

Reading War with Nietzsche and Reading Nietzsche with Kant, Rimbaud, and Bataille

Adrian Gargett  
*London, United Kingdom*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: [<clcweb@purdue.edu>](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)

## Recommended Citation

Gargett, Adrian. "Reading War with Nietzsche and Reading Nietzsche with Kant, Rimbaud, and Bataille." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.1 (2003): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1178>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1178)

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <[clcweb@purdue.edu](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)>

---

**Volume 5 Issue 1 (March 2003) Article 1**  
**Adrian Gargett,**

**"Reading War with Nietzsche and Reading Nietzsche with Kant, Rimbaud, and Bataille"**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss1/1>>

---

**Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.1 (2003)**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss1>>

---

**Abstract:** In his paper, "Reading War with Nietzsche and Reading Nietzsche with Kant, Rimbaud, and Bataille," Adrian Gargett discusses the aspects of poetry, communication, and notion that the apparition of Nietzsche manifested in Bataille is not a locus of secular reason but of necromantic religion: a writer who escapes philosophical conceptuality in the direction of unidentified zones, and dispenses with the "thing in itself" because it is an article of intelligible representation with no importance as a vector of becoming/of travel. Necromancy resists the transcendence of death opening territories of "voyages of discovery never reported." Against the strain of inert and superficial phenomenalism that typifies Nietzsche readings, Bataille pursues the fissure of abysmal skepticism, which passes out of the Kantian *noumenon* (intelligible object) through Kant and Schopenhauer's "thing in itself" (stripping away a layer of residual Platonism) and onwards in the direction of a-categorical, epochal, or base-matter that connects with Rimbaud's "invisible splendours": the immense death-scapes of a "universe without images." Matter cannot be allocated a category without being reclaimed for "ideality" and the Nietzschean crisis with the *Ding an sich* was not its tangible dogmatic materialism, but rather that it anticipated "an ideal form of matter" as the transcendent (quarantined) scene of primary truth, a "real world." Materialism is not a dogma but a journey, a break from socially regulated belief. It is "before anything else the obstinate negation of idealism, which is to say the very basis of all philosophy." Exploring a-categorical matter guides thought as chance and matter as chaos, beyond all parameters. It yields no propositions to ascertain, but only routes to discover.

**Adrian Gargett**

**Reading War with Nietzsche and Reading Nietzsche with Kant, Rimbaud, and Bataille**

Having at last escaped from the torture palace of authoritarian love we shuffle about, numb and confused, flinching from the twisted septic wound of our past -- now clumsily bandaged with the rags of secular culture. It is painfully evident that post-Christian humanity is a pack of broken dogs. Philosophy is a ghoul that haunts only relics, and the desolate rasping of our hymn to sickness has only just begun. Borne by currents of innate exhaustion that flow mute and relentless beneath the surface perturbations of convulsion and chatter, damned, shaking, claw-like fingers hewn from torment and sunk into debris lured with excruciating slowness down into the lips of flame and syrupy blackness twisted skewerish into fever-hollowed eyes. Eternal recurrence is our extermination, and we cling to it as infants to their mother's breasts. A despot forsakes any game that begins to turn out badly. This has been the instance with metaphysics. From Kant onwards investigative philosophy stopped generating the outcomes sympathetic to established (theistic) power, and we were swiftly informed, as I would like to put it, "this game is over, let's call it a draw." The authoritarian tradition of European reason tried to pull the plug on the great voyages at precisely the moment they first became intriguing, which is to say: atheistic, inhuman, experimental, and dangerous. The forces of antichrist are rising fanged and expectant from their scorched rat-holes in the wake of monotheistic hegemony, without the least care for the paralytic tinkering of deconstructive undecidability. "An attitude which is neither military nor religious becomes insupportable in principle from the moment of death's arrival" (Bataille 2, 246; all subsequent translations are mine). The war has scarcely begun. Whenever its name has been anything but a joke, philosophy has been haunted by a subterranean question: what if knowledge was a means to intensify unknowing? It is this thought alone that has differentiated it from the superficial things of the Earth. Yet the magnificence and also the ignominy of philosophy is to have sought after the end of knowing, and no more. The critical philosophy depicts the "truth of reason" as fictions, but devious ones, for they can never be revealed. They are "big lies" to the scale of infinity; tales about an unreal world beyond all possibility of sensation, one which is completely incapable of engaging in material communication with the human nervous system, however obliquely, an unconnected realm, a divine kingdom. This is the ghost landscape of metaphysics, swarming with divinities, souls, agents, perdurant subjectivities, entities with a zero potentiality for triggering excitations, and then the whole gothic confessional of guilt, responsibility, moral judgment, punishments, and rewards, the expansive priestly organization of psychological management and ethereal power. The only problem for the metaphysicians is that this mesh of vague fictions is un-coordinated, and comes into contradiction with itself. Once the zealous irrationalism of inquisition and the stake begins to collapse, and the dogmatic power of the church fails to the point that it can no longer wholly restrain philosophy within the mould of theology, vehement disputes -- antinomies -- begin to spread. Owing to the "internecine strife of the metaphysicians" polygot forces begin to be sucked into the conflict, at first mobilized against particular structures of reason, fighting under the banner of another. But eventually a more widespread resentment begins to surface, numerous elements begin to throw-off the authority of metaphysics as such, skepticism spreads, and the nomads begin to drift back, with renewed élan.

The dangerous skeptics are those Kant fears, "a species of nomads, despising all settled modes of life" (Kant 8) who come from a wasteland strip beyond knowledge. They are travelers, which is also to say: infiltration paths of the unknown. It is by the tactics of these inhumanists that the immense abrupt of necromantic zero penetrates its infectious psychosis onto the Earth. Philosophy is a discipline. It takes only the most informal reading of Nietzsche's *Genealogie* to start to take this word sincerely; to sense its assorted odour of syrupiness and decay that discloses countless streams of blood. In addition, for those instructed by Nietzsche into a more astute genealogical perception -- fusing refinement with a anxious sickness of the nerves -- a more extensive range of aromas becomes

evident; the acute sting of advanced pain, the staleness of long-standing despair, and the cloying bitterness -- brilliant in its metaphysical reverberation -- that only fully transpires in the miasma of habitual and untimely death. There are only a small number, if any, who could stare audaciously into the laboratory of human cultures, but then, this is hardly an option: the real instruction course of the intellect is not on show. Those fragments of viciousness that unintentionally remain uncovered, whether due to the fading of a deserting enemy's bestiality, intestine discord within a power system, the disastrous consequences of natural catastrophe, or some other cause of this type, must act as signs of a universally embryonic horror.

If disciplinary violence is to be efficient it is vital that it be devoid of rationalization, and thus unconcerned with teleology, either positive or negative. It must not appear as if anything is "wanted." For the most efficient means of tempering an instrument is to start to give it reasons; finally it begins to think it has a "right" to reasons. Pain must be unmistakably meaningless if it is to be "educational." It is on this basis that our history is so impenetrable, and indeed, nothing that was true has ever made sense. "Why was so much pain necessary?" we imprudently ask. But it is specifically because history has made no sense that we have gained knowledge from it, and the message remains a cruel one. Futile suffering has forever been Europe's "practical philosophy," our true evangelism, communicated to every zone of the Earth with incomparable devotion. After all, it is the revelation of so many ideas. So much power becomes available at the moment where one loses all capacity to benefit from it, and better the anguish of the master than the dejection of the slave. Thus it is that entering the state of reason has always necessitated that one spit out the ferocious ecstasy of the savages, leaving oneself in its place an immeasurable vacuum. The death of God that Nietzsche delineates is not without some degree of anticipation. If humanity's most baleful religion is instigated by an action of God, such an action is clearly best explained as a failed suicide attempt. It appears possible, as is so often the case, that this was a token action, a plea for attention. The Judaeo-Christian representation of God is a archetypal sketch of pathological insecurity. How frantic he is to be loved! So inadequate to himself, and so forsaken. How abysmal to live eternally in this way. Powerless to even imagine escaping the shadow of oneself. No one despises God as much as God. No one despises anything as much. It is not difficult to envisage his exhilaration, watching the nihilistic overthrow of his cult. The possibility of a discharge at last! Freed of all responsibility to act as the paramount of beings! His growing super-fluidity must have swelled up in him with the force of sexual crisis, such that it had all abruptly not been. There are occasions when one's compassion for God becomes irresistible; nothing has ever had to tolerate a more shameful existence than he. To not exist without excuse, his very quintessence denounces him for this default. Could there be a more degrading sinecure? When a substitute for God was wanted in the years 1888-89 even Nietzsche -- that fanatic of empathy -- was disinclined to assume the position.

"I am not a philosopher but a saint, perhaps a madman" (Bataille 5, 218). Bataille does not communicate a philosophy, but more exactly a delirious negative evangelism as I understand it, namely that "death can be tasted." Monotheism has always reconstructed pre-emptively the message of "you mean it can be known." Bataille is a philosopher not of indifference, but of evil, of an evil that will always be the description for those procedures that deliberately contravene all human utility, all accumulative reason, all constancy and all sense. He considers Nietzsche to have painstakingly confirmed that the standards of the good: self-identity, permanence, compassion, and transcendent individuality, are decisively rooted in the preservative inclinations of a remarkably shameful, inert, and fearful species of animals. Regardless of his pseudo-sovereignty, the Occidental God -- as the underwriter of the good -- has always been the perfect conduit of human reactivity, the anaesthetized anti-experimental standard of functional calculus. To challenge God, in a commemoration of evil, is to threaten humanity with adventures that they have been resolved to forbid.

Among the diseases Bataille has in common with Nietzsche is the assertion that the death of God is not an epistemic certainty, but a crime. It is no less worthy of cathedrals than the despot it threw out,

and whose mausoleum it continues to vandalize. Indeed, such new cathedrals are inextricable from the unholy celebrations of desecration which resonate through them, as the writings of Nietzsche and Bataille themselves demonstrate. "Indeed, we philosophers" and "free spirits" feel, when we hear the news that "the old god is dead," as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectations. At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an "open sea" (Nietzsche *The Gay Science*, 343). The death of God is an opportunity, a chance. It is reasonable to ask "what is meant" by the word *noumenon*, but "chance" does not perform in this way, since it is not a concept to be apprehended, but a course to follow. "To the one who grasps what chance is, how insipid the idea of God appears, and suspicious, and wing-clipping" (Bataille 6, 116). Monotheism is the great gate-keeper, and where it ends the adventure into death begins. If there are places from which we are outlawed, it is because they can in truth be reached, or "because they can reach us": in the end poetry is infiltration and not expression, a trajectory of incineration; either strung-up in the cobwebs of Paradise, or strung-out into the shadow-torrents of Hell (Nietzsche 3, 716). It is a direction out of creation, which is to each their fate elucidated as mystery, as "lure": "now a hard, an inexorable voyage commences -- a quest into the greatest possible distance" (Bataille 6, 29) Even the most angelic interest, when multiplied to the power of eternity, must find its way to end in the abyss.

In opposition to the failed security of Kantian industrialism associated with Hegel and teleology, Bataille proffers Nietzsche and the risk of chaos, war, eroticism, and submission to the sacred: "There is nothing I want except chance" (Bataille 6, 161), certainly not salvation therefore, or anything connected with God who "by definition, is not in play" (6, 84). The will to chance no longer objects to the irresponsibility of immanence, and Nietzsche figures as the confirmation that "unlike God, man is not condemned to condemn" (6, 75) Devotion, prayer, hope, or faith are all violently corroded by the will to chance, which relapses towards immanence, and "immanence is impiety itself" (6, 81). Bataille safeguards nothing (one cannot offend against the sacred): "I love irreligion, the disrespect of putting in play" (6, 86) Nonetheless, there is no religion that is not a chance, and no morality that is not chance's denial. Morality is the province of tasks, whilst religion liquefies itself in fate. Bataille's writings are "a hecatomb of words without gods or reasons to be" (5, 229), led back down through the burial-vaults of the West by a fierce desire to separate theism and religion, and thus restore the sacred to its necromantic impiety, except that nothing can ever just return, and Hell will never be an "pure" underworld again. The depths have become infernal, really so, quite irrespective of the fairy stories we are still told. "Flames surround us/ the abyss opens beneath our feet" (3, 95) claims Bataille from the edge of the impossible, "an abyss that does not end in the satiate contemplation of an absence" (5, 199) because its brink is the scorched wreck of even the most sublimed subjectivity. "I have nothing to do in this world" he writes "if not to burn" (4, 17). "I suffer from not burning, approaching so close to death that I respire it like the breath of a lover" (5, 246). It is not only due to the inquisition that all the significant explorers have for a long time been reduced to ashes. For well over a century all who have wanted to see have seen: no passionate voyage can be embarked on from the ruins of monotheism unless it takes its resources from damnation.

The apparition of Nietzsche that Bataille manifests is not a locus of secular reason but of necromantic religion; a writer who escapes philosophical conceptuality in the direction of unidentified zones, and dispenses with the "thing in itself" because it is an article of intelligible representation with no importance as a vector of becoming/of travel. Necromancy resists the transcendence of death opening territories of "voyages of discovery never reported" (Rimbaud 327). Against the strain of inert and superficial phenomenism that typifies Nietzsche readings, Bataille pursues the fissure of abysmal scepticism, which passes out of the Kantian *noumenon* through Kant and Schopenhauer's "thing in itself," stripping away a layer of residual Platonism, and onwards in the direction of a-categorical,

epochal, or base-matter that connects with Rimbaud's "invisible splendours" (Rimbaud 296): the immense death-scapes of a "universe without images" (293). Matter cannot be allocated a category without being reclaimed for "ideality," and the Nietzschean crisis with the *Ding an sich* was not its tangible dogmatic materialism, but rather that it anticipated "an ideal form of matter" (Bataille 1, 179), as the transcendent (quarantined) scene of primary truth, a "real world." There are no things-in-themselves because there are no things: "thingness has only been invented by us owing to the requirements of logic (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* #558). The *Ding an sich* is a concept adapted for a God/supreme being hysterically seeking to veil itself: a cultural glitch turned nasty, but on the run at last: "Root of the idea of the substance in language, not in beings outside us (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* # 562)

"The antithesis of the apparent world and the true world is reduced to the antithesis 'world' and 'nothing'" (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* # 567). Materialism is not a dogma but a journey, a break from socially regulated belief: it "is before anything else the obstinate negation of idealism, which is to say the very basis of all philosophy" (Bataille 1, 220). Exploring a-categorical matter guides thought as chance and matter as chaos, beyond all parameters. It yields no propositions to ascertain, but only routes to discover. This is Nietzsche as a vampiric-poet at war with the philosophers -- with the new priests -- a thinker who attempts to render life more problematic. Bataille traces a desire that echoes with the reality that stuns us, and not with a "rationality" that would lead us out from the labyrinth. Nietzsche is the great exemplar of complexifying thought, making use of knowledge for the benefit of questioning -- and this is not in order to elucidate and concentrate, but to subtilize and disconnect them. Complicating thought intensifies the stimulus of an active or effective confusion -- delirium -- against the reactive forces whose compulsive inclination is to resolve or conclude. Rebellious against the underlying sense of philosophical reasoning, it sides with thought against knowledge, against the anaesthetizing prescriptions of the "will to truth."

"The extreme sharpness of certain senses, so they understand a quite different sign-language -- and create one -- the condition that seems to be a part of many nervous disorders--; extreme mobility that turns into an extreme urge to communicate; the desire to speak of the part of everything that knows how to give signs--; a need to get rid of oneself, as it were, through signs and gestures; ability to speak of oneself through a hundred speech media -- an explosive condition. One must first think of this condition as a compulsion and urge to get rid of the exuberance of inner tension through muscular activity and movements of all kinds; then as an involuntary co-ordination between this movement and the inner processes (images, thoughts, desires) -- as a kind of automatism of the whole muscular system impelled by strong stimuli from within--; inability to prevent reaction; the system of inhibition suspended, as it were" (Nietzsche *Werke* 3, 716). In this Nietzsche fashions a connection between the artistic process and an infection, a nervous-disorder, an epidemic of "abreactive" gestures with their correlated intensities. The reticence to this outflow collapses, but the access of new material is severely reduced. In other words, the powers of absorption are suppressed; anorexia is united with logorrhoea, or extreme volubility, and an art is thought on the foundation of a violent wasting disease. In the passage that immediately precedes "How the true world at last became a fable" in his *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes: "To separate the world into the 'true' and the 'apparent,' be it in the Christian fashion, or in that of Kant (a cunning Christian to the end) is only a suggestion of decadence -- a symptom of declining life? That the artist treasures appearance above reality is no objection to this proposition. Because here, 'appearance' means reality once again, only selected, strengthened, corrected" (Nietzsche *Werke* 2, 961). The narrative sketched out by "How the true world at last became a fable" is that of our history, but it is a subsidiary occurrence when contrasted with the pre-history that presents its means and genealogical significance. The pre-historical narrative fronts the proceedings which the historical narrative assumes, the repression of the Dionysian inclination and its impulsive-drive of unreserved expenditure into a reason of preservation and resistance. This birth of history is sketched more completely in the note numbered #584 in *The Will to Power*, a text of

sustained power, including this fragment: "And behold, suddenly the world fell apart into a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world: and precisely the world that man's reason had devised for him to live and settle in was discredited. Instead of employing the forms as a tool for making the world manageable and calculable, the deranged acuity of philosophers divined that in these categories is presented the concept of the world to which the one in which man lives does not correspond -- the means were misunderstood as measures of value, even as a condemnation of their real intention -- The intention was to deceive oneself in a useful way; the means, the invention of formulas and signs by means of which one could reduce the confusing multiplicity to a purposive and manageable schema" (Nietzsche *Werke* 3, 726-27).

Where cumulative reason has introduced "truth" and "appearance" as the agencies of supreme definiteness or pure concepts, the artist recognizes appearance as reality "once again" (*noch einmal*). Reality returns in appearance like the seismic-tremor, radiating wider and wider areas for movement. Given that reality is itself the catalyst for such movements they will grow to be increasingly more damaging, as this catalyst becomes increasingly "selected, strengthened, corrected" or, succinctly, "intensified." Here at last -- where nothing is last -- is the paroxysm of zero, eternal recurrence, the libidinal motor of Nietzsche's economics. Nietzsche's economy of the artistic process, or Dionysian economy, is constructed underneath the eruptive anti-logic of eternal recurrence. The economy is a continuous re-emergence of inhuman improvidence; an imaginative, inestimable surplus irregularly displayed in the transformation of negation into reckless zero. It is inherent to desire and constantly has new -- and when not disfigured by repression -- progressively more complicated formations to excess. A Dionysian economy is undeniably a blitzkrieg fiscal-system of solar stock, in which the negative ceiling of each conceptual pair is re-established as a reinforcement for the positive; as an escalating syndrome of difference. The delirium of dissipating currents proceeds from this inexorability that rational negation under no circumstances arrives, even though zero collides. Therefore, the image of eternal recurrence follows: that the elimination of amalgamated being is the process of desire, or unrepressed dissipation, is consistent with an escalation of infection and not a (rationally comprehensible) negation of assets. Endemic difference is only developed by the irregular aberration from itself. A Dionysian economy is the volatility of impersonal desire, continuously re-animated in the pattern of recurrence, in the escalation of new realities. These persistent tremors of intensity are located at the "point" which patriarchal productivism has retained for its limit; at the end of each "becoming-woman" -- (which are misconceived as precise negations). Desire, therefore, could be represented as nothing but becoming-woman at different levels of intensity, although of course there is the potential of becoming a pious woman, to commence a history, love the masculine, and accumulate, since to become a woman is to suspend reality, and no one loves fairy-tales more than the church. But reality glides upon zero, and can be discarded again and again. In the lesbian depths of the unconscious, desire for/as feminising tremors of movement are without limit.

The death of God is a religious event, a transgression, experiment in damnation, and a lash of anti-theistic warfare, but this is not to say that it is principally a crime. Hell has no interest in our depraved moral currency. To mistake vague considerations of sin with voyages into damnation is Christian tawdriness; the Dantean fault of visualization that one could merit a venture into Hell, as if the infernal too was a question of legitimacy. Our crimes are simple faltering steps on the path to ruin, just as every anticipated "Hell on Earth" is a precise exemplar of veneration. Transgression is not criminal exploit but tragic fate; the connection of an economically premeditated apocalypse with the religious anti-history of poetry. It is the inexorable incidence of impossibility, which is not the same as death, but neither is it effectively different. This ambiguity reacts to the occurrence of death itself, which is not ontological but labyrinthine: a reversion of constitution that is absolute to discontinuity, yet is nothing at the plane of immanence. The very individuality that would figure the possibility of a proprietary death that could only be accomplished if death were impossible. One dies because discontinuity is never achieved, but this indicates that there is never "one" who dies. Alternatively

there is an unthinkable communication with zero, immanence, or the sacred: "There is no feeling that throws one into exuberance with greater force than that of nothingness. But exuberance is not at all annihilation; it is the surpassing of the shattered attitude, it is transgression" (Bataille 10, 72). Humanity is a calcified fiction fearfully hiding from zero, a purgatorial incarceration of dissolution, but to be debilitated with sanctity is to bask in death like a reptile in the sun. What is an end? One trembles perhaps. An end? Is there more than one? Is not the very question a contravention? A merciless stripping? Should death be pressed so abrasively into my awareness? Can she not wait? Is it not acceptable merely to sleep?

Unlike the will to life, the will to power is not motivated by the inclination to realize and maintain a potential, its single impulsion is that of overcoming itself. It has no motivating end, but only a propulsive source. It is in this connotation that the will to power is creative desire, without a presaged objective or anticipatory precision. It is an arrow shot into the unconceived. Will to power names the pre-representational impetus for which life is an instrument, and for which proclivity is inextricable from intensity. At the centre of the terminological motor driving Nietzsche's writings lie a string of nouns of action, each of which undermines a dogma by designating a genealogical topic. Nietzsche transliterates "moralization" fully as "the genealogy of morals," but the genealogy of logic is instigated under the compact rubric of equalization (or logicalization), as is the case in point with "eternalization," simplification, divinisation, legislation, etc. It is in this way that will to power is transcribed into thought by the first hesitant tones of a positive a-teleological syntax. What if eternal recurrence were not a belief? -- "The most extreme form of nihilism would be the view that every belief is necessarily false because there simply is no true world" (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* #15). As Bataille suggests, "the return immotivates the instant, freeing life from an end and in this ruining it straight away. The return is the desert of one for whom each instant henceforth finds itself immotivated" (Nietzsche *Werke* 6, 23).

The recurrence of the same cannot be distinguished from the non-aligned unilateral quality of difference, which is to say that recurrence is the constancy of difference with equalization. It is not that energy is what recurs as the same, but rather that energy is the economic sense of recurrence as unilateral constancy. Recurrence is not a construction of energy or cosmic economy, but the very might of indeterminate zero; the abortion of transcendence. To imagine of the real concurrence of unparalleled chaotic zero with the accomplishment of reactivity, such that the only suppressed is the un-suppressible, is to think of recurrence, and any indication that eternal recurrence is a cosmology expressible in line with a principle of non-contradiction is to unequivocally lose the idea of Nietzsche's excitement -- the unilateral, materialist, or genealogical elucidation of difference. The singular philosophical precision of recurrence glows with the effervescent stream of bilateral distinctions by indifferent matter. Spirit is different from matter once again, culture is different from nature and nature once again, order is different from chaos and chaos once again, just as life is unilaterally different from death, plenitude from zero, reactive from active forces, etc. Transcendence is both real and impossible, as is the human race.

"I count life itself as an instinct for growth, for duration, for amassing of force, for power: where the will to power is lacking there is decline. My assertion is that this will is lacking for all the highest values of humanity -- that decline-values, nihilistic values, pursue dominion under the most hallowed names" (Nietzsche *Werke* 2, 1167-68). It is the devaluation of the greatest values, the paroxysm at the apex of nihilism, that aborts the human race. Having split the high and the low in escalation, humanity perceives itself deprived of its idols -- which have purified themselves into explicit inexistence -- and is in this manner pitched vertiginously into its wretched values; physicality, pathology, sensuality, and materiality. At the closing stages of human civilization there is thus a regression determined by zero, a violent seizure of relapse whose motor is the fissure of an smashed telos; the death of God. Zero religion. As a corporeal-element of zero, overman is not a theoretically understandable enhancement upon humanity. Any such thing is, whatever the case may be, exactly



impossible. Humanity cannot be intensified, but only aborted. It is initially essential to exhume the nascent anthropoid beast at the nucleus of man, with the intention to revive the concentrated series in which it is implanted. If overman is an emergence beyond humanity, it is only in the sense of being a rearrangement of its intensive foetus. This is why overman is principally regressive; like a step back from materialization in order to soar in intensity, like the drawing-back of a bow-string. Zero is the transference element which amalgamates active and reactive impulses at the end of the immense Platonic separation between nature and culture. Zero is un-differentiable without being a unity, and everything is re-engaged through zero. Eternal recurrence -- the most nihilistic thought -- initiates everything again, as history is re-energized through the nihilistic in-differentiation between zero interest and interest for zero. Passive nihilism is the zero of religion, whilst active nihilism is the religion of the zero.

The notes gathered into section 55 of *The Will to Power* form a macabre theme. Either "existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness" (a box), or "the nothing (the 'meaningless') eternally" (*The Will to Power* #55). The nihilism of recurrence is ambiguous between its (Christian) historical meaning as the constrictive deceleration of zero and its cosmic (non-local) virtuality as an entryway to death. Christendom is to be challenged because it was its "morality that protected life against despair and the leap into nothing" (*The Will to Power* #55). "Morality guarded the underprivileged against nihilism. Supposing that the faith in this morality would perish, then underprivileged would no longer have their comfort -- and they would perish" (*The Will to Power* #55). The religious history of humanity is established on a system of ill-health: dehydration, malnourishment, disfigurement, deficiency of sleep, a general "self-destruction of the underprivileged: self-vivisection, poisoning, intoxication" (*The Will to Power* #55). A journey was in progress which Christian stabilizing moralism -- comprehensive species fearfulness -- privatised, representationalized, crushed under the transcendent phallus, immobilized, blocked, and driven somewhere else. Christianity is a contrivance for ensnaring the sick, but recurrence melts through the cell bars: "What does 'underprivileged' mean? Above all, physiologically -- no longer politically. The unhealthiest kind -- (in all classes) furnishes the soil for this nihilism: they will experience the belief in the eternal recurrence as a curse, struck by which one no longer shrinks from any action; not to be extinguished but to extinguish everything" (*The Will to Power* #55). To link sickness to death as cause to effect is itself a sign of health. Their baleful interconnection is quite different. Sickness is not followed by death within the sequence of ordered representation. It opens the gates. Genealogy does not condense sickness to a historical subject, since sickness -- the incapability to defer incentive -- evades plain recitation in progressive time, inclining towards the fading of time in epochal disruption. The reflex-spasm at (and by) which reactivity gropes is the a-temporal continuum underneath the layer of health. Death is "that which has no history" (*On the Genealogy of Morals* 2, #13), and Nietzsche's technique is syphilis: "Only religion assures a consumption that destroys the proper substance of those that it animates" (Bataille 7, 316).

"Wherever there are walls I shall inscribe this eternal accusation against Christianity upon them -- I can write in letters which make even the blind see -- I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great instinct depravity, the one great instinct for revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, petty -- I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind" (Nietzsche *Werke* 2, 1235). This stain is not a wound but a callus, because the relationship between God and man is a matter of an industrial contract. Unitary being is the regulation of work. God produces and preserves, man who labours; theology has the stench of sweat. Long before Marx, it was monotheism that hallucinated the Earth into a work-house. "As soon as we imagine someone who is responsible for our being thus and thus, etc. (God, nature), and therefore attribute to him the intention that we should exist and be happy or wretched, we corrupt for ourselves the innocence of becoming. We then have someone who wants to achieve something through us and with us" (Nietzsche *Werke* 3, 524). History is industrial history, and it only has one objective, which is God. Nihilism is the loss of that

objective, the invalidation of man's end, the reversion of all work to debris. It is in this sense that history is aborted by zero. The world of work expires with the One, and zero is an engine of war: "When truth steps into the fight against the lies of millennia we shall have seisms, spasms of earthquake, a displacement of mountain and valley, the like of which has never been dreamed. The concept of politics then passes over totally into a war of the spirit, all power edifices of the old society are blasted into the air -- they all rest upon the lie: there shall be wars as there have never been upon the earth" (Nietzsche *Werke* 2, 1153).

Between war and industry is a unilateral difference; industry is different from war and war once again. This is why significant politics is not just an event of war, but the very flow of recurrence in its concentration. Nothing is crucial but zero, and significant politics is that for which the polis itself falls prey. In addition war can seem to be directed to accumulation, supremacy, and submission, but intensely it extends corresponding to the affinity to subtilization, permeation, and termination. It is not that there is simply a craving for war, differently called by Nietzsche the "thirst for destruction" (Nietzsche *Werke* 3, 821), "the drive to destroy, anarchism, nihilism" (*Werke* 3, 708), and "will to nothingness" (*Werke* 2, 900; 3, 738), more exactly that war in its concentrated signification is craving itself, paroxysmal recurrence, unilateral zero. War is unreason, but what is reason? It is something like a pearl; the indication of a drawn-out irritant. When individuals become philosophical there is always a foundation of torture to be found. In the Occidental world the central mechanism of this torture, the very secure unit or *territorium* of brutality, has been called the soul. Like a black, damp, and icy dungeon it has always been a torment in itself. Europe has been chained in the soul, dangling with bleeding wrists, until it lusted for destruction with a foul and parched thirst. "Inspired" by the symbol of its gibbeted God, it has been a perpetual crusade.

With the immense, almost incomprehensible energy that comes from controlled rage, philosophers have watched over the carnivorous insect biting at our intellect. Perhaps they thought if they could satisfy it with an ethics its consuming greed would lessen for a while -- but such a judgment confirms a relentless corrosion of the military intuition. To endeavour to negotiate is already an overwhelming defeat -- to concede weakness, to anticipate reaction, to fend -- these are all ineffective positions to assume. At the level of strategy it might sometimes be requisite to fall back into a protective position, but grand-strategy begins and ends with a obligation to plan; to be offensive. Pragmatism is ultimately indissociable from violence. Due to the strategic folly on the part of its philosophers Europe has tried to make peace with its soul, yet relentlessly -- "stimulated" -- the maiming persists, and with each bite we suffer and perceive self.

In "Sur Nietzsche," it is not any affirmative doctrine that draws Bataille into the labyrinth of Nietzsche's writing. He is lured down into these texts by their "own" labyrinthine character, and by the nihilist religion that haunts them, which he approaches through the death of God, and entitles "the will to chance." The will to chance is the sacrifice of the will. This is not to say that the will acts out its own end, since any act of submission simply confirms humanity; increasing the extent of its possibilities into negation. Unlike any act, the will to chance defies the sequence of the possible, but even its opposition is reflexive, a "fatality of working evil, in disorder" (Bataille 6, 154). Between chance and the will is impossibility or independent difference, such that the surrender of the will is itself succumbed to as a chance. Chance is everything that no agent can do, and its scope is only restricted by fictions -- although opaque ones. It is the same as time; disintegration of individuated being into communication. "Being, humans, are not able to 'communicate' -- live -- than outside of themselves. And as they must 'communicate,' they must will this evil, this pollution, which, putting their own beings into play, renders them penetrable one to the other" (Bataille 6, 48).

It is not that Nietzsche declares upon chance in a way that Bataille comes to interpret, but rather that in Nietzsche's text chance decouples itself from the penal-complex of probability, igniting in its luxuriant immensity. Nietzsche's writing is not a dogma, but a paroxysmal risk, breaking open the confine of Kant's "nihil negativum" to soar in an affirmative psychosis, "dissolved and free" (Bataille 6,

155). In his article "Sacrifices" Bataille locates such a celestial anti-logic, in which irresolvable improbability, irrational negation and incessant compositional complexity are interlinked. When contrasted with the play of arrangement occurring at a lower stratum of composition every "being" is an improbability so violent that Bataille labels it "chance": "Poetry leads from the known to the unknown" (5, 157) writes Bataille. Poetry is eloquent silence, the only course of writing to converge with the sacred (= 0), because "the unknown is not distinguished from nothingness by anything that discourse can announce (5, 133). To write the border-line of the impossible is a transgression against discursive order, and an inspiration to the unspeakable: "poetry is immoral" (5, 212).

True poetry is repellent, because it is base communication, in contrast with pseudo-communicative discourse, which assumes the separation of the terms it links. Communication -- in the transgressive non-sense Bataille lends it -- is both a total risk and an immeasurable depravity, connected with repulsive effect. The ego surfaces in the flight from communicative immanence, from deep or unholy community, whilst instigating a history that ushers towards the acrid truth of the desertification of the isolated being. From the unease of base contact, which it can only perceive as dissolution, the ego slips into the ennui of autonomy, the ante-chamber to a severe despair, whose terror is heightened by the fact that it occurs at the point where escape has drained itself, where the ego has quarantined itself to the limit of its being against unconnected adversity. Ennui is not any kind of reaction to the compromising of the ego from without, it is not an infection or a contamination (the negation of such things are for it a state of existence), but rather, it is the very truth of realized being; the core effect of personal individuality. Ennui cannot be overcome, exceeded or determined -- *aufgehoben* -- because it is nothing but the concentrate of such processes, indeed, of function as such. Ennui is intimated into the very composition of project, as "the necessity of leaving oneself" (Bataille 5, 137). If the territory of Bataille's writing is volcanic it is not only due to the indiscriminate paroxysms of a shattering incandescence, but also because its fecundity is predicted by a grotesque disinfection. Below and before the intense jungles of delirium is the endless ash-plain of despair.

In contrast to the pompous declarations from the orthodoxies, which come from on high -- like the stroke of a whip -- an infernal message is subterranean, a whisper from the nether-regions of discourse, since Hell is certainly below. Just as the underworld is not a hidden world -- a real or true (*wahre Welt*) -- but is that hidden by all worlds, so is the crypt-mutter from Hell something other than a reversed scene, concept or belief. In their infernal lineaments words are passages, leading into and through lost networks, and not edifications. Achievement is unattainable in Hell. There is nothing *en bas* except drifting amongst emergences, and what is existing has always come bizarrely, without assimilation. Infernal "low-life" has no understanding of capital. Even the thoughts of these inferior ones are a disguise and dissolution, their beliefs mere chameleon etchings of the skin. Poetry does not strut logically amongst convictions, it seeps through crevices; a magmic flux of resuscitated amongst vermin. If it was not that the Great Ideas had basements, fissures, and vacuoles, poetry would never infest them. Faiths rise and fall, but the rats persist.

#### Works Cited

- Bataille, George. *Oeuvres Completes*. Ed. Denis Hollier, Thadée Klossowski, Mme Leduc, Henri Ronse, and J.-M. Rey. 12 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1970-88.
- Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1969.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1967.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage, 1968.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Trans. Paul Harrison. Ed. Karl Schlechta. Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1969.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. *Collected Poems*. Trans. Oliver Bernard. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.

Author's profile: A freelance author and critic, Adrian Gargett received a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of

Warwick (1997), and M.A. in art history from London's Courtauld Institute (1992). His interests in scholarship include philosophy, art, film, and cultural theory. Gargett's publications include "The Matrix: What is Bullet Time?," "Doppelganger: Exploded States of Consciousness in *Fight Club*," and "*X-Men*: Speed Mutation", "Strange Days" in the *Journal of Cognitive Liberties* 2.3 (2001), "Symmetry of Death" in *Variaciones Borges* 13 (2002), and "Eternal Feminine" and "Having Sex" in *Parallel* 25 (2002), *Albert Camus: Absurd Creation* (Ashgate, 2002) and *States of Paranoia* (Wallflower Press, 2002). His work in film criticism has also appeared. Gargett published in *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 2.3 (2002) previously his paper "Nolan's *Memento*, Memory, and Recognition". E-mail: <[agargett@darleymead.u-net.com](mailto:agargett@darleymead.u-net.com)>.