mon prochain (1947) Klossowski makes an initial case for a progression of dialectical phases in Sade's text only to show the way in which this progression breaks down into infinite repetition (that of 'delectatio morosa'). This is close to Blanchot's analysis

⁹⁴ 'La Littérature et le droit à la mort' in La Part du feu (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), pp. 303-45.

⁹⁵ Lautréamont et Sade, p. 42.

except that Blanchot argues that dialectical progression has in a sense always already broken down since it is always already subsumed into this global negation or destruction. For Blanchot Sade's text enacts an extreme movement of negation which at the very same time is an extreme movement of affirmation (the two oppose each other without mediation or synthesis). Where Klossowski, in the first version of the 'Esquisse du système', saw the breakdown of dialectical thought in terms of an overall affirmation (of God), Blanchot's reading articulates this breakdown as a primary negation which is simultaneously an overall affirmation, not of God but of literature.

Before turning more explicitly to Blanchot's theory of language and literature a little more needs to be said about his discussion of negation in Sade's text the manner in which it compares to that of Klossowski. In the earlier version of Sade mon prochain God's Law and moral categories were primary in such a way that any attempt to transgress them always confirmed them. As I have suggested, for Blanchot the negation which occurs in Sade's text has, in a certain sense, always already taken place. When the libertine murders his victims he does not recognise them as other human beings but rather bears witness to their nothingness, hence the facility of their destruction :

s'ils disparaissent avec cette facilité dérisoire, c'est qu'ils ont été préalablement annihilés par un acte de destruction totale et absolue, qu'ils ne sont là et qu'ils ne meurent que pour porter témoignage de cette espèce de cataclysme originel, de cette destruction qui ne vaut pas seulement pour eux, mais pour tous les autres.⁹⁶

Whilst Klossowski argued that the Sadeian libertine necessarily recognised his victim as human beings, Blanchot argues that the libertine's act of destruction merely affirms

⁹⁶ Lautréamont et Sade, p. 33.

that : 'il les a toujours déjà antérieurement tenus pour nuls'⁹⁷. So Blanchot's reading of Sade uncovers a movement of negation in the Sadeian text which has always already taken place. For Blanchot this negation is part of the very structure of language and literature both of which become possible to the extent that they negate the world as such, transforming objects into concepts and the world into an absence of the world.. By that very same token negation becomes total affirmation : a destruction of the world that is also the affirmation of a radical absence of the world (with these two moments opposed to each other without any possibility of dialectical progression or greater synthesis).

This point is echoed by Klossowski in his later reading when he affirms that the negation of the victim is always also a negation of the Self : 'si l'autre n'est *rien* pour moi, non seulement je ne suis plus *rien* pour lui, mais *rien* non plus à l'égard de ma propre conscience' (SMP67,130). The path that Klossowski takes in order to reach this formulation (via his reading of Kojève) has already been retraced. For Blanchot the 'cataclysme originel' of primary negation, that which makes Sade's victims always already nothing, is the effect of language itself. In his essay 'La Littérature et le droit à la mort' he elaborates the view of language and literature alluded to above which he derives from Hegel (via Kojève and Mallarmé'⁹⁸). According to Blanchot (and the Adamic myth of naming he borrows from Hegel) language itself is constituted in a paradoxical play of affirmation and negation. The word which describes an object (the word 'rose' for example) also destroys that object. It provides the concept or meaning

⁹⁷ Lautréamont et Sade, p. 36.

⁹⁸ For Mallarmé's view of language as negation see the poem 'Toast funèbre' and the essay 'Crise de vers' collected in Œuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1945), p. 54 and pp. 360-68.

of the object but at the same time necessarily affirms the absence of the object. When one says 'rose' the real rose is rendered absent, is negated, but what is affirmed is the general concept 'rose'. In this sense the ontological status of the linguistic sign is paradoxical because it is both a form of being and of non-being, a presence which is at the very same time an absence, or as Blanchot puts it :

Le mot me donne l'être, mais il me le donne privé d'être. Il est l'absence de cet être, son néant, ce qui demeure de lui lorsqu'il a perdu l'être, c'est-à-dire le seul fait qu'il n'est pas⁹⁹.

The Being of the world as it is apprehended through the structures of language and signification is always apprehended as non-Being. Being is given as non-Being, is present only in its absence. The 'cataclysm originel' of language is a form of negation which renders all Being as nothing from the start. This formulation of language and Being in 'La littérature et le droit à la mort' is complex and cannot be fully elaborated here. What is important to note is that the fact that, for Blanchot, Sade's text and the violence of his heroes testify to the nothingness of Being (precisely because the victims are 'toujours déjà antérieurement tenus pour nuls') and at the same time to the excess of language over Being (since it is in language that this testimony is possible). For Blanchot what seems essential about literature is the way in which it survives the moment of total destruction as that which cannot be negated.

What the endless destruction of victims, of God and Nature represent in Sade's text is an affirmation of negation pushed to its limit; a paradoxical affirmation that the world is always already negation. The Sadeian libertine affirms his sovereignty only through absolute negation. Blanchot writes of Sade 'Ce qu'il a poursuivi, c'est la

⁹⁹ La Part du feu, p. 325.

souveraineté à travers l'esprit de la négation poussé à son point extrême'¹⁰⁰.

Affirmation and negation are pushed to their extreme in a moment of irreducible paradox (since of course they exclude each other by definition). In this movement of negation pushed to its paradoxical extreme the taboo or limit (as moral category) is not dialectically conserved as it is in Klossowski's earlier reading of Sade. Rather it is infinitely surpassed or delimited. Blanchot writes in 'L'Insurrection ou la folie d'écrire' :

L'interdit assurément joue son rôle, comme limite qu'il faut dépasser, dans ce mouvement d'illimitation. Mais ce n'est pas nullement là l'ultime limite.¹⁰¹

Sade's text seeks to negate everything, to delimit the limits of language and of the world itself. This extreme of negation which is also an extreme of affirmation pushes Sade's text up to the limitless limit of human thought and language. Sade's text, in its 'pouvoir transcendent de négation', shows language and thought to be, in a sense, without limit, for to name the limit of language one must already be situated beyond that limit, and it is therefore no longer a limit. For Blanchot the paradoxical nature of Sade's writing reproduces the fundamental logic of language itself which is both a negation of the world (its destruction) and an affirmation (the production of meaning), where Being is always given as non-being, presence as absence. What this means is that Sade's text, in the extremity of its negation, seeks to affirm from within language that which is prior to language and which founds language i.e. the primary annihilation of the world which makes possible concepts and meanings and the apprehension of the world. The paradoxical nature of Sade's text shows this to be an impossible task because the extreme of negation as also always an extreme of affirmation. Sade's

¹⁰⁰ Lautréamont et Sade, p. 42.

¹⁰¹ L'Entretien infini, p. 328.

writing shows that language at its limitless limit cannot transgress itself, rather it can only repeat an instance of aporia.

This intransgressibility of the limitless limit enacts the true transgressive force of the Sadeian text. In seeking to negate, Sade's text also always affirms and so must endeavour to negate once more and so on ad infinitum. For Blanchot the infinite negation of Sade's text represents the point at which discursivity is arrested at an impossible and paradoxical extreme and where the logical progression of dialectical thought is thrown into hiatus, is held at that point of impossibility. This interruption Blanchot calls the 'inconvenance majeure' of Sade's writing :

c'est à la force simplement répétitive qu'est remise l'inconvenance majeure, celle d'une narration qui ne rencontre pas d'interdit, parce qu'il n'en est plus d'autre [...] que le temps de l'entre-dire, ce pur arrêt que l'on ne saurait atteindre qu'en ne cessant jamais de parler.¹⁰²

'L'inconvenance majeure' : such is the transgression of Sade's writing. In seeking to negate the limit the Sadeian text also always affirms it in a gesture which institutes an infinite movement of repetition. Repetition reveals that Sade's language is one which 'ne conçoit pas de terme' other than that moment of aporia where the dialectical progression of thought itself, which even as it strives for ever greater totality and synthesis, is interrupted, ruined, thrown into the hiatus of repetition. For Blanchot this is the very movement of literature itself. Sade's absolute negation of all limits makes him 'l'écrivain par excellence'¹⁰³. For Blanchot, as for Klossowski and Bataille, Sade is exemplary of writing in its transgressive mode yet this is a transgression which does not consist in disobeying and thus confirming the law, but rather one where the

¹⁰² L'Entretien infini, pp. 328-9.

¹⁰³ La Part du feu p. 311.

paradoxical play of writing on the limit suspends the aggressive totalising gestures of the law itself.

Klossowski in 'Le Philosophe scélérat', like Blanchot in 'L'Insurrection ou la folie d'écrire', comes to the view that it is Sade's writing itself that is the 'terrain de l'outrage' (SMP67,51), the space in which the transgressive force of the Sadeian text is enacted. For Blanchot, Klossowski and Bataille, Sade's text exemplifies a different mode of thought and writing, one which destroys the very logic of exemplification itself and which affirms the paradoxical nature of discourse held at the limitless limit of discourse itself. This writing on the limit bears witness to the fragility of the Self as a construct and to also to the fragility of all the norms which underpin human thought. Such a mode of writing affirms heterogeneity over totality, paradox and repetition over rationality and dialectical progression. According to Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski, Sade's writing shows us that human existence is always in contradiction with itself, that it is constituted always in the negation of that which initially makes it possible.

Klossowski's relationship to this different mode of thought is at first ambivalent as the argument of the earlier Sade mon prochain reveals. His later writing shows that he has fully embraced the disruptive impossibilities of Sade's texts (that Bataille and Blanchot elaborate in their readings) without trying to recuperate them into a theistic world view. At the end of 'La Raison de Sade' Blanchot writes of Sade's thought :

elle nous montre qu'entre l'homme normal qui enferme l'homme sadique dans une impasse et le sadique qui fait de cette impasse une issue, c'est celui-ci qui en sait le plus long sur la vérité et la logique de sa situation et qui en a l'intelligence la plus profonde, au point de pouvoir aider l'homme normal à se

comprendre lui-même, en l'aidant à modifier les conditions de toute compréhension.¹⁰⁴

Klossowski's Sade mon prochain in its various guises, along with the readings of Bataille and Blanchot, point towards this modification of 'les conditions de toute compréhension'. The scandalous particularity of the Sadeian text leads its modern readers in the years before and after the Second World War to a notion of writing as paradox and repetition, to the idea of human identity as fortuitous, fragile and arbitrary.

Klossowski's writings on Sade and the wider debate in which his reading of Sade can be situated can serve as a blueprint for the issues which are central to the rest of his essayistic and fictional output. The figure of Nietzsche has constantly loomed large in Klossowski's writings on Sade from the very beginning of the thirties onwards. The notions of sovereignty and of repetition around which the readings of Klossowski, Bataille and Blanchot turn carry strong echoes of the Nietzschean doctrines of the 'Übermensch' and of 'Eternal Return'. Indeed, in this whole debate surrounding Sade, the Self and writing on the limit the figure of Nietzsche has never been far away. In order to look at this modification of 'les conditions de toute compréhension' in more detail it is to Klossowski's writing on Nietzsche that one can now turn.

¹⁰⁴ Lautréamont et Sade, p. 48-9.

Chapter Two - The Uses of Nietzsche.

Klossowski on Nietzsche.

Klossowski's writings on Nietzsche, like those on Sade, span the length of his career. His first essay on Nietzsche appeared in 1937 in the second issue of Bataille's journal Acéphale which was entitled 'Nietzsche et les fascistes'¹. Bataille, along with Klossowski, André Masson, Jean Wahl and J.Rollin, in publishing this issue, sought to rescue the German philosopher's work from its hijacking by German National Socialist ideology. Klossowski's contribution consisted in the essay entitled 'Création du monde' and also in two reviews on books about Nietzsche, one by Jaspers, the other Karl Löwith's Nietzsches Philosophie der Ewigen Wiederkunft des Gleichen². It is in the second of these that Klossowski first explicitly discusses Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal Return (or Recurrence), the motif which, as shall become clear, is central to his later writing. He then published two essays in the fifties, one an introduction to his 1954 translation of Die fröhliche Wissenschaft³, '*Sur quelques thèmes fondamentaux*

¹ Acéphale, 2 (21 January 1937).

² Löwith, Karl, Nietzsches Philosophie des ewigen Wiederkunft des Gleichen, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956).

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, Kritische Studienausgabe, Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari ed., 15 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967-77), Vol. 3. All references to Nietzsche in the original German will be to this edition prefaced by the abbreviation KSA and followed by the volume and page number. For the French edition see Le Gai Savoir, translated by P.Klossowski (Paris: Gallimard, 1956). Throughout this chapter, citations from Nietzsche's texts will be given in their French rather than their English translations and followed with a reference to the original German. This is because the Gallimard/Folio works referred to are all translations of the most recent Colli/Montinari edition of Nietzsche's œuvre as yet untranslated into English. Most importantly the Colli/Montinari edition organises all the posthumous fragments according to chronological order (superseding the work Der Wille zur Macht, tendentiously arranged as it was by Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and Heinrich Köselitz (Peter Gast) (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1959); see Douglas Smith, Transvaluations, (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

de la 'Gaya Scienza' de Nietzsche', the other a lecture given at the *Collège de Philosophie* in 1957, 'Nietzsche le polythéisme et la parodie'; both of these were collected in 1963 in the volume Un Si Funeste désir⁴ (which also contains several other essays from the previous two decades). Klossowski then wrote a number of essays based on Nietzsche's later fragments that were published between 1967 and 1969⁵ were then collected in his full length work, Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux⁶ (1969). Finally he gave a short paper at the conference on Nietzsche at *Cerisy-la-salle* in 1973 entitled '*Circulus vitiosus deus*'⁷.

This extensive body of writing makes Klossowski one of the key commentators on Nietzsche in post-war France. His reading of Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal Return and his emphasis upon the motifs of repetition, parody and mask exerted an influence in particular on the interpretations of Nietzsche by both Gilles Deleuze and

1996), p. 2. Also the translators into French for the Gallimard Colli/Montinari complete works are by and large working within the same intellectual perspective from which Klossowski is reading Nietzsche. To avoid the problems posed by the very different Anglo-American tradition of Nietzsche translation and commentary I have preferred to address myself here to a specifically French face of Nietzsche.

- ⁴ Klossowski, Pierre, Un Si Funeste Désir (Paris: Gallimard, 1963). All references to essays in this volume will be preceded by the abbreviation SFD followed by the page number.
- ⁵ 'Oubli et anamnèse dans l'expérience de l'éternel retour du même', in Nietzsche, ed. Martial Gueroult, *Les Cahiers de Royaumont-Philosophie*, VI, (Paris: Minuit, 1967) (This was a paper given originally at a conference on Nietzsche attended by among others Deleuze and Foucault). 'La Période turinoise de Nietzsche', L'Éphémère (Spring 1968), 57-85. 'Le Complot', Change, 5 (2nd trimestre 1969), 88-98.
- ⁶ Pierre Klossowski, Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux (Paris: Mercure de France, 1969). All references to this volume will be preceded by the abbreviation N followed by the page number.
- ⁷ In Nietzsche aujourd'hui (2 vols), Publications du centre culturel de Cérisy-a-salle (Paris: UGE, 1973), vol 1, pp. 91-103. This conference was a major event in the reappraisal of Nietzsche by contemporary French philosophers; other contributors included Deleuze, Lyotard, Derrida, Kofman, Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe, J.M. Rey and numerous others. For a discussion of the importance of both this and the earlier Royaumont colloquium see Douglas Smith, Transvaluations, in particular pp. 150-68.

Michel Foucault⁸. The importance of Klossowski in relation to the French reception of Nietzsche (and to that of Deleuze in particular) is analysed in detail by Douglas Smith in his work Transvaluations, Nietzsche in France 1872-1972⁹. His discussion highlights the centrality of Klossowski's apparently eccentric concerns to the French assimilation of Nietzsche in the years between 1962 and 1972 (when the crucial Cerisy colloquium was held) and in particular the importance of Klossowski's reading of the doctrine of Eternal Return¹⁰.

What I want to argue here is that Klossowski's relationship with Nietzsche is more complex than the existence of a specific, chronologically ordered body of commentaries might suggest. This is because the philosopher's presence pervades much, if not all, of Klossowski's other writings. Also, the questions raised within these commentaries themselves explicitly problematise the formulation of such a relationship

⁸ See Gilles Deleuze, 'Conclusions: Sur la volonté de puissance et l'éternel retour', in Martial Gueroult ed., Cahiers de Royaumont Philosophie IV, Nietzsche (Paris: Minuit 1966), pp. 275-86 and Différence et répétition, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968). See also Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire', in Épiméthée, Hommage à Jean Hyppolite, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 145-72. Specific points of convergence between Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche and the interpretations of Deleuze and Foucault will be signalled as this chapter progresses.

⁹ Douglas Smith, Transvaluations, pp. 140-84.

¹⁰ For some specific responses to Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche see Gilles Deleuze, 'Klossowski ou les corps-langage' in Logique du sens (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 325-50; see in particular pp.341-50, and Maurice Blanchot, 'Le Rire des Dieux' in L'Amitié (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 192-207; see in particular pp. 204-07. See also Michel Balzamo, 'Klossowski et le "cas Nietzsche"' in Revue des Sciences humaines, 197 (1985), 23-34 and Brice Parain, 'Son Nietzsche', L'Arc, 43 (1970), 78-80. For some responses contemporary to the publication of Klossowski's book on Nietzsche see Jean-Pierre Faye, 'Nietzsche et Klossowski' in Change, 2 (2nd trimestre 1969), 87-88, and André Marissel, 'Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux', La Nouvelle Revue Française (January 1970), 131-32. For a more extended commentary on Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche see Jean-Pol Madou, Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski (Paris: Klincksieck, 1987); see in particular Chapter Two, 'Le Chaos et la cohérence', pp. 25-33.

in any straight-forward or traditional way (e.g. in terms of influence)¹¹. In this sense, to tell the story of Klossowski on Nietzsche in the way the introductory chapter sought to tell the story of Klossowski on Sade (in terms of a historical/ conceptual development of a body of writing) proves to be an undesirable if not impossible enterprise. This is not simply because the writings on Nietzsche are so varied and complex but rather because such a project would run counter to what Klossowski could be said to be 'doing' with the German philosopher throughout his numerous commentaries.

What this chapter will seek to do, therefore, is to look at Klossowski's essays on Nietzsche together with some of his other works in order to locate the 'uses' Klossowski makes of Nietzsche in his texts. My aim here is not specifically to look at Klossowski as a commentator and analyse the substance of those commentaries. Rather my purpose is to throw some light on the manner in which Klossowski reads Nietzsche and to see how this reading determines the problematic of his own writing in general. Within this problematic one can see the way in which writing, either philosophical or fictional, is recast into a different mode. In this context the act of writing can no longer systematise or describe an external 'reality' (it does not perform a referential or mimetic function) but becomes rather a form of movement or gesture. This also problematises from the outset any attempt to articulate a 'relationship' between those bodies of writing signed with the names Nietzsche and Klossowski.

¹¹ This point is made explicitly by Douglas Smith in his discussion of the relationship between Deleuze and Nietzsche. See Douglas Smith, *Transvaluations*, p. 171.

To do this I shall examine three of Klossowski's texts under the rubric of motifs which could be said to derive from his reading of Nietzsche. So to begin with I will nevertheless outline the substance of one of Klossowski's commentaries on Nietzsche so that these key moments or 'motifs' can be located. His 1957 essay 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie' offers a useful starting point in that it takes as its theme the advent of many gods after death of the one God. As the first chapter showed the 'Death of God' was a theme of crucial interest to the Catholic Klossowski who later came to renounce his Catholicism after traversing a religious crisis.

From Catholicism to Polytheism - 'Nietzsche le polythéisme et la parodie'.

L'apparence pour moi, c'est la réalité agissante et vivante elle-même, qui, dans sa façon d'être ironique à l'égard d'elle-même, va jusqu'à me faire sentir qu'il n'y a là qu'apparence, feu follet et danses des elfes, et rien de plus - que parmi tous ses rêveurs moi aussi, en tant que "connaissant", je danse ma propre danse; que le "connaissant" n'est qu'un moyen à traîner en longueur la danse terrestre.

Le Gai Savoir, Aph 54¹².

Klossowski himself is keen to stress that his interest in Nietzsche is not that of a traditional exegete or philosopher. In his introduction to Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux he claims, for instance, that the book is a 'fausse étude' and describes it as 'un livre qui témoignera d'une rare ignorance'. Likewise at the beginning of 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie' Klossowski questions whether he might not be charged with abusing Nietzsche's text, by exploiting it for his own ends :

peut-être aurais-je l'air de me servir de Nietzsche pour démontrer en revanche l'existence de plusieurs dieux et légitimer bien mal à propos le polythéisme; et,

¹² Le Gai savoir, 54, p. 91, Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, KSA3, p. 417.

jouant sur les mots, je n'échapperai pas au reproche, sous prétexte de montrer le sens de la parodie chez Nietzsche, de faire moi-même de la parodie, et donc de parodier Nietzsche (SFD, 187).

Klossowski is not putting these disclaimers into his text merely to fend off the critics he may encounter amongst professional philosophers or academic commentators. Rather he is emphasising an important aspect of his reading of Nietzsche itself. His relationship to Nietzsche in these texts is, he suggests, one of falsity and parody; his is not a project of elucidating a specific body of knowledge. This is not, he stresses, a matter of his own personal whim but is very much part of the structure of what he is seeking to do with Nietzsche and what Nietzsche does with him in the process of interpretation : 'pour autant que l'on est amené à interpréter la pensée d'un esprit que l'on cherche à comprendre et à faire comprendre, il n'en est point qui, autant que Nietzsche, amène son interprète à le parodier' (SFD, 187-8). The way in which Klossowski reads falsity and parody as affirmative values and then comes to characterise his own reading as parodic can be seen by looking more closely at the argument of 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie'.

What became clear from Klossowski's reading of Sade and the changes that it underwent was that, as an interpretation, it was very closely tied in with Klossowski's own personal itinerary from an ambivalent and torn Catholic in the pre-war years to a non-Christian in 1967 when the second version of Sade mon prochain was published. Klossowski's preoccupation in his early texts was the impossibility of affirming God's non-existence. Towards the beginning of 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie' Klossowski describes Nietzsche's œuvre not as a system of philosophy but rather as a

set of 'variations sur un thème personnel' (SFD, 189). This might initially suggest grounds for Klossowski's prolonged and intense interest in Nietzsche. His personal engagement with Catholicism and the subsequent crisis of this engagement proved to be central to an understanding of the developments in Klossowski's thought and writing between the two editions of Sade mon prochain. If one accepts Klossowski's judgement on Nietzsche, it would seem that neither are pursuing certain philosophical questions in purely academic terms (for example the death of God), rather they are examining the philosophical together with experiential and personal considerations (for example a questioning of their own identities). The proclamation of the 'Death of God' in the famous passage from Le Gai Savoir, 'L'insensé', alludes to the gravity of these consequences :

Qui nous a donné l'éponge pour effacer l'horizon tout entier? Qu'avons-nous fait, à désenchanter cette terre de son soleil? Vers où roule-t-elle à présent? Vers quoi nous porte son mouvement? Loin de tous les soleils? Ne sommes-nous pas précipités dans une chute continue? Et cela en arrière, de côté, en avant, vers tous les côtés? Est-il encore un haut et un bas? N'errons nous pas comme à travers un néant infini?¹³

The death of God radically decentres human existence, sending it into a vertiginous spin where all truths and all stable points of reference, which give coherence to human existence, are undermined and shown to be without foundation. Klossowski's essay on the motifs of polytheism and parody is an attempt to elucidate further on Nietzsche's view of an existence which is given up to a 'chute continue'. This essay (like most of Klossowski's work) proves very difficult to summarise since, as Klossowski himself says, it is dealing with a body of thought and writing in which, 'à proprement parler, il

¹³ Le Gai Savoir, 125, pp. 149-50, Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, KSA3, p. 481..

n'y a guère de point de départ ni exactement de point d'arrivée' (SFD,188). A point of departure is, however, necessary and this can be found in Klossowski's discussion of the notions of the 'monde apparent' and the 'monde vrai' as they are discussed and re-evaluated in Nietzsche's Twilight of the Idols.

'[T]out est changé et rien n'est changé;' (SFD,195)

Nietzsche's argument runs as follows. The existence of God is what underpins the existence of a transcendent world of reality and Truth on the one hand and a fallen world of appearances, illusion and falsity to which mortals are bound on the other. This distinction is, of course, a reiteration and modification of the Platonic vision of Ideal forms which holds our own reality to be merely the multiple and derived manifestations of these forms and therefore as being always at one remove from Truth. For Nietzsche it is just such a distinction which exists at the heart of metaphysical and philosophical discourse as such; one which renders any form of knowledge claiming to have purchase on 'Truth' or 'Reality' ultimately theological in its essence. In 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie' Klossowski comments at some length on Nietzsche's aphorism from Twilight of the Idols, 'Comment le monde vrai finit par devenir fable'¹⁴, and traces the six stages of the world becoming fable, parodying the six days of the world's creation as it is told in the Biblical narrative. The final stage articulates what is at stake in the 'Death of God' :

6. Nous avons supprimé le monde vrai; quel monde subsiste alors? Le monde des apparences? Nullement : avec le monde vrai nous avons du même coup supprimé le monde des apparences! (Cited SFD,193).

If one abolishes the notions of 'Truth' and 'Reality' one also abolishes those of falsity and illusion since falsity only exists in contradistinction to what is true, illusion only in contradistinction to what is real. The world in which such notions no longer have any significance does not then become the real world of positivistic science (since that maintains the criteria of truth and falsity which have just been abolished) but, in Nietzsche's words, becomes a *fable*. This notion of the world as fable is, as Klossowski himself puts it, 'gros de conséquences' (SFD, 195).

Construing world as fable places language, story-telling and therefore fiction at the heart of understanding and knowledge. As Klossowski tells us : 'fable signifie quelque chose qui se raconte et qui n'existe que dans le récit; le monde est quelque chose qui se raconte, un événement raconté et donc une interprétation : la religion, l'art, la science, l'histoire, autant d'interprétations diverses du monde, ou plutôt autant de variantes de la fable' (SFD, 193). In such a world there is not one Truth but a plurality of truths, of interpretations which do not exclude each other but which make up the fabric of a multiple and varied narrative. The world is written but in many ways and with many strands. At the same time because the world *is written* (the passive is significant), seeing the world as fable reintroduces the experience of fatality into existence. Fiction implies fatality. The Latin *fabula* derives from the Latin *fari* ('to foretell/ to ramble, rave') whose past participle is *fatum* ('foretold' but also 'fatality'). A fable is not told but tells itself. Therefore the world as fable is not the result of human agency or design but the result of fatality, of a necessity beyond human agency.

¹⁴ Crépuscule des idoles, pp. 30-31, (Paris: Gallimard:Folio, 1974), Götzen-Dämmerung, KSA6, pp 80-81..

Nietzsche's conception of necessity is paradoxical insofar as it implies an existence given up to randomness but at the same time one which is subject to constraint (the constraint of random determination). This notion is central to Klossowski's reading and, as will become clear, is particularly important to the way in which he formulates the doctrine of Eternal Return. This notion of fable as fatality in turn alters the way in which temporal progression can be conceived. In a world which 'tells itself' existence also loses its subjection to an end or telos since it is not 'being told' by anyone, God or human, to any specific end. Klossowski links the notions of fiction and fatality with a view of the world as unhistorical. History (narrative) is dependant upon *fatum* (language and fable); it may involve transformation and change but is not subject to linear progression and is therefore eternal and mythological :

Ainsi quand on dit que le monde est devenu fable, on dit également qu'il est le *fatum*, on divague, mais en divaguant, on vaticine, et l'on prédit le destin; toutes choses que nous retenons ici en raison du rôle de la fatalité, de la notion de *fatum* capitale chez Nietzsche. La refabulisation du monde signifie également que le monde sort du temps historique pour rentrer dans le temps du mythe, c'est-à-dire dans l'éternité (SFD, 194).

Fable and the way it implies both fatality and a temporality which is subject to suspension provides the first of the motifs with which other works by Klossowski will be examined later in this chapter, namely that of *myth*. The universe of myth which replaces the universe of 'monde vrai' and 'monde apparent' is eternal because it is not subject to any end outside or higher than itself; a mythical existence : 'se révèle comme rendue à elle-même sans autre but que de revenir sur elle-même' (SFD, 189). Such a formulation is highly paradoxical because it ultimately abolishes the possibility of a 'même' to which existence might be returned and at the very same stroke abolishes the

foundations of any subject who might apprehend such an existence. This will be discussed in further detail later. For the moment what is important is that Nietzsche's formulation of this situation, claims Klossowski : 'revient à une décision en faveur de l'existence de l'univers n'ayant d'autre but que d'être ce qu'elle est' (SFD,190). The doctrine and experience of Eternal Return is very much part of the structure of a mythical universe which is both timeless yet which has no existence outside of what it is in any one instant. Again, this will be returned to in more detail later on in this discussion. However the consequences of the 'refabulisation du monde' are not limited to a different conception of fatality and temporality alone. A mythical existence which is 'rendue à elle-même' (SFD,189) does, in the moment of its apprehension, radically alter the nature of the identity of the human subject. It alters the very possibility of there being a 'même' to which existence might be 'rendue' in the first place.

To say that existence is eternal is not to say that it is fixed and unchanging. Indeed the very abolition of the distinction between 'real' and 'apparent' undermines all possibility of there being any fixity and continuity in existence at all (guaranteed as they were by the presence of God). In these terms an eternal existence, which is nothing other than what it is at each moment, is an existence given up to transformation and flux in a paradoxical time without time or a time of the absence of time (an impossible time where transformation and timelessness coexist). This has direct consequences for any experience of the self. Human identity is stable and fixed (therefore autonomous and morally responsible in the traditional sense) only with

reference to an essence which the proper name might be thought to embody¹⁵. The world of essences, to reiterate this, is precisely what is lost with the death of God and the suppression of the 'real' world along with the 'apparent'. So in attempting to think this suppression, Nietzsche has, according to Klossowski, : 'donné congé au monde dans lequel il porte tout de même le nom de Nietzsche, et s'il continue à écrire sous ce nom c'est *pour sauver les apparences*' (SFD, 195). In proclaiming the abolition of essences, Nietzsche proclaims also the abolition of human identity. This brings one to the crux of the problem around which Klossowski is turning in this essay. For, in attempting to elaborate under the name of Nietzsche a view of the world which is denied the unity of the One God, Nietzsche is engaging in a highly paradoxical enterprise. Whilst writing under the name of Nietzsche he is affirming a view of the universe in which 'Nietzsche' as a proper name has no stable referent, no fixed identity. The experience which he is attempting to write excludes him therefore as a thinking or writing subject at the very moment he sets out to write it. Nietzsche : 'se voit amené à enseigner l'*inenseignable*' (SFD, 189) because his enterprise by its very nature renders itself impossible. It is in this sense that Klossowski describes the Nietzsche's experience as 'inélucidable' (SFD, 214). The experience of a world without God (a world of fable and myth) cannot be spoken by the conscious, thinking self because it abolishes the very foundations of that conscious thinking self. Nietzsche's project turns, then, on the paradoxical attempt to translate into the realm of thought that which conscious thought by its very nature excludes. This brings one to the second of the three motifs under which this chapter will examine Klossowski's 'relationship' to

¹⁵ Within this context the proper name can be thought of in other very different ways. This will be

Nietzsche, namely that of *translation*. By this I mean not only translation in the sense of moving from one language into another, as, for instance, when Klossowski translates Nietzsche from German or Virgil from Latin, but also translation in the sense of seeking to think something or transpose into the realm of thought that which lies outside thought, to write something which cannot be written. The question of identity is crucial here. Translation traditionally presupposes the existence of two texts or languages with stable identities or meanings, the one being exchanged with the other on the basis of their mutual equivalence. Since identity is precisely the thing which is abolished in a fictional universe the very notion of translation and of 'equivalence' is called into question. The notion of identity as it is subjected to dissolution in the 'refabulisation du monde' leads one onto the third and final of the headings of this chapter.

The death of God announces the disintegration of the stable and morally responsible self; this is a point to which Klossowski has consequently returned both in his comments on Nietzsche touched on so far and throughout his writings on Sade. Yet how is our very real experience of our own identity and selfhood to be construed in these circumstances? The death of the continuous, unified self along with the One God leads to the advent of many selves, many Gods and many truths, or in Klossowski's terminology : polytheism :

au sein de la fable il y a une pluralité des normes ou plutôt il n'y a aucune norme proprement dite au sens de ce mot, parce que le principe même de l'identité responsable y est proprement inconnu tant que l'existence ne s'est pas explicitée ou révélée dans la physionomie d'un Dieu unique qui, en tant que

discussed in the next chapter in relation to the 'nom de Roberte'.

juge d'un moi responsable, arrache l'individu à une pluralité en puissance (SFD,220).

The unified self gives way to a multiplicity of selves spread out across time each entirely disjunctive with the other. In Sade's writings the self was seen to decompose and recompose according to the vicissitudes of its aggressive impulsive energies. Klossowski's reading highlighted a central interaction between the disindividuating force of libidinal drives and the unifying power of moral and rational norms (enshrined in language). What he emphasises in this essay on Nietzsche is the entirely fortuitous character of the self in the moment of its composition within language and the 'norms of the species'. Each self, fortuitously given, relativises all the others and as a fortuitous construction any one self (i.e. the name Nietzsche and its cohesion in any one instant of time), might just as well be any other; 'ce problème', Klossowski notes :

concerne immédiatement la propre identité de Nietzsche, la remise en question de cette identité considérée comme fortuitement reçue, et donc assumée comme peut l'être un rôle - en tant que le rôle choisi plutôt que d'autres à jouer pouvait être rejeté comme un masque en faveur d'un autre parmi les milliers de masques de l'histoire (SFD,218).

Because any given self does not relate to any transcendent and immutable Identity (as it would if the 'real' and 'apparent' worlds were maintained) it becomes totally arbitrary (in the sense that it is random and exists only as a construct of language) and takes on the character of role or mask. As conscious, thinking people, however, we are never entirely free of the illusion of identity, choice and free will. As Klossowski puts it : 'On croit choisir librement d'être ce que l'on est, mais on est, en fait, contraint de jouer un rôle, n'étant pas ce que *l'on est*; donc de jouer le rôle de ce que *l'on est hors de soi*. On n'est jamais là où *l'on est*, mais toujours là où l'on n'est que l'acteur de *cet autre* que

l'on est (SFD,218). What I really am is never what I think I am; I only ever play at being at what I think I am because that which is most essential to my human existence is always excluded by the grammatical 'I' and the illusory, self-same self that it posits.

The self as a fortuitous instance or as a role or mask returns one to the question of fatality. As I have suggested Nietzsche's notion of necessity paradoxically combines fate (as constraint) with fortune (chance, randomness). Nietzsche is not talking about predestination but rather about an existence each moment of which is beyond human agency, and occurs as a unique moment and is therefore perceived as both random *and* necessary from the perspective of human agency. In this context the notion of fatality and that of the self as mask combine to make the world of fable and myth a world characterised by dissimulation :

On ne peut pas ne pas se vouloir, mais on ne peut jamais vouloir autre chose qu'un rôle. Savoir cela, c'est jouer *en bonne conscience*. Jouer le mieux possible revient à se dissimuler (SFD,218).

Consciously to dissimulate is paradoxically to act with good conscience in a Godless universe for it is basing action on the premise that one is only ever involved in playing a role. In dissimulation we recognise and affirm the fact that our identity, as we have previously known it, is only ever a false mask received by chance in the narrative of the world. It is here that Klossowski locates parody as a key term. The life of the self as it is experienced is always a matter of parody because, as a fortuitously given instance and arbitrary structure, the self is always acting out something which it is not; thought always acts out a gesture of fixity and coherence which in fact has no foundation.

Parody is also bound up with the question of translation already alluded to. In trying to speak of an experience which is radically unspeakable or to translate into thought that which cannot be thought, Nietzsche's writing can only ever be a form of parody. His doctrines are parodic and by the same token Klossowski, in commenting on those doctrines, can only ever parody Nietzsche (who has already only ever parodied himself). This motif of parody provides the third and final of the headings which will be used to examine Klossowski's relationship to Nietzsche.

It is immediately clear that these three motifs : *parody*, *translation* and *myth*, overlap and mutually implicate each other. The nature of this overlap will become clearer as the discussion progresses. Yet because of such an overlap it is not possible to construct any form of logical progression from one motif to another. Each of the following sections will therefore stand alone to a large degree. Each will show the way in which the 'logic' of Klossowski's writing can be characterised in its various moments with reference to these motifs. 'Logic' needs to be placed within inverted commas here because in a world of fable and myth, a world of discontinuity, masks and role play, it is the overarching and universalising claims of logic which are thrown radically into question. In such a context, beginning to comment on a body of writing which affirms the world as fable proves problematic. One finds, as Klossowski does when he begins to comment on Nietzsche, that : 'il n'y a guère de point de départ ni point d'arrivée' (**SFD**, 188). However, since a point of departure is necessary, the artificial logic of chronology will be adopted. Klossowski's first novel La Vocation suspendue (1950)¹⁶,

¹⁶ Klossowski, Pierre, La Vocation suspendue (Paris: Gallimard:L'imaginaire, 1950). All references will be to this edition preceded by the abbreviation VS and followed by the page number.

a tale of religious crisis, allows this chronological starting point to be considered along with this discussion's previous point of departure, the notion of the 'Death of God'.

La Vocation suspendue and the play of parody.

Es-tu vrai? Ou seulement un comédien? Représentes-tu quelque chose, ou est-ce toi qui est représenté? Enfin tu pourrais n'être qu'une imitation de comédien.....'

Nietzsche, Crépuscule des idoles 38, p. 17.

Parody as a literary critical term has developed an imprecise and variable meaning, as Gérard Genette notes in Palimpsestes : 'Le mot parodie est couramment le lieu d'une confusion fort généreuse, parce qu'on lui fait désigner tantôt la déformation ludique, tantôt la transposition burlesque d'un texte, tantôt l'imitation satirique d'un style'¹⁷. If one looks at the definition of parody given in the Oxford English Dictionary one finds : 'A composition in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase of an author are mimicked and made to appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects', a definition which rearticulates the 'imitation satirique' and 'transposition burlesque' to which Genette refers. In trying to trace the specific history of the meaning of parody and then to elaborate a 'structural' definition of the term Genette demarcates it from the satirical function conventionally ascribed to it and offers a new formulation : parody as the 'transformation non-satirique' or 'ludique' of a text. In turn, he opposes transformation with imitation thus removing his use of the term parody further from its conventional meaning.

Parody, for Genette, is therefore not the satirical imitation of a text but rather its playful reproduction in a different mode for serious purposes. Parody in the Klossowskian context can usefully be situated between Genette's new 'structural' definition on the one hand, and the conventional dictionary definition on the other. It implies both imitation and seriousness, bringing it closer to Genette's

term 'forgerie' (which he describes as an 'imitation sérieuse'). Klossowskian parody carries with it the sense of counterfeiting and false reproduction. However, whilst both the traditionally accepted meaning of parody and Genette's new definition imply the existence of an original which is parodied, Klossowski's formulation of parody brings the question of origin and authenticity radically into question. In this sense, parody has much broader implications here than it does in Genette's use of the term, which has its value within the specifically literary typology he is attempting to elaborate. In Klossowski's first novel La Vocation suspendue these broader implications of parody are explored to show the way in which the very possibility of authenticity is thrown into crisis and with that the possibility of a stable human identity which such a notion underpins.

Published in 1950, La Vocation suspendue is situated between Klossowski's earlier Christian texts and his later 'polytheistic' writing.¹⁸ In the 1947 edition of Sade mon prochain Klossowski preserved the notion of a stable human identity by appealing to a notion of 'egocentrisme primaire' on the one hand and the existence of God on the other. In the later commentary on Sade the continuity of the self was shown to be without foundation as it was constantly dissolved and then

¹⁷ Gérard Genette, Palimpsestes (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 33.

¹⁸ Few critics have devoted extensive commentary to La Vocation suspendue. For instance Jean-Pol Madou devotes only three pages to the novel in his full-length work on Klossowski; see Jean-Pol Madou, Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski, pp. 99-101. This lack of attention may have its roots in Klossowski's own ambivalence to the work - at one point he renounced it in much the same way as he did the first version of Sade mon prochain (in the preface to the 1967). He later readopted the work into his corpus. The reasons for such an ambivalence should become clear as this discussion progresses. There is some secondary commentary on the novel however. Michel Foucault devotes some of his article to a discussion of La Vocation suspendue; see 'La Prose d'Actéon', Dits et écrits, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol I, pp. 326-37; see in particular p. 336. Marcel Spada devotes a chapter of his pamphlet to the novel (Spada's short work of sixty-three pages also has chapters devoted to Bataille and La Fontaine); see Fictions d'Éros (Ghent: Annales des hautes études de Gand, 1970), Tome VIII, pp. 29-36. In general both Foucault's and Spada's comments on the text focus on the way it undermines any possibility of origin (Spada emphasising what he calls 'l'esprit parodique de Klossowski', Fictions d'Éros, p. 36,

reconstituted in the flux and reflux of 'force impulsives'. In this sense, Klossowski's first novel can be seen to occupy a space of transition between the theological readings of Sade in the thirties and forties and the more radical perspective of his post-1950 output. This transition can be seen in the manner in which Klossowski constructs the play of parody throughout La Vocation suspendue. The force of parody in this novel calls into question the logic which allowed Klossowski to affirm the existence of God in the first edition of Sade mon prochain.

The most obvious aspect of the text, namely that it is a commentary on a novel called La Vocation suspendue and is thus an imitation or copy of itself, will be dealt with later in this discussion. The novel/commentary that is La Vocation suspendue begins by detailing the publication of the novel La Vocation suspendue : 'sans nom d'auteur, édité à "Bethaven, 194..." (VS, 11), describing it as appearing initially like any number of : "'Entwicklungsromane" catholiques ou protestants' and then proceeds to situate it within the terms of a literary debate surrounding the moral function of literature and the projects of the 'Christian' and the 'atheist' novel. What the text goes on to describe is a paradoxical situation whereby it is atheist authors who, following their own logic, would write novels representing a moralising world view, and Christian authors, who, following theirs, would portray a world devoid of any order of morality. The argument which the commentator presents in the opening section of the novel can be placed within the debate surrounding Sartre's Qu'est-ce que la littérature?¹⁹ and the whole question of

and Foucault centring his discussion on the question of the simulacrum). Any convergence or divergence of these readings with my own will be signalled as this discussion proceeds.

¹⁹ Qu'est-ce que la littérature? (Paris: Gallimard, 1948).

'littérature engagée' as it developed in France from the late forties onwards²⁰.

Atheist literature, we are told, affirms itself as moral and moralising in the way it 'cherche à établir une morale sans Dieu' (VS,17). The commentator remarks on the facility with which, as he puts it 'Un Sartre, un Camus se doivent d'être des directeurs de conscience, puisqu'ils en sont à construire un décalogue qu'il y aura d'autant plus de mérite à accepter qu'il sera plus loisible de le rejeter' (VS,20-21). Christian literature performs quite the opposite function; its purpose, in the terms of this argument, would be to present an amoral picture of the universe. The truth of God's existence and the proclamation of His Greatness in all its manifestations are not the realm of fiction which by its very nature is concerned with falsity and illusion. This argument repeats of course the Platonic conception of fiction and literary representation as it is set forth in the Republic²¹. If the world we experience is itself a falsification or pale shadow of the world of Ideas, then fiction, as a representation or copy of the world, is doubly false; it lies at one further remove from the Truth to which only philosophical discourse can gain access. In the terms of the argument elaborated here by Klossowski's narrator-commentator it is not the place of Christian authors to fictionalise Truth or to proclaim their writing to be God's word; rather they should create a fiction which would affirm God's absence (from the illusory fictional world) but which would thereby ultimately and paradoxically be also an affirmation of God's presence (in the transcendent world of Truth). The commentator notes with regard to 'l'auteur chrétien' :

²⁰ In fact between August 1948 and September 1950 Klossowski published a number of articles in Les Temps modernes (reproduced in the collection Un Si Funeste Désir). 'Hegel et la mage du nord', Les Temps modernes, 35 (August 1948), 234-38, 'Sur Maurice Blanchot', Les Temps modernes, 41 (February 1949), 293-314, 'En marge de la correspondance entre Claudel et Gide', Les Temps modernes, 56 (June 1950), 2152-74, 'Gide, Du Bos et le Démon', Les Temps modernes, 59 (September 1950), 3457-76.

²¹ Plato, Republic, translated by H.D.P. Lee (London: Penguin, 1955), Book X, pp. 370-86.

parce qu'il ne saurait être un hagiographe de saints imaginaires, et qu'il n'est rien de plus outrecuidant que de parler de la grâce comme si l'on en disposait, sa tâche sera de représenter ce que cela signifie quand on dit que la grâce a été refusée (VS,20).

This is a reiteration of the logic which underpinned Klossowski's 1947 reading of Sade. As was shown in the previous chapter Sade's writing was seen to reveal 'l'expérience de la déficience de l'être et du temps sans éternité' (SMP47,118-19).

This is what made him the Christian author *par excellence*, because the Sadeian universe is precisely a universe which has been denied God's grace. Klossowski's position here is based on an awareness that literature, as fiction, is a space of illusion and falsity and that this, in turn, renders the truly Christian writer - by dint of being a writer - capable only of going against God's designs and Truths because of the very fictionality and falsity of his construct :

s'il reconnaît qu'il est un faux prophète, que tout ce qu'il dit du royaume des Cieux n'est qu'une contrefaçon qui doit sans cesse faire appel aux appétits les plus charnels de ses lecteurs pour les mettre en état de recevoir le goût de la sainteté, puisque ce n'est pas à lui de la leur donner, et qu'il ne peut que les distraire par ses fascinations, il aura au moins le mérite de demeurer conscient des moyens de son travail qui consiste beaucoup plus à contrarier les voies imprévisibles du Seigneur qu'à les imaginer (VS,21-2)

The conception of art and literature as 'contrefaçon' founds the opposition, implicit in this argument, to any Sartrean notion of an atheist 'littérature engagée' and reflects the anti-mimetic, anti-rationalist view of literature that Klossowski shares with Bataille and Blanchot. So at the beginning of La Vocation suspendue the reader is presented with an argument in which a firm distinction is drawn between the fictional on the one hand and the theological on the other. The text of revelation (e.g. the Bible) and literature proper do very different things, the one being concerned with the articulation of God's Truth, the other being concerned with falsity and the insufficiency of a world which is denied God's Grace. Yet

although art conceived of as counterfeit underpins the Christian position elaborated at the beginning of La Vocation suspendue, the relation between the theological and the fictional is worked through in the text as a whole in such a way that the Christian logic of Klossowski's pre-1950 writings begins to undergo certain shifts.

The 'crisis' described in La Vocation suspendue is, on the level of the story, the calling into question and then subsequent failure of a religious vocation. The narrator tells the story of Jérôme, a young seminarist, who finds himself at the centre of numerous intrigues between various religious factions of a Catholic Church under occupation by a foreign power. The setting, although always slightly veiled, is undoubtedly that of occupied France during the Second World War (the indeterminate and allusive nature of the text will be discussed later). The suspension of Jérôme's vocation with which the novel culminates is intimately bound up with the question of parody. Parody here carries with it not only the sense of imitation and counterfeiting but again, as in the essay 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie', also the sense of acting and of rôle-play. Being defrocked is not the same as losing a job in secular life but involves rather an entire 'mise en question' of personal identity, as the commentator remarks of the prospective priest who is forced to give up his vocation : 'On lui demande, ni plus ni moins, de cesser d'être le personnage qu'il s'est cru et il faut le convaincre d'avoir joué un rôle de comédie' (VS,107). Once the authenticity of a vocation has been called into question he who thought he was called is reduced to the status of actor and comedian, dissimulator *par excellence* rather than the disseminator of God's Truth. In this sense the authenticity of the vocation underpins the authenticity of both the personal identity of the Priest and of God's Word as it is pronounced in the rites and rituals of the Church. The authentic vocation renders possible the

coincidence of the priest's gestures and pronouncements with Transcendent Reality, with the gift of God's Grace. At one point Jérôme recalls the feeling which the carrying out of priestly rites confers onto him who knows he has been divinely called :

Tout est en suspens, rien ne s'est encore produit, il sent sa propre unité dans les actes purs qui viennent de s'accomplir; il est celé - voilà qui serait plus intéressant si c'était développé davantage - il est celé dans ces figures et ces rites par quoi s'est prononcée la Présence réelle (VS,114).

The gestures and rituals of the priesthood and the oneness of the priest with those gestures affirm the existence of the divine 'Présence réelle' and with this the unity and authenticity of self-identity is also affirmed and made manifest. Immediately one can see that at stake in the success of Jérôme's vocation is the entire question of identity, essence and Truth which is central to Klossowski's engagement with Nietzsche and the 'Death of God' as it has been characterised thus far. The authenticity of the vocation is bound up with the question of stable identity and its foundation in the existence and presence of God. Yet throughout the various stages of the narrative the possibility offered to Jérôme of properly authenticating his vocation is continually challenged.

For instance, when he interviews the Abbé Persienne he is confronted with the existence of a priest within the Church who does not himself even believe in God. The success of this 'prêtre euthanasien' in combining a psychoanalytic view of the world with a justification of his position and function within the Catholic Church provides a major threat to Jérôme's confidence in his vocation in two specific ways. Firstly because in refusing to believe in religious experience as anything other than a purely earthly experience the Abbé Persienne offers no means

of founding or establishing the authenticity of a vocation by appealing to a source of transcendent power, which begs the question that Jérôme himself poses :

“D’après quoi établissez-vous qu’une vocation est authentique, puisqu’il n’y a pas, selon vous, si j’ai bien saisi votre pensée, il n’y a pas de voix qui, de là-haut, appelle celui qui croit entendre cette voix assez fortement pour lui obéir? et comment l’Église qui, tout entière, s’est levée à l’appel de cette voix, et qui reçoit ceux qui obéissent à cet appel, peut-elle songer venir consulter un esprit qui estime que cet appel est illusoire, parce que cette voix n’aurait jamais appelé?” (VS, 101).

If one does not accept religious experience to be divinely inspired then it has no basis as religious experience, there is no possibility of distinguishing it from hallucination, self-deception, or any other misleading mental phenomenon.

Secondly, and more importantly in terms of Jérôme's own personal itinerary, the Church can accommodate the Abbé within its ranks without concerning itself as to whether he truly believes in the transcendent value of the rites he is administering; the Catholic Church : 'ne demande rien d'autre à l'Abbé "euthanasien" que d'administrer en son Nom : quelle que soit sa manière à lui d'interpréter les gestes sacramentels' (VS, 103). The admission into its ranks of someone who perceives the sacramental rituals of the Church to be nothing other than sophisticated form of rôle-play articulates the crucial point of rupture which leads to the conclusion of Jérôme's crisis.

The Church, whose task it is to pronounce the 'Presence réelle' through the rites and rituals of the priest, allows itself in Klossowski's novel to become infected with the logic of fiction, that is, of falsity and dissimulation. In terms of the literary argument advanced at the beginning of the novel, the rôles of the priest and the artist must be kept firmly apart. The former pronounces the Word of God and offers purchase on divine truth, the latter is a 'faux prophète' and offers only image

and illusion; the theological and the aesthetic must be held far from each other. The inclusion of the Abbé within the Church represents the point where these two separate realms cease to have secure boundaries and begin to infiltrate each other's territory. In performing the sacrament the Abbé could only ever be performing a rôle with which he does not coincide; he could only ever be involved in dissimulation and the parodying of the divine sacrament, the creation of false images. Jérôme falteringly and incompletely draws the consequences of this inclusion : 'Voulez-vous dire que l'Église... demande Jérôme, voulez-vous dire que Notre Sainte Mère l'Église ne serait que l'image...' (VS, 102-3); the Church ceases to be situated in the realm of 'Real Presence' but is shifted into the realm of the image, of the aesthetic. This collapse of the boundary between the theological and the aesthetic is at the heart of La Vocation suspendue and reaches its climax towards the very end of the novel when Jérôme renounces his vocation after having recognised the dual identity of the painter Malagrida. The moment when Jérôme witnesses the mass whose 'prêtre célébrant' is suddenly revealed also to be the avant-garde painter (who has figured largely in his distant and more immediate past) is the moment of ultimate crisis where the artist and the priest become fused and where the logic of parody as counterfeit and rôle-play completely overturns the logic of authenticity and self-identity. Seeing the 'peintre-prêtre' enact the Holy Mass Jérôme asks himself :

Est-il possible que *ses* longs doigts souples que Jérôme avait naguère regardés avec méfiance, que *ses* doigts tiennent le Corps du Seigneur que maintenant *il* porte à Jérôme? Voici qu'*il* lui met la Présence du Verbe sur la langue [...] (VS, 131).

In this moment 'Real Presence' becomes dissimulation, counterfeit and play acting. The 'faux prophète' is fused with the priest whose task it should be to embody the

'vrai'. There is no real priest but only someone 'acting' as a priest, only someone playing out a rôle. The priest is only an imitation, a copy, a forgery of a real priest. Yet since the priest is only ever 'real' insofar as his gestures evoke and coincide with 'Real Presence', it follows that as soon as his acts become infected with rôle-play the possibility of there ever being a 'real' priest is undermined. In this moment the whole integrity of the priestly function is called into question. As was the case with the Abbé Persienne the existence of the priest-painter within the Church calls into question the very premises upon which the Church itself is built. The priest as painter parodies 'Real Presence' in such a way as to undermine all possibility of its being either 'Real' or 'Present' because it is only ever an imitation of presence, an illusion of the 'faux prophète', of the artist actor. This moment of collapse between the two spheres of the theological and the aesthetic is also a collapse of language in its capacity to articulate Truth or to describe a stable and knowable world. Indeed the failure of the priest to enact the miracle of true presence points to a worrying and catastrophic failure of language as a vehicle of representation. Not only does a vocation come to an end in this moment but the 'Présence du Verbe' as it is acted out and parodied in Malagrida's gestures is revealed to be an absence of the Logos.

This disintegration of the 'real Presence' into the parodic operation of rôle-play is articulated before this moment of climax on different levels throughout the text. The fresco encountered by Jérôme in the early stages of the book functions as a premonitory *mise-en-abyme* and offers an example of this. It depicts various episodes in the life of the Virgin Mary and reproduces the moment where the divine gesture or image is revealed to be without foundation in any revelation of Truth. The fresco offers itself, in the first instance, as a symbol of the theological crisis into which Jérôme is thrown. It is divided into three portions, the left panel

representing the crowning of the Virgin Mary by the Angels, whilst a number of scholars look on and discuss the proceedings. The central part shows the apparition of Mary to Saint Bernadette as a confirmation and triumph of the doctrine of the Virgin. The right panel, which as a whole is only an incomplete sketch in comparison to the rest of the painting, depicts two figures, one, a portrait of Pope Pius IX, raising his arms towards Bernadette's vision, the other, a Carmelite sister, lying down on her death bed. As a set of images the fresco initially appears to be representing a single and divine Truth, that of the doctrine of the Virgin Mary. Yet its significance is plural, both within the context of the religious communities alluded to in the course of the narrative and in terms of its significance within the text as a whole. Firstly the painting is the subject of much controversy and theological dispute and is held up by the commentator as indicative of the rifts and factions within the Church; the commentator remarks :

l'idée de la fresque inachevée a semblé à l'auteur un procédé commode à figurer l'effervescence d'un certain milieu où s'opposent diverses ferveurs et diverses formes de la foi qui se veulent exclusives, parce que chacune affirme un tempérament (VS,76).

Immediately the authority of the dogma is undermined by the plurality of its diverse interpretations. Secondly, as the latter half of this comment suggests, the fresco articulates some form of relationship between images of Truth and obscure forces of temperament which cannot be spoken or formulated within language :

l'auteur a pu voir dans son thème de la fresque un moyen, parfaitement propre à l'atmosphère de l'action, de montrer que les représentations des objets de la foi (ici sous la forme plastique) peuvent faire de ces objets des prétextes de réalités humaines qui ne se manifesteraient pas autrement (VS,77).

The images of the fresco are not a representation of Revelation but rather a 'prétexte' for 'forces obscures'. This marks an interesting modification of

Klossowski's 1947 reading of Sade. Throughout his earlier reading the life of the self and the assertions of rational/logical thought were shown to have their foundation in aggressiveness or 'forces obscures'. Yet the Truth of God was kept distinct from this (since it was affirmed only through the attempt by rational atheism to negate it). Here, however, the episode of the fresco insofar as it posits this relationship between 'les objets de la foi' and 'forces obscures' disrupts the unity of theological truth in the same way as the unity of rational truth was disrupted in the earlier text. Both now are being constructed as phenomena of human life having their basis in the obscure movements of 'forces impulsives'. The fresco is many things to many people since it is a 'prétexte' for something specific each of them (their own hidden aggressive desires and impulses)²². Once again what is supposed to be unique and manifest itself as the presence of divine Truth is shown to be without divine foundation. The relation of the fresco to the transcendent reality of the dogma it depicts is disrupted as its uniqueness degenerates into a multiplicity of interpretation. What the fresco reveals is its own quality as counterfeit and copy.

This is doubly emphasised when Jérôme uncovers the history of its creation. The final panel offers one of the most striking features of the painting in the figure of the Carmelite sister on her death bed looking at the image of Bernadette as she regards the Virgin :

cette dernière figure frappe d'autant plus que la tête, sur le fond demeuré blanc, se fait remarquer comme la partie la plus *exécutée* de toute la fresque; c'est le visage d'une jeune femme, la bouche entrouverte, les yeux ravis en extase par la vision (VS,41-2).

²² The relationship between 'forces obscures' or 'impulsions' and language, the self, truth will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

This figure embodies the intensity of authentic religious experience as the woman's features are transformed by the force of the revelation to which she is bearing witness. In this sense it offers, along with the portrait of Pope Pius IX with his arms raised, the key to the whole painting, for the truth of the dogma the fresco propounds as a whole finds its guarantee in the authority of religious experience. Yet as the intrigues in which Jérôme becomes embroiled progress, the origin of this part of the fresco are revealed. La Mère Angélique tells Jérôme that the models used for the Pope and the dying sister are other than what he might expect :

Si vous y regardez de près [.....] vous reconnaîtrez que les traits du Souverain Pontife ne sont pas ceux de Pape Pie IX, mais de quelqu'un que vous rencontrerez ici, et quant à la soeur carmélite, le modèle qui a servi à composer ses traits était une *morte fraîchement ensevelie et presque aussitôt exhumée* (VS,80)

La Mère Angélique then shows Jérôme a photograph representing scenes of violent sacrilege committed in Barcelona by anarchists during the Spanish civil war in which a body of a dead sister has been dug up. It seems highly probable that the model for the Pope to which La Mère Angélique alludes would be the Spanish painter Malagrida (the 'prêtre peintre' of the climax) and particularly so when the true genesis of the painting is finally discovered. The photograph of the civil war sacrileges is not at all authentic either, but is itself false; a tableau arranged and photographed by Malagrida in the home of one libertine 'Docteur Carpocrates'. The model for the corpse in turn proves to be no corpse but rather Sister Théophile, the one character that seeks to support the success of Jérôme's vocation in the novel, and whom he now also remembers having seen in the libertine avant-garde circles he frequented before he joined the priesthood. Like the Abbé persienne and Malagrida, Soeur Théophile is involved in the milieux of both Church and art; she too implies the mutual permeability of the theological and the aesthetic. The

religious experience which the sister in the painting represents has no existence. All the images in the fresco no longer incarnate or refer to divine revelation, rather their origin is lost in a series of counterfeits, where once again the falsity of art consumes the authenticity of 'real Presence'. The fresco as a representation of the Truth, in fact parodies Truth, in the same way as the 'prêtre-peintre' parodies the divine as he rôle-plays the rites of the religious sacrament. The fresco is an image whose fictionality renders any genuine coincidence with divine revelation impossible, because there is no relation between image and Truth, but rather only a series of images which copy other images and whose originating moment becomes obscured.

This rupture between the image and a transcendent reality to which it might refer underpins the narrative strategy of La Vocation suspendue as a whole. The fresco as a form of mise-en-abyme mirrors the moment when Malagrida and the Inquisitor are revealed to be one and the same and both instances reflect what is at stake in the activity of the novel overall. This narrative strategy manifests itself in two closely related ways; firstly in the way proper names are used throughout the text and secondly in the general structure of the novel, which presents itself, as I have mentioned, as a commentary on itself.

The entire proceedings in the novel are self-consciously hidden beneath a veil of anonymity, allusion and elusion. For instance, the existence of the 'Parti Noir,' so central to the intrigues of the novel, clearly alludes to recent French history, particularly to the years of occupation by the Nazis during the Second World War. Yet at the same time as the name alludes to the Nazis there is a suggestion that it may well refer to something else. The uncertainty is only amplified by moments of the text which remind the reader that it is a commentary

on itself (on a text called La Vocation suspendue), on an absent text which the reader cannot of course consult in order to verify exactly what is being suggested :

Tantôt il est question de l'oppression que fait peser sur la société religieuse aussi bien que civile, le "Parti noir" avec ses troupes, sa police et ses bourreaux, et l'on croit comprendre qu'il ne s'agit que de l'occupation nazie. Tantôt au contraire il s'agit d'un ordre religieux de l'Église, qui exerce à lui seul l'Inquisition' (VS,25).

The identity of the 'Parti Noir' is plural and indeterminate. The same is true for that of the characters of the novel and the proper names attached to them. On one level it is clear that La Vocation suspendue is a 'roman à clef'; each character has its equivalent within the milieu that Klossowski moved before, during and after the war years²³. Yet whilst the characters of, for instance, both La Montagne and Malagrida offer themselves up to being interpreted as biographical portraits they are also more than this and can be seen as doubles or aspects of Jérôme's own personality whose internal conflicts they seem to accentuate. At one point for example the commentator suggests :

Le personnage de Malagrida surviendra ici en tant que "repoussoir", sinon même en tant que double du personnage de Jérôme. Avec lui, c'est le passé du séminariste qui resurgit et la fresque qui sert à représenter des conflits dogmatiques et dévotionnels, n'étant que l'oeuvre de Malagrida, ce sont en quelque sorte les objets de la foi - effectivement peints par son propre démon - Malagrida n'est pas autre chose - qui servent à travestir les péchés secrets de Jérôme (VS,83-4).

Malagrida, the 'prêtre-peintre', like the fresco, figures an aspect of the inner conflict to which Jérôme is subject, namely the blurring of the boundaries between revealed Truth and false image. Malagrida, the fresco (whose referent has already shown to be obscured in a play of counterfeit and imitation) and Jérôme are linked in a chain

²³ It would be impossible to identify all the keys to this novel without careful research. One can only hazard a few guesses. For instance Malagrida is probably Dali, La Montagne is probably Massignon. For some idea of Klossowski's acquaintances during the period prior to, during and immediately after the Second World War, see the biographical notes in Alain Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski (Paris: Seuil, 1990), pp. 186-87.

of reference so that none of these refers to any one thing but is caught up in chain of substitution, which is theoretically without end. One can read Jérôme's story as a biographical portrait detailing Klossowski's personal itinerary throughout the war years and indeed one is invited to do so. At the very same time Jérôme is identified with the author of La Vocation suspendue (also to be identified with Klossowski) only for the commentator immediately to disrupt this identification and prevent it from becoming stable :

entre celui que nous croyons être l'auteur et celui dont l'auteur a fait son personnage, il résulte moins le rapport d'un auteur avec son propre portrait qu'un rapport de *ressentiment* tel qu'il existe entre deux hommes qui, trompés par des analogies de caractère, ont cru pouvoir s'unir pour agir apparemment de concert, mais en fait dans l'obscur intention que l'un asservira l'autre; à la fin, l'un des deux se dérobe (le héros) et l'autre (l'auteur) lui avoue son haine éternelle... (VS,33).

The proper names of La Vocation suspendue are detached from any stable referent in such a way that the principle of identity no longer functions. Each individual character name proves to be in some way a repetition of another name. Malagrida is a repetition of Jérôme, Jérôme of the 'auteur', the 'auteur' of Klossowski and so on, each figure relating to the other through being both similar and yet different, but never identical²⁴. This repeats the break which was seen to occur in the relation between image and Truth that the history of the Fresco revealed. But as has been seen the Fresco itself is not guaranteed any stable symbolic position within the economy of the text as a whole as each individual motif (Name, image, symbol) repeats or mimics another.

The lack of any exact match between author (the 'auteur' referred to in the text and Klossowski) and Jérôme, is repeated in the non-identity of the

²⁴ The important questions of similarity, difference and repetition will be dealt with fully in the discussion of Eternal Return in the next section.

commentator, whose text we are reading, and of the author on whose text the commentator is commenting²⁵. The novel by Klossowski entitled La Vocation suspendue presents itself as a commentary by an anonymous narrator of a book entitled La Vocation suspendue by an author who himself is anonymous. La Vocation suspendue presents the reader with a singular use of the mise-en-abyme structure whose significance can best be elucidated with reference to Lucien Dällenbach's work Le Récit spéculaire²⁶. Dällenbach's study attempts to construct a typology of all the different forms of mise en abyme which can occur within a narrative. His project lies very much within the narratological framework elaborated by Genette in Figures²⁷. Dällenbach identifies a number of different 'mises en abyme élémentaires' which in their most basic form can be listed as follows : 'la réflexion de énoncé, de l'énonciation et du code'²⁸. In the first instance, it is the action of the narrative which is reflected (Un amour de Swann for example reflects and prefigures what happens to Proust's narrator in his amorous relations throughout La Recherche and would thus be according to Dällenbach a 'mise en abyme de l'énoncé prospective'). In the second instance, it is the act of writing or producing the narrative itself which is reflected²⁹ (For example Edouard in Les Faux-monneyeurs is writing a novel called Les Faux-monneyeurs) and in the third

²⁵ This point is echoed by Marcel Spada in his commentary on La Vocation suspendue : 'les perspectives du livre, c'est-à-dire le double écart, entre Jérôme et l'anonyme auteur d'une part, Pierre Klossowski et le pseudo auteur d'autre part, rejette la vérité ultime du texte dans l'irréalité d'une vision au troisième degré', Fictions d'Éros, p. 31.

²⁶ Dällenbach, Lucien, Le Récit spéculaire : Essai sur la mise en abyme, (Paris: Seuil, 1977).

²⁷ Genette, Gerard, Figures, (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

²⁸ Dällenbach, Lucien, Le Récit spéculaire, p. 74.

²⁹ Dällenbach describes this as follows : 'l'on entendra par mise en abyme de l'énonciation i) la "présentation" diégétique du producteur ou du récepteur du récit ii) la mise en évidence de la production ou de la réception comme telles, iii) la manifestation du contexte qui conditionne (qui a conditionné) cette production-réception', Le Récit spéculaire, p. 100.

instance the manner, technique or means of textual production is represented³⁰ (for instance the episode of the madeleine). La Vocation suspendue as commentary on a novel entitled La vocation suspendue fits into this scheme in an interesting way. The novel bearing the title La Vocation suspendue which one picks up to read is a commentary on a book with the same title. By implication therefore the novel called La Vocation suspendue which is commented on is itself also a commentary. La Vocation suspendue insofar as it is a commentary on a commentary is a 'mise en abyme de l'énonciation' but in a very singular sense. In commenting it reflects the moment of production of the novel it comments on (itself a commentary) therefore it is 'la mise en évidence de la production'³¹. Yet it is only ever commentary on an original moment which never takes place³². The novel La Vocation suspendue which would be just the novel itself and not a commentary is infinitely deferred; it is only ever a commentary of a commentary. So as 'mise en abyme de l'énonciation' La Vocation suspendue reflects a moment of 'énonciation' which never actually occurs; it is always only the reflection of a reflection and there is never a point of origin where one can encounter that which was reflected. One does read a narrative within the text as well as comment and indeed there is a constant and uncertain slippage between the two but one is only ever reading the narrative at a second degree through the lens of commentary. This brings Klossowski's use of mise-en-

³⁰ This he describes as the moment where the text attempts to : 'narrativiser de manière plus ou moins explicite la problématique de son écriture' Le Récit spéculaire, p. 128.

³¹ Le Récit spéculaire, p. 100.

³² Foucault makes a similar point 'La Vocation suspendue est un commentaire simulé d'un récit qui est lui-même simulacre, puisqu'il n'existe pas ou plutôt qu'il réside tout entier en ce commentaire qu'on en fait. De sorte qu'en une seule nappe de langage s'ouvre cette distance intérieure de l'identité qui permet au commentaire d'une œuvre inaccessible de se donner dans la présence même de l'œuvre et à l'œuvre de s'esquiver dans ce commentaire, qui est pourtant sa seule forme d'existence : mystère de la présence réelle et de l'énigme du Même', Dits et écrits, Vol.I, p. 336. For Foucault the 'distance d'identité' he refers to sets up a kind of presence/absence of the original text within the text - my own commentary has chosen to emphasise the radical absence of the original text.

abyeme close to what Dällenbach terms a 'mise en abyme transcendante' (which he analyses in relation to Beckett's Watt, pp. 133-138) and which, he argues, points to a structure given up to 'un décentrement narratif généralisé'³³. This structure articulates a rupture within the ontological cohesion of language itself because any possibility of language coinciding with an originary moment of being is undermined³⁴.

At the end of the second section of his book Dällenbach offers three main types of mise-en-abyme structure, what he calls 'réduplication simple (similitude)', 'réduplication à l'infini (mimétisme)' and 'réduplication aporistique (identité)³⁵. The first he designates as the reproduction within the work of 'une même œuvre', the second as the reproduction of 'la même oeuvre' and the third as that of 'l'œuvre même'³⁶. The point to be made is that La Vocation suspendue is only ever the reproduction of a reproduction; there is no original work to be reflected, only the act of reflection itself. The mise-en-abyme structure of the novel does, therefore, repeat the problematisation of the notion of origin which has been seen to be at play in both the episode of the fresco and the shifting masks of the 'prêtre-peintre', Malagrida. The novel, like the fresco is an 'œuvre d'art inachevable et inexécutable' (VS, 84). One only ever encounters a copy of the novel which is itself always a copy of a copy. Any attempt to locate the moment of origin will send the reader into a vertiginous spin as one is passed from commentator to 'auteur', 'auteur' to Jérôme, Jérôme to Klossowski, or indeed any of these to any of the

³³ Le Récit spéculaire, p. 137.

³⁴ Dällenbach writes of this narrative decentring : 'Dès lors que le Logos qui surplombe toute l'histoire de la métaphysique occidentale ne soutient plus les vocables et que s'affole le point central qui était le site du Maître-Mot, le langage, loin d'être le "berger" et la "demeure de l'être", se désinvestit de son statut ontologique. Les deux instances qui sont le réel et le discours ne se rejoignent plus' Le Récit spéculaire, p. 137.

³⁵ Le Récit spéculaire, p. 142.

others. La Vocation suspendue is itself so to speak 'suspendue'; it parodies itself in such a way as to defer it ever actually being achieved as the novel which it purports to be in the title that is given to it.

Parody is, therefore, the repetition of masks, whereby one mask, once uncovered, will only ever reveal another mask. One image will lead only to another image in a movement which causes the narrative logic and structure of La Vocation suspendue to founder and any point of origin or foundation to be lost. This loss of origin which such a structure of repetition implies destabilises the Christian logic through which Klossowski reads Sade in 1947, for not only the assertions of rational truth are shown to be without foundation but so too are those of theological truth. Yet there is some degree of ambiguity in this text. La Vocation suspendue can be recuperated within the earlier position which argues that the work of fiction must represent a world which is denied God's grace. The narrative structure and play of images and substitutions emphasise the work's status as false image, as fictionality. One might argue that this is entirely consistent with the Christian logic elucidated at the beginning of the novel since as a whole the narrative does indeed describe a world without transcendence and affirm itself as fiction and false image. However it is this crucial point at which the Church and Divine Revelation come into contact with the play of parody which makes La Vocation suspendue as a text point forwards to Klossowski's later position rather than backwards to his earlier Christian writings.

If the Catholic outlook of Klossowski's early commentaries on Sade rested on the possibility of keeping a distance between the work of fiction and the work of Truth (in the form of revealed text/priestly rituals) then Klossowski's first work

³⁶ Le Récit spéculaire, p. 142.

of fiction shows that it is not possible to keep such a distance. In the moment he takes up writing 'Klossowski' (as a proper name) is taken up by Writing. The stability and self-identity of the Self as it is embodied by the proper name becomes dissolved in the endless round of substitutions and copies, which the logic of parody instigates. The circle of negation and affirmation in which a denial of God was always also a confirmation of God is modified, because the parodic logic of writing is shown to be at work in the theological and religious spheres as well as in the realm of the purely aesthetic. Any theological position which seeks to uphold a transcendent reality itself becomes an aesthetic construct, moved inevitably to mimic the transcendent, to offer only a counterfeit copy of it. The world as fable, that the Nietzschean death of God announced, is a world which is written, a world in which self-identity is transformed into the repetition of similarity and difference, where one is only ever a 'comédien' acting out a rôle of what one is not, where one is finally only ever 'une imitation de comédien'.

Translating Nietzsche.

Ce qui passe le plus mal d'une langue dans une autre, c'est le rythme de son style, qui tient au caractère de la race, ou pour m'exprimer en termes plus physiologiques de son "métabolisme". Il est des traductions honnêtes qui sont presque des trahisons, qui banalisent involontairement l'original, simplement parce qu'elles échouent à rendre son rythme hardi et joyeux, qui court et saute au-delà de tous les périls des mots et des choses.

Nietzsche, Par delà bien et mal³⁷.

Throughout his career Klossowski has been a prolific translator. From German he has translated figures as diverse as Hölderlin and Kafka, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Heidegger, while from Latin he is the author of versions of Virgil's Aeneid and of Tertullian's treatise Du sommeil des anges et de la mort³⁸. Most notably and perhaps most importantly, he has also been a translator of Nietzsche. He begins to translate Nietzsche in 1954 when he publishes the French edition of Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft together with the Fragments Posthumes 1880-1882. He then goes on to publish a translation of the later posthumous fragments (1887-1888) in 1976 (his translations of these later fragments form the basis of commentaries in Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux³⁹). Klossowski has clearly made an important contribution in making Nietzsche available to a French readership. Translation is also a crucial question within the context of Klossowski's commentaries on Nietzsche. In what follows I will aim to show to what extent the same problematic of translation informs both Klossowski's practice as a translator

³⁷ Par-delà bien et mal, translated by Cornélius Hein (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 47, Jenseits des Gut und Böse, KSA5, p. 46.

³⁸ Virgil, L'Énéide, translated by Pierre Klossowski (Paris: Gallimard, 1964). As will become clear this translation proved to be rather controversial. Tertullian, Du Sommeil, des songes et de la mort, La Licorne, 2 (winter 1948).

³⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche Le Gai Savoir and Fragments posthumes (1880/1882) (Paris: Club Français du livre, 1954); re-edited Nietzsche, Œuvres complètes, 14 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1967-76), vol V (1967) and Gallimard/Folio, 1982. Fragments posthumes (1887/1888), collected in Œuvres complètes, vol. XII (1976). Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux (Paris:

of and as a commentator on Nietzsche. The relationship between Klossowski and Nietzsche can be seen to turn on this question of translation and this is never clearer than in a text such as Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux.

As I have argued, the argument of Klossowski's early commentary in the essay 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie' centred on the attempt by Nietzsche to 'enseigner l'inenseignable', that is to find written form for an experience that paradoxically lies outside thought and language and the principle of identity that underpins them (the revelation of Eternal Return in the mountains of Sils-Maria and its subsequent formulation into a doctrine). This project is closely bound up with the question of translation. To translate a text presupposes a relationship between translator and text in which both translator and text function as self-identical identities. I have suggested that what is most important, for Klossowski, about the Nietzschean text is that it seeks to undermine the principle of self-identity and therefore any possibility of viewing the question of translation in any straightforward or traditional way. Within this context the issue of translation can be formulated on three levels. In the first instance Nietzsche can be said to be engaged in a project of translation (irrespective of any relationship to Klossowski) as he seeks to articulate his experience of Eternal Return within the signs and codes of the German language (translating an experience beyond language into language to form the original Nietzsche text). In the second instance Klossowski translates Nietzsche's original German into French (translation in the conventional sense e.g. of Die fröhliche Wissenschaft as Le Gai Savoir). Klossowski's attempt to reformulate Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal return in the two essays of Un Si Funeste

Désir and in Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux is a third and final instance of translation (i.e. commentary as a form of translation). This threefold formulation place the question of translation at the centre of Klossowski's engagement with Nietzsche. An close examination of Klossowski's version of Virgil's L'Enéide will therefore throw light on Klossowski's relationship to translation in general and to Nietzsche's thought and writing in particular.

The whole concept of relation and of relationality is subject to hiatus within Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche. A relationship (as well as a translation) traditionally implies a relation between two discrete and self-identical entities. If, however, both Nietzsche and Klossowski are attempting to speak of and affirm the doctrine of Eternal Return which undermines the possibility of 'self-identical entity' then to speak of a relationship between the two in a traditional sense would be inappropriate. To do so under these circumstances is to posit an identity between the two and a self-identity of both with themselves which, Klossowski would claim, the aims and strategies of their texts seek to overturn. In attempting to articulate the relationship Nietzsche-Klossowski this discussion must re-situate the very concept of 'relationship' in the same way as the preceding analysis sought to modify the traditional meaning ascribed to the term parody.

An examination of Klossowski's version of Virgil's Aeneid and the theory behind its translation offer a key to the untangling of this difficulty. Reference to Walter Benjamin's essay 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers'⁴⁰ and to subsequent

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', Gesammelte Schriften, 7 Vols (in 14) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972-89), Vol. IV.1 (1972) pp. 9-21. The English translation by Harry Zohn is collected in Illuminations (London: Fontana, 1973), pp. 70-82.

discussions of Benjamin's argument by Paul de Man and Maurice Blanchot⁴¹ open a way into an analysis the questions of both translation and relation.

L'Énéide and 'The Task of the Translator'.

Klossowski's L'Énéide is perhaps the most experimental of his translations. This is in part due to the fact that he made an effort to reproduce the verse form (and therefore the syntax and word order) of the Latin original without making any concessions to the syntactic or stylistic conventions of the French language. There is a strong sense throughout his version of Virgil's work that Klossowski is seeking not to render the Latin into 'good' French but rather to imbue his French with the force of the original Latin. In this he is following the technique of translation suggested in a comment by Rudolphe Pannwitz that Benjamin cites at the end of his essay on translation, namely that the translator should allow his own language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue rather than allowing that foreign tongue to be 'tamed' by his own language⁴².

Nietzsche's comment from Par-delà bien et mal which opens this discussion can be seen to prefigure the theory of translation for which Benjamin argues in his essay and which informs Klossowski's technique in his version of Virgil's Aeneid. The key point to note is that Nietzsche is giving a prior place not to the reproduction of meaning in the process of translation (the 'traductions honnêtes') but rather to the possibility of rendering that which in the original exceeds its purely semantic content. What is most important is the rhythm of the original, the

⁴¹ Paul de Man, 'On the "Task of the Translator"', The Resistance to Theory (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 73-105; 'Traduire' in Blanchot, Maurice, L'Amitié (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 69-73; See also Derrida's essay 'Des tours de Babel' in Psyché (Paris: Galilée, 1987), pp. 203-35.

⁴² Cited by Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. IV.1, p. 20; Illuminations, p. 81.

linguistic materiality of its "métabolisme" (the body metaphor here is highly significant as will later become clear). For Nietzsche what is most necessary in translation is to reproduce the physical musicality of the original language.

Klossowski himself emphasises this priority of 'metabolic' rhythm over meaning in the introduction to his French version of L'Énéide :

dans la traduction d'un texte tel que *l'Énéide*, tout, à peu de chose près, tout de cette instrumentation incantatoire disparaît, dès que l'on se restreint au sens rationnel du discours, déroulant l'épopée.[.....].

Le mouvement vrai n'est pas dans l'action, mais dans la mélodie interne, le tableau dans des accords et dans des images contrastées, mais les images elles-mêmes jaillissent du choc des mots, non pas en ce qu'ils désigneraient quelque chose (L'Énéide, préface, pp. xi-xii).

Sense is to be subordinated to the presentation of the more rhythmic visceral patterning of the verse. The entirety of Klossowski's rendering of the Latin text follows these opening premises and results in a form of French which is unconventional if not at times straightforwardly ungrammatical. At the time of its publication Klossowski's translation proved to be somewhat controversial. The classic opening to the famous Book VI of the Aeneid gives a good impression of the unusual nature of his French text :

Ils allaient obscurs sous la désolée nuit à travers l'ombre,
à travers les demeures de Dis vaines et les voyeurs d'inanité,
tel par une incertaine lune sous la lumière maligne
est le chemin dans les forêts où le ciel il caché dans l'ombre,
Jupiter et aux figures la nuit a ôté impénétrable la couleur.⁴³

This extract was published in Le Monde in August 1964 accompanied by an interview with Jean-Edern Hallier in which Klossowski talks further of what he was trying to do in this translation :

⁴³ L'Énéide, chant VI.

J'ai surtout travaillé les inversions pour sauvegarder les images, en m'efforçant de faire passer dans la langue française ce qu'elle refuse au nom des conventions⁴⁴

As the preface to his translation suggested Klossowski is explicitly attacking the 'conventions' of the French language in order to preserve a certain integrity of the original text. Nevertheless this emphasis on his deliberate transposition of inversions did not prevent one A-F. Baillot from writing a letter to Le Monde a week later with scathing criticism of Klossowski's technique and indeed of his French grammar, offering his own 'correct' translation of the opening lines of Book VI :

Pour exprimer l'intention de l'auteur on est autorisé à traduire : 'Ils allaient solitaire par la nuit obscure'

Baillot's point is that Klossowski's attempt to keep to the syntax of the original Latin obscures the 'true meaning' of the original :

Au-delà du mot à mot grammatical il fallait rendre la pensée du poète, qui donne autant de "résonance" que la traduction littérale.⁴⁵

Baillot's criticism of Klossowski does not just hinge on the ungrammaticality of his translation but rather seeks authority with reference to authorial intentionality and 'la pensée du poète'. These, of course, are the very notions which Klossowski's readings of both Sade and Nietzsche overturn. For Klossowski, the criticism Baillot makes would be rather irrelevant. Klossowski is deliberately not concerning himself with 'la pensée du poète', rather his translation is far more concerned with doing violence to the conventions of the French language by 'invading' it with the foreignness of another.

A number of sympathetic reviewers did, along with Klossowski, also frame this 'literalness' of the translation in terms of a desire to reproduce in French that

⁴⁴ Jean-Edern Hallier, 'Un entretien avec Pierre Klossowski nouveau traducteur de Virgile' Le Monde (8 August 1964), 7.

which is integral to the Latin original. In his review in the Mercure de France⁴⁶

Pierre Leyris writes :

Une métrique plus concertée, plus unifiée - à supposer qu'on en soutînt l'effort tout au long de *l'Énéide* - n'aurait pu restituer d'aussi près le jaillissement originel du poème et l'émouvante révélation de la matière brute du latin⁴⁷.

The physical emphasis of 'jaillissement' and of 'matière brute' echoes here Klossowski's appeal to the 'instrumentation incantatoire' of the verse and to the 'choc des mots' in the preface to his translation. It is clear that Leyris has appreciated the quality of Klossowski's translation which the criticism of Baillot misses, i.e. its restitution of the physicality of the original (its syntax and form)⁴⁸.

It is at this point that the connection to Benjamin's essay on translation can be brought out. Klossowski knew Benjamin and translated the essay 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit'⁴⁹ under his supervision. Benjamin's essay entitled in the original 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers' was published in Heidelberg in 1923 as an introduction to his own translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens (from Les Fleurs du mal) and, as subsequent commentators have remarked, stands as a founding contribution to modern theories of translation. The importance, for Klossowski, of Benjamin's reference to Pannwitz at the end of his essay has already been alluded to. Benjamin, like

⁴⁵ Le Monde (15 August 1964), 5.

⁴⁶ Pierre Leyris, 'L'Énéide restituée', Mercure de France, 1214 (December 1964), 666-73. See also Michel Foucault, 'Les Mots qui saignent' in L'Express (29 August 1964), 21-22, collected Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 1, pp. 424-427 and Deguy, Michel, 'L'Énéide' in La Nouvelle Revue Française, 144 (December 1964), 1082-93.

⁴⁷ Mercure de France, p. 671

⁴⁸ Michel Deguy in his review of Klossowski's translation also picks up on this point, speaking of 'le génie latin, l'intention romaine de Virgile' which Klossowski's translation renders more immediately to the French reader, 'L'Énéide', La Nouvelle Revue Française (December 1964), 1084.

Klossowski, stresses that it is not meaning or its restitution that is crucial in judging the aims and value of a translation, but rather something beyond meaning :

die Übersetzung [berührt] flüchtig und nur in dem unendlichen kleinen Punkte des Sinnes das Original, um nach dem Gesetze der Treue in der Freiheit der Sprachbewegung ihre eigenste Bahn zu verfolgen⁵⁰

What Benjamin does here is to put forward a radically anti-mimetic theory which overturns the idea that the translation relates to its source text in the way that a copy would relate to its original (in the Platonic sense). Benjamin is quite explicit on this point, that the relation between translation and original is not one of resemblance or likeness : 'anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, muß die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich an bilden'⁵¹. One can read 'Art des Meinens' here as referring to the physical linguistic form of the original (or 'linguistic flux') in the same way as did Klossowski's emphasis on the 'instrumentation incantatoire' of Virgil's Latin. Benjamin's essays contains certain ambiguities insofar as it turns around the notions of 'die Verwandtschaft der Sprache' (the 'kinship of languages') and that of 'die reine Sprache' ('pure language'). These somewhat opaque terms have led readers to believe that in fact Benjamin is advancing a metaphysical and even messianic theory of translation. Benjamin has been seen by some to be positing some form of essentialist or transcendent account of language. In his discussion of Benjamin Paul de Man seeks to show the reverse, i.e. that Benjamin's

⁴⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technoschen Reproduzierbarkeit', Gesammelte Schriften, vol 1.2, pp. 470-508; 'L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée', translated by Pierre Klossowski, Gesammelte Schriften, vol 1.2, pp. 709-739.

⁵⁰ Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. IV.1, p. 20. The English text runs : 'a translation touches upon the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of linguistic flux' ('The Task of the Translator', Illuminations, p. 81).

⁵¹ Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. IV.1, p. 18; 'translation, instead of resembling the sense of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification,' Illuminations, p. 79.

theory is distinctly unmetaphysical and turns rather on the fragmented, incomplete and differential nature of language.

As de Man points out 'Verwandschaft' is the concept which Benjamin uses to formulate the relationship between different languages, a relationship which does not involve the resemblance of one language to another but rather is predicated upon the contention that 'alle überhistorische Verwandschaft der Sprachen [beruht] darin, daß in ihrer jeder als ganze jeweils eines und zwar dasselbe gemeint ist, das dennoch keiner einzelnen von ihnen, sondern nur der Allheit ihrer einander ergänzenden Intentionen erreichbar ist : die reine Sprache'⁵². By 'pure language' Benjamin refers to the state in which these differing modes of intention which underlie all languages are reconciled into a totality. What de Man does in his essay on 'The Task of the Translator' is to make central Benjamin's point that the totality of 'reine Sprache' is not accessible. He does this by reading very closely both the English and the French translations of Benjamin's essay by Harry Zohn and Maurice de Gandillac respectively. In particular he focuses at one point on Zohn's rendering of the metaphor of the fragment in the text. When Benjamin remarks on the lack of resemblance between translation and original and the need for the former to incorporate the latter's 'Art des Meinens' ('mode of signification') he goes on to say,

'um so beide wie Scherben als Bruchstück eines Gefäßes, als Bruchstück einer größeren Sprache erkennbar zu machen'⁵³.

which Zohn translates as :

⁵² Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. IV.1, p. 13; 'the intention underlying each language as a whole - an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realised only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other' Illuminations, p. 74.

⁵³ Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. IV.1, p. 18.

thus making both the original and the translation recognisable as fragments of a greater language just as fragments are part of a vessel⁵⁴.

Zohn's translation, says de Man, asserts the totality of the vessel far more and ignores the emphasis Benjamin places on the fragmentation of the vessel, on the radical irrecuperability of anything resembling a 'pure language', on the essentially fragmentary nature of the text in both its source and target language. Benjamin, he adds, : 'is not saying that the fragments constitute a totality, he says the fragments are fragments, and they remain essentially fragmentary'⁵⁵. This notion of both languages (source and target) being essentially fragmentary is central to de Man's argument and the theory of translation he is trying to derive from Benjamin's text⁵⁶. What he argues is that the languages of the original and the translation are not only different from each other (they do not relate in terms of resemblance or likeness) but that each, insofar as they are both 'essentially fragmentary', is also different from itself (i.e. each language is a self-identical and closed unity). What translation does, therefore is to reveal both itself and its original as originally and irrecoverably fragmentary. Translation, de Man states, is therefore an activity parallel to the activities of critical theory, literary theory and history in the way they relate to an original discourse, text, or event respectively :

they disarticulate, they undo the original, they reveal that the original was always already disarticulated. They reveal that their failure, which seems to be due to the fact that they are secondary in relation to the original, reveals an essential failure, an essential disarticulation which was already there in the original. They kill the original by discovering that the original was already dead⁵⁷.

⁵⁴ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 79.

⁵⁵ De Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, p. 91.

⁵⁶ Carol Jacobs makes this point in her discussion of Benjamin in her essay, 'The Monstrosity of Translation', in *Modern Language Notes*, 90 (1975), 755-66. See in particular p. 759 (on 'Verwandtschaft' as articulating the differential nature of languages) p. 764 (on languages as fragmentary).

⁵⁷ De Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, p. 84.

A language, whether that of the original or of translation, is not completed and self-identical and therefore neither can be said to have any form of identity with each other. The vessel which would be the 'pure language', where all the different intentionalities of language become one, is and always was an impossibility : 'there was no vessel in the first place, or we have no knowledge of this vessel, or no awareness, no access to it, so for all intents and purposes there has never been one'⁵⁸.

So translation, which has traditionally been based on a notion of an equivalence and sameness between the meanings of different languages, is transformed via de Man's reading of Benjamin's essay into an activity founded on the fragmentary nature of language, an activity which is predicated on difference; on the difference of languages from each other but also and most importantly from themselves. This is a view articulated clearly by Maurice Blanchot in his essay 'Traduire' which is also in part a commentary on Benjamin's text. The translator, he asserts, 'vit de la différence des langues'⁵⁹, not in order to suppress that difference and make languages similar but rather to affirm it; the translator, Blanchot continues,

est le maître secret de la différence des langues, non pas pour l'abolir, mais pour l'utiliser, afin d'éveiller, dans la sienne, par les changements violents ou subtils qu'il lui apporte, une présence de ce qu'il y a de différent, originellement, dans l'original⁶⁰.

Here one can return once more to Klossowski's translation of The Aeneid. To say, as did A.-F. Baillot, that it turns the original Latin into an incorrect and ungrammatical French would be to miss the point entirely for such a criticism confers on the French language a unity and stability which it does not possess.

⁵⁸ De Man, The Resistance to Theory, p. 91.

Klossowski performs on the French language '[des] changements violents' but in doing so his translation locates itself within a space which is not either entirely French (conceived of as a self-same grammatical unity) nor entirely Latin, but rather within a space which is constituted in the difference between the two. The translation is located in a space of discontinuity, that which subsists between French and Latin but also the internal discontinuity of each language with itself⁶¹. What is true of translation in the literal sense is also valid, Klossowski argues, of commentary. Both would traditionally presuppose one self-identical body (of language or ideas) which could be transposed into another. Since Nietzsche's thought does, according to Klossowski, undermine the principle of self-identity in language as such the translation of The Aeneid and the theoretical perspective which underpins it can serve as a model for the consideration of Klossowski's commentaries on Nietzsche particularly those of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux where translated fragment and comment are juxtaposed directly.

To attempt to elaborate the way in which the notion of translation as an affirmation of difference usefully describes the structure of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux (and the relationship Nietzsche-Klossowski in the text) I want here to take a short detour and look at the substance of Klossowski's commentaries, i.e. to outline the arguments and meanings that the work articulates. These fall into two closely interlinked parts; firstly a theory of the genesis of language and the self in relation to bodily drives or 'impulsions' and secondly the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence or the Vicious Circle.

⁵⁹ Blanchot, L'Amitié, p. 70.

⁶⁰ Blanchot, L'Amitié, p. 71.

⁶¹ This is the point which Michel Foucault explicitly makes in his essay on Klossowski's translation, 'Les Mots qui saignent' : 'Pour traduire, Klossowski ne s'installe pas dans la

'Impulsions', the fortuitous self, and the 'code des signes'.

What Klossowski's reads in Nietzsche is a conceptualisation of the body as a locus of multiple 'impulsions'⁶², energies ('Triebe' in German) which are literally insignificant, in that they have no signification or identity and exist outside the system of exchange constituted by language. The body for Nietzsche, contends Klossowski, is a fortuitous existence not 'belonging' to anything but simply existing in the world for a span of a lifetime. Klossowski outlines this theory of the body and its relation to language and identity in the one of the earlier sections of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux entitled 'Les états valétudinaires de l'âme à l'origine d'une sémiotique pulsionnelle'. In this section Klossowski follows the history of Nietzsche's illness in terms of his 'céphalalgies'. Using these biographical details he tries to develop Nietzsche's notion of the conflictual relationship between consciousness (the activity of the brain) and the visceral and multiple drives and forces which have their locus in the activity of the body⁶³. This 'energetic' model of the human body leads Klossowski to a key conception of the body as 'fortuitous'. As the locus of drives which escape or otherwise exceed intentionality, the existence and activity of the body is essentially random :

ressemblance du français et du latin; il se loge au creux de leur plus grande différence', L'Express (29 . August 1964), 21-22, collected Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits I, p. 427.

⁶² 'Impulsions' is the term Klossowski uses to render Nietzsche's 'Triebe' in his 1954 translation of Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft. The aim in this discussion is not, however, to compare Klossowski's and Nietzsche's texts closely, or to read Nietzsche's text with Klossowski, but rather to look at the detail of Klossowski's commentaries and the way in which it problematises the relationship between the two.

⁶³ Although Klossowski speaks explicitly of the body here, what eventually arises from his reading is a notion of the human Self which refuses the traditional mind/body distinction (based on a belief in the existence of a soul or stable Self).

Le corps est le résultat du fortuit : il n'est rien que le lieu de rencontre d'un ensemble d'impulsions individuées pour cet intervalle que forme une vie humaine, lesquelles n'aspirent qu'à se désindividualiser (CV,52-3)⁶⁴

As self-aware human beings, we have consciousness of ourselves as fixed identities and of our bodies as belonging to us in an essential way only because of what Klossowski terms 'le code des signes quotidiens'. The multiple unconscious forces which make up the life of bodily organs and functions are radically inimical to the unity and stability of the linguistic 'I'. So it is only within the codified system of language and the fixed meanings that it seeks to institute that the essential fortuity and multiplicity of the body is obscured by the illusion of propriety. This is because it is within language and particularly the grammatical forms 'je' and 'moi' that the conscious self attains to a sense of fixity and self-identity. Although the bodily 'impulsions' are continually at work to disindividuate the self we gain a constant sense of ourselves as ourselves and of our bodies as belonging to ourselves because the 'code des signes' remains fixed over time. The cohesion of the body as a structured unity is predicated upon the illusory cohesion of the self as it is instituted within the fixed signs of language :

Mais les différents âges du corps sont autant d'états différents, l'un naissant de l'autre : et le corps n'est le même corps que dans la mesure où un même moi peut et veut se confondre avec lui, avec ses vicissitudes : la cohésion du corps est celle du moi : il produit ce moi et ainsi sa propre cohésion. Mais pour soi-même ce corps meurt et renaît plusieurs fois selon des morts et des renaissances auxquelles le moi prétend survivre dans son illusoire cohésion. Les âges du corps ne sont, en réalité, que les mouvements impulsionnels qui le forment et le déforment et tendent ensuite à l'abandonner (CV,55).

What Klossowski is outlining here is the structure which informed his writings on Sade where the self as constituted within the institutional framework of language is constantly decomposed and reformed according to the flux of impulsional energies;

⁶⁴ The emphasis in this text is Klossowski's own.

a mouvement whereby 'nous sommes *saisis, abandonnés, repris, et surpris* : tantôt par le système de désignations pulsionnel, tantôt par le système des signes quotidiens' (CV,67). The only reason we know of an individual and irreversible destiny (and why we can't wake up and say 'I'll be Hitler today') is because the same body achieves cohesion again and again with an illusorily same self over time (thanks to the 'code des signes'). Yet in reality the body is always without identity, is always a fortuitous and random existence.

Each formation of an individuated self is itself also entirely fortuitous as was pointed out earlier in this chapter in the discussion of 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie'. That every instance of the self is fortuitous means that as a series of selves spaced out over time no principle of identity subsists between them but rather they are discontinuous with each other, or as Klossowski puts it :

Nous ne sommes qu'une succession d'états *discontinus* par rapport au *code des signes quotidiens*, et sur laquelle *la fixité du langage* nous trompe : tant que nous dépendons de ce code nous concevons notre continuité, quoique nous ne vivions que *discontinus* (CV,69).

It is this notion of each moment of the self being radically discontinuous with every other which brings Klossowski's thinking very close to that of Gilles Deleuze. In particular this formulation in Le Cercle vicieux recalls the arguments of Différence et répétition (published a year earlier).⁶⁵ Each 'case' of the self is conceived of in terms of durable Identity only within the context of the 'code des signes'. In and for itself it is nothing but a 'cas fortuit' the random product of a combination of

⁶⁵ Différence et répétition, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968). Deleuze explicitly acknowledges the importance of Klossowski's reading of Eternal Return in his discussion of the doctrine linking it to the functioning of the simulacrum : 'Glorifier le règne des simulacres et des reflets. Pierre Klossowski, dans les articles que nous citons précédemment, a bien marqué ce point : l'éternel retour, pris dans son sens strict, signifie que chaque chose n'existe qu'en revenant, copie d'une infinité de copies qui ne laissent pas subsister

'impulsions' which combine together in a certain relation of intensity. The relation of 'impulsion', 'intensité', 'signe' and 'code des signes' is a complex one which will be addressed shortly. What is first important in the context of the discontinuity of successive 'cas fortuits' and the relationship to Deleuze is that each fortuitous moment is singular and relates to the others through difference rather than sameness. Each formation of the self is part of a series of repetitions, where repetition is always repetition of difference and difference is always a repetition; or as Deleuze puts it :

La répétition comme conduite et comme point de vue concerne une singularité inéchangeable, insubstituable. Les reflets, les échos, les doubles, les âmes ne sont pas du domaine de la ressemblance ou de l'équivalence [...] Répéter, c'est se comporter, mais par rapport à quelque chose d'unique ou de singulier, qui n'a pas de semblable ou d'équivalent,⁶⁶

or later :

Quand le corps conjugue de ses points remarquables avec ceux de la vague, il noue le principe d'une répétition qui n'est pas celle du Même, mais qui comprend l'Autre, qui comprend la différence.⁶⁷

Because each instance relates to every other according to the principle of non-equivalence or difference the principle of identity is radically undermined. Each instance (or 'coup de dés' as Deleuze sometimes puts it) is only ever the repetition of difference, of something radically singular. The self as a 'cas fortuit' is a singularity which is never self-identical. As with the body, the illusory cohesion and fixity conferred to it by the 'code des signes' can never displace its fundamental discontinuity with itself. Yet this does not address the relation between 'impulsion' and the sign system of language which allows the illusion of a fixed self to be formed.

d'original ni même d'origine', *Différence et répétition*, p. 92. In this context it should be noted that *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* is dedicated to Deleuze.

⁶⁶ *Différence et répétition*, p. 7.

In this context repetition is what constitutes the possibility of signification in the first place, and it is under the sign of repetition that Klossowski places the relation of 'impulsion', 'intensité' and 'code des signes'. The mouvements of 'impulsions' combine at intervals according to varying 'fluctuations d'intensité' (CV,99). An intensity, as a combination of 'impulsions', has no meaning in and for itself, : 'L'intensité n'a jamais d'autre sens que d'être l'intensité. Il semble que l'intensité n'ait en soi aucun sens' (CV,98). But, asks Klossowski, how does the intensity come to signify :

Comment alors lui vient un sens et comment se constitue le sens dans l'intensité? Mais justement, en revenant sur elle-même, même dans une fluctuation nouvelle! En quoi, se répétant et comme s'imitant, elle devient un signe; (CV,98)

Only in the repeated fluctuations of singular 'impulsional' intensities are sense and sign constituted. Signification subsists only in and through repetition. Meanings and language then become possible because signs become codified, i.e. communicable to the generality of individuals (hence the term 'code des signes quotidiens'). In this process of codification all that is singular and unique to a fluctuation of 'intensité' is lost and the sign is voided of all impulsional energy⁶⁸. Originally, however, meaning only occurs because of the random, fortuitous and insignificant (chaotic) 'afflux' of intensities. No matter how much the 'code' may seek to stabilise and fix meaning it will always be predicated upon the fortuity and non-identity of repetition :

⁶⁷ *Différence et répétition*, p. 35.

⁶⁸ In this context communication and representation are always conceived of in terms of a loss of intensity or energy. Deleuze and Lyotard put forward similar views in papers given at the conference on Nietzsche held at Cerisy-la-salle in 1973; published as Pierre Boudot et al., *Nietzsche aujourd'hui?* (Paris: UGE, 1973). The significance of the bodily metaphor ('métabolisme') in the opening quotation from Nietzsche can now be seen. To translate the rhythms or 'métabolisme' of a language rather than the meaning is to seek to transfer what remains of impulsional intensity into the target language.

nonobstant le signe où culmine la fluctuation d'intensité, la signification, parce qu'elle n'est que par afflux, *ne se dégage jamais absolument* des mouvants abîmes qu'elle recouvre. Toute signification demeure fonction du Chaos générateur de sens (CY,99).

Meaning and identity, no matter how much an illusory coherence is ascribed to them, are always fortuitous and a product of repetition as always the repetition of difference. It is important to outline carefully this theory of meaning (or of the non-meaning of meaning) because it gives the key to the way Klossowski interprets the doctrine of Eternal Return and as will become clear is crucial to Klossowski's 'translation' of Nietzsche.

Eternal Return and the 'signe du Cercle Vicieux'.

This is the second aspect of Klossowski's 'translation' of Nietzsche. He initially formulates Eternal Return on two levels; firstly as a direct experience or a revelation that Nietzsche underwent at Sils-Maria (although as will become clear its status as an 'experience' is problematic) and secondly as the presentation of the doctrine of the 'Cercle Vicieux'. The first level Klossowski speaks of as a moment of the highest intensity or 'la plus haute tonalité de l'âme'. In this moment of revelation the conscious individual apprehends itself as being what it truly is (i.e. a fortuitous moment) through a process of passing through previous instances of self⁶⁹. This moment is fundamentally paradoxical, for how can conscious thought become conscious of its own fortuity when the fact of that fortuity itself undermines the integrity of conscious thought? This, as will become clear, is a paradox which, far from being overcome, is in fact constitutive of the doctrine of

⁶⁹ Klossowski elaborates on this process in most detail in the section headed : 'Oubli et anamnèse dans l'expérience vécue de l'éternel retour du même' (CY,93). As was indicated at the beginning of this chapter this was the paper Klossowski originally gave at the Royaumont

Eternal Return. On the second level Klossowski speaks of Eternal Return as a sign or a doctrine to which the conscious self adheres. If the revelation of Return voids thought of its content (by affirming its fortuity) then it is an experience which is radically incommunicable. Since the illusion of a stable consciousness exists only within language, to destroy the one is equally to abolish the other. The sign of the Vicious Circle is therefore also a paradoxical one for it is a sign which in some way voids itself of its own content as a sign.

On the first level Klossowski draws his description of Eternal Return as a moment of revelation from the imperative that Zarathustra formulates in the aphorisms 'De la Rédemption' and 'D'anciennes et de nouvelles tables'⁷⁰. Zarathustra brings together the possibility of 'vouloir' and of 'nécessité', 'necessity' referring here to the irreversibility of past moments of life (and therefore by implication the necessity of all present and future moments). Zarathustra speaks of the need to

racheter le passé de l'homme et recréer tout "cela fut", jusqu'à ce que dît le vouloir : "Mais ainsi le voulus, ainsi le voudrais!"⁷¹

If the past is irretrievable, then to will it as it was is paradoxically to will necessity - to will that which is beyond will. For Klossowski what happens in this moment, when necessity is willed and every 'It was' becomes a 'I willed it thus and thus would I will it', is that the present conscious self is rendered inactive and the whole preceding series of selves (singular fortuitous instances) is passed through (each a single 'It was'). This whole process is possible because of forgetting and

conference on Nietzsche in 1964. See Martial Meroult ed., *Nietzsche, Cahiers de Royaumont Philosophie, IV* (Paris: Minuit, 1966).

⁷⁰ *Ainsi parla Zarathoustra*, translated by Maurice de Gandillac (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 'De la Rédemption', pp. 175-80, 'D'anciennes et de nouvelles tables', pp. 245-66. It is interesting to note that Gandillac (French translator of the Benjamin essay) explicitly signals in his introduction the use of a mode of translation similar to that suggested by Benjamin.

remembering ('oubli et anamnèse') which are essential to the way Klossowski constructs Eternal Return. Forgetting is crucial to the possibility of a coherent self being able to establish itself through the fixity of the 'code des signes quotidiens'. Because in reality the self is nothing other than a discontinuous series of non-identical and fortuitous instances, any one instance can only establish itself as a coherent consciousness in the forgetting of all the other moments in the series or as Klossowski puts it : 'ma conscience actuelle ne se sera établie que dans l'oubli de mes autres possibles identités' (CV,95). Eternal Return, as a passing through of previous selves, is therefore a forgetting (disactualisation) of the current self, and a remembering of the others each in turn until one returns to the self which first underwent the revelation of Return. To quote at length for the sake of greater clarity, Klossowski articulates this moment as follows :

L'Éternel Retour, nécessité qu'il faut vouloir : seul celui que je suis maintenant peut vouloir cette nécessité de mon retour et de tous les événements qui ont abouti à ce que je suis - pour autant que la volonté ici suppose un sujet; or, ce sujet ne se peut plus vouloir tel qu'il a été jusqu'alors, mais veut toutes les possibilités préalables; car embrassant d'un coup d'œil la nécessité du retour comme loi universelle, je désactualise mon moi actuel à me vouloir dans *tous les autres moi dont la série doit être parcourue* pour que, suivant le mouvement circulaire, je redevienne *ce que je suis à l'instant où je découvre* la loi de l'Éternel Retour (CV,94).

As each past moment is passed through, each past self is rewilled, but rewilled as a necessary instance, as an instance which was not produced itself by a moment of conscious will but as a fortuitous instance, as a singular 'cas fortuit'. This means that when the circle is closed and the revelation returns to the point in the series when the revelation itself occurred something radical happens :

Il ne me reste donc qu'à me re-vouloir moi-même, non plus comme l'aboutissement de ces possibilités préalables, non plus comme une réalisation entre mille, mais comme un moment fortuit dont la fortuité

⁷¹ Ainsi parla Zarathoustra, p. 248, Also sprach Zarathustra, KSA4, p. 249.

même implique la nécessité du retour intégral de toute la série.

Mais se re-vouloir comme un moment fortuit c'est renoncer à être soi-même *une fois pour toutes* : puisque ce n'est pas une fois pour toutes que j'y ai renoncé et qu'il faut le vouloir : et je ne suis pas même ce moment fortuit *une fois pour toutes* si tant est que je doive re-vouloir ce moment *une fois de plus!* (CV,95)

What Eternal Return as a revelation represents is an apprehension of the self in all its separate moments as a series of 'cas fortuits'. It is the revelation of the non-identity of identity and of existence as repetition (in the sense outlined above with reference to Deleuze). The vision of Eternal Return reveals the span of a human life to be nothing other than a repeating series of random dice throws prior to all will and conscious intentionality. The conscious self apprehends its own dissolution as a conscious and fixed self. Again one can see the way that this is an irreducibly paradoxical moment in that consciousness is consciously apprehending the dissolution of its own consciousness. More seriously it thereby renders the status of the revelation as an experience itself paradoxical if not impossible. Indeed how can the experience of Return be an experience at all if, by definition, it lies outside the realm of experience (i.e. that of a thinking self-aware subject)?⁷² The title of the section 'Oubli et anamnèse dans l'expérience vécue de l'éternel retour du même' therefore carries with it a certain irony, firstly because 'l'éternel retour' as an experience is always an impossible experience and secondly because it overturns 'le même' and places experience under the sign of repetition and difference.

It is here that the importance of the construction of Eternal Return on the second level of doctrine or sign (the Vicious Circle) becomes apparent. If Eternal Return lies outside the possibility of language and experience then in fact the process just outlined which Klossowski described as the 'Revelation' of Return is

always already a formulation of the doctrine (since it is being described in language). The parodic aspect of the doctrine of Return now becomes apparent; it is parodic (in the sense developed in the previous section) because it is always describing something which escapes that description, the doctrine of Return can never be coincident with Eternal Return itself. As that which reveals the non-identity of experience it can never be coincident (identical) with anything at all (not even its own revelation). Yet this paradoxical moment still subsists when Klossowski speaks of the Vicious Circle as the Sign of Eternal Return. The Vicious Circle is a sign which voids the identity of whoever speaks it (since it is the apprehension of the self as fortuitous) :

Voici un signe dans lequel moi-même je ne suis rien, que je ne revienne toujours pour rien. Quelle est ma part dans ce mouvement circulaire par rapport auquel je suis incohérent, par rapport à cette pensée si parfaitement cohérente qu'elle m'exclut à *l'instant même* que je la pense? (CV,101)

'I' (as a coherent self-same identity) am nothing in this sign which overturns all identities. Despite this, what is essential about the sign of the Vicious Circle is that it places the entirety of individual experience, of meaning and language, under the law of repetition, non-identity and discontinuity. By existing under the parodic sign of the 'Cercle Vicieux' the nature of existence changes and, although as a conscious self one remains always within the illusion of fixity and coherence, the nature of one's positioning as regards that illusory unity is radically altered :

Sous le signe du *Cercle vicieux*, c'est (indépendamment du vouloir humain) la nature même de l'existence, donc aussi des actes individuels qui se modifie intrinsèquement (CV,106).

Irrespective of one's conscious intentionality existence under the sign of Return changes the very substance of experience. It also, crucially, changes the nature of

⁷² Maurice Blanchot makes this point in his essay on Bataille with respect to 'l'expérience intérieure'. See *L'Entretien infini*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 311.

writing, because again even though one writes from within the perspective of meaning and identity, writing, under the sign of the Vicious Circle, is deployed in such a way as to affirm its own lack of foundation in the random play of 'impulsions' and 'intensités'.

The 'sémiotique impulsionnelle' and fragmentary discourse.

These two aspects of Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche return us to the question of translation with which this discussion began. Klossowski locates in Nietzsche's text an attempt to return writing to the discontinuity of its 'impulsional' foundation and through this to affirm its lack of foundation in the non-identity of repetition. Although, by the very fact of writing, it is not possible to place oneself outside the illusory coherence of meaning, identity and the 'code des signes', one can seek to place discourse in a new relation to 'les intensités pulsionnelles' so that the functioning of the 'code des signes' is in some way interrupted. Discourse, whilst speaking from within the space of self-sameness, must try to affirm its lack of foundation in the absence of self-sameness. The fundamental incoherence which traverses all communication must be strategically gestured towards in order to 'déjouer' the illusory mechanisms of coherence. Klossowski formulates this most explicitly in the 'Note additionnelle sur la sémiotique de Nietzsche' at the end of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux :

Pour que le discours évite de retomber au niveau de la cohérence fallacieuse, il lui faut se contraindre à une pensée qui ne revienne point sur elle-même (soit à l'intellect) dans quelque édifice de pensées subséquentes, mais à une limite où elle mette un *terme à elle-même* (CV,361).

According to Klossowski, Nietzsche attempts to prevent his discourse from asserting itself as self-identical through recourse to the fragmentary structure of the

aphorism. Even though Nietzsche is writing from within the space of coherence (since he is speaking) the aphoristic structure allows him to do so whilst all the time fragmenting that coherence; within this structure, Klossowski claims, 'là même, le recours au code des signes quotidiens se présente comme un exercice à se maintenir continûment discontinu à l'égard de la continuité quotidienne' (CV,102). Eternal Return is, as has been indicated, radically untranslatable into the realm of experience and language since it voids both of all content and significance. To 'translate' Eternal Return is not so much to formulate a doctrine within the codified signs of a given language but rather to deploy writing in a different way. What Nietzsche is attempting to do is to translate one mode of discourse (the coherence of the 'code des signes') into another mode of discourse (the aphoristic structure which asserts its own discontinuity under the sign of the Circle). The second mode Klossowski calls a 'sémiotique impulsionnelle' :

il s'agit non pas de détruire ce que Nietzsche nomme *l'abréviation (de signes) des signes proprement dits - le chiffage des mouvements -*, mais de retraduire la *sémiotique "consciente"* en la *sémiotique impulsionnelle* (CV,81).

Within the aphoristic structure of the 'sémiotique impulsionnelle' the energy which was suppressed in the coherence of the codified sign is re-affirmed. In other words the multiplicity and singularity of 'intensités impulsionnelles' are gestured towards in and through the fragment because, as fragment it asserts the essential division of discourse from itself, its internal multiplicity and lack of self-identity. Eternal Return as the law of repetition finds its 'translation' not because language can speak something which would be equivalent to it, but rather because language can assert its own lack of equivalence with itself. Through the 'sémiotique impulsionnelle'

language can attempt to affirm its own internal disarticulation in a movement of self-fragmentation.

This aspect of Nietzsche's writing is analysed in a similar way by Maurice Blanchot in his essay 'Réflexions sur le nihilisme'⁷³. The fragmented discourse of the aphorism is a way of placing discourse in relation to the fragmentation which lies outside the totality and coherence of language : 'Le fragmentaire ne précède pas le tout, mais se dit en *dehors* du tout et après lui'⁷⁴; 'la parole de fragment', as Blanchot calls it, affirms 'le fragmentaire' (the outside) by virtue of its being :

Parole unique, solitaire, fragmentée, mais, à titre de fragment, déjà complète, entière en ce morcellement et d'un éclat qui ne renvoie à nulle chose éclatée⁷⁵.

This recalls the point that de Man makes with regard to the vessel in Benjamin's essay, namely that the fragment, as fragment, does not refer to any greater unity or whole. So by fracturing the illusory coherence of language from within the aphoristic structure does not signify or make itself equivalent to the law of Return but, as writing under the sign of Vicious Circle, it seeks to repeat the discontinuity of repetition, of an originary (or 'disoriginary') fragmentation : 'L'éternel retour dit le temps comme éternelle répétition, et la parole de fragment répète cette répétition en la destituant de toute éternité'⁷⁶. Translation, here, is therefore occurring, along the lines outlined in the opening section of this discussion. The fragmentary discourse of Nietzsche's text 'translates' Eternal Return not by reproducing the meaning of it (for it is precisely without meaning) but by reproducing its mode of non-meaning. Each fragment, by virtue of its being fragment, resists any articulation of Nietzsche's text into a whole. Fragmentary discourse affirms its own

⁷³ Blanchot, 'Réflexions sur le nihilisme', *L'Entretien infini*, pp. 201-55

⁷⁴ *L'Entretien infini*, p. 229.

⁷⁵ *L'Entretien infini*, p. 229.

'disarticulation' (to use de Man's term) with itself, and this repeats the law of Eternal Return as the repetition of difference⁷⁷.

This provides the key to situating the relationship of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux as a whole in relation to Nietzsche's texts. As a mosaic of fragments both by Nietzsche (the 'Fragments posthumes' (1887-88) and by Klossowski (his commentaries) Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux is written under the sign of the Vicious Circle. By mixing his own fragmented commentary with Nietzsche's aphorisms Klossowski repeats the original disarticulation of Nietzsche's texts and repeats also the internal disarticulation of his own. Within this structure the texts of both Nietzsche and Klossowski are affirmed as non self-identical constructs. Any articulation of the content of Nietzsche's thought on the level of argument or commentary can only be construed of as a parody of Nietzsche (since such discourse is already parodic in Nietzsche's text itself). To draw an 'argument' from Nietzsche's thought involves giving his writing a coherence which falsifies the status of his text (in this way the book, insofar as it is an 'étude', is as Klossowski claims a 'fausse étude' (CV, 11)). It is only on the level of the fragmented overall structure that any relationship Nietzsche-Klossowski can be formulated. But this relationship is a paradoxical relationship of non-relationship based not only on the lack of sameness between one and the other but also on their lack of sameness with themselves.

The conception of translation which de Man and Blanchot derived from Benjamin's essay and which was shown to inform Klossowski's translation of Virgil's Aeneid, can now be seen to inform also the 'translation' of Nietzsche by

⁷⁶ L'Entretien infini, p. 238.

Klossowski and the relationship between the two as it subsists within Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux. The disarticulation of the 'target' language (Klossowski's work) gestures towards the disarticulation of the source language (Nietzsche's fragments). Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux, like Klossowski's L'Énéide, seeks to locate itself within and affirm a space of difference. 'Klossowski' translates 'Nietzsche' by juxtaposing his own discontinuous discourse with that of the 'Fragments posthumes'. The law of repetition and difference as the originary and radical fragmentation which constitutes existence is not articulated within language (except in the parody of Eternal Return as a doctrine) but is repeated by language as the language of the fragment.

So how are we to construe the value of the proper names 'Nietzsche' and 'Klossowski' when talking about the one translating the other in this way? Neither refers to a coherent unity; neither is ever identical with each other or with themselves but rather each is a singular instance which can be applied to any one fragment at any one moment. The referent of the proper names 'Nietzsche' and 'Klossowski' is dispersed within the fragmentary textuality of their works. The fragment, as an affirmation of discontinuity, is an instance of meaning which relates to other fragments as one 'cas fortuit' would relate to another, i.e. through difference rather than identity. The proper names of 'Klossowski' and 'Nietzsche' can be constructed only as 'cas fortuits' within the fragmentary structure of the aphorism, as arbitrary signs which circulate and repeat their own difference from themselves. They may be appended to any instance of discourse, to any one

⁷⁷ Blanchot, like Deleuze, makes it clear that repetition is always the repetition of non-identity or difference : 'L'éternel retour fera pressentir que la différence s'éprouve comme répétition et que la répétition est différence', L'Entretien infini, p. 242.

fragment, but within the textual strategy of Klossowski's or Nietzsche's discourse they do not seek to designate any stable totality⁷⁸.

What this points to is a reassertion of Klossowski's opening comment in Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux that the work is not a work of philosophy but rather something else. Its value as a 'commentary' on Nietzsche lies not in what is said 'on' Nietzsche but in the work's structure which repeats the fragmentation of 'Nietzsche' (both as the person bearing that proper name and as a coherent body of thought), thus parodically repeating the fragmentation of language itself (affirming the law of Return). Yet there remains one final moment of paradox. It must be taken into account that just as this commentary has returned to the words of Klossowski in order to gain a sense of the function of the fragment in his 'relationship' with Nietzsche, so Klossowski returns to the words of Nietzsche in order to construct the fragmentation of a 'sémiotique impulsionnelle' as an affirmative structure. Just as Klossowski's text seeks to dissolve 'Nietzsche' as a point of stable origin which would govern his own text he appeals to Nietzsche in order to derive a textual strategy (fragmentation) which would affirm that dissolution. Klossowski's text returns to the content of Nietzsche's thought in the same moment in which he seeks to dissolve the self-identity of that content and construct it as parodic. His writing is bound up with the explicit substance of Nietzsche's text in the very same moment as he attempts to affirm that explicit content as parodic, arbitrary and fortuitous. In the same way this discussion has returned to what is coherent in Klossowski's text to show the way that text comes to denounce itself as incoherent. One can only make sense of fragmentation as the fracturing of coherence by reading that which

⁷⁸ Derrida makes much of the issue of proper names and translation in his discussion of Benjamin's essay and translation in 'Des tours de Babel'; see Psyché, pp. 203-235.

in the fragments is itself coherent. Klossowski's reading of Nietzsche or the reading of Klossowski being elicited here both relies upon and overturns the authority and foundation of the text being read.

This means that the relationship Nietzsche-Klossowski is one which nevertheless remains within the space of coherence and identity at the same moment that it seeks to construct itself as non-identical in and through the language of fragmentation. 'La parole de fragment', as Blanchot would call it, is never entirely coincident with 'le fragmentaire'; indeed 'la parole' by virtue of being 'parole' excludes 'le fragmentaire' just as the sign of 'le cercle vicieux' can only ever parody and falsify Eternal Return. There is a double logic here which involves an oscillation between two instances : the moment when discourse is fractured by the aphoristic structure, when the proper names 'Klossowski' and 'Nietzsche' are denounced as fortuitous cases under the sign of repetition and difference, and that other moment when such a strategy of self-fracturing is itself articulated from within the language of coherence and sameness. These two mutually exclusive moments are entirely coextensive the one with the other. The instance of fracturing is itself ungraspable and unlocatable. It is the gesture of the text beyond itself, never the text itself which is in the end always subject to the logic of coherence and identity. Klossowski writing on Nietzsche is always affirming two mutually exclusive instances, the identity of the proper name and the non-identity of the proper name, its fortuity, its quality as role or mask.

Klossowski's text is as he himself describes it a 'fausse étude'. It oscillates between fragmentation and cohesion in the same way as the self oscillates in its singular journey through time. The textual strategy of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux affirms the disruptive disindividuating forces of the 'impulsions' but only in a

parodic dissimulating fashion because it also always necessarily affirms the illusory cohesion of the 'code des signes'. The life of the self which is always experienced as coherent and autonomous and yet which is in reality only ever a series of 'cas fortuits' is repeated in the double logic of meaning which structures the 'translations' of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux.

Le Bain de Diane and the mythological image.

Il faut que les images du mythe soient les esprits démoniaques, les gardiens invisibles mais partout présents

Nietzsche - La Naissance de la tragédie⁷⁹.

Klossowski's treatment of myth brings together all the issues raised so far in the preceding discussions of parody and translation. Klossowski's published work includes two essays which deal directly with myth, the first being Le Bain de Diane (1956), which is a series of meditations and variations upon the story of Diana and Actaeon as told by Ovid in the Metamorphoses. Secondly and over a decade later Klossowski published Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines⁸⁰ (1968), an account of the roles of women in the erotic rituals of Roman religious cults which examines the development of these rituals into scenic representations performed away from strictly religious centres of worship.

In what follows I shall be looking at the 1956 work Le Bain de Diane and I will aim to show how Klossowski uses the fable of Diana and Actaeon to articulate what is at stake not only in the mythological image but also in writing more generally. Clearly this has been Klossowski's concern in both his essays on Sade and on Nietzsche but what is most significant about Le Bain de Diane is that Klossowski does not so much comment on Ovid's story but rather retells it in such a way that it undergoes a number of variations. It has been argued that the purely discursive, expository status of the essays on Sade and Nietzsche is undermined by the arguments these essays themselves put forth. Le Bain de Diane is more directly

⁷⁹ La Naissance de la tragédie, translated by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, (Paris: Gallimard : Folio, 1977), p. 133; Die Geburt der Tragödie, KSA1, p. 145.

and immediately already a work of fable and fiction. More than any other work that has been dealt with so far it occupies an ambiguous space between the discursive essay form and the narrative structure of Klossowski's novels. As a meditation upon, but also the retelling and transformation of, a mythical fable, Le Bain de Diane stands at a point of convergence between Klossowski's essayistic commentaries and his fictional output.

In the opening lines of his book Klossowski tells us that the image and story of Ovid has been : 'vulgarisés par les encyclopédies'. Diana, the virgin goddess and huntress, bathing with her nymphs, is espied by Actaeon, hunter and grandson of Cadmus King of Thebes, as he strays from his hunting party. Then, outraged that her nakedness has been seen by a mortal she splashes him with water from her bathing pool upon which he is transformed into a stag and flees. He is found by his hounds and hunting party and torn to pieces, since neither dogs nor comrades are aware of who he really is. The many aspects of this tale have, asserts Klossowski, been 'réduit à la seule vision d'un bain de femmes surprises par un intrus' (**BD**,7)⁸¹.

In retelling this mythical vision Klossowski seeks to restore unto the names of Diana and Actaeon their 'intense éclat' and 'leur sens caché' (**BD**,8). He does this, firstly, by returning Diana to the diversity of her origins as a figure in Greco-Roman mythology and thus to the richness of the symbolism which attaches to her person. Diana is first and foremost the virgin goddess, who demanded of the King of the gods that she be allowed to remain eternally a maiden and never take a lover

⁸⁰ Le Bain de Diane (Paris: Gallimard,1956); reprinted 1986. All references will be to the Gallimard edition prefaced with the abbreviation **BD**. Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines, (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1986).

⁸¹ For Ovid's version of this tale see Ovid, Metamorphoses, translated by Mary Innes, (London: Penguin 1955), pp. 77-80.

nor a spouse. This is what renders Diana exemplary as a mythical figure. A virgin goddess, Diana is also Artemis (her Greek name) but as Artemis she is also Elaphia and Britomartis, goddess of the island of Crete⁸² : 'en Artémis, Elaphia s'assoupit, et Britomartis la douce vierge apparaît au tendre sourire' (**BD**,10). Diana is a figure who, as moon, is by definition always changing and Klossowski suggests that she encompasses many other figures each a transformation or different manifestation of the type of the virgin goddess. Discussing the origins of Artemis in the 'Éclaircissements' at the end of his work Klossowski stresses once again the diversity of sources from which her genealogy can be drawn. Associated closely with the cult of Apollo and Delphi, Artemis is described in the Homeric tradition as being daughter of Zeus and Leto, and sister of Apollo but via Egyptian sources as being the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, and therefore sister of Persephone. She is also at times identified with Persephone herself or at others is the daughter of Persephone and therefore the mother of Eros.

By making the goddess Diana the focal point of his work and by emphasising her diverse origins and many guises Klossowski brings the question of transformation to the fore. In fact transformation occurs on different levels and in different ways throughout Le Bain de Diane. Firstly, Klossowski transforms and retells the story of Diana and Actaeon a number of times on the narrative level. Secondly, within the narrative itself Actaeon is subject to metamorphosis in the moment when he spies Diana and is changed into a stag. Thirdly, as has already been indicated, Klossowski emphasises the way in which the virgin goddess is herself a symbol which is manifested in many different ways. The question of

⁸² For the tale of Britomartis see The Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology, translated by Richard Aldington and Delano Ames, with an introduction by Robert Graves (London:

transformation appears to be at the heart of Klossowski's treatment of myth in Le Bain de Diane.

It is clear why Klossowski should have become interested in the question of myth in general. His engagement with both Nietzsche and psychoanalysis (one must remind oneself that Klossowski began his career publishing in a psychoanalytic review) would have facilitated such an interest, whether it be around the question of Œdipus (in his first article Klossowski discovered an inverse Œdipus complex at work in Sade's writing⁸³) or of Dionysos (a key figure for Nietzsche throughout his work). Yet such an emphasis upon the mythological symbol in its multiple transformations suggests a less obvious point of contact with the issue of myth. That the mythological symbol is multiple and yet seems to be a manifestation of an archetype (the Virgin goddess) raises the question of the relationship of Klossowski's use of myth in Le Bain de Diane to that made of it by C.G. Jung within the context of his general analytical psychology. Although it is not clear whether Klossowski in fact read Jung extensively, there are explicit indications within Le Bain de Diane that he has read some Jung (as will be made clear shortly) and is situating his own work in some relation to the Jungian treatment of myth. More specifically Klossowski's emphasis upon the motif of transformation invites one to draw comparisons and maybe contrasts with the treatment of myth in a text such as Symbols of Transformation⁸⁴. In the first instance Klossowski's central focus on the virgin goddess in her plural manifestations suggests a strong similarity with the Jungian notion of the archetype

Hamlyn, 1968), p. 86. For main account of the story of Artemis, see pp. 120-122.

⁸³ 'Éléments d'une étude psychanalytique sur le marquis de Sade', Revue Française de Psychanalyse, 6 (1933), 458-74.

⁸⁴ Jung, C.G., Symbols of Transformation, Collected Works, vol.5, translated by R.F.C.Hull (London: Routledge, 1956).

and points to some congruence in the way each conceives of myth and the mythological symbol.

In Symbols of Transformation Jung describes the space of Greek mythology as follows :

We move in a world of fantasies which, untroubled by the outward course of things, well up from an inner source to produce an ever-changing succession of plastic or phantasmal forms⁸⁵.

The 'phantasmal forms' of myth vary constantly but only in relation to an 'inner source'. For Jung the mythological image constitutes the basis of unconscious dreams and fantasies. Unlike the Freudian unconscious image the Jungian 'phantasmal form' does not have its basis in childhood sexual trauma. It might appear in childhood more because it is simply less repressed in the unsocialised infantile psyche :

In reality we are concerned with primitive or archaic thought forms, based on instinct, which naturally emerge more clearly in childhood than they do later⁸⁶

The 'inner source' to which the transformations of the mythological symbol have reference within the Jungian context is always a primordial form, a universal unity whose existence is rooted in the shared primal existence of mankind. Klossowski's use of the archetype where the key figure of Diana is also shown to be doubled in the goddesses Artemis, Britomartis and Elaphia is highly suggestive of this Jungian conception of myth.

This relation to Jung is indicated further by an omission in the 'Éclaircissements' at the end of Le Bain de Diane. The 'fond mythique' of the relations between Artemis, Persephone and other manifestations are, Klossowski tells us, recounted in the Koré by Kerenyi in a work entitled Introduction à

l'essence de la mythologie⁸⁷. What Klossowski does not mention in his reference to this work is that it is co-authored with Carl Jung and is very much devoted to the explanation of myth within the Jungian context of primordial archetypal images. In tracking down the various manifestations of the virgin goddess in his essay on the Koré, Kerenyi seeks to establish a relation of identity between them as manifestations of a single primordial image. At different points in his argument he explicitly links various goddesses with each other as embodiments of the same essence; Hecate, Demeter, Persephone, Artemis and Diana and others can, he claims, all be conflated into the same figure :

the Greeks attached the name 'Hecate' to a goddess who united in herself affinities with the moon, a Demetrian nature, and Koré like characteristics - not only those of Persephone but of *Artemis* as well [.....]

Hecate and Artemis, Trivia and Diana are used so often as equivalent names that we cannot regard this as wholly groundless, any more than we can the familiar equation of Persephone with the moon and Diana with Luna⁸⁸.

The daughter as a goddess originally quite independent of her mother is unthinkable; but what is thinkable, as we shall see, is the original identity of mother and daughter⁸⁹.

The equivalence of these names is not wholly groundless, because, Kerenyi would argue, all these goddesses refer back to the same primordial essence. Kerenyi's argument carries with it throughout echoes of the Jungian conception of myth. Indeed myth is described in the opening of Introduction to a Science of Mythology in terms which echo Jung's comments in Symbols of Transformation; it is 'the re-

⁸⁵ Symbols of Transformation, p. 21.

⁸⁶ Symbols of Transformation, pp. 28-9.

⁸⁷ C.G.Jung and K.Kerenyi, Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie, Introduction to a Science of Mythology, translated into English by R.F.C.Hull, (London: Routledge, 1955).

⁸⁸ Introduction to a Science of Mythology, pp. 155-6.

⁸⁹ Introduction to a Science of Mythology, p. 168.

arising of a primordial unity in narrative form⁹⁰. This reference to Kerenyi's work at the end of Le Bain de Diane and the concomitant suppression of any reference to Jung underlines the importance of the Jungian context in elucidating Klossowski's treatment of myth. Up until this point I have emphasised the similarities between the Klossowskian and the Jungian archetype, namely the use of a single figure which is manifested in a plurality of forms. Yet the omission of any reference to Jung is perhaps systematic of crucial differences. Admittedly there are a number of reasons for the suppression of Jung's name. Firstly one might imagine that the generally unsympathetic response to Jung in France together with Jung's Nazi leanings made him not so much of a popular figure to be associated with in the post-war period⁹¹ and that Klossowski therefore thought it judicious to leave his name out even though his treatment of myth was so similar. Secondly Klossowski simply may not have needed to make the reference explicit since the two names Jung and Kerenyi were widely associated with each other in France during the fifties. Thirdly, and perhaps more interestingly, the suppression may be read as a deliberate attempt not to associate his own use of myth and key emphasis on the figure of the virgin with the Jungian notion of archetypes. It is clear that Jung's view of myth as archetype, and the way that such a notion posits the identity and unity of human experience in existence of primordial forms, needs to be differentiated in some way from all that has so far seemed to inform Klossowski's writing (loss of origin, identity etc.). By contrasting Klossowski's use of myth with

⁹⁰ Introduction to a Science of Mythology, p. 7.

⁹¹ The reception of Jung in France has generally been very slight, for whatever reasons. This can be seen by the relatively few and brief references made to the man and his work in Elisabeth Roudinesco's history of psychoanalysis in France, La Bataille de cent ans; see Elisabeth Roudinesco, vol. 2, (Paris: Seuil, 1986).

its Jungian conception, the nature of transformation, and the metamorphosis of the mythological image in the Klossowskian context can be made clear.

Kerenyi describes the 'elemental virginity' of Koré/Persephone/ Artemis etc. not as an anthropomorphic quality but rather as 'a quality of the unadulterated primal element which had given her birth'⁹², again laying the stress on the primordial nature of her essence. For Klossowski, however, the virgin is a figure of key significance because she embodies an irreducible paradox. At this point it is worth recalling the importance of the virgin in Klossowski's 1947 edition of Sade mon prochain. There the figure of the virgin, embodied first and foremost in the character Justine, articulated the dilemma of the 'conscience sadiste'. She acted as a symbol of absolute purity to which the libertine aspired but to which he was at the same time denied access because of the inherent impurity of his desire. The '*image paradoxale de la vierge, objet de possession, qui exclut la possession,*' (SMP47,107) condemned the Sadian hero forever to repeat his cruel acts in the constant frustration of his desire. The virginity of Diana/Artemis offers a repetition and at the same time a modification of this motif. Klossowski describes this virginity as :

Un état d'intégrité basée sur la mort de la virilité extérieure - cette dernière étant suspendue comme une *menace* sur son immortelle intégrité (BD,23).

Once again the stress is laid upon the frustration and failure of 'virilité' but the quality of the virgin's 'intégrité' has altered somewhat. She is no longer a sign of disembodied and transcendent purity in the way it was framed in the section 'Hommage à la vierge' in the first edition of Sade mon prochain. Rather her 'immortelle intégrité' is reformulated to bring it more explicitly into line with

⁹² Introduction to a Science of Mythology, p. 207.

Klossowski's non-Christian 'polytheistic' viewpoint and his post-war reading of Nietzsche.

This repetition of the Sadeian motif of frustrated virility leads one to the way that Klossowski recasts the fable of Diana and Actaeon into what he calls : 'la scène encore inédite de la légende', namely : 'Diane saillie par Actéon, à la tête de cerf (**BD**,31). Actaeon attempting to rape Diana and then dying, torn apart by his hounds, reworks the exasperation of the libertine in Sade mon prochain. In this sense what is again at stake is the impossibility of desire to reach the absolute towards which it is directed. However here, the central encounter of Le Bain de Diane is constructed in the terms of Klossowski's later reading of Sade. Actaeon's attempt to rape Diana embodies a desire which is subordinate to a goal and meaning (and therefore subjected to the world of representation, work and utility) but which at the same time seeks to exceed that state of subordination. Diana, as will become clearer, embodies the principle of 'inutilité', of forces which exist outside of goal, meaning, and representation⁹³. The structure, like that articulated in the 1947 'Hommage à la vierge', is highly paradoxical. Actaeon, in seeking to possess Diana, desires consciously to possess that which is beyond conscious desire. Klossowski reverses this, putting the point of view of Diana when he describes the prey of the hunter goddess :

Le gibier de Diane, ce sont nos propres énergies aveugles domptées par la déesse et consommées par les *énergies laborieuses* : les unes et les autres détournées par la chasse et par le travail sous le prétexte d'un besoin, d'une utilité - "au bénéfice" de la sereine inutilité (**BD**,27).

Just as Sade's hero desired purity and was denied this because of the very impurity of that desire, so the desire of Actaeon, whose goal is to possess Diana violently, is

an impossible one because she represents a principle which, precisely, is without goal ('l'inutilité'). This is why the virginal integrity of Diana entails what Klossowski has called 'la mort de la virilité extérieure' (**BD**,23). The consequence of Actaeon's attempt to possess Diana can only be his destruction as a conscious desiring subject. As has been indicated, the structure of this situation repeats that of the Sadeian libertine as is framed in the later essay 'Le Philosophe scélérat' (in Sade mon prochain 1967). Yet what is more explicitly at stake here in the encounter between Diana and Actaeon is the point of intersection between the world of meaning and representation (as embodied in Actaeon's violent desire), and the world of 'inutilité' which is without goal or sense. This point of intersection was exactly what came into question in the discussion of the way Klossowski 'translates' the Nietzschean experience of Eternal Return in Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux; i.e. how one formulates or consciously seizes an experience which lies outside the possibility of consciousness or conscious formulation. Here it is a question of how Diana, divinity and principle of 'inutilité' is able to appear to Actaeon in the first place, because, embodying such a principle she should be unrepresentable. What interests Klossowski, therefore, in retelling the story of Diana and Actaeon is the way it allows him to specify the exact nature of that point of intersection between the world of human goals, thought and action and the realm of divine uselessness where energy incessantly expends itself without goal or meaning.

In order to appear to Actaeon in the form of a visible image Diana must make a pact with what Klossowski calls 'un démon intermédiaire'. Her 'sereine

⁹³ This, of course, explicitly recalls Klossowski's reworking of Bataille in his later writings on Sade and the economy of transgression which this articulates.

inutilité' can only manifest itself to the world of man via this demon who allows some form of reflection to take place between one world and the other :

Diane pactise avec un démon intermédiaire entre les dieux et les hommes, pour se manifester à Actéon. Par son corps aérien, le démon *simule* Diane dans sa théophanie, et inspire à Actéon le désir et l'espoir insensé de posséder la déesse. Il devient l'imagination d'Actéon et le miroir de Diane (**BD**,46).

As an intermediary between the gods and men the demon becomes an image of Diana in the imagination of Actaeon and allows the goddess to reflect herself as a mythological image within the space of representation. The revelation of the gods, the 'théophanie' of Le Bain de Diane, is nothing without the intermediary demon. But what, exactly, is the nature of this demon? It is interesting here to compare this point of mediation between gods and man with the way Nietzsche constructs the notion of 'le mythe tragique' in his first work Die Geburt der Tragödie. As the opening quotation highlighted, Nietzsche characterises mythological images as 'les esprits démoniaques' which immediately echoes the way Klossowski is formulating them in positing the existence of a 'démon intermédiaire'. For the Nietzsche of Die Geburt der Tragödie tragic myth arises from the possibility of mediation which can occur between the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

The Dionysian in this early context is not the expenditure of energy or the universe of Eternal Return but rather is more closely related to the Schopenhauerian notion of the Will. The Will is at once a primordial unity which underlies and transcends all the manifestations of the phenomenal world but also a constant contradiction and striving of desire. The Apollonian is the world of plastic images, individuation (subjectivity) and representation. The tragic myth mediates between these two worlds by what Nietzsche describes as the quality of 'Gleichnis', which translates into English as allegory or simile, and appears in the French

translation as 'substitut analogique'. 'Gleichnis' founds the possibility of tragic myth (which for Nietzsche is the only true form of myth) because it is a quality of resemblance or analogy that allows Dionysian knowledge to be communicated into the plastic realm of the Apollonian. Nietzsche gives the following definition of tragic myth :

le mythe tragique, c'est-à-dire le mythe qui exprime par substituts analogiques la connaissance dionysiaque.⁹⁴

This possibility of communication and synthesis between the Apollonian and the Dionysian is founded on the privileged position Nietzsche ascribes to music within this Schopenhauerian context⁹⁵. Music, as, according to Schopenhauer, a non-representational form, allows direct access to the Will and therefore to a universal reality. Through music we can have access to the Dionysian and this access allows the mythological image to be 'insufflée' with tragic force :

Entre la validité universelle de la musique et l'auditeur prédisposé à l'émoi dionysiaque, la tragédie installe donc un substitut analogique sublime - le mythe - et de telle sorte qu'elle finit par donner l'impression que la musique n'est que le plus puissant des moyens dont dispose la représentation pour insuffler vie au monde plastique du mythe.⁹⁶

This mediation between the Dionysian and the Apollonian through the universal force of music takes place via the satyr chorus of Greek tragedy. The satyr chorus as mediator between these two worlds founds the possibility of tragic myth. Insofar as it is only the inclusion of the Dionysian element which gives art any universal validity at all, it founds also the possibility of representation in general. In mediating between the two worlds of the Apollonian and the Dionysian it is clear

⁹⁴ La Naissance de la tragédie, p. 100; Die Geburt der Tragödie, **KSA1**, p. 107.

⁹⁵ Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I, 2 vols. (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 321-35.

⁹⁶ La Naissance de la tragédie, pp. 122-23; Die Geburt der Tragödie, **KSA1**, p. 134.

that the 'choeur satyrique' operates in the early Nietzschean formulation of myth as an equivalent of Klossowski's 'démon médiateur' in Le Bain de Diane.

Yet although Nietzsche's emphasis on the satyr chorus as mediator suggests close similarities with the intermediary demon in Le Bain de Diane, there are important differences to be noted which differentiate Klossowski from the early Nietzsche. To begin with the primordial unity of the Dionysian as it appears in La Naissance de la tragédie is not, as has been shown, the world of Eternal Return without 'but', 'sens' or 'utilité' but rather it is the primordial unity of Schopenhauer's will⁹⁷. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the mediation of the satyr chorus allows for some kind of a synthesis or harmony between the Apollonian and the Dionysian which gives art and experience a universality through a recognition of its tragic foundation. This Nietzsche calls the 'dialectique esthétique' of tragedy which he opposes to the 'dialectique socratique' of logical rational thought. One of Nietzsche's aims in La Naissance de la tragédie is to attack the rational dialectic of Socratic thought and the art to which it gives rise. This is because its inherent optimism breaks the ground of tragedy by denying the Dionysian element in experience and thus interrupts the 'dialectique esthétique' which constitutes tragic myth⁹⁸. The satyr chorus is a reliable mediator who grounds the possibility of

⁹⁷ See Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche et la philosophie (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 12-19. In his book on Nietzsche Gilles Deleuze offers an analysis of the difference between La Naissance de la tragédie (which he refers to as L'Origine de la tragédie) and the later works. Deleuze argues that while Nietzsche is concerned in the earlier work to articulate a dialectical relationship between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in his later work he is more concerned with affirming the Dionysian against the Socratic (rational dialectical thinking): 'Car, dès L'Origine de la tragédie, la vraie opposition n'est pas l'opposition toute dialectique de Dionysos et d'Apollon, mais celle, plus profonde, de Dionysos et de Socrate [...] et Socrate n'est pas plus apollinien que dionysiaque', Nietzsche et la philosophie p. 15.

⁹⁸ In his later criticism of La Naissance de la tragédie in Ecce Homo Nietzsche says he detected 'des relents indiscrets d'hégélianisme' in the earlier work; by this he is certainly referring to his 'dialectique esthétique' of the Apollinian and the Dionysian: Ecce Homo, translated by Jean-Claude Hémery (Paris: Gallimard/Folio, 1974), p. 140, Ecce Homo, KSA6, p.310.

representation in and through the communication of the tragic. In Le Bain de Diane, however, the 'démon intermédiaire' who allows Diana to take form in the imagination of Actaeon proves not to be so reliable. Klossowski describes the demons of myth as follows :

les démons sont ou bien médiateurs entre les dieux et les hommes, ou bien - et c'est le cas le plus fréquent - il ne sont que des masques, les mimes qui jouent leur rôle. Dans les deux cas ils simulent les dieux, et parfois, quand ces derniers se sont retirés dans leur impassabilité - qu'en réalité ils ne quittent jamais -, indifférents à ces êtres qui se confondaient un instant avec eux, ces histrions démoniaques continuent à les contrefaire (BD,47-8).

Here Klossowski returns to his interest in simulation, masks and role-playing that has characterised both the way parody was seen to operate in La Vocation suspendue and his description of the Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux as a 'fausse étude'. The reflection that the intermediary demon allows between the divinity of Diana and the world of Actaeon's conscious desires and thoughts is always a simulation. Diana as she appears to Actaeon is only ever a false mask because her principle is always radically beyond the realm of visible appearance. In La Naissance de la tragédie Nietzsche founded representation upon the possibility of mediation between tragic Dionysian knowledge and the security of the Apollonian image. Yet in taking on a false mask to create an image of the goddess Klossowski's intermediary demon creates a different space of representation; one which is neither the eternity of the gods nor the time of thought and reflection, nor even a synthesising and reliable ground between the two.

As has been indicated, Diana's divinity embraces the principle of eternity; her universe is without goal or meaning, one which is radically 'inutile' (recalling Bataille's notion of 'dépense'). Diana's divinity embodies the movements of Eternal Return, of 'intensités', 'impulsions'. This is the movement of repetition as the

repetition of difference, the repetition of an intensity which, being singular, is outside meaning and 'n'a d'autre sens que d'être l'intensité' (CV,98). In Le Bain de Diane Klossowski describes this as 'l'espace absolu du mythe', where the gestures of the goddess are eternally repeated :

Or, dans l'espace absolu du mythe qui est identique à l'essence irréductible des dieux, Diane inscrit l'éternel retour de sa périodicité féminine (le croissant lunaire) et le mouvement d'une progression circulaire (la chasse, le bain, la remontée à l'Olympe, la chasse etc.) (BD,62).

Yet since the images of what Klossowski calls this 'périodicité féminine' (the crescent moon, hunting, bathing) exist as images only via the intermediary demon, this leads to the formulation of two types of mythic space : absolute mythic space, the radical beyond of divinity, and mythic space as we know it, that of demonic images. As an intermediary, the demon :

projette dans l'espace mythique le temps de la réflexion; il récupère ainsi l'espace mythique qui est pour lui le dehors, en espace intérieur ou "mental" (BD,60).

The space of demonic, mythical images results from the projection of temporal thought into the space of the gods and their serene uselessness. Yet the recuperation of the outside into the inside never actually occurs; it is only ever simulated. Diana appears as image but her essence always remains untouched; she is, as Klossowski puts it, forever 'impassible' and Actaeon's attempt to seize her is forever doomed to result in his own destruction. The projection of reflective time into the timelessness of the gods can never subjugate their divinity, it can only seize hold of fragments of image :

le temps ne peut asservir la divinité qui est *une* avec le temps mythique jusque dans sa périodicité; mais par le temps réfléchi, la réflexion asservit les *accidents du corps* que la divinité emprunte (BD,63).

The mythical image is, therefore, always only a fragment. Yet it is a fragment not of some greater primordial unity but rather its relation is one of falseness and simulation to an outside which is always pure difference and singularity. It is now clear that this is very different from the Jungian conception of myth which first appeared to inform Klossowski's use of the virgin goddess archetype in Le Bain de Diane. Klossowski is not interested in positing the original unity and continuity of experience in the existence of primordial forms. On the contrary he is once again specifically interested in asserting the radical discontinuity of the life of the subject, the fact that experience is entirely without foundation. There are no primordial essences or archetypes, no universal striving of the Will, only the fortuitous and chaotic play of energies and forces without 'but' or 'sens' which always subtend the illusory coherence of the conscious subject. If Klossowski suppresses the reference to Jung in Le Bain de Diane it is arguably because his use of the mythological symbol and the view of subjectivity this implies is very different. If Klossowski's use of myth is characterised in this way, in contradistinction to the notion of myth found in Nietzsche's early writing (informed by Schopenhauer) or that found in Kerenyi's Koré (informed by Jung), then one is led back to the question with which this discussion began, namely that of transformation.

Throughout Le Bain de Diane Klossowski describes and redescribes the various aspects and attributes of Diana and Actaeon. He tells, for instance, how Diana received her silver bow and quiver of arrows from the Cyclops Brontes (BD,15-16). He tells of the nature of the bow and the targets of the arrows (BD,20-25)⁹⁹. Also and specifically at the end of Le Bain de Diane Klossowski

⁹⁹ Klossowski goes into some detail in describing the nature of Diana's four targets 'un orme', 'un chêne', 'un fauve', and 'une Cité des méchants' (BD,21). He questions whether these aspects

retells the scene of encounter between goddess and hunter a number of times. In these final scenes the process of destruction of Actaeon and then the rebirth of both protagonists to repeat the scene over again is described (**BD**,83-97). Yet throughout the book, each time it is retold the scene is modified. One aspect reveals itself in one telling, another in a subsequent telling. The tale is at one moment that of Artemis the huntress, at another of Diana the bather; it is of Actaeon the hunter, Actaeon the voyeur, and then as Klossowski introduces the 'scène encore inédite de la légende' it is of Actaeon the rapist. Le Bain de Diane itself is a proliferation of mythological images each a transformation of that which preceded it. Because Actaeon fails in his aspiration to possess Diana the repetition of this fable is a necessity as much as was the repetition of the libertine's violence in Sade mon prochain. The frustration and subsequent destruction of Actaeon is also the motif of his return in the modified retellings of the mythical fable. Diana's principle of divinity always refuses incorporation into the world of man and rejects any subjection to his desires and goals and so man, in the figure of Actaeon, is doomed. He is condemned forever to repeat the mythical moment when his demon reveals divinity to him and he is moved with the impossible desire to seize it. The desire may be impossible but in its flux and reflux the Self always returns to desire once more. Diana's body takes shape over and again and Actaeon goes to his destruction once more, forever unable to speak of or represent the essence of the

of Diana's activity are 'figures qui explicitent l'indicible essence de sa divinité' (**BD**,20). What is important in the context of this discussion is the way Klossowski uses these to multiply the image of Diana. A detailed discussion of Klossowski's comments on Diana's 'arc d'argent' is not possible within this context.

gods which he will forever desire to possess¹⁰⁰. Thus the mythical image repeats itself, each a transformation, each a singular scene of representation.

It is this scenic, visual quality of the mythological image and its transformations which becomes all important for Klossowski because it offers the key to the significance of myth with regard to writing and representation as a whole. Reflecting on the transformations of the divine image he writes :

Les diverses modifications de la pensée divine qui ne sont que pur jeu en soi, sans nulle utilité, si ce n'est la dépense des énergies dans des formes sans cesse renouvelées, sans autre but que de se maintenir hors de tout asservissement à une utilité quelconque, hors d'un asservissement même de la divinité à la divinité, exaltent le mortel hors de sa sphère de servitude, dès que dans la rencontre avec l'homme, ces modifications, ces jeux constituent pour lui un événement à partir duquel sa vie, jusque-là soumise à une nécessité sans figure, s'élève à la légende de pareils jeux : ainsi les dieux ont enseigné aux hommes de se contempler eux-mêmes dans le spectacle comme les dieux se contemplent eux-mêmes dans l'imagination des hommes (BD,44-5).

This lengthy and complicated sentence contains the essence of what has been shown to be at stake in Klossowski's construction of the mythological image so far. The transformations of the mythological image and the key point at which the conscious subject is destroyed offers a moment from which a certain type of experience becomes possible, where the life of man can become mythical, can be raised 'à la légende de pareils jeux'. Man, in the contemplation of his own destruction as exemplified by Actaeon, raises his existence to the level of fable, to the play of the mythological image. Man releases himself from subservience to the laborious world of utility and rational thought, divests himself of the constraints imposed upon his desires by social propriety and the imperatives of commerce and

¹⁰⁰ Ovid's tale itself incorporates the impossibility of Actaeon being able to speak what he has seen. As Diana transforms him with a splash of water she says : 'Now if you can you may tell of how you saw me undressed'. Klossowski incorporates this into his own text : *Nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres Si poteris narrare, licet?* (BD,80), and makes of it the heading of one of its parts.

becomes the spectator of himself. He beholds his own discontinuity in the demonic images of myth, in their repetitions and modifications and in so doing goes to his destruction over and again.

As Nietzsche did in La Naissance de la tragédie, Klossowski uses a specific conception of myth as a point of departure for a practice of writing and representation, and, as in Nietzsche's text, the theatrical, scenic character of representation has a central place. This is clear from Klossowski's treatment of myth in the text Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines. This work charts how the erotic rituals of Roman cults developed into the 'jeux scéniques' which eventually came to be performed outside temples 'dans les cirques et sur les scènes de théâtre'¹⁰¹. The relation between the Roman gods and the myths which are engendered in these scenic representations is the same as was constructed in Le Bain de Diane¹⁰². The constant emphasis throughout this text falls on the way in which the erotic rituals and 'jeux scéniques' of the Roman cults all partake of the 'gratuité' of the gods; they are not subordinated to the utility of the state or of civil society, because as sacrifice to the gods and ritual play they constitute the expenditure of energies without goal or reason. The representation of the gods, exemplified in the tale of Diana and Actaeon, is an attempt to seize a principle beyond the goals of utility and of rational knowledge, and, as such, is always a matter of spectacle. The mythological image offers the key to a practice of writing and representation which is spectacular and scenic. Theatre

¹⁰¹ Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines, p. 67

¹⁰² Speaking of the divinities Klossowski stresses that they :
'exigent des sacrifices et précisément des jeux ; par quoi elles révèlent qu'elles ne sont pas seulement identifiables à la procréation, mais qu'en tant que son principe elles représentent l'existence inépuisable parce que éternelle; éternelle parce que sans but, et donc inutile'
Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines, p. 13.
This text as a whole is very much a reworking of Le Bain de Diane and so will not be dealt with in detail here.

becomes the dominant figure for a mode of representation which seeks to embody the gratuitous beyond of the gods and always fails, collapsing into the repeated production of false and simulated images. In Origines culturelles et mythiques Klossowski speaks of: 'le théâtre qui est la fiction même'¹⁰³; fiction has become theatre, role-play, false mask.

Yet Klossowski's use of the mythological image as a 'point of departure' for an experience of the self and for a practice of writing and representation involves, as one might now expect, a play of paradox. What the mythological image tells us is, precisely, that there is no point of departure, no originary moment or primordial unity which could found the life of the conscious self. Fiction, as the moment when man contemplates the gratuitous play of the gods and raises himself 'à la légende de pareils jeux' (**BD**,45), is founded as theatre and spectacle in the impossibility of possessing the gods. Diana as the virgin goddess offers a key image of this founding impossibility. Her virginity, which both inspires and denies possession, is what necessitates the repetition of images as always the repetition of false images. Yet this is a foundation which is without foundation, because since Diana is herself a mythological image, she is herself a false image, an image which articulates the failure of any foundation at all. The founding impossibility is also an impossible foundation. The virginity of Diana is a key sign not because it is an archetypal essence but rather because it figures this foundation without foundation, this moment from which the discontinuous existence of man can be affirmed in the spectacular contemplation of demonic images. This is the crucial point, namely that the scene of Diana and Actaeon is itself a mythological image and therefore it is nothing other than a false demon. Le Bain de Diane, as myth, is part of 'une vaste

¹⁰³ Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines, p. 54.

entreprise d'imposture démoniaque'¹⁰⁴; it speaks to us of writing as spectacle but it is always itself only ever spectacle, simulation, demonic image.

Parody, translation, myth - figures of the outside.

What Klossowski's various writings around Nietzsche have revealed is the essential falsification which lies at the heart of existence, thought, and writing. It has become clear that what parody, translation and myth all have in common is this quality of falsification, which ultimately makes them figures of the same moment : that point of intersection between the inside of thought and the outside of singularity and difference, that moment when thought seeks to exceed itself and becomes the spectacle of falsified images. Yet the term 'falsity', even though Klossowski himself uses it (describing Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux as a 'fausse étude') is problematic within this context to the extent that it would appear necessarily to imply its opposite : truth. Likewise all of the three motifs dealt with in this discussion imply antithetical structures. A parody of something normally exists in opposition to an authentic act or moment which it parodies; a translation is normally a translation of an original text and myth normally appeals to an originary unified moment in opposition to the multiplicity of our everyday experience (as the discussion of Jung showed). Yet, while Klossowski maintains these oppositional structures, he does so to destroy the very norms on which they depend. What has been shown though is that in all cases these motifs are deployed in such a way as to reveal the oppositions which structure their meaning as artificial and unfounded. What parody, translation and myth affirm in Klossowski's writing is the loss of a point of origin or foundation which would allow oppositions to

¹⁰⁴ Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines, p. 69.

function in the conventional way. In Klossowski's texts parody operates in such a way that everything is 'always already' infected with parody; translation is no longer based upon the principle of equivalence, it does not imply self-same original and copy but rather affirms the decentring and the difference of both 'original' and 'copy' from themselves (so that the whole notion of original and copy must be abandoned). Likewise myth is always 'une vaste entreprise d'imposture démoniaque', the repeated transformations of radically discontinuous images. The traditional structures of all these motifs have been displaced so that they no longer function as oppositions which imply or affirm an original moment of origin or authenticity.

They all figure or affirm a space which is exterior to that of language where the oppositions of truth/falsity, original/copy etc. operate. Yet, at the same time, by referring to this space as an 'outside', what these motifs are trying to figure is the fact that the 'outside' always already inhabits the inside, that there is no proper opposition between the two. The 'inside' of thought and identity with all its antithetical structures which give the self its stability and coherence is only ever an illusion. It is an illusion because the oppositions which structure thought have no foundation other than in the arbitrary grammatical forms which constitute them. The antithetical structures of language are always suspended above the moving chaos of fortuitous intensities which constitute human existence. These intensities are radically incoherent and discontinuous, without meaning or end. Yet knowing this brings one no nearer to being able to escape the structures of thought and meaning. So 'inutilité' can only be figured through the space of 'utilité', difference through that of identity, singularity through that of sameness. Language always falsifies and the figures of the outside can only ever be falsifications as they seek to

speak of truth of language. Parody, translation and myth are oppositional structures whose traditional meaning is modified so that they gesture towards a space beyond oppositional structures. They become figures of non-meaning, forms of coherence which speak of incoherence.

All these motifs can never properly encompass that which they are attempting to articulate. This shift in the way they are used can only ever simulate an experience or truth which by their very nature they exclude. Whilst always implying an oppositional structure the denounce oppositional structures. Like Klossowski's commentaries on Nietzsche they are bound by a double logic whereby as forms of meaning they pronounce meaning itself to be without foundation.

By the same token these three motifs also perform that which they speak about. They speak of an inability to seize the 'outside' and are themselves unable to do so. As terms which theorise language as simulation, as non-self-identical, as both spectacle and theatre, all three always simulate and are never identical with the experience they seek to speak of. Thus they are always also a performance of that which they theorise. Language becomes theatre in the moment when it realises that it is without foundation and then seeks to affirm that lack of foundation. Writing becomes spectacle when the thinking subject seeks to seize hold of the fundamental discontinuity which subtends all human existence and in so doing is led to self-destruction.

Once again this is clearly a repetition of the key moment in Klossowski's writings on Sade. What has become clearer here, however, is this notion of writing as theatre. As was indicated at the beginning of the discussion on myth, Le Bain de Diane occupies an ambiguous space between the fictional and the essayistic, insofar as it involves the telling of a story which tells of the nature of story-telling. Yet

insofar as it lays the emphasis on the spectacular character of writing in general it shows us once more, and more clearly than before, that Klossowski is only ever writing theatre. In this sense any traditional distinction that could be drawn between a theoretical, analytical or philosophical discourse on the one hand and a fictional narrative mode on the other is rendered inoperative. Likewise any distinction between commentary and original text also becomes untenable. Textuality and discourse, once they have been deprived of any reference to Truth or to an 'authentic' original, become the repeated transformation and performance of an always singular scene of writing. Any hierarchy or division one might seek to establish between the essays of Un si funeste désir for example, Le Bain de Diane and La Vocation suspendue is purely arbitrary, for all of them turn around that paradoxical moment where language seeks to grasp that which lies outside or beyond itself and where its own lack of foundation is affirmed. There can be no distinction between discourse of 'Truth' or 'theory' on the one hand and discourse of 'fiction' or 'practice' on the other because all of these different writings are simulated images whether it be the image of Sade's hero slaying his victim, of the fresco in La Vocation suspendue or of Nietzsche experiencing the revelation of return in Sils-Maria. Language itself has become the scene upon which sundry false masks ceaselessly circulate : Sade, Nietzsche, Diana and Actaeon and, of course, Klossowski himself.

CHAPTER III - ROBERTE.

Ces dessins étaient en dehors de tout; ils sautaient, pour la plupart, par-dessus les bornes de la peinture, innovaient un fantastique très spécial, un fantastique de maladie et de délire.

Huysmans - A Rebours¹

ON WRITING AND PAINTING 'LE PHANTASME'.

Octave, the ageing, perverse theologian of Les Lois de l'hospitalité, is a collector of offensive and sexually indecent paintings. The canvases of the little known nineteenth-century painter Frédéric de Tonnerre will not, he believes, be to everyone's taste. Indeed Octave is tempted to think of his collection as 'inexposable'. Better, he remarks, that the authorities should do what they do best, that, is censor such material : 'Au demeurant, j'approuvais de tout cœur à la sage rigueur des responsables de l'ordre, au souci qu'ils ont de soustraire pareille exhibition plastique aux regards des jeunes gens, surtout à la foule! quitte aux amateurs avisés de s'en réserver la jouissance exclusive'².

Octave's concern about his Tonnerre collection could easily be applied to Klossowski's creative output as a whole. This is particularly so when one realises that the works of the fictional Tonnerre are in fact paintings by Klossowski himself. 'La

¹ Huysmans, A Rebours (Paris: Fasquelle, 1961), p. 95.

² Pierre Klossowski, Les Lois de l'hospitalité (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 83. This collects, together with an unpublished preface and postface, the following works : La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes (Paris: Minuit, 1959), Roberte ce Soir (Paris: Minuit, 1954) and Le Souffleur (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1960). All these works remain unchanged in the collected edition. All references to the novels of Les Lois de l'Hospitalité will be to this edition giving the page number and prefaced by the abbreviation LH.

Belle Versaillaise' as it is described by Octave towards the end of La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes³ resembles, down to the smallest detail, the painting of the same name signed by Klossowski. This resemblance allows one to pose similar questions about Klossowski's oeuvre as Octave does about that of Tonnerre. Should our response as commentators and critics be like that of the authorities or 'responsables de l'ordre' (LH,83) as Octave calls them. Should it be our business to censure Klossowski's perverse taste for portraying female figures as they submit to violent possession by sundry male protagonists? Should we censor his work by banishing it to the dungeon of literary pornography where Sade's novels have languished for the better part of their life, to a domain where only a select few will enjoy them for their own singular purposes?

This, of course, would be the effort of any moral or sexual political reading of Klossowski's work, one which might seek to condemn it simply because it is obscene, or in a more complex way because it may be deemed to position the female body as an object of possession beneath a masculine gaze⁴. What the ensuing chapters will argue is that the manner in which Klossowski stages such scenes of sexual violence itself seeks to problematise the very same questions of appropriation in language which inform any sexual political critique of his representation of the female body. I shall attempt to argue that Klossowski's concern with overturning fixed subject positions and denouncing identity as arbitrary is also a denunciation of all the appropriative

³ Hereafter referred to as La Révocation.

⁴ Anne-Marie Dardigna's book is a key example of a rather hostile response to Klossowski's work from a feminist perspective and will be discussed in detail later; Anne Marie Dardigna, Les Châteaux d'Éros (Paris: Maspero, 1980). Her second book is far more sympathetic to

gestures one might ascribe to a properly 'masculine gaze'. At the same time Klossowski seeks to overturn or call into question all fixed positions from which rational or moral judgements might be made. Klossowski's readings of Sade and Nietzsche show that his interest in perversion or what he calls 'les constructions mentales ou plastiques relevant immédiatement de la pathologie'⁵ lies in the possibility of such constructions being able to contest all moral or rational norms. The contestatory force of his work implies an attempt to overturn normative values in the way that was outlined in the essay 'Le Philosophe scélérat'. These are the very values one must bring to bear in order to judge his work from the perspective of any moral or political standpoint (since a judgement for or against a work on moral or political terms implies a series of rational norms and principles).

This question of sexual politics brings one to the heart of a debate surrounding the status of the transgressive text in the work of diverse French authors from Bataille to Robbe-Grillet and literary movements from the surrealists to Tel Quel. Broadly speaking all these writers or groups could be said to view the representation of forbidden sexuality as a force which is subversive of social structures or norms⁶. This question of sexuality and subversion has already been discussed in the first chapter in relation to the writings of Sade and his appropriation by the surrealists, Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski. The most critical responses to all those writing from within this broad perspective turn on the question of whether the 'morally subversive'

Klossowski's project insofar as she identifies him as a key modern thinker of 'le discontinu';

Anne Marie Lugan-Dardigna, Klossowski, l'homme aux simulacres (Paris: Navarin, 1986).

⁵ Pierre Klossowski, 'Protase et apodose', in L'Arc, 43 (1970), 9.

gestures of their texts do not, ultimately, affirm the sovereignty of a traditional male subject and, in particular, a traditional male appropriation of the female body⁷. In what follows I will seek to problematise such judgements in relation to Klossowski's fictional writings by investigating the difficulty of any attempt to position a stable, appropriating or appropriated subject within the texts themselves. I will argue that such an attempt must negotiate the kind of complexities and paradoxes which have been seen to inform Klossowski's analyses of Sade and Nietzsche. These complexities and paradoxes render any reading of his writing which does seek to identify a stable masculine subjectivity at work in his texts problematic from the outset. Klossowski's promotion of 'perversion' does not mean that his writing seeks to be 'morally subversive' through a simple and straightforward representation of forbidden sexuality. Rather it seeks to ironise or interrupt the very activity of representation itself, to suspend that movement of meaning through which one subject can appropriate, objectify and enslave another. In the earlier discussion of Klossowski's Le Philosophe scélérat it was shown that the transgressive force of the Sadeian text lay, not in the overturning of the taboo or limit, but rather in the paradoxical play of a text which sought, impossibly, to overturn those norms upon which it depended for its existence. It is this impossibility or paradox of trying to write beyond the limit (from within the limit) which characterises Klossowski's novels also and which distinguish them from a

⁶ For a historical overview of the Tel Quel group see Patrick Ffrench, The Time of Theory : A History of Tel Quel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). See also Alain Robbe-Grillet, Projet pour une Révolution à New York (Paris: Minuit, 1973).

⁷ Two key texts in this debate are Susan Suleiman, Subversive Intent (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), and with reference to Klossowski in particular, Anne Marie Lugin-Dardigna's Les Châteaux d'Éros. See also Nicholas Harrison, Circles of Censorship : Censorship and its Metaphors in French History, Literature, and Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

text which, whilst attempting to be subversive, nevertheless affirms the sovereignty of a traditional male subject.

Two figures dominate Klossowski's writing, that of 'La Femme de trente ans' and that of the male youth or 'adolescent'⁸. Roberte in Les Lois de l'hospitalité⁹ and Diana the goddess of Le Bain de Diane are manifestations of the former and have a central place in Klossowski's work throughout the fifties and very early sixties. Antoine the nephew of Les Lois and Ogier of Le Baphomet and L'Adolescent Immortel embody the latter. The figure of the adolescent remains dominant in both Klossowski's writing and painting from the publication of Le Baphomet in 1965 onwards¹⁰. Klossowski's obsessive repetition of these figures in both pictural and written form provide a context in which to discuss his novels in relation to his paintings.

Klossowski writes of Actaeon's vision in Le Bain de Diane : 'le Bain de Diane est au-dehors : Actéon pour le découvrir, n'a point à le situer en tel ou tel endroit, mais doit sortir de son propre esprit; alors ce que voit Actéon se produit *au-delà* de la naissance de toute parole : il voit Diane se baignant et il ne peut dire ce qu'il voit'¹¹. Klossowski, like Actaeon, is a man of visions; visions of Diana, visions of Roberte, visions of Ogier. Indeed, he has made the comment that before he ever set pen to paper, pencil or crayon to canvas, he 'saw' the scenes depicted in his novels, drawings

⁸ 'La Femme de Trente ans' is, of course, a classic figure from nineteenth-century French literature (e.g. a number of figures from Balzac's novels, the central character of the novel La Femme de trente ans itself or for instance Mme Arnoux in Flaubert's L'Éducation sentimentale).

⁹ Hereafter referred to as Les Lois.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the figure of the adolescent between Klossowski himself and Alain Jouffroy see Klossowski/Jouffroy, Le Secret Pouvoir du sens, (Paris: Écriture, 1994), pp. 23-56.

¹¹ Le Bain de Diane, pp. 68-9.

or paintings. This poses an important question of whether one can speak of a hierarchy between Klossowski's use of visual and written forms of expression. If Klossowski, like Actaeon, cannot speak what he sees, is a painting a more immediate or 'authentic' expression of his vision? Indeed, given the apparent inadequacy of language to convey the singularity of certain incommunicable moments (Sade's perversion or Nietzsche's experience of Return), one may wonder to what extent vision itself takes on a central and primary role in the whole of Klossowski's œuvre.

It may be remembered that this impossibility for language or conventional signs to express certain singular moments of experience (or non-experience) was central to Klossowski's writings on both Sade and Nietzsche. It founded (in its paradoxical absence of foundation) the force attributed to the motifs of parody, translation and myth as they were discussed in the last chapter. Such an impossibility gives force also to the term 'simulacre' which will provide the central focus for much of the ensuing discussion¹². The term simulacrum describes an image which both simulates, dissimulates and proclaims its own difference from itself¹³. Even though this term has

¹² Klossowski explains what he understands by this term on many occasions, most particularly at the end of *Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines* (in relation to Augustine's discussion of 'theologica theatrica' (Varro)), in *Le Bain de Diane*, at the end of *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* but also in the essays 'A propos du simulacre dans la communication de Georges Bataille', *Critique* (August-September 1963), 742-50, and 'Protase et apodose', *L'Arc*, 43 (1970), 8-20 (Incorporating 'Du caractère incommunicable des lois de l'hospitalité' and 'De l'usage des stéréotypes et de la censure exercée par la syntaxe classique'). Both these articles are reproduced in the volume *La Ressemblance* (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1984), pp. 21-3 and pp. 9-19 respectively.

¹³ For a discussion of the 'simulacre' in Klossowski's work and the relation of this term to Plato's thought see Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 292-307. Deleuze describes the simulacrum in the following terms: 'Le simulacre est construit sur une disparité, sur une différence, il intériorise une dissimilitude. C'est pourquoi nous ne pourrions même plus le définir par rapport au modèle qui s'impose aux copies, modèle dont dérive la ressemblance des copies. Si le simulacre a encore un modèle, c'est un autre modèle, un modèle de l'Autre dont découle une dissemblance intériorisée', *Logique du sens*, p. 297. Deleuze goes on to add 'Le simulacre inclut en soi le point de vue différentiel; l'observateur fait partie du simulacre lui-

not been alluded to so far throughout the previous chapters, when talking about Sade writing perversion, about parody, translation or myth it has always also been the status of the 'simulacrum' which has been at stake. This is true also for both Klossowski's painting and writing in general.

In a text published recently in a collection of interviews with Alain Jouffroy, Le Secret Pouvoir du sens¹⁴ Klossowski gives a brief definition of the term :

Par simulacre, je n'entends pas, comme on l'a cru ou compris de façon malveillante, un *tableau simulé*, mais le tableau simulant matériellement une vision intérieure, donc intime et moralement éprouvée (le phantasme), soit la contrainte qu'elle exerce et ainsi extériorisée selon les règles traditionnelles de l'image.

It is interesting firstly to note that Klossowski applies the term simulacrum to both his writing and painting. Any attempt, therefore, to see the painting as more immediate an expression of Klossowski's visions is highly problematic since the painted and the written image both comply to the constraints of 'règles traditionnelles'. Both painting and writing seek to represent this 'vision intérieure'. Yet neither represent it in any direct or immediate way; they only ever simulate it. Whereas representation implies the creation of an image or copy of an originary moment of vision, simulation implies that the image produced always incorporates its difference from what it seeks to represent it always affirms itself as a bad or unfaithful copy. The remaining three sections of this thesis will investigate the passage from 'le phantasme' (an interior vision) to the

même, qui se forme et se déforme avec son point de vue', Logique du sens, p. 298. This formulation is very close to Klossowski's (his close relationship to Deleuze was revealed in the last chapter) and is particularly important insofar as it alludes to the functioning of the simulacrum and the position of the subject (as part of the simulacrum). The 'meaning' of the simulacrum in relation to Klossowski's writing and painting will be highlighted as this chapter progresses.

¹⁴ Le Secret Pouvoir du sens, pp. 58-60. This text was a written response to a conversation Klossowski had previously had with Jouffroy.

simulacrum (an artefact or work of art) as a movement of 'simulation' which is proper to both Klossowski's fiction and his painting. In the first of these I will discuss Klossowski's attempt to write 'le phantasme' in La Révocation and Roberte ce soir¹⁵. In the second the very notion of 'le phantasme' as visual or as a moment of vision will be examined (in relation to Klossowski's painting). At the same time the question of the primacy of 'vision' (and therefore also the primacy of visual art over written word) will be posed. In the third section the singularity of the 'phantasme' will be investigated more closely within the context of Klossowski's discourse around economy or exchange. Octave's conception of 'Les Lois de l'hospitalité' and Klossowski's will provide the focus for this final discussion.

Throughout, this passage from 'le phantasme' to 'le simulacre' as it is constructed in Klossowski's work will be discussed alongside the issues alluded to earlier. His novels and paintings, as they obsessively simulate 'le phantasme' in a movement apparently without end, continue to provoke the considerations with which this discussion began. As the reader witnesses Roberte taken roughly from behind, resisting and then succumbing pleasurably to her possessor, should he or she not feel some discomfort? Will *she* quite rightly have more reserves in overcoming this response than he might? Negotiating such potential discomfort alongside the paradoxes and aporias of Klossowski's artistic enterprise will occupy the remainder of this thesis.

¹⁵ This focus on the figure of Roberte rather than that of the 'adolescent' will mean that Le Baphomet and L'Adolescent immortel will not be discussed here. In focusing on the terms 'phantasme' and 'simulacre' and the relation between the two, it is necessary to concentrate on either one figure or the other rather than both and that, broadly speaking, the same issues are at stake in both Les Lois de l'hospitalité and Le Baphomet.

Writing.

La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes and Roberte ce soir offer their reader an alternation between familiar and extremely unfamiliar settings. The narrative begins in a Parisian household where the ageing Octave and his wife dwell along with their nephew Antoine. Guests are invited into the household to tutor the young adolescent. In her diary Roberte remembers the latter days of the Second World War which she spent in Rome. In his diary Octave muses upon his Tonnerre collection and upon his strange domestic custom - 'Les lois de l'hospitalité'. Through this unusual custom the unfamiliar comes to inhabit the text. Octave's complex formulation of 'Les lois de l'hospitalité' will be addressed in more detail later. In its simplest form, however, it expresses his desire, in the name of hospitality, to offer Roberte up to guests of his house for the purposes of sexual encounter. The Parisian dwelling, the cellar of a Paris boutique or the interior of a Roman church all become unfamiliar with the sudden emergence of fantastic or improbable figures who begin to engage Roberte in all manner of sexual caresses.

If these scenes of sexual encounter introduce the unfamiliar into the text, they are also potentially disturbing. This potential manifests itself because, as has already been indicated, Roberte is not a willing sexual partner. In all these encounters Roberte is subject to the violence of constraint. In the opening scene of La Révocation, the 'scène de la grave offense' (LH, 17-20), Roberte enters a church in Rome on an errand to recover a list of Jewish refugees hidden in a tabernacle (a task which, we learn later, was given to her by a hospitalised Nazi officer). As she removes the paper from the tabernacle three knocks of a halberd upon the floor announce the approach of a giant

figure in the costume of a Swiss Guard. At the same time two hands, identical to her own, emerge from the tabernacle, seize and immobilise her. The giant figure traps her body between himself and the altar. One of Roberte's hands, having been covered with a fine cream by the pair of hands which emerged from the tabernacle, is then seized and pressed onto a page of the Bible. The giant figure, still pressing Roberte up against the altar, then sprinkles carbon dust over the page to bring her hand-print into relief. The giant figure turns Roberte around to look at her face and body as she describes herself 'serrée dans ma gaine, les épaules, les bras et les cuisses nus', turns her around again and comments '«De dos, vous faites encore mieux que de face...»' (LH,20) and on that ominous note, which implies that her sexual encounter is by no means finished, the scene ends.

The sexual violence done to Roberte is repeated throughout a number of episodes in the trilogy of novels. Later in La Révocation she is forced into a cellar by another giant figure (the same?) and a squat dwarf-like character, attached to a set of gymnastic parallel bars with handcuffs, and has her hands licked (LH,40-5). In the central scene of Roberte ce soir (LH,137-47) the heroine has her genitals licked by a hunchbacked, spaniel headed dwarf, and once more is sexually assaulted by a giant figure in a scene where sexual organs (including an extended and erect clitoris) are described using Latin words ('utrumsit' for vagina, 'quidest' for clitoris and 'vacuum' for anus(LH,145-7)).

These are just three examples of the sexual scenes in Les Lois de l'hospitalité, but even such a brief outline suggests that these key moments of the text are at once bizarre and disturbing. They are potentially disturbing because they portray what

amounts to sexual assault or rape and this in turn raises ethical or sexual political questions with regard to the portrayal of the female body. One might ask, for instance whether it is desirable to portray the assault of a woman who, whilst initially showing resistance, then succumbs willingly to her aggressor and whether this is not an unfortunate repetition of certain violent male fantasies. At the same time, however, the very bizarre nature of these scenes (e.g. the theatricality of a Swiss Guard's costume, the focus on unusual hand fetishism and the parodic use of Latin words) render them very different from anything resembling pornography or titillating prose which would stimulate or otherwise repeat nefarious sexual fantasies. Should the reader respond as *Roberte* does when she spies the Swiss Guard's costume in the 'scène de la grave offense' and says 'A peine eus-je reconnu en lui un suisse pontifical que tout sentiment de sérieux m'abandonna' (*LH*, 19)? These scenes should not perhaps be taken seriously but be viewed only as parody or pantomime where 'la parole n'est plus qu'une incarnation de la trahison et les mouvements de la chair la pantomime des esprits' (*LH*, 144). What follows will analyse the difficulty of situating these scenes as scenes of fantasy to which any stable or gendered subject can be attributed and argue that it is precisely their theatrical and parodic character and their status as pantomime which undermines or displaces the violence which one normally associates with pornography (e.g. the reification of the female body for the benefit of a male gaze).

It soon becomes clear on closer reading that the status of these scenes of erotic encounter is unclear. For instance, there is no straightforward indication within the text of the relation of such scenes and their fantastical protagonists to *Octave's* 'Lois de l'hospitalité'. The reader is more often than not given no clues at all as to the

identity of these figures. One is not sure whether they are constructed within the text as Octave's projections, or whether they can be attributed to Klossowski's own unconscious (and distinctively masculine) desire. That they entail the sudden eruption of the unfamiliar and the fantastic into the settings of La Révocation and Roberte ce soir suggests, perhaps, an implicit reference to Freud and to his concept of the Uncanny. This might suggest, then, that these are scenes of sexual fantasy in a traditional psychoanalytic sense in which the images and symbols can be interpreted in such a way that one might eventually be able to construct a subject of the fantasy and analyse therein the forces of desire which are at work.

It is evident from the discussion of Klossowski's writing around Nietzsche that in a universe which has become fable distinctions between reality and fiction or reality and fantasy are suspended and no longer function as they would in an existence which has as its foundation 'le monde vrai'. In a universe become fable, one which is itself a form of narrative, the very concept of 'reality principle' (which gives the term fantasy its force) must be abandoned along with the classical philosophical distinction between the 'real' and the 'apparent'. This became most evident during the discussion of La Vocation suspendue. The narrative structure of this text, and the play of parody to which it gives rise, articulated a fundamental break within language. The language of the narrative no longer 'referred' to a real world or commented on a real book but revealed itself to be the repetition of an always already absent moment. The commentary which was only ever a commentary of a commentary staged the loss of that originary moment which would allow the text to coincide with an authentic 'real' (or even itself). As the various motifs associated with the fresco referred the one to the

other within the text (in a movement seemingly without end) and the spheres of the artistic and the theological were collapsed in the figure of the painter/priest, any moment where the text might transcend itself and attain Truth was shown to be infinitely deferred.

The same process of textual disorigination structures the narratives of La Révocation and Roberte ce soir. As in La Vocation suspendue, reference is made to a real historical context (that of the Second World War) and to real geographical spaces (occupied France, Paris, Rome). At the same time, as in La Vocation suspendue, the narrative also constantly suggests its own ever-present textuality. In Roberte ce soir there is reference to a work seemingly very similar to Roberte ce soir itself, entitled Tacita, le colosse et le bossu and authored by Octave. Does Tacita refer, then, to another work within its pages which would be similar yet different to both Roberte ce soir and Tacita (and does that work refer to another similar work and so on ad infinitum)?

This infinite regression from work of art to work of art is suggested in a different way by Octave in La Révocation through his discussions of painting, his references to Frédéric de Tonnerre and to the question of the *tableau vivant*. The *tableau vivant*, as it is discussed by Octave in the opening pages of his diary, calls into question the notion of origin in much the same way as did the existence of the fresco in La Vocation suspendue. It will be recalled that a figure in the fresco, which represented a Carmelite sister on her death bed, had as its model a photograph from the Spanish civil war. This photograph depicted the desecration of a dead nun whose body had been dug up in Barcelona by anarchists. In turn this photograph proved to be

a fake, a tableau arranged by the painter Malagrida, the dead nun being represented by the live nun of the novel Sister Théophile (who modelled for the painting before she ever became a nun). What appeared to be a representation of a specific event (the moment of revelation depicted in the fresco) was shown to be caught up in a chain of substitutes and false copies without any reference to an authentic originary moment. The same is true of sexual scenes of Les Lois de l'hospitalité.

These scenes are sometimes events narrated in either Octave's or Roberte's diaries, at others they are descriptions given by Octave of a Tonnerre canvas (e.g. La Belle Versaillaise). It is difficult however to distinguish properly between the two. Tonnerre's La Belle Versaillaise, which depicts a woman of some social standing being sexually attacked by two young communards is described in detail by Octave in one of his diary entries (LH,80-3). On first glance this episode seems to be a straightforward description of a painting. However there are certain indicators in the text which render this judgement problematic. Octave asks at one point with reference to the detail of his description 'Me dira-t-on que je fais ici de la petite histoire, que je rêve à haute voix, j'attirerai l'attention de l'amateur désabusé sur le rapport remarquable ici entre la mimique des mains et la facture du visage de la dame' (LH,82). Octave is refuting that his description is simply a 'rêverie' but nonetheless suggests the possibility. He does this again later when he remarks 'Ne serait-ce pas déjà un risque suffisant pour ma propre description , si elle ne s'appuyait sur la réalité matérielle du tableau, qu'elle laissât transpirer une rêverie morbide' (LH,83). Once again whilst insisting on the material existence of the painting Octave is opening up the possibility that his description is not that of an objective reality. The similarity between the scene Octave

describes from the Tonnerre painting (or his own 'rêverie morbide?') and the other scenes of La Révocation (there is a scene where Roberte is again engaged sexually by two adolescents, that of the Collégiens which will be discussed later) once again poses this question of origin. Perhaps Octave is interpreting La Belle Versaillaise through his own predilections and obsessions and perhaps also the scenes of sexual fantasy are projections of this. By the same token Octave would be the 'origin' of all these episodes insofar as they are productions of his own conscious or unconscious desires.

Yet Octave's discussion of the *tableau vivant* at the beginning of his diary immediately throws such judgements into doubt. He describes the *tableau vivant* as 'ce genre faux en soi' (LH,16) which contrary to what its name implies never represents a moment of real presence. Octave goes on to ask 'N'y a-t-il pas toujours "tableau vivant" au préalable, là où il y a tableau? Oui et non! Mentalement chez l'artiste le motif passe par le "tableau vivant" avant de passer sur la toile' (LH,16).

The *tableau vivant* precedes the painting itself (or perhaps also the written description) but not as a moment of presence within the mind of a stable subject :

En effet, si le genre du tableaux vivant n'est qu'une manière de comprendre le spectacle que la vie se donne à elle-même, que nous montre ce spectacle sinon la vie se réitérant pour se ressaisir dans sa chute, comme retenant son souffle dans une appréhension de son origine (LH,16)

This is a repetition of the terms of La Bain de Diane. Life becomes spectacle when seeking its own origin it finds itself to be without origin and repeats the same failed moment over and again ad infinitum (as did Actaeon). This loss of origin is described usefully by Octave in the context of Tonnerre's use of the *tableau vivant* in the nineteenth century; he writes :

on s'inspirait généralement d'un tableau célèbre présent à l'esprit de tout le monde pour le reconstituer, le plus souvent dans un salon, avec le concours de personnes, acteurs improvisés, et on s'amusait à rendre, avec la plus grande fidélité des gestes, des poses, de l'éclairage, l'effet que l'on supposait produit par le chef-d'oeuvre de tel ou tel maître (LH, 16).

Whether one is talking of a Tonnerre canvas or any other of the key scenes in the novel, implies Octave, it is their status as representations of *tableaux vivants* which is most crucial. The motif precedes the painting or written description (and by implication the consciousness of Octave himself), but is itself not a point of origin since whatever is being represented is always caught up in the infinite 'détour' of the already written, the already figured. There are many aspects of La Révocation and Roberte ce soir as a whole which reflect this. For instance the familiar context of Octave's household and his love of paintings carries along with it echoes and resonances of Symbolist decadence. Octave, one might say, is already a literary type, his obsessions and perversions being prefigured in characters such as Huysmans' des Esseintes in A. ebours. For example, des Esseintes' collection of paintings, alluded to in the epigraph of this chapter, testify to his own love of the artificial, the unnatural and the perverse. Given this formulation of the *tableau vivant* at the beginning of La Révocation as a textual disorigination, any attempt to construct the sexual episodes as scenes of fantasy 'belonging' to a stable subject is clearly problematic. As will become clear, this is borne out in a detailed analysis of the scenes themselves.

In his commentary on Freud's Interpretation of Dreams in Discours, figure¹⁶ Jean-François Lyotard argues in the context of this question of reality and its relation to fantasy or fiction that Freudian fantasy does not necessarily imply a stable reality or

¹⁶ Jean-François Lyotard, Discours, figure (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).

a reality principle (which Klossowski's text so clearly wishes to overturn). For Lyotard the Freudian conception of unconscious fantasy radically destabilises reality in its traditional sense in a manner which is not dissimilar to the disorigination of the real which occurs in Klossowski's text. The Freudian reality principle, Lyotard argues, refers to that realm of experience from which the fulfilment of desire has been denied (it has been repressed to form unconscious desire). Reality is not objective but simply part of the imaginary from which desire has been withdrawn or within which desire is foreclosed :

la réalité est constituée à partir de l'imaginaire. Ce qui est donnée d'abord, c'est l'objet fantasmatique. La formation d'un objet "réel" est une épreuve qui correspond dans le sujet à la constitution du moi-réalité. La réalité n'est jamais qu'un secteur du champ imaginaire auquel nous avons accepté de renoncer, duquel nous avons accepté de désinvestir nos fantasmes de désir¹⁷.

The terms fantasy and reality are no longer distinct or in opposition to each other but rather they describe an experience which is either invested with unconscious desire or one which is not (what we would call reality). Likewise with reference to the sexual scenes in Klossowski's text no distinctions between fantasy and reality or fiction and reality are tenable (since as *tableaux vivants* they never refer to anything which implies a stable 'real'). It is therefore problematic to talk of an interruption of the 'fantastic' into the realistic settings of La Révocation or Roberte ce soir (i.e. the eruption of repressed material which 'subverts' the reality principle). Rather, like Lyotard, one must talk of the familiar and the unfamiliar, or perhaps, as does Lyotard, one must talk of the 'reconnaissable' and of the 'méconnaissable' :

La ligne de partage qui est pertinente pour notre problème ne passe pas entre le réel et l'imaginaire, mais entre le reconnaissable et le méconnaissable. Ici

¹⁷ Discours, figure, p. 284.

s'introduit la considération du troisième espace, différent aussi bien de celui du langage que de celui du monde, la différence est proprement l'inconscient¹⁸.

This comment offers a useful framework for identifying the specificity of the sexual scenes of La Révocation and Roberte ce soir. When, for instance, an impossibly giant figure appears to Roberte in a Roman church the reader is not passed from a realistic setting to a fantastic one but rather from one which is familiar (a church) to one which is unfamiliar (a space where bizarre creatures suddenly appear which would belong more properly in a Gothic novel). A comment by Roberte reflects this :

Près d'un pilier se discernaient les contours d'un personnage trop gigantesque pour ne pas être le simulacre d'un autre monde : appuyé sur la hampe de sa hallebarde, en costume de lansquenet, ses yeux étincelant sous le heaulme, tout irréel, comme brusquement sorti de quelque tableau de vieux maître pour épier ici ma propre irréalité (LH, 19).

The reference made to the 'tableau de vieux maître' echoes Octave's claim that the *tableau vivant* is always a copy or a repetition of an already represented scene. This in turn emphasises that both figures, Roberte and the giant, are 'irréel', both are self-consciously artificial constructions, elements of fiction - simulacra. The distinction that is made is that the colossus figure is a 'simulacre d'un autre monde', and Roberte, Octave, Parisian apartment or Roman church are simulacra of this world, bound as it is by history and society and the renunciation of desire. A simulacrum of this world carries a resemblance to the familiar world of the everyday (e.g. post-war Paris). A simulacrum of 'un autre monde', gestures elsewhere, toward unfamiliar terrain. The difference, as Lyotard puts it, is the unconscious. What the scenes of sexual fantasy stage is desire, that of 'la vision intérieure', of 'le phantasme'. Yet as the discussion of the *tableau vivant* has implied 'le phantasme' is not a fantasy to which a subject can be

¹⁸ Discours, figure, p. 285.

attributed but rather suggests a more impersonal force of desire which is without origin.

A close examination of these sexual scenes reveals the difficulty inherent in any attempt to 'situate' them, either within a specific geographical location (where they seem, ostensibly, to occur) or within the mind of a specific character. This uncertainty of location is manifest first and foremost in the way narrative indicators of space and time undergo certain shifts in the sexual episodes of, in particular, La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes.

Place and time.

This question of location and responsibility can be addressed by examining closely the manner in which some of the key scenes in La Révocation and Roberte ce soir are narrated. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of these scenes in relation to the rest of the narrative is most evident in two of the major sexual episodes of La Révocation, that of the 'barres parallèles' and of '*les collégiens*'. The first is told by Roberte in her diary and has already briefly been alluded to. In it Roberte is taken into the basement of a boutique in the Palais-Royal by a large figure (the 'colosse') and an 'homme trapu', where she is then attached to a set of parallel bars and sexually caressed in a number of ways. The strangest of these entails the licking of her hands and wrists by the 'colosse'. The second scene will be discussed later and occurs in an anonymous room in a building 'entre Condorcet et Saint-Lazare' (LH,60). Here Roberte has a sexual encounter with two of her nephew Antoine's 'collège' associates, with the accompanying props of a footstool and a torch.

The location of these encounters in relation to the narratives contained in either Roberte's or Octave's diary is, however, ambiguous. Although it is clear, for instance, that the incident of the 'barres parallèles' occurs in the cellar of a boutique in the Palais-Royal, the manner in which it is recounted renders such clear geographical determinations uncertain. Firstly it must be noted that the incident is told twice; once in severely elided form and secondly, in more detail from a retrospective viewpoint. Roberte tells of how she spies an improbably large figure on a bus who looks her up and down, focusing particularly on her hands. The figure then follows her off the bus and finally corners her in a boutique where he is joined by the 'homme trapu'. She describes the episode as follows :

Passant par le portique du Palais-Royal, je m'engageai dans la galerie de Montpensier. Sous les arcades à peu près désertes à cette heure-là, des pas répondaient aux miens, se rapprochaient; chose banale pour une parlementaire, on me suivait. L'individu, sorte de colosse gras, glabre, type du parfait indicateur à la petite semaine, s'arrête à un intervalle de deux ou trois vitrines chaque fois que je jette un coup d'œil dans l'une ou l'autre devanture. Où donc se situe la nouvelle chemiserie que m'avait suggérée Gilberte? Je passe enfin sous la voûte de la galerie Beaujolais : c'est bien bien là, à droite. Mais à présent l'individu m'a doublée. Je pousse une porte vitrée, me trompe de boutique - celle-ci n'est qu'en transformation - l'individu y pénètre à son tour. Bien qu'au-dehors les personnes qui circulent ou stationnent devant l'étalage du bouquiniste d'en face puissent apercevoir par les vitres à demi dépolies ce qui se produirait d'anormal dans cette boutique vide, nul n'y songe un instant. Le dos contre la porte vitrée, le colosse m'interdit le passage dès que je veux ressortir, la main sur la poignée. Alors, par une porte du fond, apparaît un autre homme, de taille moyenne, trapu, en manches de chemise. Tous deux se dévisagent d'un regard convenu. Le second se retire et laisse la porte entrebâillée...

... Moins d'une heure plus tard je vais m'asseoir à la terrasse de la Régence, les tempes battantes. Mais mes mains tremblent sans doute et le garçon me demande tout de suite si ça ne va pas. Je souris, me lève pour aller aux lavabos, me considère dans la glace : inutile de me repeindre le visage, j'ai excellente mine. Somme toute, que leur reprocher au juste? Si'ils ont goûté un lamentable plaisir... Pour moi, c'est à présent que le plaisir commence. Je regagne la terrasse et je recapitule. Alors que sur la plate-forme de l'autobus je

me tenais le dos contre le bastingage, le bras levé, la main égarée sur la barre, le colosse, qui causait d'abord avec le receveur, m'avait pris les doigts. J'étais allée à l'intérieur choisir une banquette vide; mais lui, venu s'asseoir en face de moi, me scrutait alors d'insolente façon (LH,41-2).

Perhaps most striking about this sequence of events is that it a large section of it is narrated in the present tense. This question will be addressed in more detail shortly. Important here is the fact that the encounter between Roberte and her assailants is entirely elided from this straightforward telling of events (the 'points de suspension' that form the break between the two paragraphs of this passage are Klossowski's). A detailed account is only given when Roberte sits down afterwards and recounts the incident from *memory*: 'Je regagne la terrasse et je récapitule' (LH,42) (and when she does this the past tense is restored). This elision and subsequent retelling is significant. The scene is not told as part of a sequence of events that 'happened' in any straightforward way. It is told in such way that it is clearly filtered and to some uncertain extent modified in Roberte's recollection. As she sits on the café terrace afterwards what is recounted seems, in part, to have a status separate from that encounter which has just been elided: 'Somme toute, que leur reprocher au juste? S'ils ont goûté un lamentable plaisir... Pour moi c'est à présent que le plaisir commence' (LH,42). It would seem that the events narrated by Roberte, which the reader identifies as the episode of the 'barres parallèles', did not in fact occur beneath a boutique in the Palais-Royal but rather can be located in the imagination of Roberte. Perhaps this, then, is her fantasy; whatever *did* happen has been reworked along the lines of her own desire and her own pleasure.

This supposition is, however, complicated by other comments Roberte makes. The central motif of this fantasy is the attaching of Roberte to the set of parallel bars and the licking of her hands by the 'colosse'. She suggests that the whole impetus of the scene stems from the moment on the bus when the 'colosse' strokes her fingers :

Il fallait qu'il me touche les doigts et, dès lors, plus moyen pour lui de s'arrêter jusqu'à la descente dans le sous-sol. A partir de cet attouchement furtif mais irrépressible, quel scénario à la fois rapide et minutieux a dû se dérouler sous son crâne? (LH,42).

The entire contents of this scene, the fetishised moment of hand-licking, could therefore be attributed to the sexual pathology of the 'colosse'. The significance of the hand-licking here is unclear. However, the 'colosse' from the very first encounter with Roberte in La Révocation is clearly obsessed with her hands. As has already been mentioned, during this first encounter he takes a print of her palm with carbon dust whilst pinning her down from behind in a sexual position. The significance of Roberte's hands will be looked at in more detail as this discussion progresses. The question that must be posed here is whether the fetishism of Roberte's hands which the 'colosse' displays over a number of episodes can lead the reader to believe that this is properly his fantasy. Can one say, once more, that the events described do not take place in an identifiable location in Paris but rather in the mind of this strange figure, in the strange world of his private desire, acted out 'sous son crâne'? If so, what is the identity of this figure?¹⁹ The incident of the parallel bars seems to hang indeterminately between three locations : the geographical space of the boutique, and the respective imaginations of

¹⁹ This question will be addressed in detail shortly. However it is worthy of note at this stage that in the paintings entitled 'Les Barres parallèles' (1972) the figure licking Roberte's hands seems to resemble Klossowski himself.

Roberte and that of the 'colosse'. Roberte herself alludes to the uncertain status of this encounter towards the end of her diary entry :

Cette occasion particulière de me sentir moi-même depuis l'instant où j'étais montée à l'aventure dans cet autobus jusqu'à celui où, dans ce sous-sol, je me retrouvais suspendue et secouée, cette occasion-là n'est dès lors ni plus ni moins que l'arc tendu de ma réflexion au-dessus de cette après-midi oisive (LH,45).

The reference to 'l'arc tendu de ma réflexion' recalls the silver bow of the goddess Diana in Le Bain de Diane. This allusion could be of help here. In Le Bain de Diane the intermediary demon which simulates the theophany of the goddess was described as 'l'imagination d'Actéon et le miroir de Diane'²⁰. This episode can perhaps be located in that demonic intermediary space, *both* in the imagination of the 'colosse' *and* in Roberte's 'réflexion' (carrying with it as it does the connotation of 'miroir'). Or rather it cannot be located in either, but rather in a space which, because it is intermediate, spills beyond the control of any one subject, with the result that it is subjectivity itself as a figure of responsibility which is suspended or effaced.

Roberte's encounter with the 'collégiens' also bears witness to this suspension of subjectivity. Although it is narrated by Octave, it becomes clear that the scene, if it can be said to have 'happened', did so as the result of a bet between Vittorio and the two adolescents involved, and that it was recounted to Octave by Vittorio who himself was not present. The events are narrated in great detail, yet all the details have no guarantee of authenticity. One cannot be sure if they occurred in fact or whether they were modified by Vittorio as a result of his own fantasy. Octave alludes to the problem of giving any credence to what he recounts on several occasions; for example :

Roberte allait déjà franchir la porte de sortie, lorsqu'un groom, venant en sens inverse, portant je ne sais quoi de gras et de tachant dans un récipient en aurait versé au passage sur les souliers de Roberte; et aussitôt les deux petits cireurs qui attendaient, de se précipiter, d'avancer l'escabeau, etc., etc. Mais je n'en crois rien - ce détail me semble avoir été inventé après coup pour expliquer l'incompréhensible geste de Roberte... (LH,56).

The details may have been changed or modified at any stage. The use of the conditional tense 'en aurait versé', implying, as it does, an event which was *alleged* to have happened, suggests this. Also Octave's account is so detailed that it could not be recounted in such a way unless he himself were present or he were himself imagining it. Again the question is posed : is this an event that took place in a building between Condorcet and Saint-Lazare or is it a fantasy which could be attributed to any number of the characters in the novel, Vittorio, as the instigator of the bet, Octave, as the narrator, or even the nephew Antoine?²¹ Again no clear answer to this question can be gained from a reading of the text itself.

In this way, then, in both the scenes of the parallel bars and that of the 'collégiens' one can see that the narrative does not allow the episode recounted to be positioned either in the geographical place in which they ostensibly occur or within the imagination or fantasy of a particular character. The sexual fantasy seems to be located in a kind of impersonal space or non-space which cannot be reduced to the mind of the narrator (the diaries of either Roberte or Octave). This point is reinforced by the use of tenses in both these episodes.

²⁰ Le Bain de Diane, p. 46. The identification of Roberte with the goddess Diana is, however, a complex one and will be discussed in more detail later.

²¹ Antoine, of course, has complex sexual feelings towards his aunt and one could see this scene as some form of sexual projection on his part given the figures involved are adolescents like him. It could be noted once more that when this scene is painted in 1989 it is given the title Roberte et les collégiens ou le cauchemar d'Antoine and features several figures on the right-hand side of the painting depicting an anguished dreaming adolescent.

The difficulty of spatial determination in these sexual scenes is paralleled by an uncertainty of temporality. This is signalled by a shift in tense usage at key moments in the narration. In the incident of the parallel bars, for example, there is a distinct point at which the narrative moves from the use of past tense to the use of the present tense.

If one recalls part of the passage already cited :

Passant par le portique du Palais-Royal, je m'engageai dans la galerie de Montpensier. Sous les arcades à peu près désertes à cette heure-là, des pas répondaient aux miens, se rapprochaient; chose banale pour une parlementaire, on me suivait. L'individu, sorte de colosse gras, glabre, type du parfait indicateur à la petite semaine, s'arrête à un intervalle de deux ou trois vitrines chaque fois que je jette un coup d'œil dans l'une ou dans l'autre devanture (LH,41).

This, it could be argued, is exactly the moment of transition between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Up to this point Roberte has referred only to an unspecified figure who touched her on a bus and to someone (perhaps the same person, one cannot be sure) who stared at her to the point where she got off the bus. From the moment that she actually identifies her potential assailant as a 'sorte de colosse gras' the narrative shifts into the present tense. The narrative then continues in the present tense until the moment after the elision referred to above when Roberte writes 'Je regagne la terrasse et je récapitule' (LH,42). At this moment there is a return to the use of the past tense which continues until the point where Roberte narrates her descent into the cellar :

Avisant une sortie au palier supérieur qui prend jour sans doute sur la rue de Beaujolais, j'ai voulu m'élancer. Mais le trapu, qui m'attendait sur les marches, abat sa main sur mes doigts agrippés à la rampe; et moi qui crois encore possible de fuir, je les retire d'un geste brusque, redescends et - à deux pas de l'arrière boutique, ce moment où, encore résolue à me défendre, de mon sac frappant le colosse au visage, je l'ai vu s'accroupir, mais crouler presque... quand, déjà sous ma jupe, sa main s'insinue entre la jarretelle et la chair, saisit en plein le gras de ma cuisse, son bras enlace mes jambes, me soulève, me fait basculer sur son épaule, mouvement inattendu et si précipité que j'ai dû me

retenir des deux mains à sa nuque - et alors sa folle descente avec moi, par l'escalier en limaçon au sous-sol (LH,43).

As Roberte retells the episode it is only when she enters the site of the encounter itself that the tense changes once more. As the unfamiliar and the sexually perverse invade the text in this way the time of diary narrative gives way to a present tense. This use of the present is by no means unusual in French. The 'historic present' is often employed to lend past events a degree of immediacy and excitement which a simple retelling in the past would not convey. Yet what it does in this instance is, also, to propel the scene of sexual encounter out of a determined sequence of past events (the diary entry) into a non-determined temporal space²². Klossowski's use of this classical device allows the present tense forms to erupt, as it were, into the narrative sequences told in the past. This eruption of the present suspends action by taking it out of the time of the story and placing it into an ever-present moment, which lies outside the normal sequence of narrated events.

This same process occurs in Klossowski's use of another narrative device in the telling of the 'collégiens' episode. In this case the shift is not from a usage of the past to the present tense but rather from one kind of past tense to another. In the following passage the transition between the 'passé simple' and the 'imparfait' signals the first point of sexual engagement between Roberte and the 'collégiens' :

Et ce fut en se penchant vers la glace, amoureuxment sans doute, que machinalement, c'est le moins qu'on puisse dire, elle posa un pied sur l'escabeau

²² Klossowski's use of terms which have theatrical connotations emphasise this suspension of normal time. 'La rampe' is an inclined surface but is also the array of lights at the foot of a theatre stage. Theatrical time (the succession of events on the stage) entails by definition a suspension of 'real' time (that of our everyday experience). Such theatrical references also recall Klossowski's formulation of writing as spectacle in Le Bain de Diane, pp. 44-5 and Origines culturelles et mythiques d'un certain comportement des dames romaines, p. 54.

qu'on lui avançait. Les deux petits frotteurs s'empressaient et elle, laissant faire, en était à se mettre du rouge aux lèvres, lorsque la lumière s'éteignit. En un tournemain, la substitution était faite. X. avait saisi le pied de Roberte, posé sur l'escabeau, tandis que F., placé derrière elle, passant ses bras par devant, relevait les pans du manteau par le revers de la jupe et, les faisant glisser sur le genou levé de Roberte, les remontait jusqu'à la ceinture; X., d'une main, avait immobilisé à la cheville la jambe avancée de Roberte et, de l'autre main, recevait une lampe de poche que F. faisait clignoter sous la cuisse de Roberte (LH,57).

From the moment when 'la substitution était faite' the 'passé simple' is abandoned in favor of the imperfect. Here, and in other parts of the narrative like it, the imperfect is used to describe a suspended moment, where the actions are held and seem to be always ongoing (as in a *tableau vivant*). This usage of the imperfect can be usefully analysed through a comparison with Proust's novel A la Recherche de temps perdu. Genette comments on Proust's use of the imperfect in his essay 'Discours du récit'²³. Genette makes the distinction between actions which are narrated as unique events in what he calls the 'récit singulatif' and actions which are narrated as habitual or repeated by the 'récit itératif'. Genette claims in his essay that no literary work, other than Proust's : 'n'a jamais fait de l'itératif un usage comparable'²⁴. The narration of habitual actions of Sunday routine in Combray, for instance, all rely on iterative narration. Yet, Genette argues, the way in which Marcel recalls his childhood leads to a blurring of the distinction between the 'singulatif' and the 'itératif' into what he calls the 'pseudo-itératif'. He defines the 'pseudo-itératif' as follows :

c'est-à-dire de scènes présentées, en particulier par leur rédaction à l'imparfait, comme itératives, alors que la richesse et la précision des détails font qu'aucun

²³ Gerard Genette, Figures III (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

²⁴ Gerard Genette, Figures III, p. 148-49.

lecteur ne peut croire sérieusement qu'elles se sont produites ainsi, plusieurs fois, sans aucune variation²⁵.

A similar merging of the singular and the iterative can be observed in Klossowski's use of the imperfect to narrate Roberte's encounter with the 'collégiens'. Gestures which are discrete events and which do not appear to be ongoing (e.g. 'X. [...] recevait une lampe de poche') are placed in this tense of suspended incompleteness. As the episode is narrated, filtered through the fantasy of Vittorio/Octave/Antoine, the singular action is transformed into something which suspends narrative time. Moreover narrating the action in the imperfect places it within the temporality of repetition.

Proust himself signals the transformational power of the imperfect tense in his famous article on Flaubert 'A propos du style de Flaubert'²⁶. He calls the imperfect tense as it is used in Flaubert's L'Éducation sentimentale 'cet éternel imparfait' and affirms that it can 'change entièrement l'aspect des choses et les êtres'²⁷. Proust's comment offers a clue to Klossowski's adoption of this convention in La Révocation. By placing the singular action into the mode of the 'pseudo-itératif', the use of this convention removes it from a strictly past temporality and places it into a tense of timelessness and repetition. The force of this convention is ultimately very similar to the use of the 'historic present' in the 'barres parallèles' episode. In both cases narrative time is suspended. The narration of the central scene of Roberte ce soir in the present tense now takes on greater significance. A sense of timelessness or eternity is reaffirmed when the 'colosse' appears suddenly at the door of Roberte bathroom just

²⁵ Gerard Genette, Figures III, p. 152.

²⁶ Proust, 'A propos du style de Flaubert', Contre Sainte-Beuve suivie de essais et articles, (Paris: Gallimard:Pléiade, 1971), pp. 586- 600.

²⁷ Proust, Contre Sainte-Beuve suivie de essais et articles, p. 590.

prior to her sexual encounter with both him and the aborted dwarf figure she finds clinging to her thigh. Describing the 'colosse' the narrator says :

Sous l'ample manteau gris négligemment jeté sur les épaulettes, il serre la cravache dans son poing ganté de blanc, tandis que l'autre, posé sur la hanche, semble indiquer que c'est de toute éternité qu'il se tient ainsi, la grabuette livrant passage au gigantesque membre qui pointe vers Roberte son gland lisse et admirablement bombé (LH, 138).

In all these scenes including that from Roberte ce soir, narrative time appears held in an eternal present, a time of an eternally repeated moment. Fantasy, then, is not only irreducible to a specific subject or personality, it is also without time. This re-iterates a point made by Freud in his essay 'The Unconscious'. In this essay Freud writes : 'The processes of the *Ucs* [Unconscious] are *timeless*; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not ordered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all'²⁸. The particular intensity of the scenes of sexual fantasy in La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes and Roberte ce soir comes from the way in which they rework this Freudian notion of unconscious a-temporality in that they stand outside traditional determinants of space and time. As narrative events they appear to signal themselves as being beyond or in excess of narrative perspective and narrative sequentiality.

The implication is that the reader is witnessing neither a male fantasy of Roberte's possession nor Roberte herself reworking that fantasy along the lines of her own female desire (nor, indeed, Klossowski unwittingly betraying his own patriarchal unconscious in assuming Roberte *could* rework such scenes for her own pleasure). Rather the text seems to be gesturing towards a scene of fantasy which is without a subject, to a form of desire which would be ungendered and impersonal. This is

²⁸ 'The Unconscious', The Collected Psychological Works of Freud, vol. XIV, pp. 159-216, p. 187

because it is unclear what relation these scenes might have to the events in the novels of which the reader can be more sure e.g. (the interactions of the Octave household, conversations between Octave and Roberte, Octave and Antoine etc.). Again a reference to Freud's conception of fantasy and of the unconscious is helpful. As well as asserting that the unconscious is without time, Freud also makes the point that the subject is represented in a very opaque way in the scene of fantasy (i.e. that it can not be identified with any one figure or motif but is potentially dispersed amongst many figures); the subject of the dream is subjected to symbolisation and transformation²⁹. Yet Klossowski takes this one step further in that the sexual scenes appear to have no clear or determinable subject at all³⁰. In the gesture they make towards an impersonal a-temporal space (or non-space) the narration resists any possibility of assimilating these scenes to the imagination of any one character. A more traditional Freudian reading might at this point turn to an examination of motifs and symbols in order to detect and decipher a desiring subject which would be encrypted within the images of the fantasy. In the case of Klossowski's text, however, as I hope to show, one finds that the motifs and symbols in these fantasies are, like the narration, carefully

²⁹ See in particular Chapter Six of The Interpretation of Dreams 'The Dream-work', The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Freud, vol. V, pp. 339-508. Freud refers to this process of symbolisation as a 'dramatisation' of the subject's unconscious thoughts; he writes 'Condensation, together with the transformation of thoughts into situations ('dramatisation'), is the most important and peculiar characteristic of the dream-work', Freud, 'On Dreams', The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Freud, vol. V, pp. 633-86, p. 653.

³⁰ This point is echoed by Daniel Wilhem in his book on Klossowski. In the key moments of encounter between Roberte and the 'invités' of the text characters cease to function as discrete entities such that they become in a sense interchangeable in what Wilhem calls the 'Tête-bêche du théâtre et de l'hospitalité' : 'Les retours et les détours du visiteur des Lois sont machinés; la péripétie est réglée, programmée; mais les figures simulacres se renversent selon les vents, les eaux, les fers, les courants, les intensités : les débauchés se retournent en censeurs, les séminaristes deviennent officiers nazis, les persécuteurs se retrouvent bienfaiteurs; tous les corps, ni actifs, ni passifs, mais intensifs, sont indéfiniment convertibles; le tête-bêche est généralisé', Daniel Wilhem, Pierre Klossowski : le corps impie (Paris: UGE, 1979), p. 71.

constructed so as to resist any reduction of the fantasy to any one stable and unified subject.

Motifs.

The two motifs which recur most often throughout the sexual encounters recounted in La Révocation and Roberte ce soir are the 'colosse' himself and the Roberte's hands. The 'colosse' is an apparently anonymous figure who, if his identity could be fixed, might allow one, nevertheless, to locate the 'subject' of these fantasies. Likewise the repeated reference to Roberte's hands, to the gestures she makes with them, and to her gloves as they are removed or remain in place, implies a use of symbolism which may offer the key to interpreting these scenes and the way they function in relation to the rest of the text.

However the 'colosse' is a motif rather than a character precisely because it remains anonymous. It is a figure who certainly is at times identified with a specific character (Vittorio or Victor) but at others is described as 'un simulacre d'un autre monde' (as was shown earlier), and again at another point as 'un pur esprit' (LH, 140). The moment in the text when the identity of this figure appears unequivocal is the central scene of Roberte ce soir when it is given the name Victor. The reader has already been introduced to this character in the pages immediately preceding this episode. In a long and convoluted exchange with his nephew, Octave discusses a photograph taken during a visit he supposedly made to Madame de Watteville in Ascona. The photograph depicts Roberte standing by a fire at the moment when her skirt catches fire. In the same instant a young man is tearing the flaming dress from her

to reveal her naked legs. Octave identifies this figure as Victor or Vittorio della Sante-Sede, erstwhile member of the Roman Church and future tutor of Antoine, who is due to arrive the next day. In the following scene where Roberte is engaged in sexual and theological congress with the 'colosse' and 'le bossu' the 'colosse' is explicitly identified with Victor :

Tentée de prendre un bain, elle s'éloigne du miroir où se noie son visage redevenu sévère, mais face au siège près de la baignoire, elle porte ses doigts sur ses fesses pour relever sa longue jupe noir, lorsqu'elle avise, s'échappant de la boîte à papier hygiénique, les feuillets d'un chapitre de l'ouvrage censuré d'Octave, intitulé : *Tacita, le colosse et le bossu*. Assise sur le siège, elle relit pour la centième fois ces élucubrations qui la vexent, sans doute suffisamment satisfaite de la décision qu'elle vient de prendre au conseil pour commencer à pisser, pourtant plus outrée que satisfaite pour ne pas s'arrêter d'uriner, quand soudain la porte s'ouvre sans bruit sur l'énorme personnage. Le casque à cimier brille moins que l'émail des dents et le blanc des yeux dans la face basanée de Victor (LH, 138).

It is interesting to note that the appearance of Victor is announced by Roberte's reading of Octave's Tacita, le colosse et le bossu. This would once again beg the question as to whether the fantasy is Octave's (since he is clearly obsessed enough with this scene to write a book about it) or Roberte's (since she has obviously read the scene over and over and is very familiar with it). Once again no clear answer is given to such a question. At the same time this moment of identification of the 'colosse' with Victor could allow the reader always to associate these two figures with each other. Like the giant figure in the church at the beginning of La Révocation the 'colosse' is, here, dressed in elaborate armour and has piercing features (shining eyes in the former scene and bright white enamelled teeth in the latter). Yet how far does this identification help in the location of a stable subject position within the sexual scenes of La Révocation and Roberte ce soir?

Octave's 'Lois de l'hospitalité' allow one to make sense of this identification. His desire in formulating this custom is, put in its most banal form, to permit the adulteration of his wife with a stranger, with guests invited into his household. Victor, in his role as Antoine's tutor, is clearly the 'invité' of the piece. It could be argued therefore that Victor's participation in these scenes in the form of 'le colosse' is quite simply a projection of Octave's desire as it is expressed in 'Les Lois de l'hospitalité'. The scenes of sexual fantasy in the text have their source in the imagination of Octave as he visualises his wife being 'taken' by the stranger Victor. If the 'colosse' is the key figure of each fantasy then Octave is its source, Octave is fantasising. Yet such an attempt to place the fantasy squarely within the imagination of Octave encounters all the resistances outlined in the discussion of place and time and so must remain highly problematic. The far from straightforward nature of the character Victor himself also disrupts the stability of this interpretation. All that is learnt of his history subsequent to the central scene of 'le colosse et le bossu' makes it impossible to attribute to him a clear role or coherent identity.

In a conversation between Octave and Roberte the latter tells of Vittorio della Sante-Sede's past life at the end of and after the German occupation of Rome. As some form of bet with a Nazi camp commandant called Binnsnicht³¹ he parachutes into Rome 'tenant un ostensor' (LH, 155). Soon both Sante-Sede and Binnsnicht are captured by the allies, the former is released the second is held to be tried as a war criminal until he is discharged for lack of evidence by the British. The commandant Binnsnicht judges it prudent to change his identity and so exchanges his for that of

Sante-Sede. Binnsnicht on his way to a rendez-vous in Switzerland under his assumed name is recognised and lynched in Milan. Vittorio who hears of the lynching decides to keep Binnsnicht's rendez-vous in Switzerland, pretending to be Binnsnicht pretending to be Sante-Sede, or as Octave paraphrases it 'Vittorio fait donc passer sa véritable identité pour la fausse identité d'un autre' (LH,156). When his cover is blown by news reports of Binnsnicht's death he seeks refuge in a monastery only to find Binnsnicht himself hiding there, still alive after all. The situation is now very complex and confusing because no one now knows : 'Lequel des deux est Sante-Sede, lequel des deux Binnsnicht' (LH,157) except the 'prieur' of the monastery. This equivocation is left hanging. The identity of Victor is, therefore, itself indeterminate. If Roberte's account is to be believed one cannot know whether Victor is an erstwhile member of the Catholic clergy or a Nazi war criminal. This uncertainty is compounded by Octave's assertion of Victor's presence at M^{me} de Watteville's residence in Ascona when the photograph of the flaming dress was taken, a fact of which Roberte is entirely unaware. Who then is Victor? He is implicated in the past of both Roberte and Octave. His identity is subject to fluctuation, and he seems to be many things or as Roberte says 'Victor? ou plutôt le ramas de choses qui porte ce nom' (LH,163). It is true that Victor is the 'invité' of Roberte ce soir, but his status as a figure whose identity remains constant is called into question. If Roberte knows so much of his uncertain past how is it that she did not recognise him when her dress caught fire at Ascona? In each case are we talking about the same Victor and if so what is it that guarantees that sameness? And even though a photograph of this incident at Ascona is

³¹ The name suggests the German phrase 'Ich bin es nicht', roughly translating as 'I am not it' and

referred to, is it not so far-fetched that it would have had to have been staged (returning us once more to the motif of the *tableau vivant*)? This confusion between the figures of Victor and Binnsnicht and the impossibility of attributing to him a fixed role render any identity one might ascribe to him entirely arbitrary. Klossowski's emphasis throughout his writings on Nietzsche on the fortuitousness of self-identity on its quality as arbitrary role or mask is borne out in the character of Victor.

Even though the figure of the 'colosse' is in part associated with Victor, this does not seem to help any attempt to establish its identity. Just as the locus of the 'barres parallèles' episode was seen to hang in an uncertain space between the imagination of the 'colosse' and Roberte, so the identity of the 'colosse' itself is suspended somewhere in between reference points belonging to both Roberte and Octave. Reference points which themselves are ambiguous (the impossibility of knowing whether Sante-Sede is Binnsnicht or vice-versa, the uncertainty over the 'jupe enflammée' episode). Again the space of fantasy appears to resist reduction to any clear and distinct determinations. This resistance is characterised, above all, in what is in fact a key Klossowskian motif, a gesture of the hands as they are held 'à demi repliées'.

This, one might argue, is the most oft repeated gesture throughout all the sexual scenes of these novels. Indeed it appears to be the most commonly repeated gesture throughout Klossowski's entire painted oeuvre. This is pointed out by Alain Jouffroy in an interview with Klossowski in Le Secret Pouvoir du sens. In a note to his book Jouffroy gives a list of paintings in which the gesture of the hand features. His

indicating absence of identity.

list is, he claims, probably not exhaustive but nonetheless totals over eighty canvases³².

The significance of the gesture is glossed by Octave himself in his commentary on Tonnerre and his discussion of 'le solécisme'. An error in the syntax or idiom of painting human figures has, at its root, he claims, an inconsistency between bodily gesture and apparent conscious intent. Octave cites Quintilian on this point with a phrase he has placed as an epigraph to the catalogue of his Tonnerre collection :

“Certains pensent qu'il y a solécisme dans le geste également, toutes les fois que par un mouvement de la tête ou de la main on fait entendre le contraire de ce que l'on dit” (LH, 14).

The hand or the head can betray a desire or a meaning which runs counter to the conscious pose or intention of a character as it is painted. In reference to the female figures of Tonnerre's paintings, Octave later writes of the hand gesture :

Car, en plaçant le revers d'une main devant une toison dévoilée, en imprimant telle expression aux doigts, en moulant la paume des mains, en articulant bien l'index et le pouce, [l'artiste] met une agitation spirituelle auprès de telle ou telle partie du corps, d'un tangible volume. Là, on voit précisément jusqu'à quel degré la femme s'appartient encore ou voit ses appas échapper à sa volonté (LH, 24).

In portraying this moment when desire is in excess of conscious intentionality the gesture of the hand signals the difference of the painted figure from itself, its lack of self-coherence. This gesture of the hand signals an irreducible division within Roberte herself where two moments oppose each other without any mediation or possibility of synthesis : she says no but at the very same time always also says yes. On the one hand this moment of division brings one to the most difficult and potentially uncomfortable aspect of the sexual tableaux of these two novels. Roberte always begins by resisting her assailants but then part of her succumbs and begins, despite herself, to experience

³² Alain Jouffroy, Le Secret Pouvoir du sens (Paris: Écriture, 1994), pp. 184-6.

sexual pleasure in the encounter. It is difficult to imagine a more obvious cliché of male sexual fantasy. The woman may *say* no, the scenario runs, but deep down 'she wants it really'. This play between resistance and acceptance is figured by the 'mains aux doigts à demi repliés'. This is made clear in the description of Roberte's hands in the episode of the 'barres parallèles' :

C'est là ce que déclare sa main à la renverse, à hauteur du menton, le creux de cette main avec cette voluptueuse naissance du pouce, ces longs doigts qui semblent habiles à beaucoup mieux qu'à corriger, qu'à secouer un enfant difficile; main qui s'agite dans une réminiscence de possible aventure, tandis que l'autre main, que l'on voit de dos, les doigts tendus soutenant le bouquin, appartient encore à un état responsable, si adorablement démenti par la main grande et longue dans l'affolement que suscite le vilain lutin (LH,50).

A critique of this moment might run as follows : although the text may resist any attempt to locate a subject of this fantasy, the specifically male desire to overcome a woman's 'resistance' and force her pleasure is nevertheless and without doubt reflected in this motif of the hand. However, it is important to note that it is not a transition from no to yes that this gesture of the hands evokes but rather a simultaneous and paradoxical no *and* yes which, as will become clear, expresses Roberte's difference from herself.

The distinction that is set up in the above cited passage is between a part of the body which represents desire (the 'voluptueuse naissance d'un pouce' which suggest a certain phallic imagery implying arousal and erection) and to another part of the body which represents 'un état responsable', i.e. the conscious self, bound as it is by moral imperatives and interdictions which inhibit desire. The implication is that, if fantasy this be, the gesture of the hand which welcomes obscene caresses does not represent Roberte as she succumbs to a real attacker *per se*. Rather it represents the moment

when her conscious, responsible self is opposed to and fractured by that otherness within, which is the force of desire. Roberte's refusal and her gesture of acceptance coexist, mutually excluding each other, figuring an irreducible and paradoxical division within the supposed unity of her person³³. This is not a representation of a woman who refuses an external assailant but who is shown in reality to desire him despite her protestations. Rather it articulates that point where conscious intentionality is divided from itself by the impersonal movement of desire. Roberte herself gives this interpretation in one of her diary entries in La Révocation. She describes her reaction to the central encounter of Roberte ce soir 'le colosse et le bossu'. To say that such a scene implies the willingness of a woman to succumb to an aggressor 'in real life' is itself, she argues a masculine assumption :

Le lieu choisi : ma salle de bains et la scène qui s'y déroule - nuitamment (quelle erreur!) - s'inspirent de cette idée bien virile qu'une femme qui consent à s'abandonner à une rêverie libidineuse doit infailliblement se livrer à un agresseur fortuit, parce qu'elle n'aura plus le discernement nécessaire pour le chasser comme un intrus. Inutile de dire ici que jamais femme vraiment femme n'a connu ce genre d'alternative : si elle rêve de cette façon-là, elle ne désire personne de l'extérieur et de toute évidence mettra n'importe qui à la porte, fût-ce un dieu. Si elle se livre, c'est alors seulement qu'elle commence à rêver (LH,66).

What the sexual scenes like that of 'les barres parallèles' and 'les collégiens' portray, therefore, is Roberte caught in that moment where the unified mask of her rational self is split by the desire of 'la rêverie'; she is held in that instant when she becomes different from herself, is divided, doubled. The folding of the hands signal this moment

³³ Daniel Wilhem makes a similar point in reference to the removal of Roberte gloves : 'Le dégantement, par Roberte, marque le retour de la pensée à son effet pur, à son pur intensité. Le dégantement, par les partenaires de Roberte, marque le retour de la pensée à son impersonnalité et met à nu l'incohérence du sujet pensant', Pierre Klossowski : le corps impie, p. 63.

of division where conscious self is interrupted by the forces of desire, where conscious thought is suspended in the no which is also always a yes and vice-versa.

The difficulty of situating the sexual scenes of La Révocation and Roberte ce soir within the mind of any one subject takes on its full importance here. The space of desire, of 'le rêve' or of 'le phantasme', is an impersonal one. Fantasy cannot be reduced to the mind of a particular character, because it marks the limit point beyond which subjectivity is dissolved and anonymity is affirmed³⁴. The 'colosse' is anonymous precisely because it figures this limit point of fantasy. It is a 'pur esprit', which Roberte defines as a 'terme bien pittoresque pour désigner les forces obscures que le travail et la raison dissipent et que la volonté réduit' (LH,171). All these sexual encounters gesture towards a space of desire which is in excess of identity. This gesture is enacted through the confusions of spatial and temporal location which structure their mode of narration. Wherever they are situated it is in a space, or rather an absence of space, 'beyond' the language which recounts them. This is signalled by the use of 'points de suspension' in the text at key moments. The way in which the 'barres parallèles' scene is elided using this technique was shown earlier. At the end of the 'collégiens' scene as Roberte climaxes there is another lacuna :

X. ne distinguait plus la raison de son plaisir, tandis que Roberte, les cuisses et les fesses ruisselantes de l'impertinence de nos deux néophytes, s'abandonnait à ses ultimes secousses, ahanant et vouant à tous les diables ses obligations à la Chambre, et de députée devenant pute entre Condorcet et Saint-Lazare... (LH,60).

³⁴ This can be usefully compared to a comment made by Maurice Blanchot in his essay 'Rêver, Écrire'. He poses the same question which has been at the centre of this discussion : 'dans le rêve, qui rêve? Quel est le "Je" du rêve?' and comes to the formulation 'Là ou je rêve, cela veille'. It is this kind of impersonality, which Blanchot speaks of in relation to dream, that

This signalling that the scene of desire is in excess of narration and language brings one back to the notion of simulation. It brings one also to the key paradox of Klossowski's attempt to write 'le phantasme'. By recourse to certain devices and narrative conventions (e.g. the use present historic or the imperfect, the indeterminacy of location and character identity) Klossowski makes it clear the 'le phantasme' is paradoxically absent from the writing which describes it. The text may gesture toward an impersonal space which is without a subject, it may mimic that space, but the text is always, in the final analysis, woven from linguistic and narrative conventions which imply subject positions (even if it is in the use of proper names, or the subject/object divisions of a grammatical sentence).

The attempt to render the uniqueness of 'le phantasme', the uniqueness of that moment where the subject is abolished in 'le rêve', is always compromised by the fact that writing is always constituted in codes and conventions which are necessarily far from unique (a code or convention must by definition be shared). This is the tension which structures the writing of the 'phantasme' in Klossowski's novels. However much the text might resist the reduction of fantasy to a subject-position it is necessarily constituted within language. Language cannot but affirm subject positions insofar as it always poses a grammatical 'I' or a proper name who writes and speaks (Klossowski the author) and therefore also along with the subject I an object 'you'. Klossowski as a writer seeking to render the uniqueness and impersonality of 'le phantasme' is caught in a double bind. Every moment he seeks to affirm the impersonality of desire his writing at the same time has recourse to the 'code des signes' which structures and articulates

fixed subject positions. Like Roberte Klossowski says no but at the very same moment and against himself he also always says yes : in the moment he seeks to negate the fixity of the subject he also affirms it. Writing 'le phantasme' leads the writer to this impasse where he is always doing two contradictory things in the same instant. Affirming the intensity of impersonal desire always also affirms the person who affirms. The scene of fantasy, as it is written, carries with it this dual and paradoxical affirmation. It is the paradoxical relationship between these two moments (the 'personal' and 'impersonal') which will be discussed in the following section.

The problem posed turns around the question of where this moment of aporia or impasse might lead the critic of Klossowski's texts? If he or she does wish to analyse a cultural unconscious at work in his writing which betrays male patriarchal desire (and as should be clear this is not the case here), then does not this persistence and unavoidability of subject positions justify such a reading? It might argued that, whether the text gestures toward the impersonal or not, what one is left with is an artefact which necessarily betrays the presence of a subject, that is Klossowski himself. Although he may wish to affirm the anonymous or the impersonal, ultimately, is it not *he* who writes, *his* subjectivity which affirms itself in that impasse which the writing of 'le phantasme' constitutes? If a 'phantasme' is, as Klossowski describes it, 'une vision intérieure', is it not Klossowski who sees, Klossowski who must bear the responsibility for the violence done to Roberte. On this reading, however Klossowski might seek to construct this violence within his novel as impersonal, as the violence of anonymous 'forces obscures', what one witnesses is, arguably a form of a rationalised violence.

This persistence of an identifiable subject brings one to the next part of this discussion. The question is, crucially, whether this impasse of representing 'le phantasme' constitutes a recuperation of the text (into structures of meaning which are both appropriative and patriarchal) and a failure of its gesture towards the impersonal, or whether such an impasse or moment of aporia can itself be construed of as a transgressive gesture. In the first instance this question brings one back to Klossowski himself and his comments on the visual, visionary nature of his work (both the painting and the writing). If masculine violence there be in these texts, is it not the violence of him who sees, of him who obsessively repeats *his* visions of Roberte; the violence of Klossowski himself?

Seeing.

Car en effet le Bain de Diane est un événement imprévisible et extérieur à Actéon; le Bain de Diane est au-dehors : Actéon pour le découvrir n'a point à le situer en tel ou tel endroit, mais doit sortir de son propre esprit; alors ce que voit Actéon se produit au-delà de la naissance de toute parole : il voit Diane se baignant et il ne peut dire ce qu'il voit³⁵.

Il y a eu rupture absolue avec l'écriture. Passant de la spéculation au spéculaire, je me trouve en fait sous la dictée de l'image. C'est la vision qui exige que je dise tout ce que me donne la vision³⁶.

'Le primat de la vision'

Klossowski's insistence on the visionary nature of his work has been discussed by a number of his commentators, most notably by Alain Arnaud in his book written for Seuil's 'Les Contemporains' series³⁷. This emphasis on vision as an almost revelatory moment has also led his work to be compared to that of both Blake and Fuseli³⁸. In an interview with Alain Arnaud published originally in La Quinzaine littéraire, Klossowski implies that the visionary and also visual aspect of his work becomes the most important aspect of his work when he devotes himself exclusively to painting in 1972 (this is most explicit in his comment cited above). His comment indicates that the shift from writing to painting involves a movement from an abstraction or conceptual idiom ('spéculation') to the concreteness of a visual idiom ('spéculaire'/'image'). Yet the quotation from Le Bain de Diane (dating from 1956)

³⁵ Le Bain de Diane, pp. 68-9.

³⁶ 'Entretien avec Alain Arnaud', La Quinzaine littéraire, 381 (1-15 November 1982), 16-18 (La Ressemblance, (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1984), pp. 99-111), p. 102. All references to this collection of essays will be to this volume giving the page number and prefaced with the abbreviation R.

³⁷ Alain Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski, (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

shows that even when he is, for the most part, devoted to the writing of essays and fiction the moment of vision, as that which gives the initial impetus to writing is nevertheless all important³⁹.

This is not seeing or vision in the ordinary sense. Seeing would normally imply a subject who sees, an object seen and a space in which both are situated the one relative to the other. In order to see the vision of Diana bathing Actaeon must 'sortir de son esprit' and the vision cannot be situated in any specific place. This indeed is a strange kind of vision. How, indeed, can one see by stepping outside of one's mind when seeing itself must be dependant upon an individual mind or consciousness? In this respect the passage from Le Bain de Daine cited above suggests that not only does the vision occur 'au-delà de la naissance de toute parole' but beyond seeing also. This is a vision which, like the scenes of fantasy in La Révocation, cannot be given a locus, and in which the self who sees (Actaeon) must exceed his own consciousness, must transcend that faculty which allows him to see. The idiosyncratic nature of Klossowski's use of visual and visionary terms to describe his writing is reflected in a comment he makes on the composition of the novel Le Baphomet :

L'ensemble fut écrit rapidement comme si je n'avais qu'à transcrire une dictée, ou mieux : *le décrivant tel un spectacle auquel j'assistais sans jamais omettre les paroles que les diverses attitudes des acteurs me suggéraient, au point de me croire sur les lieux à les entendre*⁴⁰ [Klossowski's emphasis].

³⁸ See Alain Jouffroy, Le Secret Pouvoir du sens, (Paris: Écriture, 1994), pp. 15-17 and J.-F. Lyotard, Discours, figure, p. 225, note 33.

³⁹ In fact Klossowski's first exhibition of paintings was also in 1956. This was a private exhibition given at the Cours de Rohan (Klossowski's residence) and featured some of his portraits (e.g. of Gide, Breton and Bataille); see Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski, p. 188.

⁴⁰ 'Notes et éclaircissements pour Le Baphomet' postface to Jean Decottignies, Klossowski, (Paris: Veyrier, 1986), reprinted in Le Baphomet, (Paris: Gallimard, 1965); reprinted Gallimard/Imaginaire, 1987, pp. 225-32, p. 225.

This suggests quite clearly that the scenes and tableaux that make up Klossowski's novel exist first and foremost as visual, visionary moments. Indeed, the novel is written as if Klossowski, the author, were viewing a spectacle, a visual scene. Yet his language also carries with it a quite different emphasis. At the same time as he is viewing a spectacle Klossowski is also transcribing a dictation 'sans omettre les paroles' which the poses of the actors suggest to him. The scenes envisioned by Klossowski as he writes Le Baphomet may indeed have a visual force but they are also at the same time apprehended in the verbal forms which are proper to written language.

So how is one to make sense of Klossowski's visions? They do not occur in any locatable space; they imply a self who sees and yet which must in the process transcend or go beyond itself. They are visual and 'au-delà de la naissance de toute parole', yet at the same time are intimately bound up with and inseparable from 'la parole'. Given these difficulties what kind of distinctions can be drawn between Klossowski's writing and his painting? If his visions are already like a 'dictée', or are already distinctly linguistic it would clearly be problematic to attempt draw any hierarchy between the two (by affirming one as somehow more visual and immediate). At the same time this question of vision raises sexual political considerations which have already been alluded to. Klossowski's use of the terms vision and seeing do not imply the positioning of a stable subject and an object. They do not imply a clearly differentiated space within which subject and object are entirely distinct and where the former could be said to appropriate or violate the other.

If Klossowski's idiosyncratic use of the term 'vision' is not qualified properly in the manner just outlined one runs the risk of likening him to either some kind of a Christian mystic on the one hand or a phallogocentric, not to say misogynistic, voyeur on the other. Alain Arnaud likens him to the former in his *Seuil* monograph when he argues that Klossowski's entire oeuvre is founded upon the 'Primat de la puissance visionnaire et de ses révélations' and says of Klossowski himself: 'il ne connaît qu'une seule loi : la vision'. To an extent this is true but the language Arnaud uses to describe Klossowski's visions constantly recalls that of religious revelation and suggests the existence of a moment when the subject encounters, in however fragmentary a way, a point of origin, essence and immediate contact with the Divine. Klossowski's vision is, for Arnaud, 'la vision primitive', 'la vision immédiate' and 'une vision essentielle', which he links explicitly to Klossowski's readings of Augustine⁴¹ and his assimilation of Catholic doctrine as it is embodied in the proclamations of the second Council of Nicaea⁴². These theological influences are certainly central to Klossowski's formation as a writer and essayist and leave their mark throughout his writing (in, for instance, the scholastic dialogues of *Roberte ce soir* or in the elaboration upon Gnostic heresies in *Le Baphomet*)⁴³. Yet, as was shown in the opening chapter, there comes a point in

⁴¹ Arnaud, *Pierre Klossowski*, p. 42, p. 17, p. 49, p. 87, p. 62 and p. 66.

⁴² Arnaud, *Pierre Klossowski*, p. 43. In reference to Klossowski's use of the term simulacrum Arnaud refers to the text of the Second Council of Nicaea in which the simulacrum was considered to be 'une image "résiduelle" de la vision primitive, "prototypique", dirait le vocabulaire conciliaire' p. 49.

⁴³ Klossowski's use of theological language in his later texts is essentially parodic, a staging of a discourse which no longer functions in reference to a unitary Truth (the One God who was the central reference in the first edition of *Sade mon prochain*) but which denounces itself in order to affirm the many over the One. For a useful discussion of Klossowski's later use of theological discourse see Jean-Pol Madou, *Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski*, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1987), pp. 43-63. Madou comments: 'Loin d'être un système monolithique, la théologie fait apparaître, à la faveur de sa théâtralisation par la fiction klossowskienne, la

his career where he tries to move beyond a Christian affirmation of origin to a more complex 'polytheistic' point of view. How, then, can 'la vision' be defined in such a way as it no longer carries with it such theological implications?

The violence of vision.

It is important that such an alternative formulation be made because if one does accept the implications of Arnaud's construction (i.e. the essentially theological, affirmation of a stable subject who sees) then this makes accusations of voyeurism and misogyny all the more credible. It has been suggested that Klossowski's 'visions' are not the transcription of a specific content, of something seen and then subsequently represented, but rather imply something which goes beyond a subject who sees. If, like Arnaud, one does posit some form of 'visionary subject', then the sexual scenes narrated in the Roberte trilogy can be constructed, not as 'impersonal' scenes of fantasy irreducible to a stable self, but rather as the violent projections of a masculine gaze - that of the 'subject' Klossowski himself - which is indicative of a wider cultural violence towards women. This is not the view taken here but one which is argued forcibly and comprehensively by Anne-Marie Dardigna throughout her book Les Châteaux d'Éros⁴⁴. The sexual tableaux of Klossowski's novels, the primacy of the visual element and centrality of the image are judged as follows :

pluralité des disputes et des controverses dont elle est issue, la multiplicité des sources où elle s'origine : Tertullian, saint Augustin, Averroès, Duns Scot, Maître Eckhart, saint Thomas d'Aquin. S'affichant comme pluriel, le discours théologique chez Klossowski s'énonce d'une manière quasi-carnavalesque comme une polyphonie de voix dont les éclats de rire et de colère prennent, à l'ombre des gardiens de l'orthodoxie romaine, des aspects grimacants et subversifs', pp. 44-5.

⁴⁴ Anne-Marie Dardigna, Les Châteaux d'Éros, ou les infortunes du sexe des femmes, (Paris: Maspero, 1980).

Image, c'est-à-dire, vision intériorisée, absorbée et recomposée par l'imagination, corps de femme où déjà se marque le travail de la volonté masculine.

L'image féminine n'est en effet rien d'autre que le corollaire du regard masculin. Les femmes, sur la scène érotique, n'étant jamais sujet, ne peuvent manifester qu'un regard reflet du regard masculin, c'est-à-dire un regard où elles ne voient rien d'autre qu'elles-mêmes. L'enjeu du narrateur dans le procès de sa narration, c'est la réduction du corps féminin au statut d'objet regardé⁴⁵.

This comment brings one to the heart of what is at stake in any interpretation of Klossowski's conception of 'vision'. The clear distinction made between the subject who sees and the object which is seen allows Dardigna to speak of the reification of the image of woman, of her appropriation beneath a masculine gaze. At the same time Dardigna recuperates Klossowski's writing within the logic of identity and representation which, it has been argued, his post-Christian position contests. Both Klossowski's fiction and his painting, because of the primacy attributed to the visual and to vision, are brought back within the essentially theological tradition of Western thought and logic. This tradition is characterised as explicitly male in the theoretical work of Luce Irigaray. In her essay 'Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un'⁴⁶ Irigaray argues that this rationalist, male tradition is centred around a masculine language and discourse which excludes the feminine and any expression of female desire. Speaking from within the philosophical discourses inherited from this tradition Irigaray can only hypothesise as to what the language of female desire would be : 'Le désir de la femme ne parlerait pas la même langue que celui de l'homme, et il aurait été recouvert par la

⁴⁵ Les Châteaux d'Éros, p.110.

⁴⁶ See Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un, (Paris: Minuit, 1977), pp. 21-32. Dardigna's text is heavily influenced by Irigarayan arguments and in particular she makes important references to Irigaray's Speculum de l'autre femme (Paris: Minuit, 1974).

logique qui domine l'Occident depuis les Grecs⁴⁷. Moreover Irigaray goes on to maintain that this male discourse is dominated by an economy of the visual or what she calls the 'scopic' :

Dans cette logique, la prévalence du regard et de la discrimination de la forme, de l'individualisation de la forme, est particulièrement étrangère à l'érotisme féminin. La femme jouit plus du toucher que du regard, et son entrée dans une économie scopique dominante signifie, encore, une assignation pour elle à la passivité : elle sera le bel objet à regarder⁴⁸.

On this reading Klossowski's promotion of 'la vision', associated firmly by Irigaray with a dominant male economy and a Western tradition dating back to the Greeks, would allow his work to be placed firmly within a tradition of male domination (and this is clearly the move made by Dardigna). His painting and writing could be opposed to a putative feminine economy which is based upon touch and which would respect plurality, difference, and the otherness of the self to itself (indeed all the motifs which the argument of this thesis has associated with Klossowski's writing!).

This is the main thrust of Dardigna's argument in Les Châteaux d'Éros :

Klossowski's visions, it is claimed, provide an image of woman reduced to the status of object and in so doing include her as a sign of exchange between men in a discourse of male power. In the light of these arguments it is clear that Klossowski's use of 'vision interieure' needs to be differentiated from traditional forms of seeing that are implied by Dardigna's use of 'Image' and Irigaray's notion of 'économie scopique'.

⁴⁷ Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un, p. 25.

Envisaging the invisible.

Firstly it is important to note the difference in expression between Klossowski himself and Dardigna's language in the comment drawn from Les Châteaux d'Éros cited above. While Klossowski, as was indicated earlier, speaks of 'la vision intérieure' the latter refers to what she calls a 'vision intériorisée'. This is a crucial difference in emphasis. An 'interiorised' vision implies an existing representation which has been internalised. It implies an inside of a subject and an outside of objects. In the interiorised vision, subject-object relations which subsist in an exterior social space (relations of power and domination) are reproduced in an internal or mental scene of fantasy. The violence of social relations repeats itself in the image of fantasy. A vision which is 'intérieure' in the Klossowskian sense obeys a very different logic. It implies an encounter with the limit of sense itself. It does not appeal to an inside and an outside or a differentiation between subject and object but rather marks a limit point of the self beyond which any distinction between self and other is suspended⁴⁹. 'Vision intérieure' implies an abolition of space which overturns also the distinctions Irigaray makes between a 'masculine' economy characterised by the dominance of the scopic element, and a 'feminine' economy based on touch.

In L'Espace littéraire⁵⁰ Maurice Blanchot describes a kind of vision which does not imply the clear divisions traditionally associated with seeing (the seer and the seen)

⁴⁹ In relation to Klossowski it is better to use the terms self and other (as this discussion has done) rather than subject and object. The first formulation carries with it the connotations of the self as arbitrary role or mask which were investigated in the second chapter. The subject-object distinction necessarily implies fixed positions and in the context of philosophy (after Descartes) carries with it connotations of an autonomous rational ego. See Blanchot on his preference for the distinction 'moi/autrui' (following Husserl and Levinas) in L'Entretien infini, pp. 70-105.

⁵⁰ Maurice Blanchot, L'Espace littéraire (Paris: Gallimard, 1955).

and elaborates on the nature of the image which such vision produces. In order to keep it distinct from the theological implications pertaining to the act of seeing which have been outlined here Blanchot uses the term 'fascination' :

Pouquoi la fascination? Voir suppose la distance, la décision séparatrice, le pouvoir de n'être pas en contact et d'éviter dans le contact la confusion. Voir signifie que cette séparation est devenue cependant rencontre. Mais qu'arrive-t-il quand ce qu'on voit, quoique à distance, semblent vous toucher par un contact saisissant, quand la manière de voir est une sorte de touche, quand voir est un *contact* à distance?.

Blanchot goes on to add 'Ce qui nous est donné par un contact à distance est l'image, et la fascination est la passion de l'image'⁵¹. What Blanchot is elaborating is not a notion of seeing in the normal sense. Rather his formulation implies a relationship to the image which does not appeal to the fixed positions of a subject and an object. Klossowski's obsession with the image of Roberte is closer to Blanchot's 'fascination' than it is to Dardigna's 'vision intériorisée'⁵². Interior vision is that point of dissolution where 'la décision séparatrice' of self and other is overturned and therefore it cuts across the distinction made by Irigaray between a scopic economy which fixes identities and a 'sensible' economy which blurs boundaries and affirms difference. Vision in this sense is neither intelligible nor sensible. It is perhaps 'une sorte de touche' but only insofar as it affirms a moment where boundaries which might come into

⁵¹ *L'Espace littéraire*, p. 28 and p. 29.

⁵² In his essay on Klossowski 'Le Rire des dieux' Blanchot remarks, in language which echoes these formulations from *L'Espace littéraire*, that while the central notion of 'tableau' might suggest that Klossowski's œuvre is a visual one, this ultimately is not the case, and here it is useful to cite at length : 'Un tableau, en principe, fait appel à ce sens de droiture qu'est la vue. Sans doute, ce qu'on voit dans le monde et, à plus forte raison, par l'art plastique, on ne le voit qu'à distance, par la distance et à condition de ne pas le toucher : l'intact - l'inaccessible - seul est visible [.....] Or, les tableaux imaginaires et les scènes qui ne le sont pas moins, jouent, dans les récits de Klossowski, le rôle de l'inimaginable et, par le mode d'un langage rigoureusement réfléchi, se voient (cela est, en effet, presque visible) retirés de l'immédiat qui est leur lieu pour être introduit dans celui d'une réflexion où d'abord tout se suspend et s'arrête comme au seuil

contact or touch each other are abolished. Nor indeed is vision in any conventional sense *visual* at all. Speaking of the act of painting in the essay 'Retour à l'Hermès Trismégiste'⁵³ Klossowski comments :

chaque fois que l'artiste travaillerait à un tableau, quel qu'en soit le "motif", ce serait à contrefaire son modèle invisible - (R,96).

'La vision intérieure', therefore, is the seeing of something unseeable, where no one sees. The force of this term 'modèle invisible' brings to the fore the paradoxical status of Klossowski's use of the term vision. The vision or 'phantasme' that the artist simulates in his painting and writing is not something visual. 'La vision intérieure' is not only the vision of something 'au-delà de la naissance de toute parole', as Klossowski had written in Le Bain de Diane it is also the vision of something prior to, beyond or beneath the visual.

The propriety of vision.

The question that occupied the discussion of writing in the preceding section must now be reposed, namely the question of whose fantasy it is that is being portrayed in the fictional text. If, in the scene of fantasy, nothing is in fact *seen*, and the self who sees exceeds itself and in no real sense actually sees, then one cannot speak of the vision of, say *Roberte*, being proper to Klossowski. If the sexual scenes of Roberte ce soir and La Révocation are not the simulation of a visual moment prior to language then, one cannot talk of 'Klossowski's' visions in terms which would suggest that they are somehow proper to him (to that identity construct going by the name

même de la vision, puis se réfléchit, c'est-à-dire se dédouble, se dissout, jusqu'à se retirer dans la pure invisibilité abstraite', L'Amitié (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 194-95.

Pierre Klossowski). The motif of impersonality which was introduced earlier now reasserts itself. Klossowski addresses this relation between the image of Roberte and the problem of propriety in the postface of Les Lois de l'hospitalité. In that discussion he describes a moment of vision which descended upon him whilst working in a garden

Fasciné par le nom de Roberte en tant que signe, alors que j'étais dans le jardin sans plus rien voir de l'ensoleillée verdure autour de moi, n'ayant d'autre vision que la pénombre insituable où se jouait la lueur de sa main dégantée - je me décide à décrire ce qui doit se passer dans cette pénombre, ici illusoire. Je réfère au nom de Roberte ce que je vois et que je ne verrais point à défaut de ce nom.

La pénombre, la lueur de l'épiderme, le gant, autant de désignations non pas de choses existantes ici à ma portée, mais formant un ensemble au gré de l'irréelle pénombre. Tout de même c'est à moi, qui choisis ces termes, qu'appartient la faculté de les fixer. Vais-je encore prétendre que ce n'est pas de la "représentation" et que la pensée s'appartient à elle seule, non comme ma faculté, mais comme une intensité qui m'a trouvé ici, au milieu de la verdure - car, cette intensité, où irait-elle, si je n'étais pas là? (LH,335).

This quotation is worth dwelling on in some detail. Firstly it is significant that Klossowski uses the term 'Fasciné' to describe his predilection for the 'nom de Roberte' which is reminiscent of Blanchot's term 'fascination' and his definition of it as 'la passion de l'image'. Secondly it is clear that, although he refers to vision and what he sees, it is clear that what he sees are not 'choses existantes' but rather 'la pénombre'. He sees penumbra, that area of partial shadow which is on the borderline between visibility and invisibility, that point at which visibility succumbs to darkness. For Klossowski this 'vision intérieure' clearly does not seek to reproduce or stage a conventional representation within the theatre of the mind.

⁵³ Pierre Klossowski, La Ressemblance, pp. 93-98.

At the end of the preceding discussion of the writing of the sexual scenes of La Révocation and Roberte ce soir it was shown that even though the scenes of sexual fantasy might seek to gesture towards the impersonal they were always also still caught up in the conventions of language which implied a person (at the very least the person who writes). Klossowski makes this point explicitly here. This vision of Roberte, in all its minute details, may be an encounter with the impersonal, with 'une intensité' or with a mode of thought which 's'appartient à elle seule', but in the depiction of these details 'c'est à moi, qui choisis ces termes, qu'appartient la faculté de les fixer'. The scene of fantasy one reads in a novel or contemplates in a painting must ultimately not be impersonal but a result of, as Klossowski puts it, 'ma faculté', the staging of fantasy through recourse to cultural schemata or modes of representation imply conscious activity (that of painting or writing, selection of detail etc.). That strange moment of vision, of seeing the unseeable, may be an encounter with impersonal and invisible forces but can only ever be rendered by the use of terms which are part of language and of identity. Yet Klossowski emphasises that in the moment of vision itself it is not the writer who penetrates into 'la pénombre' but rather is touched and overcome by it. That the writer must use conventional language to speak of such an experience does not affect the intensity itself :

n'est-ce pas une intensité qui me traverse et qui fait vibrer quelque chose que je traduis de façon tout à fait arbitraire par les termes "pénombre", "lueur d'épiderme", "gant"... quand je ne serais moi-même qu'intensité pure qu'attendait la pensée de personne pour se désigner par ces termes? (LH,336).

In the moment of vision subjectivity is dissolved into a unique point of intensity. This language of impersonality, of 'la pensée de personne' recalls Klossowski's

commentaries on Nietzsche. The experience Klossowski is alluding to is like the thought of Eternal Return. What is at stake once more is consciousness at its 'plus haute intensité' (the point at which it is abolished) and the possibility of thought finding a sign to designate such an intensity, to translate it into language. That sign could be the sign of the 'Cercle Vicieux' or the 'nom de Roberte' (or indeed the key sign of 'Sodomie' in the writings of Sade). Klossowski, amongst the greenery of his garden, brushed by 'la pénombre insituable' and 'fasciné par le nom de Roberte' does not have a vision which is proper to him, which is 'his', but he is invaded by forces which are prior to his 'himness'. In the end he does not really see at all but is touched by the invisible, his 'himness' is dissolved into 'la pensée de personne', or as Blanchot puts it :

Quiconque est fasciné, ce qu'il voit, il ne le voit pas à proprement parler, mais cela le touche dans une proximité immédiate, cela le saisit et l'accapare, bien que cela le laisse absolument à distance. La fascination est fondamentalement liée à la présence neutre, impersonnelle, le On indéterminé, l'immense Quelqu'un sans figure. Elle est la relation que le regard entretient, relation elle-même neutre et impersonnelle, avec la profondeur sans regard est sans contour, l'absence qu'on voit parce qu'aveuglante.⁵⁴

But if 'la vision' as Klossowski uses the term is not visual, and the image which vision envisages does not refer to anything one can see, to 'choses existantes', then what exactly is the status of the image? The image is an image of something unseen and unsayable, something outside the sphere of representation altogether; this brings one back to the notion of the 'simulacrum'. Seeing is no longer what is most important to an understanding of Klossowski's use of the term 'vision', rather one is returned to questions of language and writing.

⁵⁴ *L'Espace littéraire*, pp. 30-31

The opening line of the lengthy passage cited earlier provides a clue to situating the status of the image in Klossowski's work . He describes himself as : 'Fasciné par le nom de Roberte en tant que signe' (LH,335). Klossowski's image of Roberte cannot be separated from the sign which is the 'nom de Roberte'. This point is made very clearly by Klossowski in his interview with Alain Arnaud when he states : 'L'image est un signe mais d'un univers autre que celui des signes signifiants' (R,105). The image is a sign which exists at a limit point between what Blanchot calls 'l'immense Quelqu'un sans figure'⁵⁵ and the everyday signs of language and communication (the 'code des signes quotidiens'). The terms 'image', 'vision intérieure' and 'phantasme' come together here insofar as they all seek to represent that unrepresentable and unique limit point between on the one hand the chaotic and impersonal movements of 'impulsions' and on the other the codified sign systems of language and representation. Because 'l'image' or 'le phantasme' do not figure anything which is already figured or figurable, they exist on this limit point and are themselves neither visible nor representable. This limit point is unique in such a way that no other sign can represent it without falsifying the force of its singularity. 'Le phantasme' constitutes that moment when the light of figurability shades into 'la pénombre insituable' of the unrepresentable. If Klossowski does find words to designate this unique limit point it is only in the language of everyday signs, a language of common currency and exchange which is far from unique. The signs 'lueur d'épiderme' and 'gant' figure this moment of intensity, this unique sign which refers to

⁵⁵ L'Espace littéraire, p. 30.

no other sign, but at the same time they signal its absence, the fact that they do not properly express it or in any way coincide with it.

Such a movement from an impersonal intensity designated by a 'phantasme' to a conventional sign which in turn designates the 'phantasme' involves a double simulation. The 'phantasme' simulates a movement of intensity, it is a figure of that intensity only insofar as it also expresses its difference from it. As a limit point between the universe of 'impulsions' and the world of signs it is another term for the 'démon simulateur' that plays such an important role in Le Bain de Diane. The 'phantasme', like the demon, deals between the space of human consciousness (language/representation) and that of the divine (chaos, 'forces obscures', intensities or 'impulsions'). Yet, as has been indicated the signs 'lueur d'épiderme' and 'gant' also simulate. They affect to represent the uniqueness of 'le phantasme' and yet are always part of the 'code des signes' which exists only through being shared and understood by all those who speak and think. The 'code', by virtue of its very codification is the antithesis of the unique. Hence the language which designates the 'phantasme' is always a 'simulacre', always the simulation of a simulation⁵⁶. The simulacrum does not simulate an originary moment of 'authentic' vision but simulates that always already false and dissimulated moment of the 'phantasme', that vision without vision. At the

⁵⁶ This lack of coincidence between 'phantasme' and 'simulacre' is emphasised by Jean-Pol Madou who writes : 'Ne se confondant jamais avec le phantasme, le simulacre en tient lieu, il en est le gage, le valant pour. Bien qu'il soit constitué de signes communicables, le simulacre est le gage de l'incommunicable' and later goes on to add 'En effet, le simulacre est un masque qui, se dénoncent comme tel, trace les contours de ce qu'il dissimule', Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski, p. 88 and 92. Madou does not, however, emphasise this quality of double simulation that is being discussed here, i.e. the crucial point that the 'phantasme' as ('démon simulateur') is *already* a simulation. This is crucial if one is to recognise that the simulacrum is not just a 'bad copy' (as Plato would have it) but is an image which overturns both model *and* copy.

end of Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux in the 'Note additionnelle à la sémiotique de Nietzsche' Klossowski describes this relation between language and 'le phantasme' as follows :

le langage est le simulacre de la singularité obstinée de notre phantasme : car si nous avons recours au langage, c'est que par la fixité des signes il offre aussi l'équivalent de notre singularité obstinée⁵⁷

The fixity of the 'code des signes' allows the 'phantasme' to be written but because of that very fixity the 'phantasme' can never be reducible to writing or coincident with it. It is always absent from what is written in the way that was discussed in the preceding section. The simulacre can stand in for the 'phantasme' but only on the basis of what Klossowski calls an 'échange frauduleux'⁵⁸. The exchange between the 'phantasme' and the 'simulacre' is always fraudulent because the one is never really equivalent to the other. If the 'simulacre' does offer an equivalence with the 'phantasme' it is only on the basis of a radical *non-equivalence*. It always only simulates or parodies the fantasy (which is itself a simulation or parody)⁵⁹. Again all the motifs that have previously been explored (parody, myth, translation) are implicated in this movement from 'phantasme' to 'simulacre' from 'vision intérieure' to the reproduction of that

⁵⁷ Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux, p. 367.

⁵⁸ Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux, p. 367.

⁵⁹ In L'Économie libidinale Jean-François Lyotard criticises Klossowski for his assertion that the simulacrum 'offre aussi l'équivalent de notre singularité obstinée' arguing that in positing the possibility of such an equivalence he betrays a residual attachment to the language of representation. Lyotard however seems to miss the full force of the use of 'échange frauduleux' and of the idea of simulation. This crucial self-conscious dissimulation which structures the simulacrum undermines Lyotard's criticism. See J.-F. Lyotard, L'Économie libidinale (Paris: Minuit, 1974), pp. 57-103, see in particular pp. 96-98. Blanchot, however, picks up on the ambiguity of the term 'équivalent' in the context of Klossowski's writing : 'Mais le mot "équivalent" est trompeur, à moins de le prendre dans un sens nouveau : cela "vaut pour", mais non pas à la manière dont, dans le symbole ou l'allégorie, le signe vaut pour quelque sens transcendant ou immanent. Car ici c'est le sens qui vaut pour le signe, et l'équivalence n'est jamais donnée dans une égalité, fût-elle infinie, mais plutôt dans une pure inégalité', Amitié, p. 198.

vision in the novel or on canvas. The simulacrum is always a conventional sign but its conventionality is always clearly signalled and therefore so is its difference from the uniqueness and singularity of the 'phantasme'.

Painting and writing.

The relation of Klossowski's painting to his writing is now thrown into a new light. If it is not possible to speak of a prior, distinctly visual, moment of vision at the origin of Klossowski's artistic creation then there is no reason for a painting to offer a more immediate rendering of 'le phantasme' than would writing. Both a painted canvas and a written scene of sexual encounter appeal to conventional signs or representations, they both simulate 'le phantasme' on the basis of an 'échange frauduleux'. Because both the novel and the painted canvas use conventional signs they might equally be said to be forms of writing. Klossowski says as much in his interview with Alain Arnaud when he says : 'Je traite la peinture comme une hiéroglyphie' (R,102). But this does not mean that there is no difference between Klossowski's paintings and his novels. Clearly a very different kind of space and use of signs is operating in the one and the other. Klossowski addresses this question in a short article entitled 'Roberte et la coiffeuse'⁶⁰. He begins by asserting that :

Une scène décrite et la même scène en tant que tableau sont deux modes d'appréhension aussi différents entre eux que leur objet même semblerait identique.⁶¹

The scene of Roberte attached to the parallel bars as it appears in La Révocation and as it appears on canvas seem to portray the same moment in different forms but this is

⁶⁰ 'Roberte et la coiffeuse', Obliques, 1 (1972), 95-102.

not necessarily the case ('leur objet [...] semblerait identique'). Their resemblance the one to the other, Klossowski would argue, is an occasion for their divergence from each other. Indeed painted and written sexual fantasy do not refer to the same scene at all, as Klossowski goes on to argue :

*Le passage alternatif de l'expression graphique ou picturale à l'écriture, de celle-ci à celle-là, ne révèle pas nécessairement une seule propension originaire, mais une manière d'éprouver des instants obsessionnels dans deux espaces différents, dût-il s'agir du même motif provoquant une appréhension différente.*⁶²

The 'instant obsessionnel' is neither originary (being always a simulation of an intensity or 'impulsion') nor is it ever the same twice (being unique and singular). If recognisable elements are repeated e.g. parallel bars, the physiognomy of *Roberte*, her gloves etc. then this is because the same motifs are adopted and reproduced in different media with an 'appréhension différente'.

What, then, one may wonder is the specificity of these two different types of apprehension, that of 'l'expression graphique ou picturale' and of 'l'écriture'?. If there is no hierarchy between the two, if one cannot say that painting is a more immediate rendering of interior vision, then why did Klossowski renounce writing so firmly in favour of painting and drawing? Towards the end of '*Roberte et la coiffeuse*' Klossowski offers some explanation of what seems to be his preference for the painted image over the written word. Discussing the situation of an artist who is both painter and writer, he makes the point that the visual image of the painting allows a greater possibility of divergence from the codification and fixed meanings of written language :

⁶¹ *Obliques*, p. 95.

Quelle que soit la singularité graphologique d'une écriture, cette singularité reste astreinte automatiquement au tracé fonctionnel des signes. Or, chez le peintre ou le dessinateur le même tracé graphologique récupère son autonomie pour se déchaîner "calligraphiquement" en "caractères", divagants par rapport à ceux de l'écriture.⁶³

Written language always carries with it a closer complicity with functionality. By this Klossowski refers to the ability of language to communicate fixed meanings on the basis of exchange value (X being equivalent to Y) and ^{the} relation of this functioning of language to the world of institutions, both social and economic (this is the relationship between language and institutions which was described in the discussion of 'Le Philosophe scélérat' in Chapter One). The painted image is less abstract and therefore less implicated in the production of concepts than is the written word. In his 'Lettre à Patrick Waldberg'⁶⁴ Klossowski describes this difference in terms of a universality of abstraction, proper to writing, and a universality of the concrete which is proper to the language of the painted canvas :

on peut tout juste dire que pour le tableau il existe une universalité du *concret* qui lui assure sa *jouissance* immédiate - donc en somme "animale" - tandis que pour le *texte* en revanche il règne une universalité de l'abstrait qui, s'agissant du poème, ne fait que supprimer ses données idiomatiques. En sorte qu'un tableau ne peut être prétexte qu'à une nouvelle invention⁶⁵.

The opposition between the painting and the written scene of fantasy is not derived from the ability of the former to render 'vision' more immediately. Rather the painted image preserves more of its autonomy; it is recuperated with greater difficulty into the realm of abstract meanings and fixed interpretations. The painting, therefore, is more

⁶² Obliques, p. 102.

⁶³ Obliques, p. 102.

⁶⁴ Preface to Patrick Waldberg, Les Demeures d'Hypnos (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1976), pp. 9-13.

⁶⁵ Les Demeures d'Hypnos, p.11.

likely simply to provoke another 'phantasme' and therefore another 'simulacre', rather than engender a rational interpretative discourse⁶⁶.

This 'universalité du concret' which is proper to the 'hiéroglyphie' of the painted image perhaps explains Klossowski's apparent preference for painting rather than fiction in his post-1972 output. His preference does not imply a hierarchy of a visual over a written medium as such, but rather a difference between two sorts of writing, one being more implicated in conceptuality and abstraction than the other. Nevertheless it must be re-emphasised that both forms of expression are writing insofar as they rely on conventional signs, on the parodic use of the stereotype to designate the uniqueness of the 'phantasme'. As Klossowski puts it in his essay 'Du tableau en tant que simulacre' in *La Ressemblance* : 'Toute invention d'un simulacre présuppose le règne de stéréotypes prévalents' (R, 77). For Klossowski *all* expression is stereotyped because it is dependent on the 'code des signes'. What is important is the manner in which the stereotype is undermined or rather singularised by the 'phantasme'.

The violence of the 'simulacre'.

This tension between the singularity of interior vision and the generality of the language used to figure it was described at the end of the preceding discussion of the scene of fantasy as an impasse; an impasse which carried with it a dual affirmation. The

⁶⁶ Klossowski's analysis of Sade's writing as well as his commentary of *Le Bain de Diane* showed the way in which the designation of singularity always failed, and led to repetition or reiteration. If the simulacrum is recuperated into a rational discourse, then there is no further need to repeat because it no longer designates an obsessive singularity; rather it is returned to the false equilibrium of truth.

scene of fantasy affirmed the intensity of impersonal desire whilst at the same time affirming stable subject positions in its recourse to conventional signs and language. It has been argued that the contradictory terms of this impasse relate to each other on the basis of 'simulation' and the 'échange frauduleux' which takes place between the 'phantasme' and the generality of language. It has also been argued that Klossowski's use of the term 'vision' does not imply an appropriating male gaze, but rather also entails a movement of simulation; a movement in which the invisible is envisaged at the limit point of the visible, in which the subject is dissolved into a point of intensity. Because the simulacrum carries with it the force of this double simulation (the 'phantasme' simulating an intensity, the 'simulacre' simulating the 'phantasme') it functions differently from a conventional use of the stereotype.

The violence of the stereotype (the 'code des signes') lies in its suppression of diversity and plurality; it substitutes a simple representation for what in fact are complex and multiple phenomena. It claims to have a universal reference and therefore functions to underpin ideological positions and the appropriations of power. The stereotype, for example, of a woman who is being raped and who in the process is shown secretly to enjoy the experience could be said to express the phallogentric aim of being in control of female desire, insofar as it constructs the woman as an always willing object of male possession. This is just the stereotype which was discussed earlier in the context of Roberte's sexual encounters in La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes. The simulacrum, however, because it is parodic and paradoxical (it speaks of that which cannot be spoken) always carries with it an ironic relation to the simple representations of the conventional stereotype. It does not designate any Truth or

ideological presupposition but seeks to undermine universality by fraudulently designating a singular moment of intensity. As an ironic staging of the stereotype, the simulacrum constitutes its exaggeration to such an extent that its point of reference cannot be a universal but is returned to the obsessive singularity which characterises the 'phantasme' :

Le simulacre ne simule efficacement la contrainte du phantasme qu'en exagérant les schèmes stéréotypés : renchérir sur le stéréotype et l'accentuer c'est accuser l'obsession dont il constitue la réplique (R,78).

The violence of the simulacrum is therefore different from the violence of the stereotype in its conventional form. The stereotype appeals to a universal Truth and in so doing appropriates and suppresses diversity and multiplicity. The simulacrum, in accentuating the stereotype so as to mimic 'le phantasme', affirms singularity over universality. It suspends the movement towards Truth, interrupting the violence of the stereotype. The violence of the simulacrum is that of the unique against the universal⁶⁷. The simulacrum reproduces the violence of the stereotype but only to exaggerate it and turn it back upon itself.

This, ultimately, is the function of the scenes of sexual fantasy in Roberte ce soir and La Révocation and in Klossowski's painting. The writing or painting of fantasy is not a matter of seeing, nor of a male gaze and its appropriations, but rather

⁶⁷ Madou alludes to this problem and in particular the way in which Klossowski's use of stereotype seeks to differentiate itself from pornography : 'C'est en déconstruisant ou en grossissant démesurément les schèmes stéréotypés de la sensibilité et de la représentation que Klossowski cherche à fixer les fulgurantes et éphémères manifestations d'un signe unique sous la contrainte duquel se resserre sa pensée' and later affirms on this basis : 'C'est en effet aux démons pornographes comme aux rigeurs de la Loi que Klossowski dispute la physionomie de Roberte', Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski, p. 9 and p. 12. This is an important point, I think, and indicates that a sympathetic reading of Klossowski's work (which would differentiate itself from Dardigna's view) would not only reject any complicity of certain key

of the production of simulacra. The simulation of fantasy seeks to affirm the singular over the universal. The rape of Roberte at once stages the violence of the stereotype in its movement toward Truth (it stages the possession of Roberte) but at the same time suspends that movement. In Roberte ce soir or La Révocation writing seeks to possess Roberte in that moment when she succumbs to desire and becomes uniquely other from herself. Yet the language of the text clearly indicates that that impersonal moment of intensity is not here, not reducible to language. The unique sign which is the 'nom de Roberte' eludes the narrative; 'Roberte' is not to be possessed. The motif of suspension is a key point around which the simulacra of Roberte's possession turn. The failure of possession and the ironic relation of the simulacrum to the stereotype are affirmed in this motif. The final image of Roberte ce soir offers an image of just such a suspension, an image of Roberte being eternally withheld and beyond possession :

Roberte, la jupe encore relevée, d'une main semble rajuster sa gaine ou ses bas, tandis que de l'autre du bout des doigts elle tend une paire de clés à Victor que celui-ci touche sans les prendre jamais : car l'un et l'autre semblent en suspens dans leur positions respectives (LH, 173).

Such an image of suspension also underpins the use of tenses which was discussed earlier. Just as Victor remains fixed in his movement towards Roberte here so the protagonists of the other scenes are halted in their progress towards possession. The use of the present tense in the parallel bars episode or of the imperfect tense in the scene of Roberte and the 'collégiens' both served to interrupt the temporal flow of the narrative, to suspend narrative time and place it in a time of repetition and eternity.

scenes with pornography as it is marketed today but would see such scenes as specifically anti-pornographic.

The simulacrum, always designating its difference from itself, suspends and interrupts the possession of Roberte, thereby indicating that the keys to Truth are withheld and will always be withheld. The simulacrum situates writing outside the time of logical progression and universal Truth and places it under the sign of repetition and eternity, where thought is returned to a point of intensity, and dissolved within the movement of the impersonal.

Economies of writing.

It is clear why some critics have mistaken the nature of Klossowski's writing and painting. On one level it is arguable that he does reproduce traditional schema of the reification of the female body and its appropriation by a violent desire. Yet in exaggerating these schema, in self-consciously playing upon them, he writing articulates a suspension of the very movement of violence itself. The play of the simulacrum suspends the appropriation of one subject by another in favour of another form of violence. The forces of 'impulsions' or the intensity of the 'phantasme' do not imply the aggressive desire of an identifiable subject but rather precede any subject. They imply a singularity which performs violence upon the generality of language and the stability of the conscious subject (this, of course, parallels Klossowski's reformulation of the question of violence in the 1967 edition of *Sade mon prochain*). This amounts to the positing of two different economies of language, one based on the circulation of conventional stereotypes (the 'code des signes') and upon the principle of equivalence or sameness, the other based upon the circulation of simulacra and the principle of non-equivalence or difference. The stereotype represents something and

signals its coincidence with that which it represents; the simulacrum always signals its lack of coincidence with what it represents.

This latter economy of writing was described at the end of the last chapter as theatre or spectacle. The artifice and sense of simulation that such a designation implies has been reaffirmed here in the discussion of the simulacrum. A mode of writing based on an economy of difference would contest the writing of representation and is a motif which has been implicit throughout the preceding analyses of all Klossowski's writings. But Klossowski's work not only employs what could be referred to as a different economy of writing but also explicitly problematises and offers a critique of the notion of economy itself. How, for instance, can one talk of an economy of difference at all when the very notion of economy is dependent upon the principle of equivalence and exchange (and therefore upon a logic of representation)? This second economy of writing is, on these terms, itself an impossibility. The strange custom from which the *Roberte* trilogy takes its name offers an image of a form of exchange based on difference rather than sameness and at the same time articulates the impossibility of such a form of exchange. 'Les Lois de l'hospitalité', as Octave seeks to practise them, highlight the impossibility of an economy founded upon difference and problematise the notion that such an economy in some way transgresses one based upon equivalence. In the end a discussion of the simulacrum as a form of economy brings this argument back to the point from which it started, namely to the question of transgression.

Exchange.

Qui donne pour ne pas recevoir prend à chaque fois possession de qui, ayant reçu pour être, ne peut rendre; d'avance ce dernier s'est tout entier donné à la puissance qui s'augmente, au lieu de diminuer, en donnant sans recevoir pour reprendre davantage qu'elle n'a donné

La Monnaie vivante⁶⁸

Octave's desire is to give his wife to guests of his household. The more unfamiliar the guest, the greater his desire to offer this unusual hospitality. Yet Octave seeks to give his wife in order to possess her more thoroughly, more absolutely. To this end he institutes a singular practice of welcome : 'les lois de l'hospitalité' which give the Roberte trilogy its name. Yet how is one to make sense of such a strange custom and in what sense can one give something away in order better to possess it?

In the practice of 'les lois de l'hospitalité' the key Klossowskian motifs of the 'phantasme', the 'nom de Roberte' and of transgression are brought together under the sign of economy or exchange. Questions of economy, and more explicitly of an economy based upon the gift rather than barter (the exchange of goods of equivalent value) lie at the heart of the debate surrounding writing and transgression in France from the thirties onwards. The linking of a notion of economy with language and questions of meaning was already well established by this time. For instance Nietzsche in his early essay 'Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn' compares words to coins. Words he argues are given a value in much the same way as is money. Likewise Saussure in his Cours de linguistique générale speaks of verbal signs as

functioning according to their 'valeur' in the system of language⁶⁹. The question of transgression in its relation to language and writing is developed from the thirties onwards within a wider critique of the notion of economy itself⁷⁰. One of the most important contributions to this particular critique of economy can be found in the work of Georges Bataille⁷¹. Bataille's reading of Marcel Mauss lead him to promote a form of economy based upon the gift (taking as its model native American forms of ritual exchange such as the potlatch). The appeal of the gift economy lies in the way it challenges the omnipotence of conventional exchange based as it is upon the principle of equivalence. The circulation of goods in the form of gifts constitutes a system of exchange which, Bataille would argue, precedes and exceeds the economy of identity and meaning (in which one thing is given a value equal or equivalent to another). Bataille's conception finds its fullest elaboration in his 1949 work La Part maudite⁷² where he develops his notions of general and restricted economy within the context of both historical and contemporary perspectives⁷³. Bataille's discourse on economy, and particularly on the notion of a gift economy is a key frame of reference for any understanding of Klossowski's 'lois de l'hospitalité'.

⁶⁸ La Monnaie vivante (Paris: Éditions Éric Losfeld, 1972); re-edition (without photographs by Pierre Zucca) Paris: Joëlle Losfeld, 1994, p. 54.

⁶⁹ Cf. Roland Barthes, 'Saussure, le signe, la démocratie' in L'Aventure sémiologique, (Paris: Seuil, 1985), pp. 221-26.

⁷⁰ This begins most crucially with Marx's Capital (subtitled A critique of political economy) and its attempt to challenge the basis of traditional economic thinking (i.e the imposition of a general principle of equivalence or the subordination of use value by exchange value).

⁷¹ The critique of economy becomes a central term of reference for thinkers in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of Bataille's reflections. This has been developed most significantly by Lyotard in his work L'Économie libidinale.

⁷² Georges Bataille, La Part maudite, Œuvres complètes, vol.7.

⁷³ Although this opposition does not necessarily function in any straightforward way. See Derrida's essay on Bataille in L'Écriture et la différence, (Paris: Seuil, 1967), pp. 369-407.

In fact all of the motifs of Klossowski's writing which have so far been examined intersect with this question of economy or exchange. Whether it be perversion in Sade's writing, the sign of the Vicious Circle in Nietzsche's discourse, or indeed the 'signe unique' itself in Les Lois de l'hospitalité, all these terms have their particular value within Klossowski's writing because they function paradoxically as signs of that which is *inexchangeable*. The 'signe unique', for example, refers only to itself; it is equivalent to nothing other than itself. It is, therefore, a sign which is not a sign, it does not function within language since linguistic signs always function on the basis of equivalence. The singularity of perversion or the intensity of Eternal Return are likewise placed outside the codified sign systems of human thought and language. The conclusion of the previous discussion spoke of Klossowski's writing in terms of two 'economies of language', the one based upon meaning and sameness (the 'code des signes') the other based upon non-equivalence or difference (the fabrication of simulacra). Yet how is it possible to exchange the inexchangeable? Or, put another way, how is it possible to think an economy of difference when the very notion of economy seems to imply an exchange or circulation of goods which can only take place on the basis of some rule of equivalence (by which one thing is substituted for another according to agreed principles)?

It is in answer to this question that Bataille champions the Amerindian ritual of the potlatch in La Part maudite and Klossowski formulates the custom of 'les lois de l'hospitalité' in the trilogy of that name. In both cases an attempt is made to formulate a mode of exchange which transgresses or overturns classical economy in favour of an 'economy' of the gift.

A contradictory custom - 'Les lois de l'hospitalité'.

Unlike Bataille in *La Part maudite*, Klossowski has recourse to fiction in order to stage a system of exchange predicated upon the gift. In a densely argued few pages towards the beginning of *Roberte ce soir*, Octave's formulation of 'les lois de l'hospitalité' is presented in a language couched in terms borrowed from Scholastic philosophy. It is also formulated in a manner which carries with it echoes of Bataille's project of the Sacred, implying both a transgression of the Law and a merging or subject and object. The master of the household, in the first instance, seeks to offer up his wife to visitors in order to institute a more essential relationship with them than he would otherwise have :

le maître de céans recherche avec l'étranger qu'il reçoit une relation non plus accidentelle, mais essentielle. L'un et l'autre ne sont d'abord que des substances isolées, sans communication l'une avec l'autre, qui ne soit toujours qu'accidentelle : toi qui te crois loin de chez toi chez quelqu'un que tu crois être chez soi, tu n'apportes que des accidents de ta substance, en tant qu'il font de toi un étranger, à celui qui te reçoit dans tout ce qui ne fait de lui-même qu'un hôte accidentel (LH, 110).

Klossowski's use of the term 'communication' here alludes to both the Catholic doctrine of 'l'incommunicabilité des êtres' on the one hand and the Bataillan theory of the sacred and transgression on the other. The former, a doctrine derived from Thomist philosophy, describes the existence of a human being as a substance which is doubly determined, principally by its *essence (essentia)*, and secondarily by what are called *accidents*⁷⁴. Accidents are secondary because they can be altered or undergo

⁷⁴ Of which there are nine : quantity (*quantum*), quality (*quale*), action (*actio*), passion (*passio*), relation (*relatio* or *esse ad*), place (*ubi*), time (*quando*), possession and situation (*habitus* and *situs*). For a full account of this theory of accidents and essence see Etienne Gilson, Le

transformation without affecting essence. They define the contingency of human beings and their being in the world relative to other substances (human beings). Substance is isolated because it can only know another substance accidentally, that is it can apprehend only accidents not essence. All communication between human beings is therefore relative rather than essential. That which is most essential to a human being remains always incommunicable⁷⁵. For Octave his ritual of hospitality is a means of apprehending essence :

parce que le maître de céans invite ici l'étranger à remonter à la source de toutes substances au-delà de tout accident, voici comment il inaugure une relation substantielle entre lui et l'étranger, qui en vérité sera un rapport non plus relatif, mais absolu, comme si, le maître étant confondu avec l'étranger, sa relation avec toi qui viens d'entrer n'était plus qu'une relation de soi à soi-même (LH,110).

In what sense, however, can the offering up of a spouse to a fortuitous stranger constitute a penetration of accidental attributes to the essence of substance? It is here that the relation of 'hospitality' to a Bataillan conception of communication and the sacred gives shape and context to Octave's singular desire.

In my first chapter I examined Bataille's theory of transgression in the context of his writing on Sade. The key element in this discussion was Bataille's insistence that in transgressing limits placed upon behaviour by social taboos the Sadeian hero was

Thomisme (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992). See in particular pp. 22-24 and pp. 55-73.

⁷⁵ For a discussion of Klossowski's use of a theological notion of incommunicability see Alain Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski, pp. 93-108. It goes without saying that Klossowski is adapting this doctrine to his own parodic ends; for Klossowski it is not the essence of the Self which is incommunicable (the Self being an arbitrary role or mask) but the pre-personal or impersonal movements of intensity which underpin the Self (as a foundation which is without foundation). For further discussion of Klossowski's use of this doctrine see Deleuze's essay 'Klossowski ou les corps-langages', Logique du sens (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 325-50; see in particular pp. 338-39. See also Jean-Pol Madou, Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski, p. 50.

unleashing energies which overturned also the limits of the Self as a discrete entity.

This dissolution of the Self/Other, subject/object distinction in the act of transgression Bataille refers to as 'la communication'. This, of course, is not communication in the conventional sense since it does not refer to contact between two discrete entities but rather the dissolution of these entities. In L'Expérience intérieure Bataille speaks of the 'extase' which gives rise to 'la communication' as follows :

Il n'y a plus de sujet = objet, mais "brèche[sic] béante" entre l'un et l'autre et, dans la brèche, le sujet, l'objet sont dissous, il y a passage, communication, mais non de l'un à l'autre : l'un et l'autre ont perdu l'existence distincte⁷⁶

Octave's attempt to inaugurate 'une relation substantielle entre lui et l'étranger' recasts this experience of transgression and communication. In 'giving' his wife to a guest of his household, in requiring Roberte to commit adultery, Octave is enacting a transgression of that most sacred of limits, that is to say the bond of Christian marriage. This moment re-enacts or recasts the experience of 'la conscience sadiste' as it was outlined in the first version of Sade mon prochain. The violation of the sacred bonds of marriage is also at the same time a more general violation of God's Law. However, the terms of this transgression in this instance are more complicated (not to say convoluted) and need some further explanation.

The edict of hospitality is formulated in such a way that both Octave and Roberte are assigned two rôles the former expressing their conventional social functions and the latter indicating their functions as both giver and gift. Octave the 'maître de céans' is doubled into 'l'hôte'. Roberte the 'maîtresse de céans' whose identity is defined by her social function as wife (or for example as the aunt of

⁷⁶ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, vol. 5 (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), p.74.

Antoine) is doubled up as 'l'hôtesse'. In both cases the second term refers to Octave and Roberte in relation to the law of hospitality. They become either host or hostess only in relation to the act of 'giving 'Roberte' in such a way that hospitality is 'l'essence même de l'hôte et de l'hôtesse' (LH,110). In the scholastic terms outlined above the 'maître' and 'maîtresse' denote accidental (contingent) identity whilst the terms 'hôte' and 'hôtesse' denote essential identity. In this sense 'les lois de l'hospitalité' as a ritual of transgression assimilates the thomist conception of accidents to the Bataillan notion of the limit as that which marks the Self as a discrete entity. Both accidents as contingent determinations and limits as restrictions or taboos structure identity as it is socially given. In offering his wife to a stranger Octave seeks to transgress those limits which constitute Roberte in her accidental identity (that of 'la maîtresse de céans') :

La notion de maîtresse de céans, est prise sous la raison d'existence; elle n'est une hôtesse que sous la raison de l'essence : cette essence est donc limitée par son actualisation dans l'existence en tant que maîtresse de céans. Et la trahison n'a donc ici d'autre fonction que de rompre cette limitation (LH,111).

Roberte given to the 'invité' is projected out of her accidental identity (wife, aunt) to be revealed in her essence (Roberte). Yet at the same time, and most crucially, this act of transgression decomposes the limits which separate the 'hôte' and the 'invité' so that they 'communicate' in the Bataillan sense and become interchangeable. It is interesting to note that the French language itself incorporates this possibility insofar as the word 'hôte' can denote both host *and* guest. At some level language does not discriminate between these apparent opposites in a manner which reflects what is at stake in the act of hospitality itself⁷⁷.

⁷⁷ For an illuminating discussion of the resonances set up around the terms 'hôte' and 'hôtesse' see Madou, Démons et simulacres dans l'œuvre de Pierre Klossowski, p. 108. Madou's discussion

So there are two key moments to 'les lois de l'hospitalité', firstly that Roberte, on being possessed by a stranger, is propelled out of her accidental role ('maîtresse') to reveal her essential identity (essential because as 'hôtesse' Roberte is propelled outside her conventional social identity in the transgression of the marriage bond). Secondly the 'hôte' and 'invité' cease to be separate entities as limits are overturned in the transgressive act :

l'hôte s'actualise dans l'invité, ou si tu veux, il actualise une possibilité de l'invité, autant que toi, l'invité, une possibilité de l'hôte. La délectation la plus éminente de l'hôte a pour objet l'actualisation dans la maîtresse de céans de l'essence inactuelle de l'hôtesse (LH,110).

Octave, as he inaugurates an essential relation with the guest, seeks to possess the essence of Roberte (as 'hôtesse'). The guest possesses Roberte in her essence (liberated from the limitation of 'la maîtresse') but at the same moment Octave becomes interchangeable with the guest. The 'hôte' is both host and guest in such a way that allows Octave to 'know' his wife in a manner that would otherwise be denied him.

Hospitality, therefore, is a means by which Octave seeks to possess the essence of Roberte. Without this ritual of giving his wife to a fortuitous guest Octave knows Roberte only relatively or accidentally. As 'maître de céans' he knows Roberte only as 'maîtresse de céans'. But by actualising the essence of Roberte as she is taken sexually by his guest, and by confounding himself with his guest he knows her and possesses her absolutely. His hope in instituting the law of hospitality is that :

turns around words he links together in the following series : 'hospitalité, hôpital, hôte, otage, hostie, ostensor, autel', all of which figure in key episodes of the Roberte trilogy.

il saisira coûte que coûte l'essence de l'hôtesse dans l'infidélité de la maîtresse de céans. Car ce qu'il veut, c'est la posséder infidèle, en tant que hôtesse remplissant fidèlement ses devoirs (LH, 111).

It is in this sense that Octave gives in order better to possess. His project (like that of the Sadeian hero) is broadly speaking a dialectical one. Octave loses Roberte in order better to affirm his propriety over her. The negation of the bonds of marriage through the adulteration of Roberte is a suppression but also a conservation (a 'suppression conservatrice' or *Aufhebung* in the manner outlined in the first chapter in relation to Kojève). Octave is seeking to use the contradictory nature of his act as a means of imposing a totality and unity on the relation between his own self and that other which is Roberte. Yet this act of dialectical assimilation founders upon its very impossibility.

Octave knows, for instance, that in the act of giving Roberte the identities of 'hôte' and 'invité' are dissolved and confounded. At the moment when his own identity is subject to dissolution he seeks to possess, he seeks to accrue something to himself in the moment that he ceases to be himself. The gesture which would allow him to possess Roberte at the same time suspends his identity (since it has become interchangeable with that of the 'invité') and suspends the principle of propriety by which he could be said to 'own' or 'possess' anything at all. The possession of Roberte is a gesture which renders itself impossible in the moment it occurs. At the same time he desires to possess Roberte in her infidelity, yet that infidelity is constituted only insofar as she is '[une] hôtesse remplissant fidèlement ses devoirs'.

The gesture of hospitality, both as a transgressive act and as a dialectical project, appears to be an impossible enterprise from the outset⁷⁸.

Bataille's discourse on the 'potlatch' in La Part maudite can shed some light on the paradoxical nature of this custom⁷⁹. Bataille's critique of expenditure was outlined briefly in the opening discussion of this thesis. His proposition that human existence is always in excess of itself, that rational systems can never know any closure and always produce an 'excédant', forms the basis of his meditation on economy in La Part maudite. The distinction Bataille posits between a restricted and general economy finds its expression within the economic sphere proper in the opposition between a circulation of goods based on barter and one based on deliberate wastage or dilapidation of wealth. Barter, or the exchange of goods on the basis of equivalence, is developed into its most sophisticated form in capitalist economy (which accrues and appropriates). Dilapidation, or the futile expenditure of goods, is developed into social

⁷⁸ Interestingly, Daniel Wilhem chooses to gloss the structure set up in the ritual of hospitality in Lacanian terms. Of the visits payed by the 'invité' he says: 'Il est nécessaire de les relever dans le jeu et par le jeu des ordres lacaniens, dans et par le jeu déchirant du symbolique, de l'imaginaire. Nous avançons ceci: le visiteur du récit klossowskien met un pied dans l'ordre des contrats et un pied dans l'ordre des simulacres; il marche ainsi déchiré entre la contrainte du retour et le leurrrre du revenir; il paraît danser sur un pied et sur un ordre, et changer aussitôt de pied, et d'ordre; il progress en dansant; il danse le jeu de l'outré, il fait le jeu d'un troisième ordre où le tableau lui-même paraît prendre et perdre pied: le réel', Pierre Klossowski: Le Corps impie, p. 112. The strength of this reading lies in the way it highlights the double nature of Klossowski's writing, the fact that it both uses the stereotypes of the 'code des signes' and undermines them in favour of singularity. Wilhem's reading also allows the 'visiteur' as a point in a structure to be a position occupied by the reader. The 'invité' as intermediary (be it figured as demon, colosse or dwarf) becomes a locus which can be occupied 'à tour de rôle' by reader, Octave and Klossowski alike precisely because it alludes to a point where identity is overturned in favour of a moment of impersonal intensity. It might seem difficult given the context in which Klossowski is writing *not* to assimilate such a triadic structure to the lacanian orders. Clearly, however, such a reading is useful but by no means exhaustive.

⁷⁹ For some useful commentaries on Bataille's discourse on economy see Carolyn Bailey Gill (ed.), Bataille. Writing the Sacred (London, Routledge, 1995). See in particular Geoffrey Bennington's article 'Introduction to economics I', pp. 46-57, and Denis Hollier, 'The use value of the impossible', pp. 133-53. See also Michael Richardson, Georges Bataille (London, Routledge, 1994).

practices of sacrifice (as in the Aztec culture) or into the circulation of goods through a ritual of giving or potlatch (practised primarily, but by no means exclusively, by natives of North America). In the custom of the potlatch, Bataille argues, the paradoxical nature of human existence is acted out and affirmed.

The potlatch is a paradoxical custom because in the act of giving it represents a wastage but also an accumulation in the sense that it increases the prestige of the giver. According to this ritual one gives and the amount that is given becomes an affirmation of status or rank. The onus is then on the receiver to give in return in order not to be in a permanently subservient position with regard to the giver (although the return of the gift is usually at a much later stage). Potlatch is, as it were, a form of challenge. Wealth is given away (or sometimes just destroyed) in order to affirm the quantity of one's wealth; the more one gives the greater one's accumulation of prestige. In the rite of potlatch goods that could be put to good use are expended uselessly but this expenditure (or negation of use value) is converted into a symbolic accrual. Bataille's point is that the potlatch, unlike traditional economy, does not seek to convert use value (labour, enjoyment) into exchange value (money), nor does it seek to stock up resources in view of exchange, rather it wastes profligately. Yet this wastage is, at the same time, 'made use of'. This makes the potlatch a paradoxical gesture which simultaneously implies both wastage and use. The potlatch articulates an impossible moment as it seeks to make use of profligacy. It expresses in the very same gesture moments which are radically opposed to each other. The potlatch :

utilise à contresens la négation qu'il fait de l'utilité des ressources qu'il gaspille. Il fait ainsi tomber dans la contradiction non seulement lui-même mais en entier l'existence de l'homme⁸⁰.

This contradiction exactly parallels the impossibility of Octave's attempt to possess Roberte in the ritual giving of 'les lois de l'hospitalité'. Like Octave's custom the potlatch enacts a project (a giving which is at the same time an attempt to possess) which undermines itself because it simultaneously articulates two diametrically opposed instances : wastage (the giving of Roberte or an item in the ritual of the potlatch) and accumulation (the 'possession' of Roberte or the accrual of prestige). In the same manner as 'les lois' the potlatch represents the impossibility of a giving which would also be a form of keeping where the giver : 'place la valeur, le prestige et la vérité de la vie dans la négation de l'emploi servile des biens , mais au même instant fait de cette négation un emploi servile'⁸¹. In enacting such a gesture the potlatch affirms the paradoxical basis of human life itself. It affirms that any project of totalisation or dialectical synthesis is always predicated upon a radical expenditure which overturns such a project.

Both the potlatch and 'Les lois de l'hospitalité' show the degeneration of dialectical thinking (where identity or utility are negated and yet maintained) into a moment of aporia or paradox. As a form of gift exchange the potlatch repeats the appropriative movement of human thought when it reaches that limit where it can no

⁸⁰ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, vol. 7, p. 75.

⁸¹ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, vol. 7, p. 75. Bataille comments in La Part maudite : 'Nul ne peut à la fois connaître et ne pas être détruit, nul ne peut à la fois consumer la richesse et l'accroître' Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, vol. 7, p. 76. This sentence could apply equally to Octave's custom (he seeks to possess at the moment when his own self is dissolved) and to the ritual of potlatch (which gives in order to accrue).

longer appropriate but rather self-destructs (the moment which, for Bataille, Sade's writing also embodies). Bataille writes :

En effet, la contradiction du potlatch ne se révèle pas seulement dans toute l'histoire, mais plus profondément dans les opérations de la pensée⁸².

Human existence as it attempts to '*saisir* ce qu'elle voulut elle-même *insaisissable*, [d'] *utiliser* ce dont elle refusa *l'utilité*'⁸³ is shown to be always divided from itself, always in contradiction with itself, without any hope of that contradiction being sublated into a greater synthesis.

In 1947 Klossowski responded to this crisis of dialectical thought by affirming the greater unity of God. Yet the paradoxical moment which the potlatch or laws of hospitality embody has been shown to be present throughout all of Klossowski's writings. The paradoxical nature of both hospitality and potlatch lies in the way they both seek to bring into exchange that which properly speaking is inexchangeable. In the same way the Sadeian libertine, as portrayed in first version of Sade mon prochain, impurely desired to possess purity (that of the Virgin). Actaeon's attempt to possess Diana, Nietzsche's wish to think the thought that overturns thought itself (Eternal Return) are all expressions of the same impossible desire.

As we have seen the sexual scenes of La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes and Roberte ce soir also stage that same moment (in the preceding discussion of writing and painting 'le phantasme'). In this sense the fictional 'lois de l'hospitalité' (the ritual of giving inaugurated by Octave) operate as a kind of mise en abyme of the sexual episodes. It has been argued that the sexual scenes seek to embrace or represent the

⁸² Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, vol. 7, p. 76.

⁸³ Georges Bataille, Œuvres complètes, vol. 7, p. 75.

'phantasme' in an impossible gesture (the 'phantasme' being outside language and conscious thought). This parallels Octave's attempt to possess Roberte in the ritual of hospitality. Just as language seeks to articulate what is outside itself in these sexual scenes, Octave seeks to possess Roberte at the moment when he is outside of himself, at the moment when he is interchangeable with the 'invité' and is no longer a subject who can possess (the principle of propriety having been overturned). 'Les lois de l'hospitalité', the ritual of giving which gives the Roberte trilogy its name, provide an image of the desire at work in the narrative itself as it attempts to describe Roberte 'hors d'elle-même', succumbing to sexual pleasure and becoming different from herself. The writing of the 'signe unique' or the 'phantasme' is figured by this notion of hospitality as an impossible attempt to possess.

This conception of impossibility, articulated in Bataille's potlatch and Octave's 'lois de l'hospitalité' is by now a familiar term of reference within this discussion. Yet, even at the risk of some repetition, it is necessary to give a full explanation of Octave's unusual custom because the narrative of the Roberte trilogy introduces an important ambiguity into the motif of exchange which this custom embodies. The paradoxical gesture articulated by 'les lois de l'hospitalité' brings this discussion back to the question of transgression as it was articulated within the context of Klossowski's earlier and later writings on Sade.

Théodore's dilemma - 'l'essence de l'hôtesse'.

Théodore's dilemma in Le Souffleur, the third final and novel of Les Lois de l'hospitalité, has its origin in two key sentences from Octave's discourse on hospitality.

It was shown earlier that Octave's desire with regard to Roberte was to : 'la posséder infidèle, en tant que hôtesse remplissant fidèlement ses devoirs'. In casting Roberte out of herself in her role as 'maîtresse de céans' to possess her as 'hôtesse', Octave is taking a certain risk. He is gambling on the fact the 'hôtesse', in her essence, is faithful to the 'hôte'. Octave writes :

Si l'essence de l'hôtesse est dans la fidélité à l'hôte, cela permet à l'hôte de faire surgir aux yeux de l'invité l'hôtesse, essentielle dans la maîtresse de céans existante (LH, 111).

What this means is that Octave can possess Roberte only through transgressing the bonds of marriage if Roberte, in her essence, remains within and is faithful to those bonds in the first place. By transgressing the limits of the marital unit Octave affirms them (and therefore his propriety of Roberte) all the more. And yet what if, muses Octave, the essence of Roberte was in infidelity? What if she were never, in her essence, bound by those bonds? Octave poses the question and offers his own answer :

Si l'essence de l'hôtesse était dans l'infidélité, l'hôte aura beau jouer, il aura perdu d'avance (LH, 111).

The functioning of 'les lois de l'hospitalité', however contradictory, depends on this question of the essence or essential identity of Roberte and this question is really a question of her self-sameness (her fidelity to herself rather than to Octave). The gift of Roberte to a stranger casts her outside of herself in the transgression of the marriage bond (her role as 'maîtresse de céans'). Yet if Roberte is essentially already unfaithful, already outside of herself, then the act of transgression has no value. How can one transgress a limit which has, in a crucial sense, always already been transgressed? If the essence of Roberte is not self-same, if she is always unfaithful to herself, then she has always already also been unfaithful to Octave. Her act of infidelity which is dictated by

'les lois de l'hospitalité' is therefore no longer a faithful act of infidelity (as Octave wishes) because it is not an act of infidelity at all. Octave's contradictory attempt to possess Roberte has failed before it has even begun, because Roberte is already outside of those limits he seeks to infringe in order to possess her.

This question of the essence and fidelity of Roberte in relation to the laws of hospitality is played out in the narrative of Le Souffleur and turns around the possibility of two types of giving and two types of transgression. In Le Souffleur it is Théodore Lacase, the narrator, who is married to Roberte. Théodore Lacase is also a novelist and author of a work going by the name of Roberte ce soir in which one Octave institutes a strange custom of welcome. Like many of the proper names in Klossowski's novels the name of Théodore Lacase is highly suggestive and overdetermined. 'Lacase', for instance, suggests a reference to 'casa' or house. Lacase, then, is a double of Octave, the 'maitre de céans', and, like his double, promotes within his household a code of hospitality which involves the adulteration of Roberte⁸⁴. Within the narrative of Le Souffleur, then, Roberte ce soir is Théodore's

⁸⁴ The name Théodore also means 'Gift of God', an allusion which associates him even more closely with the act of giving and the attempt to possess the essence of Roberte (which parallels Actaeon's attempt to possess the divinity of Diane). Other names within this text are also suggestive. Ygdrasil, drawn from Norse mythology, means Tree of Life. Le Souffleur, like La Vocation suspendue before it, can be read as a 'roman à clefs'. In this context Ygdrasil may be identified as Jacques Lacan (which poses the question as to what links one might make between the Tree of Life and Lacan's work?). Guy de Savigny who has ambivalent relations with Théodore and a daughter called Julie appears to be Bataille (is the aristocratic name a personal aside?). All these allusions are kept necessarily veiled and offer no definitive answers or interpretations. Klossowski's use of the 'roman à clef' again places his writing under the sign of repetition. Just as the figure of Théodore repeats the character of Octave (and K. repeats that of Théodore) without any form of identity being established between them, so the various figures of these novels might be said to repeat historically existing figures (Bataille, Lacan and Klossowski himself). However, as one might expect, this repetition does not imply a mimetic project but rather designates the already fictional status of those selves who go by the proper names Bataille, Lacan and Klossowski. This essentially articulates a transgression of the whole life/fiction dichotomy and thus of the autobiographical genre in general. Jean Decottignies in his

creation and 'Les lois de l'hospitalité' Théodore's obsession. Le Souffleur can therefore be read as a mise-en-abyme of the writing of Roberte ce soir and shows the narrator/author of this text to be subject to the same moment of aporia or dissolution as Octave. On first reading, Le Souffleur is a story which can appear highly convoluted and confusing. This is because it is essentially the story of a confusion, namely a confusion centring on the identity of Roberte, Théodore's wife. The confusion arises from the fact that Roberte has a double. Théodore, who stages enactments of Roberte ce soir in his apartment for friends and acquaintances, desires to see Roberte doubled, cast out of herself as she is taken by another. These rehearsals of Roberte ce soir represent a theatrical enactment of 'les lois de l'hospitalité', although the reader is led to believe that Roberte has indeed had relations with one of Théodore's friends (one Guy de Savigny).

Yet Théodore's nightmare begins when, one evening during one of the 'répétitions' of Roberte another woman arrives in the apartment, Roberte's double in a very literal sense, and begins to struggle with his wife. The struggle ends, one of the woman leaves, and yet in the confusion Théodore is not quite sure which one. From this point on Théodore can never be sure of anything at all. He cannot be certain whether what he sees is real or imagined, whether the Roberte he encounters is the Roberte he knows or her unfamiliar double. His narrative proceeds with strange

work partially devoted to Klossowski (the rest is devoted to Stendhal and Giono) articulates this describing the movement of Klossowski's text as a perversion of the autobiographical : 'Telle est la perversion imposée à la pratique autobiographique : prodiguant d'une part les conditions de cette pratique, sous la forme de ces désignations à la faveur desquelles *l'identité du signature force la clôture fabulaire* pour s'installer au cœur du récit que l'on fera agir l'oubli de soi et vaciller la *mémoire* constitutive de la personne. Pratique foncièrement ambiguë, par laquelle l'auteur des Lois de l'hospitalité joue et risque son propre statut. Déplacement du récit

indications such as ‘Ce qui se passa le lendemain - si lendemain il y eut - comment le décrire maintenant?’ (LH,233) and has the air of a descent into hallucination and madness. Le Souffleur is the story of Théodore's attempt to hold onto his sanity and uncover the mystery and uncertainty concerning the true identity of his wife. What he uncovers is a long history of collusion between two women whose resemblance to one with the other has allowed for a most singular form of role swapping. Throughout the years of his marriage Théodore has believed himself to be the husband of one Roberte, ‘veuve de guerre’ and former wife of a ‘commandant D.’. Roberte's strange double he identifies as one Valentine K. wife of K. the writer (who bears a strange resemblance to Théodore himself) but also supposedly a widow who was once married to a ‘docteur Rodin’.

The more Théodore learns the greater and more definitive his confusion becomes. Roberte and Valentine K., Théodore learns from his friend Guy, found it necessary to swap identities during the occupation whilst working for the Resistance. Valentine became Roberte, Roberte became Valentine. Roberte was therefore the real widow of ‘le docteur Rodin’, Valentine the real widow of ‘le commandant D.’ (Roberte being Valentine and Valentine being Roberte). In the years after the war this confusion of roles was never resolved, but rather was exploited all the more. Théodore must confront the possibility that the wife of K. is Roberte and that Roberte is in fact the wife of K. In this case Roberte, his wife, is not his wife and a woman who is not his wife is his wife. In fact Théodore can never know which is which, whether the two have swapped rôles again or swapped back in a cycle which renders the identity of

Roberte forever uncertain. This is a repetition of the rôle swapping which occurs in La Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes between Sante-Sede and Binnsnicht. In both cases the identities of the two figures involved become exchangeable in such a way as to radically undermine the principle of identity. One never knows which is which and under such circumstances there is no possibility one rôle being proper to the figure who bears it (Valentine might just as well be Roberte and vice-versa). Once again what this exchangeability affirms is that identity is only ever an arbitrary rôle or mask.

This point is emphasised when, after his conversation with Guy, Théodore visits his friend and psychoanalyst docteur Ygdrasil (who in years previously had the docteur Rodin's widow as his secretary). He confronts Ygdrasil with the following conclusion :

ou bien Roberte est aussi la femme de ce K. et donc la veuve d'un certain docteur Rodin, ou bien elle n'est pas la femme de K., mais bien la veuve du commandant D. et dans ce cas j'aurais vécu... tantôt avec l'une, tantôt avec l'autre... (LH,281).

This radical confusion and uncertainty surrounding the identity of Roberte represents a crisis not just for Théodore's sanity but also for the functioning of his 'lois de l'hospitalité'. His conversation with Ygdrasil soon shifts to a discussion of the implications of the uncertainty surrounding Roberte for Théodore's custom of hospitality.

Théodore and Ygdrasil disagree on the subject of economy. Théodore desires exchange as the giving of a gift (embodied in the ritual of offering Roberte to a stranger). Like Octave he seeks to give in order better to possess, as he tells Ygdrasil :

On ne donne jamais ce qu'il y a d'inéchangeable, mais toujours l'on prête pour mieux posséder ce que l'on a (LH,303).

Ygdrasil, on the other hand does not believe in property and possession. The adulteration of a wife by her husband so that the latter can affirm his ownership of the wife all the more is an unacceptable alternative. For Ygdrasil the circulation of goods or, more importantly in this context, the sexual traffic between men and women can only take place as a free circulation, one without ownership or propriety, where giving is always accompanied with receiving. Ygdrasil's logic dictates the 'mise en commun des hommes et des femmes' :

L'adulteration de l'épouse par l'époux, on ne peut pas vivre avec une semblable idée. La pratique de l'hospitalité, telle que vous la concevez ne saurait être unilatérale. Comme toute hospitalité, celle-là aussi, et particulièrement celle-là, exige la réciprocité absolue pour être viable, et c'est le pas que vous ne voulez pas franchir : la mise en commun des femmes par les hommes et des hommes par les femmes. Voilà le corollaire de vos lois de l'hospitalité, la seule légitimation universelle de l'adulteration de l'épouse par l'époux, sans quoi tout ceci ne reste qu'un pur phantasme où la morale monogamique se transgresse éperdument pour revenir sur elle-même, où le sacrement de mariage ne se vérifie que par le sacrilège, vestige d'une théologie dont les miasmes vous empoisonnent... (LH,303).

One must receive as well as give, claims Ygdrasil, or the act of transgression embodied in 'les lois de l'hospitalité' will always be limited and will always confirm the limits which it seeks to transgress. Ygdrasil's insistence on the reciprocity of the gift must not be confused with a notion of barter or the exchange of goods on the basis of equivalence. In the latter, two individuals exchange goods of equal value (this is where the conversion of use value to exchange value would occur, most usually in the fixing of a price). In the reciprocal gift advocated by Ygdrasil each individual engages separately in an act of giving, both of which acts affirm themselves as singular and unique (constituting a circulation of gifts rather than an exchange of goods). Gilles

Deleuze makes just such a confusion between these two forms in his commentary on Klossowski in the appendix of *Logique du sens*⁸⁵. Deleuze cites Ygdrasil's instruction to Théodore : 'Il faut maintenant aller jusqu'au bout, consentir à échanger Roberte contre d'autres femmes, accepter d'être infidèle à Roberte comme vous vous obstinez à vouloir qu'elle le soit à vous-même'⁸⁵. Deleuze comments on Théodore's response as follows :

Théodore reste sourd, il sait que la vraie répétition est dans le don, dans une économie du don qui s'oppose à l'économie mercantile de l'échange (...hommage à Georges Bataille)⁸⁶.

Yet Ygdrasil's notion of 'la mise en commun des femmes par des hommes et des hommes par des femmes' does not constitute a return to 'l'économie mercantile'. Rather it expresses a more radical economy of the gift⁸⁷. If, as Deleuze says, Théodore's formulation of the gift is a homage to Bataille (and the notion of potlatch) then Ygdrasil's formulation is also an implicit critique. A gift without return confirms the limits it transgresses, it confirms possession. Or for Octave/Théodore it enacts the moment where : 'la morale monogamique se transgresse éperdument pour revenir sur elle-même'. If the gift is universalised, as Ygdrasil proposes, then everyone gives, every one receives and the whole notion of propriety, ownership or of limits is abolished. The gift is radicalised because giving functions no longer as an affirmation

⁸⁵ Deleuze, *Logique du sens*, p. 334

⁸⁶ *Logique du sens*, p. 334

⁸⁷ Decottignies, whose commentary relies heavily upon and frequently cites Deleuze, follows him in this judgement of Ygdrasil : 'Ygdrasil reproduit ici l'effort restititif qui depuis un siècle et demi, désamorçe la fiction dénommée *fantastique*; représentant éminent de la race «mercantile». Installer Théodore dans l'emploi de malade mentale (une forme s'il en est!), n'est-ce pas le meilleur moyen de justifier et par conséquence d'aplanir toutes les incongruités dont il est l'instigateur, de préserver toutes les identités que menace la pensée et les discours de ce perturbateur?', *L'Écriture de la fiction*, p. 166.

of possession but as an act of gratuity which overturns possession (and thus, as will become clearer, the notion of giving itself).

Ygdrasil wants Théodore to give properly and to this end Théodore must learn also to receive, must allow everyone to give. In this context the dual or indeterminate identity of Roberte is decisive. The Roberte that Théodore took to be his wife was, when he first met her, active in collecting alms on behalf of the Salvation Army : she is the very image of moral uprightness and fidelity (and indeed of salvation). Valentine K., wearer of furs and excessive make-up, is the very image of a dissolute woman⁸⁸. In fact she has been installed as an 'hôtesse' in a public brothel, the 'Hôtel de Longchamp'. The significance of the 'Hôtel de Longchamp' is divulged to the reader through an article authored by K. himself. Sexual encounters in this house of pleasure are categorised in a number of ways but the main principle is anonymity. Masks are worn and identities kept secret in an anonymous traffic of bodies. The monies derived from the activities of the 'Hôtel' are all added to the coffers of the state and, because of this, those men who allow their wives to become hostesses are placed into a lower tax band. From the moment he first discusses the 'Hôtel' with Guy de Savigny Théodore is determined (because of personal financial pressures) not to be forced to place Roberte there as a hostess. K. however has no such scruples. As a reader and devotee of Fourier, he is a firm believer in 'la mise en commun phalanstérienne'⁸⁹ of

⁸⁸ This, of course recalls, the figures of Justine and Juliette from Sade's novels. An essay by Klossowski devoted to these two characters is included as a preface to La Nouvelle Justine, suivie de l'histoire de Juliette sa sœur, in the *Cercle du livre Précieux* edition of Sade's complete works, 'Justine et Juliette', Sade, Œuvres Complètes, tome VI (1966), pp. 67-79.

⁸⁹ In parallel the later Klossowski is also a reader and commentator on Fourier's work. See Pierre Klossowski 'Entre Marx et Fourier' in Denis Hollier Le Collège de sociologie (Paris: Gallimard/Idées, 1979[new revised edition 1995]), pp 586-87 [pp. 883-85 new edition] and Les

men and women. K., like Ygdrasil, believes in a free circulation of bodies, in a radically gratuitous and generalised giving which abolishes all propriety and identity.

If Théodore's wife is the faithful Roberte he always thought she was, then his construction of 'les lois de l'hospitalité' has the sense which he desires. If, however, his wife is Valentine K. then the 'essence de l'hôtesse' lies in her essential infidelity - the giving has as it were always already taken place and Théodore has nothing to give, no possession to affirm. It has been made clear that Roberte's identity is overturned and becomes arbitrary rôle or mask in the play of substitutions which has taken place between 'Roberte la salutiste' and 'Valentine K. l'hôtesse de l'Hôtel de Longchamp'. In the confusions and doubling of Le Souffleur the entire edifice of 'Les lois de l'hospitalité' as a form of giving shifts in its emphasis. Théodore in giving Roberte has, it seems, 'perdu d'avance' because he can never be sure of the essence of his hostess. The infidelity of Valentine K. means that just as Théodore seeks to offer Roberte to a stranger he might already have received a gift from K. himself and what he gives was never his to give. Giving has become more radical and seems to have moved beyond Théodore's limited conception (where giving is always also possessing) to a point where giving abolishes possession itself (and as will become clear by implication also abolishes giving itself).

Le Souffleur introduces into the narrative of Les Lois de l'hospitalité two discourses on the gift which at the same time embody two different types of transgression. The first gift, that of Octave/Théodore, transgresses limits of propriety in order then to affirm them. The second gift, that of Ygdrasil and K., transgresses

limits in order to abolish them entirely in an affirmation that they have always already been transgressed. These two discourses on the gift mark the break between the earlier and the later Klossowski. Where in 1947 Sade was seen to deny God's Law yet at the same time affirm it, in Klossowski's 1967 version of Sade mon prochain Sade's atheism was shown to be 'foncier' in that it affirmed the fragile nature of all norms (both rational *and* theological); it affirmed the fact that norms always inevitably engender and are overthrown by that which they seek to repress (perversion). The notion of 'la prostitution universelle des êtres' overturned God, the law and any possibility of identity and self-sameness within being. Ygdrasil's and K.'s formulation of giving as a free circulation or communisation of bodies constitutes just such a 'prostitution universelle des êtres' and parallels Klossowski reading in his later commentary on Sade. Le Souffleur therefore is the process of the 'guérison' of Théodore. When he wakes up at the end of the novel the narrator has become K. and his crisis over the identity of his wife has passed. Le Souffleur recounts the movement of one type of transgression to another. It tells of a giving which refuses to receive which is displaced by a more universal notion of the gift. Only in the second type of giving can humanity free itself from the tyranny of moral law and attain to innocence, as Ygdrasil puts it :

La mise en commun des femmes et des hommes prépare la voie à l'innocence, bien plus, en assure le terrain, et chasse du domaine des sexes le sentiment de la faute et le malheur, qui s'engendrent mutuellement (LH,304).

The story of Le Souffleur speaks of a transition from guilt to innocence. It tells on one level the story of Klossowski himself in his transition from a Catholic who read transgression one way in 1947 to a non-Christian who reads transgression in a very

also La Monnaie vivante (passim).

different way in 1967. This transition speaks of a Klossowski who moved from an affirmation of theological unity to a more radical anti-Christian affirmation of multiplicity (which as the second chapter has shown is closely bound up with his reading of Nietzsche)⁹⁰.

Yet this differentiation is more complicated than such a straightforward formulation might imply. This is because Le Souffleur - and Les Lois de l'hospitalité as a whole - does not end on a simple affirmation of one form of giving over the other (i.e. Klossowski's rejection of his earlier Self) but also problematises this second notion of the gift and the second form of transgression which it implies. Indeed, the relationship between the first form of giving (Octave/Théodore) and the second (Ygdrasil/K.) is more complex than may at first seem to be the case. This, once again, is because of the very impossible nature of Ygdrasil/K.'s universalised notion of the gift itself.

Derrida and the impossible gift.

For Ygdrasil and K. the act of giving is an act of radical gratuity. When one gives according to the law of 'la mise en commun des hommes et des femmes' one

⁹⁰ Decottignies describes these two forms of transgression as 'transgression éthique' and as transgression properly speaking. The former is placed under the rubric of a simple disobeying of moral codes : 'Transgression éthique que de «faire le mal en dépit de l'impératif du bien»; que de dire ou écrire ce qu'il ne faut pas dire. A réduire ainsi le sens de la transgression, on aplanit les conflits fondamentaux du langage et l'on esquivé la violence spécifique de toute prise de parole', L'Écriture de la fiction, pp. 171-72. This is clearly reminiscent of the use the surrealists made of Sade and of Klossowski's treatment of him in relation to 'catégories morales' in the 1947 version of Sade mon prochain. Likewise Decottignies' description of the second type of transgression reflects Klossowski's later writing practice : 'il faut bien admettre que la pratique la plus lucide consiste à élaborer un langage qui déclare sa propre insuffisance : un langage qui, loin de s'évertuer à les réduire, affiche comme insurmontables les contradictions qu'engage sa simple formulation', L'Écriture de la fiction, p. 172.

gives in the knowledge that this gesture is universally reciprocated, in the knowledge that what one gives has already been given and that giving never asks to possess that which it gives. This is giving in its pure form, one which does not seek to indebted but which affirms itself as a singular and gratuitous event. Yet, asks Derrida in his essay Donner le temps⁹¹, how is such a gift possible? Does not a gift in a sense always indebted the person who receives it and if nothing belongs to any one person in the first instance (as 'la mise en commun des hommes et des femmes' seeks to affirm) to what extent is a gift a gift at all?

Derrida argues in his essay that any act of giving is indeed bound up with impossibility. In other words he argues that if a gift is to be a gift it must not return to the giver. Derrida repeats Ygdrasil's criticism of Théodore. Ygdrasil's contention is that 'les lois de l'hospitalité' and the act of giving (in order better to possess) are not 'viable'. Indeed, as he puts it : 'on ne peut pas vivre avec une semblable idée' (LH,303). For Derrida the gift, 's'il y en a', must never accrue or affirm possession :

S'il y a don, le *donné* du don (*ce qu'on donne, ce qui est donné, le don comme chose donnée ou comme acte de donation*) ne doit pas revenir au donant (ne disons pas encore au sujet, au donateur ou à la donatrice). Il ne doit pas circuler, il ne doit pas s'échanger, il ne doit en tout cas pas être épuisé, en tant que don, par le procès d'échange, par le mouvement de la circulation du cercle dans la forme du retour au point de départ⁹².

If one gives any recognition of indebtedness or gratitude this affirms that the gift is the property of the giver and that in a crucial sense the gift returns to the giver; the giver accrues what has been given (just as the potlatch gave away in order to accrue status) : 'Pour qu'il y ait don, il faut qu'il n'y ait pas de réciprocité, de retour, d'échange, de

⁹¹ Jacques Derrida, Donner le temps I (Paris, Galilée, 1991).

⁹² Donner le temps I, pp. 18-19.

contre-don ni de dette. Si l'autre me *rend* ou me *doit*, ou doit me rendre ce que je lui donne, il n'y aura pas eu don, que cette restitution soit immédiate ou qu'elle se programme dans le calcul complexe d'une différence à long terme⁹³. The essence of the gift lies in the fact that it never incurs a debt, never asks for a return; therein lies its radical gratuity. It must be noted that Derrida's use of the term 'réciprocité' differs crucially from that of Ygdrasil's in Le Souffleur. When Ygdrasil tells Théodore he must learn to receive as well as give he insists that giving must be generalised to an extent where propriety (and therefore any notion of debt) is abolished. When Derrida says that the gift, to be a gift, must not be reciprocated he is making the same point, i.e. that it must not incur a debt and must not affirm possession. They say the same thing in different ways. But, again, is this gift, as a radical act of gratuity which does not incur a debt or require a return possible?

Derrida pushes his argument further to make the point that the gift is the essence of impossibility. For the gift to be a gift, Derrida asserts, it must not be recognised as such by either the donor or the recipient, it must not manifest itself as a gift :

*A la limite, le don comme don devrait ne pas apparaître comme don : ni au donataire, ni au donateur. Il ne peut être don qu'en n'étant pas présent comme don. Ni à l'"un" ni à l'"autre"*⁹⁴ (Derrida's emphasis).

The gift can only properly speaking be a gift if it does not present itself as a gift, because if donor or donee recognise it as such, some form of debt or exchange will be incurred. Awareness of the gift as it is given always means that a symbolic return is made either in the gratitude of the receiver (a recognition of indebtedness) or in the

⁹³ Donner le temps I, p. 24.

expectation of gratitude from the side of the giver. In both cases the gratuity of the gift or that which constitutes its essence as gift is annulled. For Derrida the giving of the gift is an impossible event because 'S'il se présente, il ne se présente plus'⁹⁵. This impossibility of the gift is also its paradoxical double bind :

l'impossibilité ou le *double bind* du don : pour qu'il y ait don, il faut que le don n'apparaisse même pas, qu'il ne soit pas perçu comme don⁹⁶.

The gift is only present in its absence, it can only occur insofar as it never occurs. This paradoxical and impossible status of the gift, and the logic of the double bind which underpins it, also informs the notion of gift as gratuity as it is advocated by Ygdrasil and K. in Le Souffleur.

Derrida's concern in his essay is wide-ranging and specifically seeks to address this problematic of the gift in terms of the Heideggerian formulation 'es gibt Sein'. The intricacies of this argument are not relevant within the context of this discussion. What is highly relevant however is Derrida's remark that this coincidence of the gift with impossibility renders any rigorous discourse on the gift itself impossible :

Si le don s'annule dans l'odyssée économique du cercle dès qu'il apparaît *comme* don ou dès qu'il se signifie *comme* don, il n'y a plus de "logique du don"; et il y a tout à parier qu'un discours conséquent sur le don devient impossible : il manque son objet et parle, au fond, toujours d'autre chose⁹⁷.

This comment is directly relevant to Ygdrasil's discourse on the gift in Le Souffleur. If giving is abolished as soon as any subject is aware of the gift as gift, then how can the universalised giving promoted by Ygdrasil and K. take place in the first instance? If a conscious act of giving always necessarily implies a recognition of debt (and hence

⁹⁴ Donner le temps I, pp. 26-7.

⁹⁵ Donner le temps I, p. 28.

⁹⁶ Donner le temps I, p. 29.

propriety and possession) and therefore an annulment of the gratuity of the gift, is not the act of giving always also ultimately as Théodore first conceived it? Ygdrasil or K.'s conception of the gift will always in reality function in the same way as Théodore conceives it; the gift will always affirm possession and annul itself as a singular and gratuitous event.

'L'incommunicabilité des lois de l'hospitalité'.

Klossowski comments on the impossibility that underpins 'la mise en commun des hommes et des femmes' in his article 'Protase et apodose'⁹⁸. 'Les lois de l'hospitalité' and the experience which they seek to articulate are, Klossowski argues in 'Protase et apodose', unintelligible. They cannot be formulated in any way which will express the singularity of Octave's desire. Under the sub-heading of 'L'incommunicabilité des lois de l'hospitalité' Klossowski's argument affirms the 'absence de lieu proprement conceptuel de cette coutume' (PA,12). This absence of a conceptual space in which Octave's custom can be properly situated implies that whatever conceptual schema the reader is offered in order to make sense of hospitality, such a schema excludes that which is most essential to its essence. This is so first and foremost because Octave and Roberte are a married couple :

S'agissant ici de la vie d'un couple, le comportement d'Octave à l'égard de Roberte et les réactions de celle-ci ne sont appréhendés par le lecteur qu'à travers le schéma de la logique monogamique de l'adultère (PA,12).

⁹⁷ Donner le temps I, p. 39.

⁹⁸ 'Protase et apodose', L'Arc, 43 (1970), pp. 8-20; special issue devoted to Pierre Klossowski. Reference to this article will be to this volume giving the page number and prefaced with the abbreviation PA.

This is the logic that Octave himself puts forward : he seeks to break the bonds of marriage, to force Roberte's infidelity so that she will be faithfully unfaithful and he can possess her as she is possessed by another. Yet this monogamous logic of adultery, this act of giving as it is conceived of by Octave/Théodore means that the reader apprehends motives, causes and effects of this custom as a series of experiences : 'qui ne correspondent jamais au tout indissoluble vécu par Octave' (PA,12). Any conceptual formulation of hospitality, argues Klossowski, forecloses a proper apprehension of hospitality, prompting him to pose the following question : 'A quoi donc se heurte un énoncé intelligible des lois de l'hospitalité?' (PA,13). To answer this question he returns to the issue of language, the 'le code des signes quotidiens', and the problem of stereotypes. What this suggests is the extent to which language as a codification of signs is structured by a logic of impossibility :

Nul contenu d'expérience ne se peut communiquer jamais qu'en vertu des ornières conceptuelles que le code des signes quotidiens a creusées dans les esprits; et, inversement, le code des signes quotidiens censure tout contenu d'expérience : ainsi l'expérience à l'origine des lois de l'hospitalité ne peut se décrire que selon les stéréotypes de la représentation coutumière (PA,13).

The contention that the 'code des signes' suppresses the singularity of experience has already been discussed in the preceding section. What is interesting here is that Klossowski's comment here repeats the logic (or a-logic) of the double bind that Derrida attributes to the gift in Donner le temps. The gift only appears as a gift insofar as it is annulled or rendered absent as a gift. By the same token what makes experience communicable (shared conceptual schema) also renders it incommunicable (these shared schema foreclose the singularity of experience). What renders the gift and

communication possible (exchange or the 'code des signes') at the same time renders them impossible.

This logic of the double bind applies also to 'les lois de l'hospitalité' as a discourse on the gift. If the logic of monogamous adultery cannot communicate the experience which the laws of hospitality seek to formulate then, Klossowski insists, neither can the logic of 'la mise en commun des hommes et des femmes' which appears to be its successor in the narrative of Le Souffleur. At first appearance the monogamous logic of adultery (Théodore's gift) appears to be in direct opposition to the logic of 'la prostitution universelle des êtres' or, as Klossowski calls it in this article, 'la logique du libertinage'. It is an inversion of monogamous logic : where one is based on ownership and identity the other is based upon the abolition of ownership and identity :

La logique du libertinage pur et simple répond du point de vue conceptuel à l'abolition du principe d'identité, soit de la signification permanente du sujet et de l'objet-sujet : donc le règne de l'arbitraire (PA, 14).

Klossowski goes on to conclude :

Ainsi l'inversion de la logique monogamique de l'adultère (soit de la transgression) s'exprime rationnellement par le postulat de la prostitution universelle - basée sur l'abolition de la propriété du moi - telle que Sade l'a illustrée (PA, 14).

Yet because the 'énoncé' of libertinage or prostitution 'relève de l'inversion de la logique monogamique de l'adultère' (PA, 14) and because it can be understood only in terms of this inversion, they remain dependent on the limit in the same way as does the monogamous logic of adultery. Ygdrasil or K. may promote a universalised giving expressed in the doctrine of 'la mise en commun des hommes et des femmes' but such a doctrine can only be formulated in terms which borrow from and invert Théodore's

more restricted logic of the gift. Where Théodore seeks to transgress the limit in order to confirm it (a gift which affirms possession), Ygdrasil seeks a form of transgression which affirms the abolition of limits (a radically gratuitous gift). Yet the conceptualisation of this second form of transgression within the 'code des signes' (as prostitution or libertinage) remains dependent on the limit. As an inversion of Théodore's conception of transgression it still works within the notion of limits it seeks to abolish or as Klossowski puts it

On demeure ici dans le même lieu conceptuel : au nom du principe d'identité, soit de propriété, c'est un même interdit qui frappe à la fois l'adultère et la prostitution universelle, et parce que l'un et l'autre sont l'énoncé de ce même interdit, c'est précisément cet interdit qui garantit l'expression intelligible des contenus d'expérience nommés adultère ou prostitution (PA,14)⁹⁹.

The gift advocated by Ygdrasil in his discussion with Théodore is, as Derrida describes it, an impossible gift : 'S'il se présente, il ne se présente plus'. The gratuity which the 'mise en commun des hommes et des femmes' conceptualises is abolished in the very act of conceptualisation - it functions in the same way as Théodore's gift in the same moment it seeks to move beyond it.

If Le Souffleur is the story of the transition of one kind of transgression to another, then, what kind of transition can this be said to be when those two kinds appear indistinguishable the one from the other? On one level, Le Souffleur can be read as a transition from one type of giving to another, one type of transgression to another. Yet as a whole it also reveals a relationship between the two which implies that they can never quite be differentiated the one from the other that they always

⁹⁹ Théodore makes this very point in his discussion with Ygdrasil : 'la prostitution universelle ne se peut pratiquer si elle ne présuppose l'attrait de la transgression du mariage : l'épouse, prostituée par l'époux, n'en reste pas moins l'épouse' (LH,304).

overlap or are dependent on each other. Théodore, at the height of his confusion, learns that he will never know which Roberte is which, whether his wife is the faithful 'salutiste' or the venal Valentine K.. Is he giving away a wife whose essence is in 'la fidélité' or 'l'infidélité'? Is he giving something which still belongs to him or something which has always already been given away? If the identity of Roberte has become radically indeterminate, then so has the transgression of Octave's/Théodore's ritual of giving enshrined in 'les lois de l'hospitalité'. Given this indeterminacy, this custom must always necessarily be read both ways as an act which affirms limits (Théodore) but at the same time as an act which affirms the radical abolition of limits (Ygdrasil, K.). The custom articulated in 'Les lois de l'hospitalité' affirms the gift as possession and at the very same time affirms the gift as a gratuitous event which abolishes any possibility of possession. This is because, as Théodore puts it to Ygdrasil, the second form of giving 'n'est [...] qu'un simulacre du don', it is the gift of a gift, which can never be present as gift, and which is always foreclosed in the moment of its enunciation. The second form of gift is always only a parody of a gift, always returns to the first form which, because it always seeks a return, is never a gift. Klossowski's discourse on the gift in Le Souffleur and 'Protase et apodose' leads one back once more to the motif of parody and simulation. At the same time this return to the motif of parody suggests what the more radically transgressive force of Klossowski's texts might be.

The shift in Klossowski's conception of transgression between his Christian writings of the thirties and forties and his post-Christian outlook which dominates from the fifties onwards finds its expression in the narrative of Les Lois de l'hospitalité.

Yet the differentiation between the one and the other cannot properly be made since the latter form of transgression can only be formulated in terms which repeat those of the former. The latter always returns to the former. The difference between the two, since a shift in emphasis has nevertheless taken place, lies, precisely, in the motif of parody which strikes Klossowski's later conception of transgression. Klossowski, when he publishes Les Lois de l'hospitalité in 1965, affirms the impossibility of his discourse on the gift. Such a discourse, Ygdrasil argues, must be radicalised in order to free itself from a dependence on the concept of propriety and possession. Yet this new conception of the gift can only parody a form of giving which is never present as giving. The impossible discourse on the gift parodies itself, it is never really a discourse on the gift; instead it confirms Derrida's contention that : 'il manque son objet et au fond parle toujours d'autre chose'¹⁰⁰.

The logic of parody repeats the logic of the double bind¹⁰¹. What makes the gift possible makes it impossible. In the same way what allows for the communication of hospitality also renders it incommunicable. This means that the gift that does present itself or the hospitality which is communicated are always simulacra or parodies (of the gift, of hospitality). Klossowski's discourse on the gift and

¹⁰⁰ Donner le temps I, p. 39.

¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note that seemingly the only exchange between Klossowski and Derrida which has been recorded is on the subject of parody and took place at the colloquium on Nietzsche at Cérisy in 1971. Just as this discussion has analysed two types of transgression so Derrida (during the discussion which follows Klossowski's paper 'Circulus Vitiosus') remarks that there are two types of parody : 'Ne faut-il pas distinguer entre deux sortes de parodie, dont l'une, sous prétexte de le concerter, fait le jeu de l'ordre politique établi (lequel aime beaucoup un certain type de parodie et y trouve sa propre confirmation) et, d'autre part, une parodie qui peut effectivement déconstruire l'ordre politique établi? Y a-t-il une parodie qui marque effectivement le corps politique, par opposition à une parodie qui serait une parodie de parodie, qui jouerait à la surface de l'ordre politique, qui consisterait à le chahuter au lieu de le

transgression insofar as they always affirm themselves as parodic returns one to the motif the simulacrum. The simulacrum itself always implies an impossible necessity (the necessity of representing the 'phantasme', or the giving of the gift) as well as a necessary impossibility (the 'phantasme' is necessarily in excess of representation, the gift is never given) - this, exactly, is the logic of the double bind. Parody becomes parody when the grounds of possibility of a certain gesture are also the grounds of its impossibility such that the gesture can only ever occur as a simulation of itself and therefore can never be itself, can never be self-identical. Perversion, the 'phantasme', or the 'signe unique' have a notional existence as such because of the language that articulates them, because of the theoretical or fictional discourse which give them meaning. Yet since all these (perversion, 'phantasme' and 'signe unique') are outside of language, the very language which allows them to present themselves means that they are never present, that, in fact, they never present themselves. They are only ever mimed or parodied. In the same way the radical gift of 'la prostitution universelle' always returns to the limited gift articulated by the 'logique monogamique de l'adultère'. The notion of prostitution is dependent on that of adultery for its very articulation in a movement which renders that articulation impossible. Yet this is not to be construed as the failure or ultimate recuperation of transgression. In Klossowski's post 1959 writing transgression is never the breaking of a taboo or the crossing of a limit, rather it occurs in and through the movement of parody.

Parody, as the simulation of an always absent, of an always already simulated instant, overturns all possibility of origin. Parody is always a parody of a parody (a

détruire?', *Nietzsche Aujourd'hui*, vol. 2 (Paris: U.G.E., 1973), pp. 111-12. These two types of

simulation of an always already simulated moment). So, although Klossowski's text inevitably remains within the system of language, of the 'code des signes', the parodic gesture has transgressive force because it affirms that the system is without foundation, that it is really only ever a parody itself, that it is not self-same and never can be.

The problem of the limit and of parody is implicitly raised by Blanchot in his essay on 'La Voix narrative' and in particular in relation to what he calls 'le neutre'.

Blanchot articulates this problem of the limit as follows :

La vie est dite limitée. La limite ne disparaît pas, mais elle reçoit du langage le sens, peut-être sans limite, qu'elle prétend limiter : le sens de la limite, en l'affirmant, contredit la limitation du sens ou du moins la déplace; mais, par là, risque de se perdre le savoir de la limite entendue comme limitation du sens.¹⁰²

In the naming of the limit, Blanchot argues, the limit receives its sense as limit yet at the very same moment is no longer a limit. The limit named has been displaced since to receive its sense as limit it is brought within the system of language and therefore annulled as limit (in much the same way as the gift is annulled in Derrida's critique).

The limit is delimited, perhaps infinitely. Any attempt to name the limit (or to transgress it in any straightforward sense) is therefore parodic; such an attempt names a limit which never presents itself as limit and in this paradoxical movement the very meaning of the limit in the conventional sense is overturned. The double bind repeats itself once again : what makes possible the naming of the limit of sense also makes that naming impossible since the sense of the limit is never coincident with the limit of sense. This impossible movement of naming the limit is one of both enablement and

parody seem to correspond very well to the two types of transgression outlined here.

¹⁰² Maurice Blanchot, *L'Entretien infini*, pp. 556.

disablement which repeats the paradox or aporia to which this thesis has returned over and again.

The parodic gesture, the impossible of naming the limit (or giving of the gift) is both affirmation and negation. Naming the limit affirms the limit (insofar as it gives the limit meaning as limit) yet at the same time it negates the limit (it renders the limit absent as limit, it delimits the limit). Since as it is both, it is neither the one nor the other, or rather the whole structure of binary opposition collapses and with this the dialectical movement of thought itself. That process of knowledge which accrues, accumulates and totalises is neutralised or subject to hiatus, is given up to repetition. This is the force of Blanchot's term (which is not a term) 'le neutre'. The suspension of oppositions articulated by both Blanchot's 'neutre' like Klossowski's parody displaces the functioning of thought and language. By overturning origin and suspending dialectical progression it withdraws identity from the system of language (affirms that it is never self-identical but always other to itself) and thus gestures towards an infinite alterity.

It is only in this suspension of thought and withdrawal of identity or self-sameness that Klossowski's texts affirm the impersonality of 'le phantasme', the repetition of Eternal Return or the singularity of perversion. It is in this sense alone that they can be said to be radically transgressive. In the aporia of parody the other is allowed to speak, or as Blanchot puts it :

L'autre parle. Mais quand l'autre parle, personne ne parle, car l'autre [...] n'est précisément jamais seulement l'autre, il n'est plutôt ni l'un ni l'autre, et le neutre

qui le marque le retire des deux, comme de l'unité, l'établissant toujours au-dehors du terme, de l'acte ou du sujet où il prétend s'offrir.¹⁰³

The gesture of Roberte's hands, as one opposes the other in a moment suspended in infinity, repeats the gesture of all Klossowski's writing. Across the figures of Sade, Nietzsche and Roberte, as well as many others who have not been discussed here, this same gesture repeats itself, transforms itself in a movement which ruins all sameness and all Self. Indeed parody itself is repetition. What must present itself yet is always abolished in the moment of its presentation, is still struck by the necessity of presenting itself. Klossowski's discourse on the gift in Les Lois de l'hospitalité reveals the impossibility and the necessity of his writing as a whole, its parodic force and the suspension or withdrawal of identity which it enacts. A vast circulation of proper names has given life to this discussion : Sade, Nietzsche, Diana, Roberte, Octave, Théodore and Klossowski himself. In this circulation of proper names the gift is always given but also always at the very same time it is withheld.

¹⁰³ Maurice Blanchot, L'Entretien infini, p. 556

Conclusion - The persistence of parody.

Parole de commentaire : il ne s'agit pas de toute critique, dans les sens très variés, encore que confus, que ce mot supporte. Il s'agit, par une prétention qui peut-être, en effet, enveloppe toute critique, de répéter l'œuvre. Mais la répéter, c'est saisir - entendre - en elle la répétition qui la fonde comme œuvre unique.

Maurice Blanchot.¹

At the very end of his book on - and with - Derrida, Geoffrey Bennington raises an interesting problem. In having attempted to explicate and represent faithfully Derrida's texts and arguments, he has, he claims, necessarily been unfaithful to those very texts and arguments : 'En essayant de répéter fidèlement la pensée de Derrida, nous l'avons trahi'². The attempt to represent as a totality a body of thought which questions the very concepts of representation and totality can only ever be a form of betrayal. It is interesting to note within this context that Bennington does not, in fact use the verb 'représenter' but rather 'répéter'. What the discussion of Klossowski's œuvre (and in particular his reading of the doctrine of Eternal Return) has shown is that repetition is always a non-identical transformation. In one sense repetition is always a form of betrayal because it always repeats difference. The problem of commentary, repetition and infidelity encountered by Bennington as he writes on Derrida is the same as that encountered by the preceding discussion of Klossowski's essays and fiction.

In an attempt to respond properly to Klossowski's writing, I have discussed its historical progression, its key themes and motifs, which I have then related to other thinkers and writers with similar concerns. Through an exposition of a wide number of Klossowski's works my argument has sought properly to situate and

¹ Maurice Blanchot, L'Entretien infini, p. 570.

² Geoffrey Bennington, Jacques Derrida (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p.292.

problematise the paradoxes of his thought and writing. Yet this proper response to these texts by dint of its own propriety is revealed to be an improper response. By constructing a history around, and conferring a coherence upon, Klossowski's writing, this discussion has shown the way in which it resolutely refuses, suspends or otherwise abolishes the concepts of history and coherence per se (and the principle of identity upon which they are dependent). So, like Bennington's commentary on Derrida, my own commentary has been unfaithful in the very moment of its fidelity. It has necessarily taken Klossowski's work as a meaningful whole and as a historical unity, whilst claiming that it speaks only of its own lack of self-identity, its difference from itself, its absence as a whole. In faithfully describing Klossowski's novels and essays in terms of their content, meaning and textual strategy this discussion has been wholly unfaithful.

The fact that any proper response to Klossowski's writing will also always inevitably be an improper response returns one to the motif of parody. In commenting on Klossowski's writing one can only ever parody it; one can only ever be faithful to it by betraying it. Parody, it has been argued, is always a matter of repetition. A commentary on Klossowski's work is inevitably parodic insofar as it repeats the work but is also necessarily different from the work, in that as it always betrays the work. As has been argued throughout this thesis, parody here is not being used in the traditional sense i.e. parody as a treacherous distortion of an original moment, but rather parody is simulacrum : a repetition of difference which overturns the notion of both original and copy and destroys the possibility of an authentic origin³. Klossowski's writings are themselves only ever a matter of

³ This is a point made by Gilles Deleuze in the discussion that followed Klossowski's paper at the C erisy conference on Nietzsche in July 1972 ('Circulus Vitiosus Deus') : 'La parodie

parody, they are themselves only ever simulacra, staging an always already simulated intensity. This means that, although commentary must necessarily affirm these writings as a point of origin, it must also at the very same time affirm that they are never originary.

The parodic operation of Klossowski's text ultimately persists in the commentary of these texts. Klossowski wrote of Nietzsche in 'Nietzsche, le polythéisme et la parodie' : 'pour autant que l'on est amené à interpréter la pensée d'un esprit que l'on cherche à comprendre ou à faire comprendre, il n'en est point qui, autant que Nietzsche, amène son interprète à le parodier'⁴. The same has been true of this commentary. Because the proper reading of Klossowski has at the same time paradoxically been an improper reading, proper and improper no longer function in opposition to each other. Since the one necessarily entails the other such an opposition is suspended.

The suspension of proper and improper in relation to commentary is a necessary consequence of parody. One can be faithful or unfaithful to a text, have a proper or improper response to that text, only if the propriety of that text is upheld, only if its status as point of origin is secure. When, in the movement of parody, the distinction between original and copy, proper and improper are suspended, commentary becomes something very different. Klossowski's work no longer functions as a secure point of origin and commentary can no longer be an attempt to seize or interpret the totality of an œuvre in all its unity and coherence. Rather it becomes a repetition of the œuvre. Commentary is placed, like Klossowski's texts

efficace au sens nietzschéen ou au sens de Klossowski, ne prétend pas être copie d'un modèle, mais dans son acte parodique elle renverse du même coup et le modèle et la copie', *Nietzsche Aujourd'hui?*, Vol. 1, p. 114.

⁴ *Un Si Funeste Désir*, pp. 187-88.

themselves, under the sign of repetition. This is not a matter of repeating the ‘truth’ of his writing but as Blanchot puts it : ‘répéter [l’ œuvre], c’est saisir - entendre - en elle la répétition qui la fonde comme œuvre unique’⁵. Since commentary parodies a text which has always already parodied itself, commentary, in a sense, repeats repetition.

In this way we, as commentators on Klossowski, necessarily become like Klossowski himself, seeking, perhaps obsessively, to seize an obsessive movement of repetition (the repetition of the texts themselves). Yet, as might now be expected, this is a strange and paradoxical instance of likeness since we become like Klossowski only insofar as we understand that Klossowski is always already unlike himself. We, as commentators, *understand* Pierre Klossowski only insofar as we understand that the proper name ‘Pierre Klossowski’, as a signature appended to a corpus, has been dispersed in the incessant movement of parody and of the simulacrum. We become *like* him only insofar as our own writing, in its attempt to seize and rationalise the repetition which founds Klossowski’s work, inevitably travesties, betrays and parodies the work and therefore repeats that repetition.

As we seek to seize the singularity or repetition which founds Klossowski’s writing (in its very absence of foundation), we, as commentators, will never cease to repeat, to be seized ourselves and taken up by repetition. Seized by the necessity of such unceasing repetition, we, as commentators, may then understand that we are always, like Klossowski, unlike ourselves.

⁵ L’Entretien infini, p. 570.

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