II

PIERRE GUYOTAT
I Is an Other
Notes on Pierre Guyotat’s Coma

From a journal.¹

April 3, 2015

In front of my friend, the alternative erupts, the debate, an ancient one for me, between oeuvre and life. The dilemma has lost its power since then: the more I intervene physically in language the more I feel alive; to transform language into Word is a voluntary act, a physical act. There may be a debate between literature and life, but there is none between what I write and life; because what I do is life. Here is one indication that Guyotat is essentially a religious writer or one who believes … In the beginning there was the Word, and, from this primal Word, this Unutterable Word, which encompasses all languages, from this one, was born a multiplicity of languages. For Guyotat, the transformation of language into the Word is a physical act. In ancient Egyptian mythology, Atum, the primal one, becomes multiple through an act of masturbation, the hand he uses represents the female

¹ The following is from a journal that I kept while reading Guyotat’s Coma. All italicized passages here are from Coma’s passages.
principle. Language is born of a rupture in the primal unity. To descend, like Orpheus, into the otherworld, is a search for Origins, that original unity; Guyotat’s “beat sheet”; he literally masturbated while writing his early texts. He crosses the line between the physicality of the body and the immateriality of the words on a page. It is as if he is shutting off the mental critic to engage in a dialogue with the body, so that the words are literally embodied, through a kind of sexual trance where one thing becomes no different from another. I think the crisis in Guyotat’s life, which he relates in Coma is the inability to cross that line, or to sustain a sense of transcendence.

April 4

Guyotat writes of a beating he received by an Algerian man — homosexual pick-up gone wrong? Or was a political motive? He writes, the brutalization of my being, wounded and in absolute pain, intensifies what I have been resisting with the weapons of youth; the judgment of my father and of general authority; their truth is my mistake; my forfeiture. The brutality of the Patriarch, the judgment of God even? His is a different Truth. He writes, I experience all pain (even physical pain or adversity as compensation — and not “punishment” — for some cowardice or other that has not yet been “atoned for”: but there is no morality in this, nothing but pure logic, pure material, one weight offsetting the other, the balance of Judgement … But who meets out this “compensation”? Why has Guyotat experienced pain as compensation for some imagined cowardly act or something that has not yet been “atoned for”? In this passage, he is carrying the weight, perhaps, of Original Sin, the sin that has not been atoned for but has simply perpetuated guilt and fear of the body, of sexuality.

April 5

Ville-d’Avray, July 1977: I walk with a name that is mine, one I no longer feel inside but which others return to me. What is
the object before it is named, the body before it is categorized, defined, psychologized, institutionalized, what is the primal body, the “body without organs” or name? But there is the pain of leaving the body behind, the alienation and isolation that is felt when one’s most familiar name is no longer recognizable except in the voice of the other. He is depressed. But he hears the song of a bullfinch, *a song now prohibited, inaccessible*. He is speaking about the problem of language and embodiment. *The word bouvreuil [bullfinch] itself, its roundness of breath and the trembling of the u and the l, such pleasure, such words are now forbidden to me; because of a judgment superior to morality, to Art. Inaccessible.* He concludes that *physical laws keep us apart.* Furthermore, he writes, *the ease of birds, the torment when depression removes you from the world: non-depression is winged feet, whatever the obstacles.* But man is not a bird. He perishes, so does Art ultimately. And yet there is a judgment superior to mortality. We are in the garden of Eden again: apple … serpent tree … betrayal. *Flesh was an element of knowledge, but its temptation weakened the strength of spirit and of mind. In that very Cartesian education, both the flesh and the spirit existed, and the idea was to find some kind of balance between them. Our knowledge of good and evil ultimately made us cowards, unable to act with a pure conscience, conflicted between, on the one hand, an abstract God and the other a physical Christ. Here is the judgment of a God who wrote the Book to test us and ultimately to deceive mankind. Man failed the test, and for his crime was given to suffer and this is the essential condition of living. Guyotat puts it this way: *Caught between that infinite, ‘above,’ and this research of origins ‘below’ that has tormented me since childhood: objects, buildings, ideas; between two infinities to which others are adjoined.*

April 6

Then comes a moment of transcendence while writing: *When writing, I settle into the central axis of the Earth, my existence, as a humble plowman of language, is grafted onto that axis, onto*
the axis of that movement, which is more grandiose than human movement alone; the movement of the planet: the rotation of the planet, with its sun and stars: and in this way to elude even the feeling of death. To conceive the totality of existence in terms that are not merely reducible to the human but expansive; to realize the impossible, to become the ineffable. But here again is that feeling of alienation and isolation as a result of this search for origins: The more I move back in Time, the more I feel estranged from my “self”; but imagining and setting up that distant world requires the support of a “self” whose power is tenfold: to be that Roman, Greek, Persian, Egyptian, hierodule, or boat carpenter from the Cyclades, means to wrench a past “self” from one’s “self” and have it live daily at one’s side.

April 7

It is the devotion to that which is not “I” but resides, nevertheless, in a secret part of the self. He writes, Using the figure of the priest, his sacred hierarchy, I delve back to the origins of the god he serves … the priest is, and remains, the one who can hear everything — and imagine everything — without any surprise, he is the messenger and ordainer of forgiveness; in what I write, what I might pit against this figure of cold vengeance. His conscious waking self writes this. Then there is the other which is not “I”: in the text parallel to the Book, written at night, more freely … a figure appears in the bordello: “Samora Machel,” the whore, the Compassionate one, the Light of Night. For Guyotat writing is an occult practice that at one time involved onanistic pleasures. Guyotat writes, I am only well when I am what is necessary to be the other echoing Rimbaud’s “I is an other.” He continues, The other, whomever he or she may be, becomes my sole concern. But this other is also where he wounds himself, I take on the reasons of that abruptness, injustice, jealousy and most of all, lack of faith — life’s desolation: up to the very reasons of its lack of faith, fibrous laziness. Our lack of faith is a product of our having physical bodies. We cannot really see what is Beyond our
terrestrial vision. Our laziness is woven into our muscles and bones. We are constantly reminded of the limits of bodily form. The body is dependent on food and air and is subject to decay and eventual death. That’s why the Buddhists say life is sorrow.

April 8

But Guyotat’s project takes place on a grand scale and drives him to the absolute silencing of the body through starvation, which results in a coma. In this state the body is completely other. This life terminates. Then, later on in the book: that red, submarine coral traces the inverted border of the fiction I am writing, its occult nature, the movement of its figures caught within the movements of the Great Desire — which is for me, Life, which lies before me when I write, and which I tower over—at ease there, or constrained in their liquid bath … which is not the mother’s local one, but … who can say it? … by a superior force that is the preexisting primordial rhythm (the rhythm that creates the world). My figures are born of my language, of that rhythm, in its bath. Inverted because directed backward toward the preexisting primordial rhythm. He does not use the term “words” but rather “figures” like occult symbols. Words are divested of their semantic baggage and liberated in order to function as a kind of sonic painting. Furthermore, What have I done, or not done, that I am now so estranged from that centrifugal force of life: procreation … but the first men, besides procreating, painted. And then Guyotat talks of the visual sense, the organ of the eye, the importance of this: We must see ourselves as animals see us … What seems most universal, most indubitable to my human eye is challenged by other, animal gazes, in their size, their depth and height, or speed. Until the subway cricket, which also sings, teaches me that the most beautiful human music is the most beautiful of all music, I shall be unable to believe it. It is one of Guyotat’s most beautiful passages. In this moment, he desires to see through the eyes of God who sees all things. He is totally invested in the other, the non-human. He explains, “God” cannot have created the world with human senses; creating a species of insects, of fish, for exam-
ple, wouldn't He watch the world through the eyes of the species He is creating? Isn't evolution the trajectory of God's thought, as he thinks creation to come and thinks it as a synthesis of His visions? The trajectory of Evolution = the trajectory of the thought of God the Creator. Then he says, Often what saddens me the most is that the Christian heart has thought of nothing except the human.

April 9

Man is more than the human tasks he sets out to accomplish. His destiny involves more than that. At issue is what Guyotat calls, God’s internal image, the realization that man mirrors God. But Guyotat concludes, Man has his voice in the chorus of the Universe, a voice no doubt equal to that of the others, as in a beautiful system of democracy. Man is neither small, nor miserable, he is part of what, for a large part, for an endless part, remains unknown to us. “Remains unknown to us”: Guyotat’s incredible desire for the Absolute ends in failure.

April 10

If it were not incumbent upon me to carry my figures to their temporary term, and to continue loving what in the world is not loved, I would wish to be reduced to a pot, without earth nor flowers, reduced to the blade of a spade: even as a child I stare at inanimate, “insentient” objects and envy their state: rocks, motor parts, even words, abstract ones, especially from philosophy. His love … draws me to the humblest of objects: scrap, school notebooks in public dumps, the gaze of children, the dribble of idiots, those are what can be looked at in full; art objects, antiques, the gaze of adults, books, monuments, harvests, all of that constitutes a reality for others. Text aside, what elevated discourse I take on, be it reasoning, the expression of learning, is as if spoken by someone other than me, speaking, explaining, persuading, even. My distress is already inexpressible; I want it undetectable by others in my voice. Who can really express what is inside himself or herself using the language in its present state? Isn't it rather that we only
present surfaces, substitutes, simulating what is essentially unsayable, which is the truth of us all, that we are alone? How can explain the reason for this without falling into existentialist clichés? For Guyotat, there is the unknown, the absent god, the occasional flickers of a beyond detectable in the traces of language; Guyotat attempts to cross over that line dividing the corporeal from the immaterial and thus to have knowledge of God. It is a Promethean quest. How can Guyotat give voice to such an impossible mission? What is its object? How can he resolve “the above” with that which is “below”?

April 11

Guyotat writes, What other subject can I provide than one so related to my writing: through subverted morality—inverted hierarchy, debauched innocence, scorned maternity: disappearance of the human into the non-human, continuous sexual use. Here “human” stands for the Man of Reason, the “non-human” stands for that which is other. Continual sexual subversion is a reduction of the human to the animal, which perhaps leads to a realization that man is not superior to an animal just as God is not superior to man. At the core of this project is the transformation of the language, the voice of the young Dauphin, then of the young king (scene of his proclamation as king and of his mother kneeling at the Temple upon hearing of his father’s decapitation), into the language and voice of the people. A kind of intoned metaphor of the tragedy issuing from within myself, inside my art, inside myself, issuing from the transformation of my writing into language—before, later, after coma, into Word. In this project, he continues the search for origins. There is the problem of language. How can language function in such a way that it embodies the primal Word? How to make the body issue from the voice, the god materialize before you? What invocation to use? We are in occult territory.
April 12

So many individual, collective lives from which I am shut out. I feel this separation even more as I, since childhood, cannot get used to the fact that it is impossible to embrace, in one human life, each of the billions and millions of human lives, those ongoing and those in the process of being born, as I cannot see an illuminated window without feeling the regret, the rage of not being among those living there—and wolfing down the soup. In addition to which the billions of billions of billions of so-called animal lives to be lived, died, “birthed” then … It is an astonishing passage. The desolation and alienation of the human is terrifying. The limits of the physical body that separate us from others, not only other humans, or animals, but even those who have died and those in the process of being born … Guyotat exposes the infinite distance we are, not only from God or from an Absolute, but from others, despite our attempts to connect, language providing no outlet to accurately convey what we think or feel. We are in the desert despite the enormity of our desire for the beyond … for contact, for an ecstatic moment of transcendence where the totality of existence is within our grasp and comprehension … to see with the eyes of God!

April 13

Here it is again, the human problem: that interior game between an illness I have known since childhood to afflict all humans at once, namely to be nothing but that, human in a mineral, vegetable, animal, divine world, and a recovery that no one would desire, that would deprive me, if it were to succeed, of all courage, all desire, all the pleasure of pushing ever beyond, ever onward—and which, having long known where my interests lie, I do not want. But the written word is his only lifeline to the living.
April 14

Here is something that reminds me of Artaud’s railings against doctors: *In the same movement, they also do a poor operation on the frenulum breve of the penis. To distract me from my core affliction; and entertain themselves there.* Artaud also hated the idea of birth and believed that every newborn simply perpetuated the evil that was life itself. Artaud recoiled from sexuality, hated it with a vengeance. Guyotat describes the site of sexuality as a “sore affliction.” The problem is similar in Guyotat, who is aware of the limitations of the human body and suffers because his desires cannot be realized: he cannot extend beyond his corporeal form … his desire is for the Absolute, he wants to steal from God his sound.

April 15

But the tragic human condition grounds him against his will: *Living with others is impossible, yet if you give yourself up to them, you disappear in them. And thus I have disappeared into my fictive figures, into the Italian ones, into those closest to me, and who draw from me what they dare not draw from God himself … I see the struggle that each being wages to live. Then, To refound the self in the place, the time and the state of the human, in the full light of day, and with others around living fully in that light, is perhaps natural for humans attuned, but is a vain task for those who have ceased to be.* Guyotat is estranged from the human universe, that part of the world, *laden with noise, with light, with smells, lies at such a remove from my feeble body that I feel how inefficient it is to recover what I have lost … during the hiatus of the world, I can think it natural that I stop as well — and yet I do not sleep.* Guyotat’s crisis is a spiritual one. He feels distant from the world of light, of noise, of life. At this point he is beginning to lose weight, the body seems to rebel against his spiritual longing, his desire for a vast communion with all of existence. In order to consummate such a work, the body must reduce to a kind of singularity, a black hole that can absorb anything
and everything. He cannot sleep, sleep brings with it dreams, the body seems unreal. But insomnia has this effect, *Insomnia, and the pressure of light on the window panes, on my heart, runs stake through my chest, and leaves me taut, in the early morning, upon the bunk from which I spring, formerly, desert, plateaus, torrents, Roman ruins, forests, town centers, with such joy for work or travel ahead, alone or against others* ... His anxiety proves to him that he is in the world ... He speaks of the creative process as a kind of magical act that can give birth to his text, *painting guides my hand and my future creation is in my interior gaze*. His figures have *depth like a painting of Creation* and it is up to him to *animate them now, to have them speak without lifting an eye from them. But how can I make them speak from my mute throat?*

**April 16**

Then comes a key into Guyotat’s state of mind: *And, haunted as I am by History, by Prehistory, by Evolution, not only for the human, but also for the animal, the vegetable, the mineral, the object, how can I resolve to make a figure appear for the sole reason of action or of “art”? I must have superior reasons, a more distant logic, so that the figures emerge from my “breast” at least, just as they do for the Creator, so that they surface from what I sense of my infinitude. Thus, they rise from that rhythm-mass, and must remain linked to it, undifferentiated momentum and result*. Earlier I was thinking about the problem between art and life. Some dispense with the written word in favor of direct action, whether it is in performance art or the staging of some protest, or interactive artwork, etc. ... But these arguments don’t really concern Guyotat. His interest isn’t in distinctions between words and action and his project cannot be merely categorized as “Art.” Guyotat belongs in the tradition of the great martyrs and saints of the Medieval period. I envision him walking down a rain-soaked and filthy side street in the late afternoon in Medieval Paris, a famous flagellant, the red marks of the whip like railroad tracks down his back. His “language” must emerge from the Origin, that “rhythm-mass,” and remain unsullied and
“undifferentiated” in its momentum from the Source. In order to perform such an act, he must wrench the power from God himself by sensing his own “infinitude,” he must go beyond the merely human, in order to achieve a kind of pure transmission. But, of course, a state of purity threatens to infect the human. A God is the opposite of a human. There is always the danger of infection and death.

April 17

Guyotat writes, To nomadize is to make oneself available to all, to those who are close to us but especially to strangers. The movement for Guyotat is Outward, the desire to make contact with the other. It is also to forget the self, increasingly; the self that is the true enemy and that still remains, unfortunately—and for how long—the backing of creation … As long as my communist commitment lasts, having learned to see with the first images of the death camps, I rule out the violence of revolution and yet the revolution is, for me, a new man, with new sentiments, and perhaps as well, if I carry the whole thing to its logical conclusion, a disappearance of feeling that might begin with the inversion of feelings, their subversion. The depth of that movement, even though it hurts me, is plain to see if you pause an instant on what the work I do shows and proves: a world overturned. “Continual sexual use …,” the transgression of normative values, the creation of a new man, Artaud’s man “without organs,” the “inversion of feelings,” the end of reproduction, the stripping away of false consciousness, the lie that is the body; but there is the pain of withdrawal from the material toward the spiritual, it results in an apocalypse of reason. The self is the true enemy; one’s own selfish reasons no longer matter, the stability of the self is in danger; Guyotat is seeking nothing less than the transformation of man and the world. As long as you are thinking, you cannot die.
April 18

There is a kind of imbalance between how small we are athletically and the enormity of the cerebral network of which we are the seat, and the enormity of the impulse toward the more that we are through the heart. The skeleton, the organs themselves are worth nothing. What is of value is the network. The essence of things, the thing in itself, what is intrinsic no longer counts, only the consequences count ... we only see the consequences. Guyotat wants to penetrate to the essence of things. He wants to know the being of a thing, its origin, the movement toward what preexists even morality, toward a before — “God.” Is such knowledge possible, can we travel to a time before the human, before language, before even “God”? Can such a time or place be conceived of? Can one access those primordial waters? This is to beat God at his own game, to change the rules, to access the secret of creation, to be able to invent a new world. “No God but Man” is what the alchemists say. This is the highest magick; and magick is a language where each figure is charged with occult meaning.

April 19

It is rare in this present time to see an author who is so concerned with the problem of being, the ontological problem, which is the essential problem of philosophy. So much has been taken for granted about the self or the body in Western thought. Guyotat writes, Ideologues themselves, those who are labeled philosophers and who probably suffer from the disappearance of being, do not deal with being but with society in which beings must cope. Action is forgotten as well. It seems that the only thing that counts are the words with which all people manifest that they wish to stay away from being or action. It is Guyotat’s desire to usurp the power of God, and this leads to his primary transgression against the body, the limits of the body, the border of reality, because of the way I am, it is never “I” that is insulted, beaten, pushed away, but, in my self, something of the surface, a physical, interdependent reality, or an historical, even metaphysical soli-
darity; the only thought I have ever had of myself is as a medium, an intermediary, a messenger ... the one who brings light or who restores it to the heart of another. The secret reserve, the sense of his own infinitude, drives him onward in pursuit of a language ... the problem of faith, how to achieve spiritual purity: starvation, the ecstasy of the saints, the flagellants wandering in the dark streets ... 

April 20

And yet, save for what tortures me, the artistic solution to be found, nothing wounds me more in the brief recurrences of my emotional self than the incapacity of others, sometimes those closest to me, to see, to understand the effort that I extend to live, to renew with life. ... It hurts that people closest to me look at me with the same eyes as yesterday (but no matter, we must push onward): the very idea of infinitude is affected. Nothing less than an “interior transformation” is at stake ... and then, I sometimes feel that I am defecating skins from my throat and from my tongue, and then my tongue itself ... In a dream, Guyotat says to his mother, whose death affected him greatly, mother, take me back (to nonexistence, because even if you were to abort me, my human soul, recreated through you, would join a new hell) ... To deny the procreative function, the “core affliction,” the “phantom leg”... fearing perhaps, it’s in the air, that by wrecking her, I might wreck what makes me live — create — she refuses me her main entry, which my member desires, and deviates it toward her mouth, toward her voice ... will I suffer this lack of completion to no end? ... with Agnes’s knife all I can do is cut my own throat ... out of revolt against all that is forsaking me (my mother’s God, my mother herself — God’s will for me and grace: must I withstand the test of all true artists, of the gesture of their spirit, which designates their exception, that cruel passage without the assistance of He who wanted what I am, and of she who carried me to become it) ... Guyotat is in the desert wandering alone under a fierce and merciless sun that beats on his head like a hammer ... vomiting through my mute mouth the inverted remains of my body,
with its memory, its ancient and future actions, its disappearance … to become the body without organs, mere shanks / but ready to carry out / their apocalypse / for they have spoken / too much of it to be born / and spoken too much in birth / not to be reborn / and / take on body / at last / authentically … calling out / to the ambient spaces / to rise up / and speak — Artaud. To go before birth, to remember the child, the first screams of the newborn. I latch onto the newborn asleep in the gleam of the night-light, I grasp onto its faraway odor, and its mewling, onto the faraway, changing odors of its tossing in the crib … but everything excludes me from life: life, even. Not even the newborn child, the emerging life, with its joy and possibility, it’s innocence, can bring any relief or hope for the future.

April 21

Guyotat seeks a prelapsarian world, before the biblical Fall, before the test in the garden … his is nothing less than an attempt to recover the essence of this lost world, to go back before time, before space, everything reduced to a singularity, a black hole, to absorb everything back into the steaming pool, to close the mystical egg, and to watch it vanish into oblivion. Am I not one of those heroes, semi-gods, future celestial bodies, children borne of goddesses and men, of gods and women, or of women and beasts, momentarily led back to the surface and to life by its judgment? Is it the shame of Adam and Eve, their knowledge of good and evil, the morality that spread from that choice, that keeps us bound in a complex relation with the material body, unable to lessen its weight, and to fly … what were we before this happened, what was Paradise?

April 22

To sense that infinitude which resides deep in ourselves, to know that we only represent surfaces of a greater need, barely spoken, but that we are all aware of. Across from me, my friends, their friends, they are of another species, or rather, they belong
to a species: I, myself, belong to none. Here is the vast desert, silent except for the occasional breeze, there is nothing for miles and miles, it is impossible to tell where you are, someone calls out your name, but you don’t recognize it as your own, you say, “why God have you banished me and left me to die on this earth, rather than residing among the stars, in eternal flight towards the source of all being, O my terrible remorse …”

April 23

How can I grow seasoned to the reality of my language, to the language of my being before I am myself? How can I appease the fear it causes me, the fear of the Unknown? … I suffer but one pain, this language, I know its beauty is too hard for me already, too strong, and yet it moves me within with science and pleasure, but how I would prefer to us a language directly readable by all (and yet …) … it is the language of an artist too strong for the human being that I still am: of a prophet of myself then. How is language supposed to embody the unutterable, how can this language accommodate what is ineffable, how can the unsayable be understood by all? What is a “language for the people”? What is a language of the “soul”? How can the material body perform a spiritual gesture without the extreme pain, mental or physical, of the body’s annihilation? Does the body wither as it transforms into a spirit?

April 24

Guyotat wants to learn the secret of Death. He is Orpheus in the Underworld, Letting my body go, letting my life cross what we call death, that I no longer see: the solution lies beyond that crossing salvation—if it is nothing but a soul raw against society, how can a body die that loses its existence with its weight? Does the soul die along with the body? And what lies on the other side, Beyond, on the other side, the ideal Grammarian, the Decipherer and the Pronouncer, for all. There is no such purity in the language as it stands. What we have is a corrupt language, a lan-
language of empty signs, a tower of babel. The Word remains inaccessible, unknown and unpronounceable. For Guyotat, finding the language to express his world, his desire, is the source of his pain. *It is unbearable … that the simple inscription on the page, the simple reading of the printed lines does not allow for understanding, for beauty! I am here, on this field of the dead, crushed by the ordinary reader I have become.* How can we change the way we read, the rules of grammar, the flow of words on a page, how can we change the way we see, comprehend, determine meaning in a sentence, all in accordance with a spiritual desire. What are these underlying rules we subconsciously obey that cut us off from realizing the Word? Language circumscribes our world; we are told that if we don’t have the words to say what we mean, that the thought doesn’t exist in the mind, and there is the overreliance on the linguistic sense, but what was the angelic language, what finally does it mean to be an “ordinary reader” and what if the writer wants to speak about a world which the present language has no way of conveying? Does it or does it not exist? Is it a futile project: *I write on the page of a notebook — is it writing, or is it instead drawing, a sign, a formula? Lines overlap, grow blurred like the simultaneities of a moment of thought, at the time I feel my writing is ash and that if I tip the page the ash will slide along with its meaning — the plea I bury under the gravel. … How could a doctor, even very learned, understand that my exhaustion proceeds from torture that is purely of an artistic nature?*

April 25

*The empathy that rules me, and against which I have since childhood attempted to oppose my reason, mocks me, nudges me from one identity to another, superimposes them and places as well. The movement for Guyotat is always away from himself toward the other, the alien, the foreign, the animal, and this is such an elemental force, born of empathy, that it assumes these disparate identities. Reason is our inheritance from the age of the Enlightenment, or even father back, we can speak of the Greeks and the Romans. But they had their disobedient gods, the poet be-
ing foremost in his rebellion against Reason, and just as Reason acts in opposition, insisting you are [enter your name here] and cannot be an other, the poet counters this claim and insists that “I is an other.” Everything is high-level work and pleasure for the “superior beings,” their brains full of inventions, their gestures as light as their feelings.

April 26

But Guyotat is concerned with an age before the existence of man. He is not of this world. His father shows him a photo of a pier, 1939. In the photo his mother is there. His father says, we conceived you there, the following night, your mother and I, my heart instantly starts racing and palpitates as if bound to another: I was, I am, in that thinking womb, before being there; before that human “conception,” I am. To imagine the state before birth, before that human “conception” that he would become, the fully formed man, with limbs, blood flowing through the veins, a mind wrapping itself around objects, then advancing to more sophisticated thoughts, then to the idea of God, of totality, the mysteries of Catholicism, but the internal sexual rupture was an effect of my belief in Christ, triggered by the notion that he is both man and God … human and divine the trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit combined in a single God, an abstract entity and at the same time there is the carnal and sexual imagery of the crucifixion, a charged physical image, this is sadomasochistic. So on the one hand an abstraction and on the other a material image; the body is limited, the spirit infinite. The closer I get to the end, the more I give to all, as if to lessen, reduce the distance between everybody who will live, and me who will disappear. I give as an inverse movement, contrary to what the living do as they heap the dead with bare necessities.

What I write, what I’ve been able to do and to experience, is a question of being. Much more than the body, being is what torments me, if I can use the word torment for this. I mean quite simply the fact that we exist. … This isolation, the contempt in which we hold those empty, useless objects fills me with a compas-
sion of reason and sentiment that is equal, and at times superior, to the one I feel for humans and for those we call animals. ... The question of the animal is not, for me, a moral issue. It's an issue of Reason. The strongest and most violent things do not pass through common sense, they pass through Reason. Sometimes I hear discussions, on the radio and in other places that profoundly shock me. You hear someone making very astute cultural analysis and, all of a sudden, the same person affirms that the animal is an inferior being who must serve man, in the name of I don't know what situation of sacred confrontation (because the sacred must be everywhere, of course) with the "beast." ... The exclusion from life is unbearable; the exclusion of criminals is unbearable as well. The body losing weight, all the drugs, the despair, isolation, obsession, "flesh nothing but flesh," but the spirit, what of the spirit? Why must I whip the body in order for the soul to speak, to attempt speech? How can we live, seeing things that do not exist, hearing sounds that do not exist, touch objects that do not exist? How can one live according to faith, how can one believe in a God, how can one quench this need, this longing for an Absolute, which is so strong it threatens to overwhelm your entire being. One is plunged in an abyss, growing more distant from Him the more one yearns for Him. The rupture widens, but in the end, Guyotat provoked Him and went farther, into sin, in order to speak.

April 27

Must I move farther back in time to an era before writing, as if to surprise it from behind, before its hieroglyphs, in its signs, their meaning erased by History, like my own signs whose secret will disappear along with me? ... Better to die (as a child can "die") than not be multiple, infinitely multiple. There is the great need to belong and thus to be multiple, to lose oneself in the arms of the Infinite.
April 28

Guyotat writes of the “core affliction,” the rupture caused by the penis being withdrawn from the woman’s vagina, the attraction to the male body, a sexual conflict in terms of what society finds bearable, since it cannot codify a double sex, or understand the idea of depriving oneself of what one loves, of what one can take pleasure from, in order to make something even stronger, to make use of this contained jouissance in order to make something yet more powerful, the idea, also, that one is this, and that, and that, is also impossible to assimilate today. Indeed, the idea of what constitutes the “human” underwent a major transformation in the twentieth century with the dominance of digital technology. The “new man” seems to be just visible at the horizon line of contemporary science. But we have a long way to go if we are really to consider a model like Artaud’s “body without organs” or, in Guyotat’s work, the idea of a man with new sentiments and perceptions achieved through the subversion of feeling. Making people believe that if they think one thing they cannot think another is a form of violence.

[In the hospital.]

My eye cracks open, once again, and the vision of a carton of fruit juice, Rhea, the grip of that mother goddess, wife of time, takes me back by force toward Antiquity, the “minus” period of the time before the birth of Jesus Christ: the time of death? That false time before Christ, that space-time on the edge of which this medical treatment keeps me hovering. This makes me think of Artaud’s Bardo state, that period between life and death, in the Hindu Book of the Dead, where the body is in a transitional space, and subject to demon influence before its passage into the next world. Guyotat reads, the graphs moving upon the monitors of the equipment plugged into my heart and brain, before my eyes that part with difficulty, so shrunken have my eyelid muscles become, draw the trace, the proof of my historical trajectories. Everything, during the year, that I have suffered to foresee is accomplished. Now dependent on drugs, hooked up to machines in the hospital, his body shrunken through starvation,
brought to an extreme point, now fully conscious of the body's reduced weight, he begins to hallucinate images of the ancient gods, drawing him back to the origin of the world, or perhaps back into his mother's womb, to a time before his own birth, before being forced through a canal and thrown into the world, screaming and even at that time resistant, nevertheless being drawn out into the light, the light that blinds, the very light that is the sign of God that will eventually split into two opposing forces, the light standing for the sacred, the darkness for the profane, and a massive rupture will be felt deep in the body, from the erect member, the desire for women and the desire for men will be born. Christ on the cross, the mysteries of his birth from a virgin's womb, his resurrection, etc.—all this produces from this rupture a profound yearning, a desire to transcend the limits of the body, to achieve a state of raw soul, to cross from the materiality of language to the purity of the soul, to God, in order to speak in the language of God.

But in the end his attempt to break from the social order, to sanctify his vocation, and to link these two disparate sexual obsessions through a sacred and carnal practice, invites an inversion of desire, a transgression into sin, and a descent into the darkest abyss of human degradation. To witness the body degraded and to reject the humanistic ideas of human grandeur and to alter the language, to shorten words, create alternative spellings, excessive use of apostrophes, diacritical marks, and symbols, adopts a linguistic radicality that takes language to an extreme point and initiates a profound and overwhelming despair, a questioning of the artistic process itself, a rejection of former works. Yet after a near death experience comes the birth of a new man.

Works Cited