Autour de l’extrême littéraire

Autour de l’extrême littéraire

Edited by

Alastair Hemmens and Russell Williams

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS

PUBLISHING

Autour de l'extrême littéraire,
Edited by Alastair Hemmens and Russell Williams

This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4163-3, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4163-4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii

Introduction 1
Autour de l'extrême littéraire
Alastair Hemmens and Russell Williams

Chapter One 5
Bring on the Bloody Nun: Horror, Parody and Aesthetics in the Surrealist Quest for the Extreme
Jeremy Stubbs

Chapter Two 21
Sur la littérature sauvage
Denis Saint-Amand

Chapter Three 33
Sodom and Gomorrah Revisited: Modern Cities, Modern Heroes, and Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*
Sven Greitschus

Chapter Four 46
L'Extrême corporel dans la trilogie des jumeaux d'Agota Kristof
Nadia Bongo

Chapter Five 61
Jorge Semprún and the Truth of Fiction
Gregory Herman

Chapter Six 73
"Aux cendres d'un époux": traumatisme et temps du désir inexprimable dans *Andromaque* de Racine
Jennifer Row

Chapter Seven 88
Cults, Crimes and Coprophilia: Subversive Communities in Richard Morgiève's *Sex Vox Dominam* and Thomas Hairmont's *Le Coprophile*
Russell Williams

Chapter Eight 101
L'Extrême littéraire à l'ombre du Divin Marquis : Millet, Jelinek, Skorecki, Ellis
Liza Steiner

Chapter Nine 112
The Death of Desire: Bataille, Transgression, and the Erotic Extreme in Michel Houellebecq's *Plateforme*
Zoë Roth

Chapter Ten 124
"Un Cri Écrit": Emma Santos, Speaking from the Semiotic
Gillian Ni Chellaigh

Chapter Eleven 139
Extremities of Space and Gender in *La Queste del Saint Graal*
Leona Archer

Chapter Twelve 150
L'Intime en scène. L'Obscénité du corps dans l'écriture de Christine Angot et Annie Ernaux
Francesca Forcolin

Bibliography 162

Contributors 173

Index 176

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors wish to thank the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP), particularly Professor Andrew Hussey, Dr. Anna-Louise Milne and Dr. Louise Lyle for their encouragement, support and invaluable suggestions in the organisation of the 2011 ULIP Postgraduate conference "Autour de l'extrême littéraire" and the editing of this volume. Thanks are also due to Louise Lalaurie-Rogers, Eugene Brennan and Rebecca Lawn for their moral support and valued practical assistance. We also extend our thanks to the ULIP postgraduate students who attended the reading groups where the problematic for this conference was initially formulated.

INTRODUCTION

AUTOUR DE L'EXTRÊME LITTÉRAIRE

ALASTAIR HEMMENS AND RUSSELL WILLIAMS

Extremity is an integral element of contemporary experience. Thrill-seekers and hedonists spend their weekends seeking the adrenaline rush found in "extreme" sports. Mainstream politics is rediscovering the split between the "extreme" left and the "extreme" right. Elsewhere, the word "extreme" is used somewhat counter-intuitively; the advertising industry does its best to associate the extreme with the most mundane of products; cosmetics firm L'Oréal markets a range of "extreme" hair-care products, while Nestlé offers a line of ice creams that promise "[les] sensations EXTRÊME".[1] As scholar Paul Ardenne has noted, we live in an epoch when the so-called extreme experience is highly-valued in contemporary society, a situation reflected in its artistic output,[2] but the extremity we repeatedly encounter often seems closer to the banal that it does to some outer limit. Concurrently, genuinely extreme forms of representation are all around us. The Internet and social media place hardcore pornography, snuff films and cannibalism within easy reach of anyone with a keyboard or smartphone.[3] Likewise, extreme images of violence, torture and war are incessantly televised into our living rooms via 24-hour rolling news. Our contemporary relationship with extremity is therefore one of paradox; on the one hand, it is banal and inauthentic, and on the other, it is uncomfortably pervasive.

The notion of the extreme implies a limit, or set of limits, boundaries or norms. Much writing in French, such as that of Sade, Céline and Mallarmé has been both implicitly and explicitly concerned with the experience of what happens when we approach and even venture across these limits. This act of transgression has itself become the object of much critical inquiry.[4] However, as Michel Foucault, in reading Georges Bataille, has suggested, transgression is a fundamentally conservative gesture. It reinforces the transgressed limit, catching the committed transgressor in a never-ending spiral of transgression and punishment.[5] In

contrast, the extreme experience appears to move beyond this infinite loop. The extreme is not so much a simple crossing of boundaries as it is an adrenaline-fuelled rush away from a centre. A movement that potentially escapes the guilt associated with the related experience of transgression.

Whilst the texts collated in this current collection, the product of a conference organized and supported by the University of London Institute in Paris in the summer of 2011, cover a wide breadth of periods and subjects, they all interrogate this notion of extremity. The collected articles demonstrate that the quality of the extreme can be applied to a great number of texts for quite different reasons and from myriad perspectives. In grouping such a diverse range of contributions together, the danger, of course, arises that the notion of the extreme becomes impossible to pin down and provide any meaningful definition. However, in bringing this collection together we noted that, despite the multiple uses of the term, a general definition of the "extrême littéraire" emerges from the articles included in this volume.

The extreme has a specific geometry that emerges from a human concern with centres and what happens when we move within and far beyond them. Where transgression is preoccupied with the crossing of boundaries, the extreme is concerned with how the individual subject is situated in relation to a radiating point that often represents a space of order and control. It is a gradation, a place in a measurement. The metaphor of the Renaissance city provides a useful illustration; the space within the city walls is safe, ordered, everyday. But when he moves outside and farther away, the citizen finds himself increasingly in a land beyond the familiar. He goes into a wild, dangerous place where he can find no comfort, where terrors lurk and the normal course of everyday experience does not apply.

Within the context of the broader European cultural imagination, the literary extreme is Dante wandering from the city, lost in the wild forest only to suddenly find himself faced with the horrors of Hell. From a French perspective, the precedent is set by Baudelaire's *flânerie*, considered here by Sven Greitschus. The etymology of the term is significant on this point; the extreme is "outwards" or what lies without. In contemporary France we see a similar phenomenon in how the Parisian *banlieue* is apprehended by the bourgeois imagination: it is at the edge of the radiating point of control, or beyond it, where subversive forces and danger reside as one moves away from the city centre. Here, Denis Saint-Amand considers what he terms "la littérature sauvage", an approach to art that inhabits the extremity in terms of its position outside conventional

networks of production and mediation, tracing a path from Rimbaud and the Zutistes to contemporary street art.

In the case of medieval romance as discussed by Leona Archer this is a very visible point as the knights wander away from the ordered centre of the Arthurian court into wastelands and strange landscapes. These spaces exist outside everyday experience, being both physically and experientially distant. Here the roles demanded by courtly life are subverted and the hero faces ambiguities and temptations that challenge contemporary notions of sexual identity, if only, in this case, to reinforce them. Galahad, however, is also extreme in his absolute embodiment of total chastity as a sexual identity and as the perfect knight. It demonstrates that the centre also embodies an extreme. It is the absolute point from which the extreme is measured.

The notion that the extreme can reach an apex from which it begins to become comical, however, problematizes the notion that it must always embody a source of danger. As Jeremy Stubbs notes, the further we go towards the extreme, the intensity of shock we experience increases, only to fall suddenly into self-parody. The extreme in this case provides a source from which to evoke strong emotions, as a space of danger, but at a certain point, the further we move away from everyday experience the extreme becomes simply absurd and laughable. Indeed, as the analyses presented in this volume will demonstrate, the extreme is also inseparable from sensation. It is a dangerous form of experience, yet it is also exhilarating, as much for the writer as the reader.

Further, the literary extreme is frequently received in terms of a media scandal, as with the work of Michel Houellebecq, considered in this volume by Zoe Roth. Extremes can also be approached playfully, as in the work of Agota Kristof explored here by Nadia Bongo who explores the extreme physicality of Kristof's writing. It is also urgent as in the writing of Jorge Semprún, examined in this collection by Gregory Herman, to come to terms with the horrors of the extermination camps. Likewise, Jennifer Rowe explores the notion of trauma with reference to Racine's *Andromaque*.

Extremes, however, need not always be external, they can also be situated internally, as demonstrated by Gillian Ni Chellaigh's exploration of Emma Santos' work against the backdrop of psychoanalytically-inspired *écriture feminine*. Moreover, Francesca Forcolin considers the relationship between internal and external extremes through the work of two writers who have made self-exposure a cornerstone of their work: Annie Ernaux and Christine Angot. Whilst Russell Williams argues that the motif of the religious cult within contemporary French writing

provides a space for exploration of both internal and external extremities. Liza Steiner's contribution explores how the work of Sade, frequently championed as an example of the literary extreme, is mediated through the work of contemporary writers from inside and outside the French tradition, including Bret Easton Ellis and Elfriede Jelinek.

The extreme therefore encompasses a wide variety of forms in French literature, yet it is always outside, beyond and far from the centre of our everyday experience. It shocks us, excites us, and horrifies us. Above all it invokes strong emotions. The extreme has an enduring place in the French literary imagination that cannot be sufficiently contained within the notion of transgression. It is a qualitatively and quantitatively altogether different mode of writing to which French literature has repeatedly returned in order to deal with the problems of modernity and those lived experiences that cannot be evoked any other way.

Notes

[1] For an example of Nestlé's marketing discourse, see: <http://www.nestle.fr/Nosmarques/glaces/Pages/EXTREME.aspx>, [accessed on June 20th, 2012].

[2] Paul Ardenne, *Extrême: Esthétiques de la limité dépassé* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006).

[3] For a consideration of the availability of extremity within society and contemporary art, see Maggie Nelson, *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning* (London: Norton, 2011).

[4] For a consideration of contemporary approaches to transgression see Matt Foley, Neil McRobert and Aspasia Stephanou, eds, *Transgression and its limits* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012)

[5] Michel Foucault, "Préface à la transgression", *Critique*, No. 195-196, August-September 1962, pp. 751-769.

CHAPTER ONE

BRING ON THE BLOODY NUN: HORROR, PARODY AND AESTHETICS IN THE SURREALIST QUEST FOR THE EXTREME

JEREMY STUBBS

Introduction

French Surrealism is usually presented, by its adherents and its historians, as a would-be revolutionary movement aiming ultimately at the betterment of human society. This betterment is to be inspired by greater collective use of the imagination and those capacities normally associated with art, poetry and aesthetics (the Surrealists only liked using the second of these terms). Yet critics have noted too the consistent presence in Surrealist works of extremely violent images, suggesting a paradoxical attraction towards the darker side of human nature. The present article aims to tackle certain aspects of that paradox, making use of the concept of the *extreme*. As should become apparent, Surrealism exploited simultaneously two different types of *extreme* in literature. Suffice it to say for now that the *extreme* designates some experience of an unusually strong nature, dominating the organism, overwhelming conscious control, subverting executive intervention. This experience may be one of sensation (pain or pleasure), emotion (joyful or fearful) or ideas that powerfully ignite the intellectual and imaginative faculties. In literature or art it is conveyed to the reader or spectator in such a way that they may feel something of the experience for themselves – often vicariously. The means of communication – the medium used and the rhetorical devices – must be adapted to the task. On those occasions where they fall short, this insufficiency can give rise to parody, voluntary or involuntary. It is amid the complex relationships between extreme experiences, the means used to communicate them and the potentially parodic effects felt by the reader that the Surrealist paradox is to be hunted down.

A Case of *détournement*

Our starting-point is a text that juxtaposes the world of aesthetics with that of violent crime, and does so with the help of an intertext. A reader of 1930 who habitually delved into the newspaper, *L'Intransigeant*, might have come across the following article, which appeared on 11 September of that year and contained these passages:

> Quelle attraction a donc réuni sur ce plateau alpestre, à mille mètres au-dessus de Sierre, quelques-uns des plus grands interprètes musiciens de notre temps ? […] Magda Tagliafero, Wladimir Harowitz [*sic*], Joseph Szigeti, Milstein, Weigartner [*sic*]… Quelle philharmonique d'Europe ou d'outremer pourrait se vanter de réunir ces vedettes sur la même affiche ?

A short time afterwards, that same reader, had they also been inclined towards avant-garde publications, might have alighted upon the text below, which appeared in André Breton and Paul Éluard's book, *L'Immaculée Conception*:

> Quelle attraction a donc réuni au fond de ce gouffre, à mille mètres au-dessous du niveau de la mer, quelques-uns des plus grands criminels de notre temps ? […] Troppmann, la Brinvilliers, Vacher, Soleilland, Haarmann… Quelle fête de charité pourrait se vanter de réunir d'aussi grandes vedettes sur la même affiche ?[1]

As the Pléiade edition of Breton's works revealed to the wider world, the Surrealist text is a rewriting of the article. A cutting thereof accompanies Breton and Éluard's manuscript in the Musée Picasso.[2] Authored by one Gérard Bauer, it was a review of a music festival in the Swiss Alps where some of the contemporary giants of classical performance could be heard. The piece was entitled – significantly – "La Musique sur les cimes".[3] Breton and Éluard's text – equally significantly – was headed, "Il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible". According to a standard procedure in Surrealist poetics, inspired by Isidore Ducasse's *Poésies*, Breton and Éluard rewrote the original by replacing certain nouns or verbs, while more or less preserving the syntactical structures. After Situationists, this is now referred to as a "détournement" (literally a "hijacking" or "diverting" of the original).[4]

What is most striking in these extracts and their subsequent development is the replacement of the names of the virtuosi by those of murderers made famous by the sensationalist press of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Brazilian pianist, Magda Tagliaferro, becomes the

Marquise de Brinvilliers (1630-1676), who was at the centre of the famous Affair of the Poisons and executed for the murder of her father and brothers. Though her case dates from the reign of Louis XIV, it was routinely included in collections of *causes célèbres* in the later period.[5] The great Hungarian volinist, Joseph Szigeti, is transformed into the deranged "shepherd-killer", the "Jack the Ripper of South-West France", Joseph Vacher (1869-1898), who murdered, mutilated and raped around thirty women and children.[6] As for the Russian violinist, Nathan Milstein, he is replaced by Jean-Baptiste Troppmann (1849-1870), who massacred eight members of the same family. His case brought success to the newspaper that was to make a speciality out of sensational crime reporting, *Le Petit Journal*. His name inspired that of Georges Bataille's main character in the novel *Le Bleu du ciel*.[7] Felix Weingartner, Austrian conductor, composer and pianist, becomes the "Butcher of Hanover", Fritz Haarmann (1879-1925), who murdered 27 boys and young men.[8] Finally, the renowned Vladimir Horowitz is transmuted into Albert Soleilland, who on 31 January 1907 raped, stabbed and strangled the 11-year-old daughter of his best friends. He deposited the body in the left luggage at the Gare de l'Est. Wintry temperatures retarded discovery of the remains. The crime itself caused a sensation, but so did Soleilland's subsequent trial and reprieve from the death penalty.[9] At this time, the Surrealists would have been children of around 12, and the events no doubt left a mark in their memories.

Overall then, we have a metamorphosis of virtuoso musicians into notorious murderers. One idea that links their worlds is that of "execution": the operation that one group apply to great musical works and the other group apply to their wicked deeds – and finally undergo once their killing spree is ended. This semantic overlap is suggested by Breton and Éluard's description of these "artists" as preparing "les programmes mystérieux dont les exécuteurs splendides ne sont pas nés".[10] In appearance the two frames of reference could hardly be more distant from each other. On the one hand, the world of uplifting aesthetics, and on the other, the world of abject cruelty. Although this contrast must be meaningful in itself, what initially strikes one most is the extreme incongruity. This lends a gruesome humour to the Surrealist version and marks it out as a form of parody. It is visible even to the reader unaware of the intertext, as in the rhetorical question about what charity ball or "fête" could boast such a line up of stars as the five infamous criminals. One wonders what sort of charity they could inspire and what acts they might perform to stimulate people's benevolence.

Sensationalism, parody, and the bell-curve of the *extreme*

This is in line with Margaret A. Rose's essential definition of parody as "the structural use of comic incongruity". The combining of different elements (stylistic or otherwise) previously known to the reader in a new and unlikely juxtaposition lends new meanings to those elements – what Rose terms "the comic refunctioning of preformed linguistic or artistic material."[11] The incongruity between aesthetics and crime in the Surrealist text is not new in itself, as there was a tradition dating back to Thomas de Quincey's "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts", of 1827-1854. We shall have to return to this, but not before fully considering the basis of the parody or self-parody which frequently undermines certain attempts to express the literary extreme.

It is obvious that the first type of extreme invoked by the Surrealist text is one of horror, violence and moral transgression. Traditionally this is associated with a cheap, facile kind of literature that creates its effect on the reader by simply "going for the jugular". It is habitually decried by moralists and cultural highbrows.[12] The first great form of popular printed fiction, the Gothic novel, created a paradigm of such sensationalism, appealing to a lowest common denominator of fearful delectation through its wild landscapes, dark subterranean spaces, innocent victims, Machiavellian monsters and possibly supernatural agencies. A similar appeal can be found both in the *roman-feuilleton* (or serial novel), which took up the baton of popular fiction in nineteenth-century France, and the *fait divers* (or shocking crime report) which came to play such an important role in the daily press.[13] The great challenge in terms of audience satisfaction is to maintain consumption by meeting an increasing need for stimulation. The public, once habituated to the diet, requires increasingly stronger doses of horror. The temptation of authors and editors is to pile on ever more shocking details, an ever more abundant rhetoric. (The US horror cinema of the 1950s also attempted to work on the medium, with seats that shook and actors dressed as mad axmen running through the house.) The result is a kind of bell-curve of the extreme.

Imagine a graph with along the X-axis the increasing use of rhetorical procedures and descriptive details designed to produce a reaction of horror, while the y-axis registers the effect on the reader. At first, as the devices begin to be piled up in the text, there is a palpable increase in the genuine impact on the reader. Yet eventually there comes a point of saturation where the increase in means ceases to produce an increase in horrified effects. Indeed the latter start to wane and turn into their

opposite: comic amusement. Doubtless a more subtle literature of the unspeakable would turn to other devices to affect the reader, using greater economy *via* the indirect and the unsaid.

Sensational literature itself encountered this barrier early on in its history. As E. J. Clery writes of the Gothic:

> Although intense supernatural effects might work to stimulate terror once or several times, sooner or later *the repetitious mechanism would become apparent* and fear would turn to laughter. This natural fatality or planned obsolescence of Gothic fictions, which eventually *turned them into parodies of themselves*, also made easy targets for satire.[14]

The tendency to self-parody gave rise to a secondary current of literature designed both to amuse readers and satirize the collective hunger for cheap thrills. The Gothic novel or "roman noir" in France mutated after the Restoration into the "roman frénétique", a term which, like the English "frantic", originally signified "mentally deranged". This genre in turn gave rise to comically exaggerated versions, the master-piece of which was Jules Janin's *L'Âne Mort et la femme guillotinée* of 1829.[15] A curious blend of despair and comic hyperbole was cultivated by that wave of writers now known as the "petits romantiques" and generally appreciated by the Surrealists.[16] If the ultimate in the facile rhetoric of horror is sheer exclamation, Charles Lassailly's epigraph to his novel, *Les Roueries de Trialph. Notre contemporain avant son suicide*, constitutes a parodic summit:

Ah !
Eh ! hé ?
Hi ! hi ! hi !
Oh !
Hu ! hu ! hu ! hu ! hu ![17]

The same vein was discovered and deliberately exploited by the authors of *romans-feuilletons* whose work was published in the very press that cultivated the *fait divers*. In *La Fabrique de crimes* of 1866, Paul Féval, a master of popular fiction, satirised his own style of writing as well as the general audience demand for sensations, promising in the preface to his novel:

> En moyenne, chaque chapitre contiendra soixante-treize assassinats, exécutés avec soin, les uns frais, les autres ayant eu le temps d'acquérir, par le séjour des victimes à la cave ou dans la saumure, un degré de montant plus propre encore à émoustiller la gaieté des familles.[18]

We find here not only comic hyperbole, but also a studied incongruity between the awfulness of the events related and the "gaiety" of audience reception. The art of horror was encapsulated in Paris during the Surrealists' own time by the Grand Guignol theatre, consisting of short plays that involved the unleashing of mad assassins on stage with ample haemoglobin.[19] The typical works of the genre's major author, André de Lorde, made an easy target for parodists. Paul Reboux and Charles Müller included him in their popular, long-running series, *À la manière de…*: "Le Docteur Coaltar" is a parody of Lorde's adaptation of Poe's, "Le Système du docteur Goudron et du professeur Plume". In true Grand Guignol style, the main character suffers a bout of temporary insanity and kills everyone around him, while a derailed locomotive crashes into his hospital and a nearby arsenal explodes. The play ends thus, as he becomes conscious of what he has done:

> Qu'ai-je fait ? Ah ! Malheureux !
> *Il se tranche les deux bras et asperge les spectateurs avec ses moignons d'où jaillit spasmodiquement le flux artériel. Puis, succombant à tant d'émotions, il tombe à la renverse et se noie dans le sang.*[20]

Outlandish though the action may be, in a genre already so "over the top", there was not much scope for exaggeration. Breton appreciated this form of theatre over all others and claimed in *Nadja* that it enabled him truly to descend into "les bas fonds de l'esprit".[21] This downward direction is exactly the one indicated in "Il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible". Those "mysterious programmes" to be executed by as yet unborn individuals, referred to above, are being prepared, the text tells us, "dans la paix de ce bas-fonds".[22] Is this then the aim of Surrealism, to drag us down into some unconscious world of violent Thanato-Erotic urges, heaping parodic mockery on our heads for good measure? Or is some other operation discernable in all this?

A more aesthetic extreme

The "shock-horror" approach, although perhaps the most obvious, is not the only form of the *extreme*. One can envisage works that, rather than prodding the reader or spectator's most basic fears and urges, instead overwhelm their senses and thoughts with a more subtle, insinuating language or some all-embracing combination of media. Indeed examples of highbrow, aesthetic forms of the extreme, apparently at the antipodes from raw sensationalism, are to be found aplenty in the late nineteenth century. They exploit a vision of life as being, in Remy de Gourmont's

words, "une suite de sensations reliées par des états de conscience".[23] The *fin-de-siècle* aesthete may share with the reader of shocking crime stories a quest for sensations, but he requires for the latter a more elaborate cultivation and *mise en scène*. Whether real like Edmond de Goncourt and Robert de Montesquiou, or fictional like Huysmans's Des Esseintes, aesthetes endeavour to create extreme environments for themselves where the combined effects of their harmonized sensations give rise to a holistic experience of beauty that transforms or blots out the *ennui* and ugliness of ordinary living. To affect all the senses it is necessary to combine all the arts. This focalisation on media is thoroughly in keeping with the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* most readily identified with Wagnerism. The quest for a total work of art was further pursued by the major movements of the first historical avant-garde, above all Futurism (in Italy and Russia/USSR) and German Expressionism. Exploiting technological innovations and variously combining film, performance and sound, the goal was to create "total immersion" environments for the spectator or participant. One might compare the virtual realities of today.[24]

A more modest, though compatible, alternative was the creation of a "suggestive" poetic language – a strong current in French Symbolism. Mallarmé defined "le symbole" as being, not the naming of an object, but the mystery of *suggestion*.[25] In the context of the times, this word was inseparable from the putative power of hypnotism. The latter was supposed to be a discourse that penetrates directly to the unconscious, bypassing rationalization, and exercises an unrivalled power over the mind of the subject, influencing their very experience of reality. The connection was more explicit in Charles Morice's definition of Symbolist poetics:

> La suggestion est le langage des correspondances et des affinités de l'âme et de la nature […] Surtout, comme elle parle dans les choses dont elle parle, elle parle dans les âmes auxquelles elle parle.[26]

Suggestion represented, not a new combination of media, but a new exploitation of the resources of language. In short, doing the most possible with words.

Surrealism differs from the other avant-garde movements of its time through a lesser propensity for producing synthetic environments *via* technology. Such an ambition creeps in with their later exhibitions, but these were ephemeral and relatively small-scale. The Surrealists were happiest outdoors, as *flâneurs* in city streets or explorers of wilder terrains, interacting with their surroundings through their imagination. The background of Breton and the Surrealist writers generally was quite close to Mallarméan Symbolism, especially as filtered through the work of Paul

Valéry. Comparatively speaking, their means remained more conventionally textual or pictorial. Even their vaunted heroes, Lautréamont and Rimbaud, were caught between the poetic text, on the one hand, and a reality "out there" somewhere. Breton's automatic writing – with its lexis of "parole", "voix" and "murmur" – was the heir to the Symbolists' inner language of suggestion.

But given that the latter was subtle in its overwhelming effects, how did automatism get hooked up with *fait divers* sensationalism? In "Il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible" the answer lies in an implicit appeal to the audience's horizon of expectations: the *fait divers* represents a common paradigm of the collective thrill. Far from being an informative item, it was – in Barthes's term – a "monstrous" news story that disrupted the normal pattern of things.[27] For Franck Évrard, the *fait divers* is an event that satisfies deep-seated, aggressive instincts on the part of its audience and fulfils a certain need for voyeurism.[28] The Paris of the Belle Époque was saturated with *fait divers* coverage. A good idea of the atmosphere can be gained from the cover illustration of the satirical review, *L'Assiette au Beurre*, no. 284 for 8 September 1906 – not long before the Soleilland case.[29] Under the title "Faits divers", like graffiti daubed in blood, we see a small crowd of gawpers of all ages, sexes and social classes. They eye with evident pleasure a display of newspapers with headlines like "crime sensationnel", and especially a poster entitled, "Le crime de la rue Chose", showing a sinister backstreet with the semi-naked body of a woman lying in a pool of blood. The latest horrific murder would bring people out on to the streets to hear about and discuss it, driven by lurid curiosity and paranoid rumours concerning gangs of "Apaches" or hoodlums. The Soleilland crime was particularly fertile in popular emotions, and a vast crowd followed the victim's funeral cortège.[30] The Surrealist text thus constitutes a search for the corollaries of a new aesthetic experience based on invoking thrills already known. Rather than introducing new media to overwhelm the senses, Breton and Éluard exploit the audience's experience of these collective situations and shared emotions. This hitching of high aspirations to negative energies had a long and varied pedigree, which will illuminate the role of parody.

Enter the Bloody Nun: sublime and 'orrible

The understanding of this phenomenon goes back at least to Edmund Burke's 1757 contribution to the theory of the sublime:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure.
> […]
> The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.[31]

Overwhelming the mind is achieved most effectively by negative emotions. Yet the goal remains the sublime, that is to say an uplifting, not an extinction, of consciousness. The works Burke has in mind are cast in a noble register: wild landscapes and tragic dramas that focus the mind on human mortality and the vicissitudes of fortune. Sade, however, introduces the same notion into the erotic boudoir:

> Nous voulons être émus […] il s'agit seulement d'ébranler la masse de nos nerfs par le choc le plus violent possible ; or, il n'est pas douteux que la douleur affectant bien plus vivement que le plaisir, les chocs résultatifs sur nous de cette sensation produite sur les autres, seront essentiellement d'une vibration plus vigoureuse, retentiront plus énergiquement en nous, mettront dans une circulation plus violente les esprits animaux qui, se déterminant sur les basses régions par le mouvement de rétrogradation qui leur est essentiel alors, embraseront aussitôt les organes de volupté et les disposeront au plaisir.[32]

Hence terror can be linked to the awe of the sublime and also to sexual desire. It may serve as a tonic, especially with an admixture of erotic spice, to give extra power to other elements like the sublimity of poetic language. This is where parody comes in. Surrealism was not interested in horror for its own sake. Therefore the overwhelming energy of terror has to be mitigated by a degree of self-consciousness that remains vigilant, thanks to parodic incongruity. It is again Sade who provides a clue, for Breton says of his work in the *Anthologie de l'humour noir*:

> Les excès même de l'imagination à quoi l'entraîne son génie naturel et le disposent ses longues années de captivité, […] ont toute chance de faire

> surgir de son récit quelque passage d'une outrance manifeste, qui détend le lecteur en lui donnant à penser que l'auteur n'est pas dupe.[33]

One example which comes to mind is that of Vespoli in *Histoire de Juliette*, the master of ceremonies whose pleasure is, clad in a leopard skin, to violate mad youths who think they are Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary. The hyperbolic incongruity – how easy can it be to find such victims and what exactly does the pelt add to the blasphemy? – is that of self-parody. In the theoretical preface to his anthology, Breton cites Hegel on German Romanticism in a far from clear manner. Yet the humour here is comparable to German Romantic irony. According to Tieck:

> […] the poet should not lose himself in his work, but remain above it. Irony protects him from onesidedness and empty idealizing.[34]

A dose of irony enables the author – and the reader – not to be sucked wholly into the experience of the work, but to remain partially above it. The parody in "Il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible" re-functions the elements, introduces unexpected novelty and opens a chink of self-consciousness. It loosens the grip of horror just enough to allow the other aesthetic to come through.

An emblem of this can be found right from the start of Surrealism's interest in Gothic sensationalism. In his *Manifeste du surréalisme* of 1924, Breton rejects the realist tradition in the novel while praising Lewis's Gothic extravaganza, *The Monk*, as the only worthy form of fiction. A little further on, after eulogizing the fairy tale, he exclaims:

> A moi, si j'avais vécu en 1820, à moi « la nonne sanglante », à moi de ne pas épargner ce sournois et banal « Dissimulons » dont parle le parodique Cuisin […].[35]

This passage is placed strategically just before Breton presents the members of the Surrealist movement as the inhabitants of a Gothic castle. Cuisin was a now obscure man of letters who produced two volumes of Gothic-cum-frenetic parodies, which included the bloody nun story originally made popular by Lewis's *Monk*. The title of the Cuisin volume Breton refers to is a humorous catalogue in itself:

> *Les Ombres sanglantes*, galerie funèbre de prodiges, événements merveilleux, apparitions nocturnes, songes épouvantables, délits mystérieux, phénomènes terribles, forfaits historiques, cadavres mobiles, têtes ensanglantées et animées, vengeances atroces et combinaisons de crimes, etc. Recueil propre à causer les fortes émotions et la terreur.[36]

Thus Cuisin's version of the bleeding nun is the very symbol of the rehashed, tongue-in-cheek horror story. The tale underwent all sorts of transpositions, including a stage version in 1835, two operas – Donizetti's *Maria di Rudenz* (1838) and Gounod's *La Nonne sanglante* (1854) – and even a puppet version.[37] Breton's enthusiasm for the figure can be explained as an early awareness of the function of parodic consciousness in the context of horror. He would have seen it at work in that compendium of Surrealist inspiration, Ducasse's *Les Chants de Maldoror*, whose unique tone has been convincingly tied to parody of both Gothic fiction and the *roman-feuilleton*.[38] The title of our text, "Il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible", was one of the Surrealists' favourite quotations from Ducasse's *Poésies*. Breton's feeling about the role of self-parody in Sade's work has been extended by critics who have found parody and pastiche at the centre of his work too.[39]

Although an emblem of the parodic consciousness, the bleeding nun story is also symbolic of the kind of duality involved in our twinned aesthetics – horror and poetic language. Don Raymond is to elope with Agnes, who is detained in a convent. She will meet him outside at midnight and, to frighten off any meddlers, will be disguised as a much-feared ghost, the Bleeding Nun, who wears a blood stained habit and a veil. Raymond duly finds his beloved veiled and gets her into his carriage. They drive off, but the horses are out of control, and when a tremendous storm breaks, the vehicle crashes. Injured, Raymond finds no trace of Agnes. Some time after, his convalescent's chamber is visited by the same female figure. Finally lifting her veil, she shows the face of a corpse: Don Raymond had eloped with the phantom by mistake! The focus on the veil and the act of unveiling was an obsession with Surrealism and is the origin of one of the movement's favourite words, "revelation". With the bleeding nun, there is ambiguity until the eventual moment of unveiling: which woman do we have, the wholesome bride or the bloody phantom? This maps on to our two extremes: the *poetic* or the *sensational*? They co-exist in the text. De Qunicey's envisioning of crime as a paradigm for aesthetics evokes the aggressiveness of the aesthetic discourse against the reader or spectator's preformed idea of the "real".[40] Similarly, Breton and Éluard's text uses crime as a bludgeon on the reader's consciousness, to loosen it up for penetration by poetic language. Parody keeps that consciousness partially alert.

Ups and Downs

Horror, then, provides a booster to the language of the soul, while the veil represents the distance and tension between two aesthetics, poised on a cusp of revelation. Bauer's article provides Breton and Éluard's point of departure, because it embodies a false, facile idea of the sublime. Such is implicit in his title, "La Musique sur les cimes", with its picture-postcard association of Alpine scenery and classical masterpieces. It is also embodied in his attempt – doomed to failure – to use journalistic clichés to transpose the effects of music. Breton and Éluard subvert this empty ideal and substitute a truer one. Where Bauer goes straight for the heights – "les cimes", "ce plateau" – the Surrealists head down – "bas-fonds", "abîme", "ce gouffre" – creating an undersea world of darkness and lubricity. Whereas a spurious aesthetic aims upwards, an authentic aesthetic first aims down in order to rise higher. And whereas a superficially poetic language strives vainly to imitate another art form, music, a genuinely poetic language exploits the resources of language itself. One is reminded of Mallarmé's injunction in "Crise de vers" that poetry should "reprendre à la musique son bien". All this is apparent in the rewriting of the following passage by Bauer, a masterpiece of commonplaces:

> Au détour de quelques sentiers, effleurant les pins et les mélèzes, des mélodies se mêlaient à l'atmosphère – et jamais peut-être leur vibration ne s'était produite avec plus de liberté. L'attraction mystérieuse, qui avait agi sur ces musiciens, c'était peut-être cette pureté, ce silence de l'altitude, qui permettent à la musique, en quelque sorte, de retrouver sa jeunesse, le point de liberté où elle est absolument elle-même, sans que rien ne l'entrave ou ne la corrompe.

In the Surrealist version, this becomes:

> Au détour de quelques sentiers, effleurant les mâts des bateaux engloutis, des paroles sans chanson se mêlent à cette atmosphère de pirates et jamais peut-être leur pouvoir ne s'est exercé avec plus de liberté. L'attraction qui a agi sur ces criminels ne doit pas être autre chose que cette pureté, ce silence de l'abîme, qui permet au langage assassin de retrouver, en quelque sorte, sa jeunesse, le point de force et d'action où il est absolument lui-même, sans que rien ne l'entrave ou ne le corrompe.[41]

In a typically self-referential move, the Surrealist text evokes itself: the "paroles sans chanson" suggest that true poetic form which does not try futilely to imitate music. "[Le] langage assassin" unites our two aesthetics, sublime and sensational, in a poetic discourse that destabilizes ("murders")

consciousness and conscious control over thought. Such language does not serve goals outside itself ("il est absolument lui-même") and flows as automatic writing should ("sans que rien ne l'entrave"). The "point de force" is another typical Surrealist ploy, recalling the world of school science lessons. The expression, meaning "moment" in English, designates the manner of calculating the net effect of several forces acting simultaneously on a point. This is the very image of the two different aesthetics at work in the text, combining, despite their differences, to produce an overall upward motion.

The Surrealist text then focuses on Soleilland, playing on the obvious association with the positive word "soleil" ("on admira le génie de Soleilland le bien nommé"). His mother knew that one day he would become "un soleil", as though he had a special destiny, like Christ, thus matching the blasphemous tone of *L'Immaculée Conception*. Whereas Horovitz is described by Bauer as "un des plus grands virtuoses vivants", Soleilland is "un des plus grands directeurs de conscience vivants".[42] In addition to this term's ironically religious meaning, another sense lurks. In an earlier section of the book, "Les Possessions", Breton and Éluard textually simulate different types of delusional discourse. Breton subsequently admitted that, although this writing was not "pensée dirigée", there was a "minimum de direction" involved.[43] If Soleilland is a "directeur de conscience", it is because the sensationalism he represents does not exclude a residual degree of conscious direction – thanks for example to the parodic humour we have seen.

Confirmation can be found in the original borrowing of the title from Ducasse. The quotation from *Poésies II* comes as the culmination to a *détournement* of the famous "pensée" by Pascal which begins, "Quelle chimère est-ce donc que l'homme?" Pascal denigrates humanity as irrational and inconsistent, ending with "il [l'homme] est un monstre incompréhensible". Ducasse contrarily builds humanity up and, after opposing Pascal's "monstre" with "Il [l'homme] parvient à comprendre qu'il est la soeur de l'ange" proclaims, "Il n'y a rien d'incompréhensible". He goes on to laud the clarity of human thought:

> La pensée n'est pas moins claire que le cristal. Une religion, dont les mensonges s'appuient sur elle, peut la troubler quelques minutes, pour parler de ces effets qui durent longtemps. Pour parler de ces effets qui durent peu de temps, un assassinat de huit personnes aux portes d'une capitale, la troublera – c'est certain – jusqu'à la destruction du mal. La pensée ne tarde pas à reprendre sa limpidité.[44]

The third sentence contains an obvious reference to Troppmann's crimes committed at Pantin (Troppmann is already mentioned in *Poésies I*). For Ducasse, as for the Surrealists, conscious thought is never entirely extinguished, and pulling humanity down can never prevent its upward surge. Truly nothing, not even the extreme, is unthinkable.

Notes

[1] André Breton, *Œuvres complètes* (vol 1, Paris: Gallimard, "Pléiade", 1988), pp. 867-868.
[2] Ibid., pp. 1643-1644, 1665-1667.
[3] The article is also reproduced in André Breton, Paul Éluard, *L'Immaculée Conception*, Présentation par Marguerite Bonnet et Étienne-Alain Hubert (Paris: José Corti, 1991), in an unpaginated appendix.
[4] Guy-Ernest Debord, Gil J. Wolman, "Mode d'emploi du détournement", *Les Lèvres nues*, 8 (May 1956), pp. 2-9. Breton used the word "détournements" to describe max Ernst's collage novel, *La Femme 100 têtes*, in 1929: Breton, *Œuvres complètes* (vol 2, Paris: Gallimard, "Pléiade", 1992), p. 305.
[5] E.g. Armand Fouquier, *Causes célèbres de tous les peuples* (8 vols, Paris: Lebrun, 1858-1867).
[6] Douglas Starr, *The Killer of Little Shepherds. A True Crime Story and the Birth of Forensic Science* (New York: Knopf, 2010).
[7] Dominique Kalifa, *L'Encre et le sang. Récits de crimes et société à la Belle Epoque* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 10.
[8] Maria Tatar, *Lustmord. Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[9] Jean-Marc Berlière, *Le Crime de Soleilland. Les journalistes et l'assassin* (Paris: Talandier, 2003).
[10] Breton, Éluard, *L'Immaculée Conception* (op. cit.), p. 116.
[11] Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 31, 52.
[12] E. g. Louis Bethléem, *Romans à lire, romans à proscrire* (Paris: Masson, 1908).
[13] See Lise Queffélec, *Le roman-feuilleton français au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, "Que sais-je ?", 1989); Franck Évrard, *Fait divers et littérature* (Paris: Nathan, 1997).
[14] E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 146. Present author's italics.
[15] Anthony Glinoer, *La Littérature frénétique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2009).
[16] Francis Dumont (ed.), *Les Petits Romantiques français*, special number of *Les Cahiers du Sud* (1949).
[17] Charles Lassailly, *Les Roueries de Trialph. Notre contemporain avant son suicide* (Paris: Silvestre, 1833), title page.
[18] Paul Féval, *La Fabrique de crimes* (La Tour d'Aigues: Éditions de l'aube, 2006), p. 6.

[19] Agnès Pierron, *Les Nuits Blanches du Grand-Guignol* (Paris: Seuil, 2002).
[20] Charles Müller, Paul Reboux, *À la manière de…* (3e série, Paris: Grasset, 1913); reprinted in *Le Théâtre.* Cahiers dirigés par Arrabal (vol 2, Paris: C. Bourgois, 1969), pp. 185-190.
[21] Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, vol 1 (op. cit.), p. 668.
[22] Breton, Éluard, *L'Immaculée Conception* (op. cit.), p. 116.
[23] Remy de Gourmont, *Le Chemin de velours* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1902), p. 86.
[24] Jean Galard *et al.*, *L'Œuvre d'art totale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003); Marcella Lista, *L'Œuvre d'art totale à la naissance des avant-gardes, 1908-1914* (Paris: CTHS, 2006); Matthew Wilson Smith, *The Total Work of Art. From Bayreuth to Cyberspace* (New York, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); David Roberts, *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011); Ralf Beil, Claudia Dillmann (eds), *The Total Artwork in Expressionism. Art, Film, Literature, Theater, Dance and Architecture, 1905-1925* (Darmstadt: Hatje Cantz, 2011).
[25] Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (new edition, Paris: Thot, 1984), p. 77.
[26] *La Littéraure de tout à l'heure* (1889), cited in Guy Michaud, *La Doctrine symboliste* (Paris: Nizet, 1947), p. 76.
[27] Barthes, "Structure du fait divers", in *Essais critiques*, cited in Franck Évrard, op. cit., p. 12.
[28] Évrard, op. cit., p. 21.
[29] Available on Google Images.
[30] Berlière, op. cit., pp. 13, 15-26.
[31] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 36, 53.
[32] D.-A.-F. de Sade, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007), p. 79.
[33] Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, vol 2 (op. cit.), p. 891.
[34] In Kathleen Wheeler (ed.), *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism. The Romantic Ironists and Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 17.
[35] Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, vol 1 (op. cit.), p. 321.
[36] (2 vols, Paris: Lepetit, 1820).
[37] Patrick Berthier, "Un (mélo)drame romantique exemplaire: *La Nonne sanglante* (1835)", in *Mélodrames et romans noirs, 1750-1890*. Textes réunis et présentés par Simone Bernard-Griffiths et Jean Sgard (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2000), pp. 365-379; Jacques Chesnais, *Histoire générale des marionnettes* (Paris: Bordas, 1947), p. 188.
[38] Hélène Millot, "Utilisation, récupération et détournement du roman noir dans *Les Chants de Maldoror*", in *Mélodrames et romans noirs* (op. cit.), pp. 461-477; Michel Nathan, *Lautréamont, feuilletoniste autophage* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1992).

[39] Eric Bordas, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir du Marquis de Sade* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), pp. 167-190.
[40] Jeremy Stubbs, "De Thomas de Quincey au surréalisme : un art qui assassine", in *Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859)*, publié sous la direction de J. Ristat et M. Bulteau (Paris: Mercure de France/Digraphe, 1994), pp. 60-75.
[41] Breton, Éluard, op. cit., pp. 116-117.
[42] Ibid., p. 119.
[43] "Lettre ouverte à André Rolland de Renéville", cited in Breton, Éluard, op. cit., p. 20.
[44] Lautréamont, Nouveau, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, "Pléiade", 1970), p. 277.

CHAPTER TWO

SUR LA LITTÉRATURE SAUVAGE

DENIS SAINT-AMAND

Pour Jacques Dubois

Les différents objets abordés au cours de la réflexion collective réunie dans ce volume ont en commun leur capacité à faire de la littérature un lieu du dépassement des limites : de Racine à Thomas Hairmont et de la *Quête du Graal* à *Plateforme*, cet extrême littéraire peut notamment se métaphoriser par une grande figure tératologique de la violence, qui trouverait à s'incarner dans des actes et des prises de position transgressant l'ordre établi d'une époque donnée en se distinguant sur des registres tantôt moraux, politiques, sexuels et/ou religieux. L'une des caractéristiques de ce type de production est de faire passer un discours hétérodoxe d'une sphère privée, où les convictions sont assumées en toute intimité, à une sphère publique ; partant, de contribuer, par un processus de fictionnalisation requérant différents moyens, procédés et techniques, à les intégrer à l'imaginaire social d'une époque. Pour autant, la diffusion de cette écriture-limite qui détone et dérange, du fait même de sa marginalité revendiquée, ne va pas de soi : des agents de la censure officielle aux associations pudibondes en tout genres, nombreuses sont, on le sait, les instances qui ont tenté d'écarter les textes respectifs des Sade, Baudelaire et autres Houellebecq des circuits de diffusion traditionnels du livre. Pressentant leur future proscription ou choisissant simplement d'entrer dans le jeu littéraire par une porte non-traditionnelle, plusieurs auteurs ont investi des supports variés pour diffuser leurs idées à une échelle plus ou moins large selon les cas : envisageables sous l'étiquette pratique des producteurs de « littératures parallèles et sauvages », selon l'expression de Jacques Dubois, « c'est-à-dire celles qui ne participent d'aucun des réseaux [habituels] de production-diffusion, qui s'expriment de façon plus ou moins spontanée et se manifestent à travers des canaux de fortune », ceux-là se sont distingués et se distinguent encore par leur capacité à développer des stratégies de communication efficaces susceptibles de

servir leurs propres intérêts tout en prenant, par résignation ou par provocation, les rouages de l'institution littéraire à contre-pied, fût-ce pour mieux donner l'occasion à cette dernière de se les réapproprier ultérieurement.[1] C'est de quelques-unes de ces « littératures sauvages » dont il sera question dans les pages qui suivent, lesquelles s'efforceront de mettre en lumière différents profils d'auteurs déviants, d'interroger les supports originaux investis par ces derniers et de cerner les effets potentiels de ces productions, pour mesurer, enfin, les possibilités de leur récupération institutionnelle.

1. Mettre l'album en marge : Vilains bonshommes et Zutistes

Pratique privée, résolument paralittéraire, l'*album amicorum* se présente comme un format traditionnellement fort peu sujet à la publication. Comme l'explique Philippe Hamon, ce ciment social d'une collectivité constituée se donne la plupart du temps à voir sous la forme d'un « recueil d'autographes manuscrits rassemblés sur les pages blanches d'un album qui est à la disposition d'une petite société d'amis, et qui est souvent attaché à un lieu fixe (salon, café, atelier, collège…) que fréquente cette société, et rédigés au fur et à mesure par les hôtes du lieu ».[2] Depuis les petits cénacles romantiques, la pratique est à la mode dans le champ littéraire français ; à la fin du second Empire, elle est réinvestie au second degré par différents collectifs plus ou moins goliardiques. Le groupe des Vilains Bonshommes est de ceux-là : ce collectif fluctuant est composé de poètes s'étant approprié la dénomination qu'un chroniqueur du *Nain jaune* leur avait assigné le lendemain du 14 janvier 1869, après qu'ils eurent salué avec trop de verve la première représentation du *Passant*, la pièce en un acte de François Coppée avec Sarah Bernhardt dans le rôle de Zanetto. Proches du Parnasse, les Vilains Bonshommes se voient lors d'un dîner mensuel, lors duquel la récitation est de mise, de même que la composition à plusieurs mains d'un album subversif appelé à ne circuler qu'au cœur du groupe. Paul Verlaine présente le projet à François Coppée dans une lettre du 18 avril 1869 :

> Le dîner des *Cygnes sive* des *Vilains Bonshommes* a toujours lieu. Il s'est enrichi d'un album où toutes les ignominies sont seules admises. Sonnets féminins, et autres, *la mort des Cochons*, *l'ami de la Nature*, etc. décorent cette institution que fleuriront dessins obscènes (pas d'autres !), la musique « imitative », mauvais conseils et « pensées » infâmes. — On compte sur votre retour pour ajouter de nouvelles pierres à ce monument gougnotto-merdo-pédérasto-lyrique.[3]