The Fate of Words: Glosses on Critical Inutility

By Anthony Iles

gloss, n., interpretation. — L. *glōssa*, 'an antiquated or foreign word that requires explanation', hence also 'explanation, note', fr. Gk. γλῶσσα, Att. γλῶττα, 'tongue, speech', which stands for *γλωχ-ϳα, prop. 'that which is projected', and is rel. to γλωχίς, 'a projecting point', and perh. cogn. with OSlav. *glogŭ*, 'thorn'. Cp. **glottis, epiglottis,** and **gloze,** 'a note'. Cp. also the second element in **monoglot, diglot, triglot, polyglot,** and in **bugloss, Cynoglossum, Docoglossa, Hippoglossus, hypoglossus, Odontoglossum, Ophioglossum, Pangloss, Salpiglossis, Tachyglossus, Triglochin.**

Derivative: *gloss*, tr. v., to write glosses to.

gloss, n., polish. — Rel. to obsol. Du. *gloos*, 'a glowing', MHG. *glosen*, Norw. *glosa*, 'to glow', and prob. also to OE. *glōwan*, of s.m. See **glow** and cp. **gloze,** 'to shine'.

Derivative: *gloss*, tr. and intr. v., to polish.

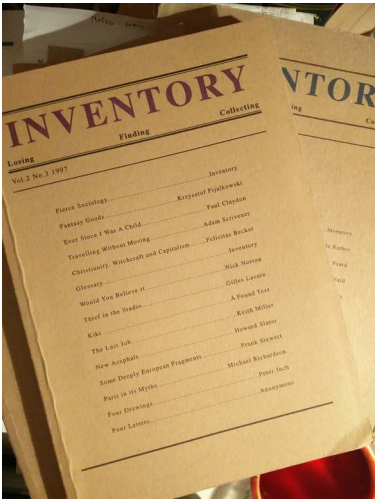
glossary, n., a collection of glosses; a partial dictionary. — L. *glōssārium*, 'vocabulary of antiquated or foreign words, glossary', formed with suff. *-ārium*, fr. *glōssa*. See **gloss,** 'interpretation', and subst. suff. **-ary.**

Derivative: *glossari-al*, adj.

glossator, n., a writer of glosses. — ML., formed with suff. **-ator** fr. L. *glōssa*. See **gloss,** 'interpretation'.

This pamphlet stems from, and can be located at, the forking paths of a few different projects. A version of the material is to be included in a series of pamphlets, Arcade Materials.[1] The questions which prompted my interest in problems of anxiety, crisis, collectivity writing and form I began to explore in a collectively edited anthology entitled, *Anguish Language: writing and crisis* (2016).[2] The impetus to define this area of study, or the object of study, which I am calling the critical dictionary, philosophical dictionary or satirical glossary, came from the need to better understand the glossary published in consecutive issues of the artist-run journal, *Inventory* (1995-2005), which is the subject of my PhD research.

1 https://arcadematerials.tumblr.com/
2 http://anguishlanguage.tumblr.com/



GLOSSARY

Alcoholic

Low notes; find a day beyond the next. If you could side step yourself you would. Nevertheless being present to oneself is unavoidable. Furthermore, one is forced into a second role as witness to the whole filthy experience in an action similar to grabbing a cat's head and twisting its gaze in the direction of the stinking shit it has just created. Thus, intoxication has been attractive to humankind for as long as there has been consciousness. Like a fantasy made real with disastrous consequences; the alcoholic builds one cage for another.

Habitual drinking - the steady state of drunkenness - cannot be thought of as being particularly abject. For it is only the symptom of thoughts without conclusion, observations that cannot be shared, unless they have been crushed into the silent recognition's that arrive with stupor. A hypocritical lip service is often paid to a notion of a form of nomadic thought. Usually by those who inhabit a comfortable world of complacent stasis. This fashionable magpie-like contrivance never matches up to an anguished restlessness that has been slowly ushered into a thoughtspace where there seems to be no possibility of rest. What happens to someone when, at some definitive moment, they are brought to a realisation that this invention of men, this world in all its disgusting vileness, means nothing? Out on the streets, in a million dwellings, there are a legion of homeless minds. An enforced nomadism that is a direct consequence of the cold hand of productive purpose, of a reason that can only quantify, balance and measure. Preserving and propagating a lifeworld that only serves and regulates the existence of capital. Thus sacrifice is still present in our modern economy as these homeless minds, seemingly voluntarily, put themselves to the sword. If this is truly the time of the tribes as Maffesoli suggested, then which tribe? Which role? Which function? Mother, worker, thug, fan, son, daughter, collector, thief, shopper, outcast, official, boss, minority, deviant, DRUNKARD. It is what Vaneigem called 'survival sickness', sick of roles - a million minds sanctioned, truncated and leads to that moment when a 'passion destroyed is reborn in the passion for destruction'. *'For brief moments his daily life must generate an energy which, if only it were not rechanneled, dispersed and squandered in roles, would surfice to overthrow the world of survival. Who can gauge the striking power of an impassioned daydream, of pleasure taken in love, of a nascent desire, of a rush of sympathy? Everyone seeks to extend such brief moments of life. But conditioning succeeds in making most of us pursue these moments in exactly the wrong way - by way of the inhuman - with the result that we lose what we most want at the very moment we attain it.'*

Life is not elsewhere - it is here and now. Life is not a career, a project, a task that has to be completed according to a set of dictated behavioural patterns. So which is the more terminative? A weak, role-bounded subservience or a blind, wantonly self-destructive will? At the very least, the alcoholic, being the latter, is the nobler; for he understands and acts upon his condition.

A. S.

Couplings and Linkages

I

Let:
L,M,N = linkages
C,D,E = couplings
a,b,c = elements

Then:
f(L(abcd),a') g L(a'b'c'd')
f(C(abcd),a') g C(a'bcd)

Think of linkages as joined elements, chain links for example, the Great Chain of Being for another, cars in traffic for a third. Think of couplings as adjacent or concatenated unrelated objects, glasses on a shelf for example, people on a loosely-populated sidewalk for a second, catastrophes for a third.

L(M,N) g L'
C(D,E) g C'
C(L,D) g C'
C(D,L) g C'
L(C,M) g C'
L(M,C) g C'
L(C,D) g C'
C(L,M) g C'

or:
1x1x1 = 1; 0x0x0 = 0; 0x1x0 = 0; 0x0x1 = 0; 1x0x1 = 0; 1x1x0 = 0; 1x0x0 = 0; 0x1x1 = 0

A coupling of couplings is a coupling; a coupling of anything is a coupling.

A linkage of linkages is a linkage; a linkage of anything with a coupling is a coupling.

The 'principle of fragility of good things': The linkage is as strong as its weakest links, and becomes increasingly improbable as the number of elements is increased.

Nevertheless, we might consider action at a distance, such that:
f(R(stuv),s') g R(st'uv) | R(st'u'v) | R(stu'v) | etc.: Consider this a form of 'chain negation'.
Action at a distance combines linkages

Image: Glossary section, *Inventory*, Vol.3, No.3, 1999.

Picking up the pamphlet with your right or left hand point it diagonally away from your body and use your other hand to run your fingers along the spine flattening and straightening it. This is one axis running through the published object – a line which demarcates and joins its beginning and its end – one which can be rotated to evaluate the other directions in which text might have covered the object and other orientations through which it might be read.

Meditating on this complex object over the last few years I have identified an increasingly wide and rich field of rival and comrade glossaries, dictionaries and indexes, many of which are obscure. And I think this obscurity is central of them, and a good reason for not necessarily considering them rivals vying for the same attention but instead more or less distant comrades. The examples I have sought to bring together here wrestle with the authority and obscurity of the dictionary and glossary. They revel in the subversion of the fixity of language and things.[3] In doing so they open phenomena and words, minor or major, to the prospect of change.

This leads to some questions. Why have writers, artists, philosophers, satirists used this form? For what reasons have critical thinkers, surrealists and communists successively picked up, occupied and developed the glossary or dictionary format? What are the qualities of the glossary or dictionary form which nominate it for experimental use? What are its affordances? How do these formats facilitate 'writing in common'? What are the forms adjacent to the glossary and dictionary? Is there one original object of which these experiments are mimetic, or, are there many, do they imitate a number of different models? Is the glossary a form of marginal writing or does its

3 'Things have to appear to want to change', Anne Boyer, *A Handbook of Disappointed Fate*, Brooklyn, NY: Ugly Duckling Press, 2018, p.138.

annexation of other texts and phenomena lend it an authority placing it above other publishing formats?

The question of rivalry is important here, because this is the one way we can single out these objects from the formats which they imitate. These are not *definitive* dictionaries or glossaries. Though they are commodities in themselves or parts of larger commodities, albeit rather unprofitible ones, they compete *iteratively*, they do not seek to rival and replace each other *definitively*. They do not compete in the same way as the Oxford and Chambers Dictionaries to be the definitive reference guide to the English Language, or vie to become the definitive *Glossary of the Petroleum Industry: English/Spanish & Spanish/English* or *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*. We do not generally see the publications I am talking about enter into 2nd, 3rd and 4th editions quickly. Though some of them are of a serial nature. Due to their form, in fact they tend to, via quotation, reference and other means of reproduction, annex other works (much like dictionaries and encyclopedias do), however their self-presentation, as partial fragments of larger works or projects of definition marks them out clearly as not definitive, something that always halts at the status of an *attempt* at comprehensiveness, never venturing too much further than the sketch of this possible prospect.

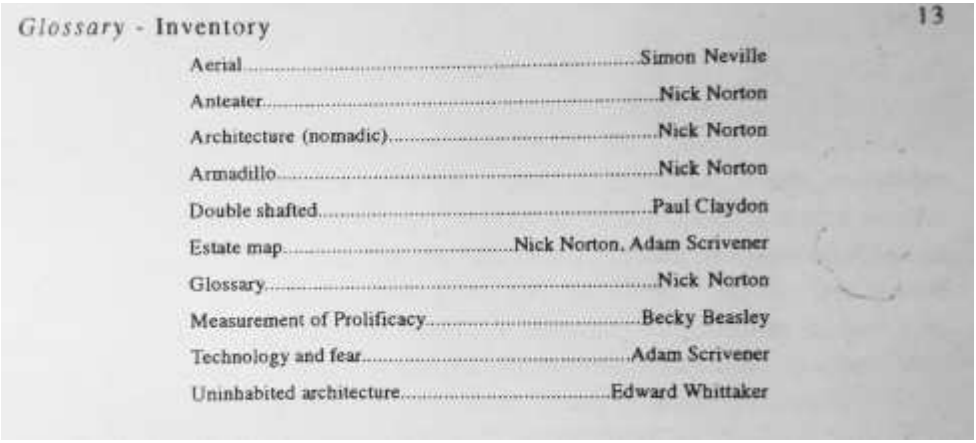


Image: Glossary index *Inventory*, Vol.3, No.3, 1999

Inventory's Glossary

Inventory's Glossary develops the relationship between material phenomena and writing suggested by *Inventory*'s title. This section follows the form and style of a critical, philosophical or satirical dictionary in the enlightenment, journalistic and surrealist traditions.[4] Whereas a dictionary or encyclopaedia suggests comprehensiveness, a glossary is partial and tends towards the interpretive and explanatory.[5] *Inventory* adapted this tradition to suit a serial form, publishing small alphabetically ordered collections of definitions or glosses in each issue. The glossary appeared in almost every issue of *Inventory*

4Some historical models would be Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopedie* (1751-1772), Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697-1702), Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764), Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911) or the 'Dictionnaire Critique' (critical dictionary) developed in the pages of surrealist magazine *Documents.* The publishing initiatives of Georges Bataille are further considered in Chapter 2. Georges Bataille's philosophical and methodological contribution for *Inventory* is explored in Chapter 3.

5'Gloss' and 'Glossary' in Catherine Soanes & Angus Stevenson (Eds), *Concise English Oxford Dictionary*, (Eleventh Edition), Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, n.p.

from Vol.1 No.2 1996 through to the final double issue Vol.5 Nos.2 & 3 2005.[6] The glossaries are simply listed in the cover table of contents as Inventory, 'Glossary' suggesting authorial responsibility fell wholly on the core editorial group. *Inventory*'s glossaries were initially authored primarily by the core and secondary editorial groups. However, as the journal developed an increasingly diverse range of contributors participated in writing entries. Each Glossary presents terms in alphabetical order. Arranged in two-columns, the glossary section breaks with the single column formatting of the rest of the journal. As well as the interior Table of Contents where glossary entries were attributed with full authors' names, each glossary provided author attribution via initials printed below each entry. The first Glossary contained in Vol.1 No.2 1996 comprised the final article or section of the journal, with the second glossary printed in penultimate position, after a found text, thereafter in subsequent issues the glossary generally found its position towards the middle of the journal. The shortest glossary, published in Vol.2 No.3, 1999, contains only three entries. The longest glossaries are each ten entries long, the average is six entries.[7]

Each Glossary is formed by a series of entries often under one-word headings, either objects, nouns or abstract nouns (states, feelings or actions): 'Alcopops', 'Death', 'Escape', 'Stone', 'Aerial', 'Anteater', 'Armadillo', 'Kebabed', 'Smokers'; 'Possession' and so on. Individual glossary entries were frequently illustrated with a single image, and in longer entries a run of images was often arranged dynamically in relation to the entries' columns.[8] The journal's aspiration to become 'a space for a theory/practice that conjoins and conflicts writing and image, found and made, the lost and the discovered' was explored extensively and experimentally in this section.[9] Despite its designation as a separate section, some longer entries in the Glossary can still be considered

6Issue Vol.1 No.1 contained a related contribution by Toni da Silva entitled 'Categories' and the special issue 'Collected' Vol.2 No.2 1997 contained a section entitled 'Inventories' authored by Inventory.

7*Inventory,* Vol.2 No.3 1997 and *Inventory,* Vol.3 No.3 1999.

8Two key examples are Adam Scrivener, 'Photo booth', *Inventory,* Vol.2, No.1, 1997, pp.73-79 and Adam Scrivener 'Remote Control', *Inventory,* Vol.1 No.2 1996, pp.91-92.

9'Notes to Contributors', printed in the final pages of each journal issue.

'essays' and therefore this section can also be understood to be regulated by the editor's desire to develop 'the essay as a form'.[10] Further support for this view is given by the knowledge that *Inventory* also published Glossary entries as essays in other publications.[11] The relationship between the essay, critical thought and the glossary or critical dictionary must be considered in relation to *Inventory*'s influences and methodological explorations, and in the considerations of the journal as a more or less unified object of knowledge. On occasion several authors each contributed entries for a single word e.g. 'Comply' in *Inventory* Vol.3 No.1 1998, resulting in a game in which several players would 'take turns'.[12] The generation of such a homespun 'heap of linguistic fragments', according to Sianne Ngai, 'calls attention to language as the site where system and subject intersect [...] where system and subject converge is more specifically where language piles up and becomes 'dense'.[13]

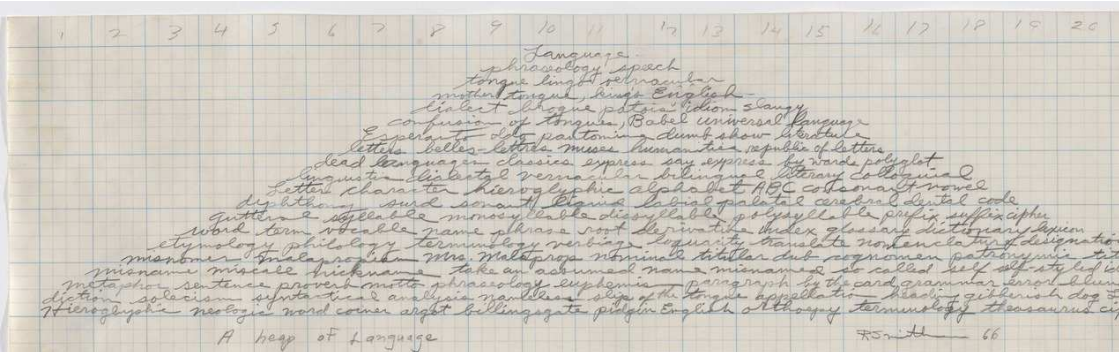


Image: Robert Smithson, *A Heap of Language*, 1966

10 Ibid.

11This true of both the essays and glossary section but more common in terms of the glossary. An example is Inventory's essay on 'Death' published in Welfare State International, *Dead*, Ulverston: Welfare State International, 2001 (published on the occasion of the touring exhibition Dead, at Camden Roundhouse, London 2-10 March, 2001 and Lanternhouse, Ulverston, Cumbria, 29 March-30 June, 2001. Printed on a body bag, the text also formed part of *Inventory*'s contribution to the exhibition. The text was republished as Inventory, 'Death', *Inventory*, Vol.5 Nos.2 & 3 2005, pp.138-131.

12*Inventory*, Vol.3 No.1, 1998.

13Sianne Ngai, 'Stuplimity', in *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2007, pp.248–297, p.288 and pp.263-264.

Image: Inventory installation at the British Council Window Gallery, Prague, 1996. ‘The fairest order in the world is a heap of random sweepings’ is a quotation from Heraclitus’ Fragment 124

Inventory, as a title, implies the translation of things as words – therefore as a vehicle of research, the journal would be interested in the relationships between things and words – and the enumeration (finding, listing, counting, collecting) of forms. The title’s meanings resonate with and point us towards the Glossary section, as a list of words or ‘a list of what is found’; and in general the articulation of complex relations between content, category and classification which this description of the journal’s form explores. Forms here can be understood to refer to the characteristics of a thing (shape, colour, volume etc.),

but since words provide form for things, an investigation of forms shall be understood to imply study of things-in-themselves and the words that are generated to describe and enumerate them. Things as 'found' also implies attention to the context they were found in as much as the placement in relation to other things in a list or other system of classification. '*Inventory'* expresses the aggregate of this enumeration and translation, the list as a totality or constellation of fragments. '*Inventory'* also expresses this enumeration as an ongoing activity, necessarily always incomplete and temporary.

The study of the relationship of words and things can be understood to foreground 'the central importance of language as the process through which the subject is formed'.[14] From this perspective, '[t]he subject is thus seen as constituted by language and it appropriates the world through language.'[15] *Inventory*'s research into the relationship of words and things is therefore also an inquiry into subject formation. An early hand-drawn mock-up cover displays the strapline: 'finding, losing, collecting' sandwiched between the title split into two words: 'Invent […] ory' with a single human eye in the centre of the cover. This cover emphasises invention and an actively curious or mysterious subject as central to these actions.

14Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Philosophy Through the Looking Glass: Language, Nonsense, Desire*. London; Melbourne; Sydney; Auckland; Johannesburg: Hutchinson, 1985, p.48.

15Ibid.

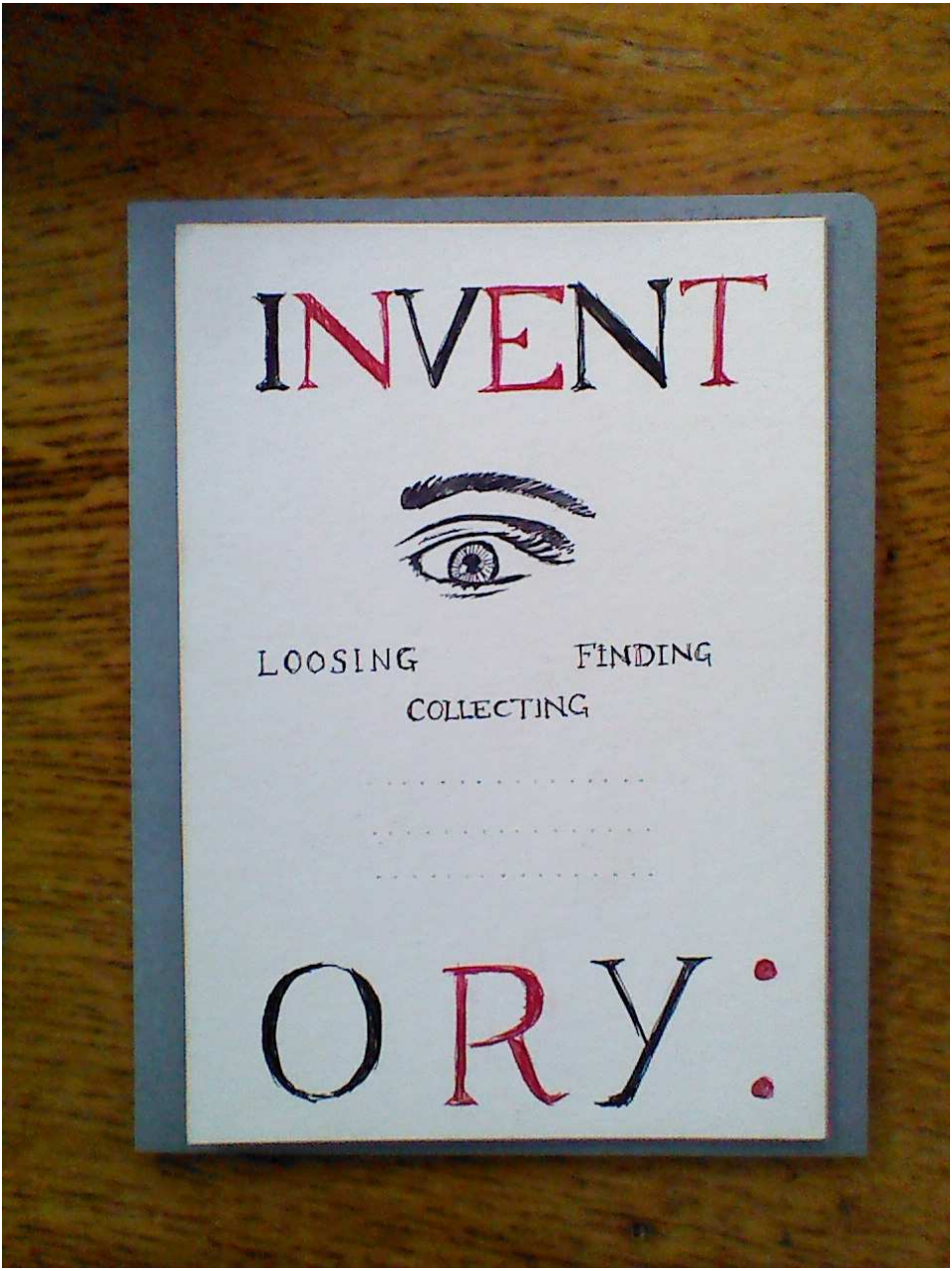


Image: Early mock-up for *Inventory* cover, c.1994

We might even speculate on it as the appearance of an ‘invisible, disembodied Mind’, the ‘I’, which has long determined the relationship between writing and thinking, or a hovering ‘disembodied, supernatural agency’, a ‘we’, a spectral collective subject yet to emerge.[16] In either case this early suggestion that language implies a body and a subject will remain a central theme for all *Inventory* was to encompass.

By assembling these competing ‘definitions’ or interpretations the Glossary explored contradictions between system and individuation, or determination and flexibility, over which standard dictionaries tend to regulate. The Glossary provided an open forum for the playful satire of existing classification systems and dictionaries, but also a means of incrementally building up new knowledge and identifying sites of ‘density’, as well as interacting with the essays in the form of an ‘aside’ or marginal ‘gloss’. This could be understood as undermining the systematic proposition of the journal as a whole or creating a field of tension between its components.

I wanted to trace this format of the glossary through the writing of the critical left because it seems from there to present an allegorical tableau through which some problems around group form and writing publishing forms might be posed. I frame this as a question of publishing because unlike the study of literature, the study of publishing implies not just the study of a finished product, but of a process in which production takes place. The publication of a glossary can be understood as an act of post-production, the glossary is

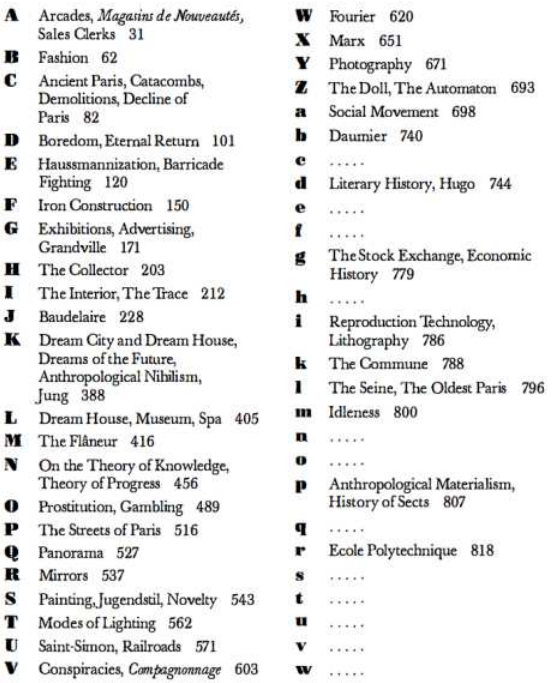
16 Brian Rotman, *Becoming Beside Ourselves: The Alphabet, Ghosts, and Distributed Human Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008, p.13.

written when the rest of the book is done. In the late-20th century, the glossary/critical dictionary, the reinvention of an archaic publishing format, meets with an energetic growth of interest in self-publishing in political circles as print-publishing both becomes more easily achievable for the amateur and starts to look archaic in the face of the growth of digital media. This reactivation of the glossary format in print, from the beginning of the 1990s, however, happens precisely in relation to the new possibilities of online publishing: which provide precisely for collaborative writing, horizontal hierarchies, classification and reclassification, iterative contribution and versioning. However, this is not necessarily the most interesting aspect, it is printed form which comes to take on a resistant and self-consciously minor condition in the face of the growing system of standardisation building the web. This reactivation of the glossary format coincides with another development much harder to describe, which relates to the break-up of mass parties in Europe, the subculturalisation of the left, the operation of small groups, fictional groups, 'phantom organisations'. If Marx wrote, a spectre is haunting Europe, when that spectre retired, the possibility of its animation no longer depended on central authority, it instead fell to a non-identical subject, no-one, anyone, everyone.

Any book could be the first book, the only book. However, a glossary cannot be the first or only book, it necessarily implies others before it, the one it is a commentary on, and generally to come after it. Similarly, dictionaries do exist as learning devices. And they do vie to cancel each other out, replacing an older model. Glossaries are generally *closer to their object* than other works of reference. They are bound to the larger volume they act as a guide to. Or they are located in the workplace, they act as an interpretive veil to the

phenomenon they inform on. They could be considered translation devices, or maps of sorts.

I want to frame these ‘glossaries’ as elucidating problems of objectivity in communist theory. This is to say Communism has problems with objectivity and that this format, for some reason has turned out to be popular in exploring the problems that objectivity presents for communist theory. The glossaries which have fallen under my study, I shall argue, relate to problems of political form and I am going to try to frame them today under the theme of problems of communist form and communist objectivity. In this pamphlet I am will try to survey some key examples of the glossary/critical dictionary before returning to my main topic, the late-20th century proliferation of this format.



A Arcades, *Magasins de Nouveautés*, Sales Clerks 31
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r Ecole Polytechnique 818
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Image: Walter Benjamin, Index to the unfinished *Arcades* project c.1937

Glossary, Index, Encyclopedia, Dictionary

Glossary, Index, Encyclopedia, Dictionary. Each of these forms promises an image of totality and completion, comprehensiveness and comprehension, frozen, even if only momentarily, for posterity. Their predilections, however, become just as fleeting. Formative to the development of Enlightenment thought and initially charged with the force of critique and the authority of comprehensive universality, these forms ossified quickly into tautology, as they became a measure and container of objectivity in scientific culture. Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* sought to unveil the hidden connections and secret passages between the ruined phenomena of the nineteenth century. Prominent amongst those ruins would be the encyclopedia which, increasingly determined by commerce and anticipating an explosion in bureaucracy, shadows and exceeds the arcades themselves as an extensive effort towards miniaturisation and interiorisation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Glossary, Index, Encyclopedia, Dictionary were repurposed as devices for the production of ostensible critical authority only to give way to philosophical, poetic and satirical concerns under the aegis of creative misuse by literary wits, artistic avant-gardes and proponents of the critique of capitalism's diabolical totality.

This pamphlet forms a gloss on glossaries; a collation and commentary on the glossaries of others. Here the standpoint of 'tradition' is both the position of trying to wrest something from the path of total destruction, that which critical thought has long been engaged, whilst also caught up in its path– an act of salvaging what has been disregarded by history and the participation in the destruction of something in order to make anew. Here we have a tradition which is methodically self-destructive of anything which would grant it false

authority. This tradition has been framed recently by Nick Thoburn as the *Anti-Book*, and here I investigate what we could consider its smaller offspring, the anti-glossary.[17]

GLOSSAIRE : J'Y SERRE MES GLOSES

A

AMERTUME — *la mer s'abreuve d'écume. Je hume la mer.*
ANNEAU — *l'angoisse pend à nos naseaux.*

C

CADAVRE — *le cadenas s'ouvre : c'est le havre, cadastre de nos lèvres.*
CALICE — *un cilice de pétales.*
CHEVELURE, *huche des vœux voleurs de chair.*
CIEL — *si elle ? où elle ? ré-elle ou irré-elle ?*
CLOISON — *le cloître ou la prison, une loi.*
CUISSES — *acuité des ciseaux nus, lisses.*

D

DÉCIMER — *détruire les cimes.*
DÉFINIR, *c'est disperser. Dilemme de la démence.*
DENSITÉ — *dents serrées : les pierres de la cité. Dans quel site serons-nous ressuscités?*
DOMINER : *délire dérisoire, dédale déchiré.*

E

ECLIPSE — *ellipse de clarté.*
ECLOSION — *écluses voupues, si nous voions !*
ENIGME — *je gis dans la géhenne. Est-ce une digue ou une dîme ?*
ENSEVELI — *serai-je bientôt lié dans les sèves ?*
ENTRAILLES — *l'autre du corps, et ses broussailles.*
EPAVES — *elles pavent la mer.*
ERE — *l'air que nous respirons, notre aire d'action.*
ETAU — *les ais, sans le couteau.*
ETINCELLE — *éteinte et célée sitôt ailée.*
EVASION — *hors du vase, vers Ève ou Sion !*

F

FANTOME — *enfanté par les beaumes.*
FÉCONDER — *profondeur des fées, te seconder et te sonder...*
FIANCÉE — *au fil des ans défi lancé.*
FIÈVRE — *la sève monte, je me défie de ses lèvres.*
FILIGRANE — *les fils de nos organes nous lient, granules.*
FLAMME — *l'âme s'effile comme une lame.*
FLEUVE — *fleur neuve des rives.*
FLORAISON, *hors des raisons flétries, le flot de braise...*
FOUDRE — *le feu en poudre, quant va-t-il sourdre?*
FROID — *fixe et roide.*

G

GLACE — *mirage qui craque. Il nous enlace.*

H

HORLOGE — *hors du cadran l'heure abrogée.*
HUMAIN — *la main humide, moite. L'as-tu connue, cette main?*

I

INGÉNU — *le génie nu.*

J

JEU — *le feu de joie, la joie du feu.*

L

LANGAGE — *bagage lent de l'esprit.*
LANGUE — *la gangue des ailes, comme la lampe en est la hampe.*
LÉGENDAIRE — *j'entasse les pierres d'autan, dures ou légères.*
LUCIDE — *Lucifer de l'épée, quel suicide ?*
LUXURE — *l'usure du luxe charnu erre.*

M

MARBRE, — *arbre immuable des veines.*
MÉTAMORPHOSES — *maladie métaphysique des morts.*
MIGRATION — *migraine des oiseaux.*
MINERAL — *nerf durci par les râles, pierre terminale.*
MURAILLES — *mûres, elles se marquent de failles et de craquelures.*

N

NOMBRE — *l'ombre niée.*

O

ORBE — *courbure, l'aube des ovaires.*
ORIGINEL — *les os rigides naissent : je les hèle.*
OSSATURE — *eaux-mères saturées, déposez les structures !*

P

PERSPECTIVE — *l'œil perce, lumière active.*

R

RACINES — *sinuosités originaires des races.*
RAVIN — *V entr'ouvre son raVin, sa ValVe ou son Vagin.*
RÉVOLUTION — *solution de tout rêve.*
ROSAIRE — *l'érosion des prières.*
RUMEUR — *brume des bruits qui meurent au fond des rues.*
RUSE — *elle rase les murs, elle est ma muse.*

Image: Michel Leiris, 'Glossaire, J'y serre mes glosses', 1925

17 Nicholas Thoburn, *Anti-Book: On the Art and Politics of Radical Publishing*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2016.

Holding the pamphlet apart now with both hands, these points of purchase will help you begin by grasping the initially opposed paths of the dictionary vs. anti-dictionary at a point at which these projects branch obliquely.

An Ossuary for Glosses

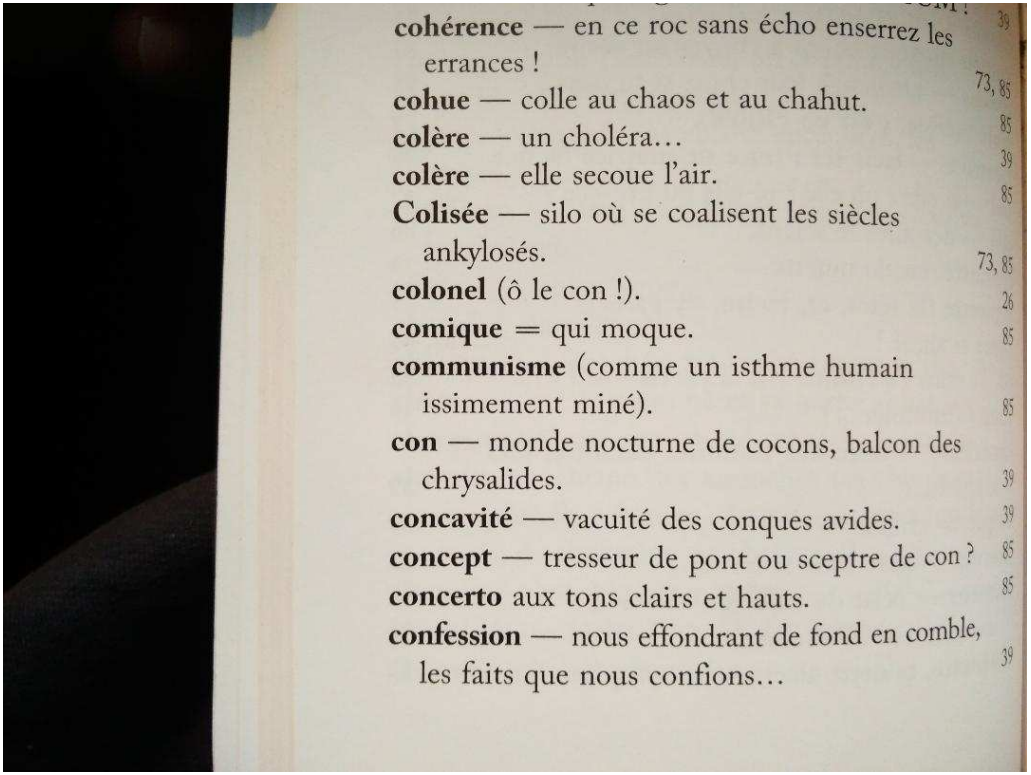
Michel Leiris' *Glossary*, first published in *La Révolution Surréaliste I, No.3*, (1924), contends that 'A monstrous aberration causes people to believe that language came into being to facilitate their relations with one another. It is with this end in mind, of usefulness, that they make dictionaries […] as for usage, it is superfluous to say that that is the lowest criterion to which one could refer.'[18] Usefulness, 'the lowest criterion', dismissed here by Leiris was also contended with by Benjamin in the case of the collector, who, in their passion for objects, does 'not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value – that is, their usefulness – but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate.'[19] Leiris' *Glossary* indeed epitomises the personal and fetishistic approach of the collector towards their objects, in this case words. Launched in an issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (The Surrealist Revolution) in April 1924, Leiris worked on successive editions of his *Glossaire* publishing them in journals and as collections until the final set was published in 1986.[20] Leiris's word collections are mnemonic poems, the detritus of words chewed into component phoenemes, homophonic insubordinations against the carceral national dictionary. Discussion, then, of the glossary or dictionary deactivated

18 Michel Leiris, *Brisées: Broken Branches*, (trans. Lydia Davis), San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989, p.3.
19 Walter Benjamin, 'Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Collecting', in *Selected Writings II*, Harvard University Press, 2005, p.487.
20 *La Révolution surréaliste* April 1925, pp.6-7, available http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb34381250f/date. In 2014 Gallimard published a complete edition of the collected Glossaries. Michel Leiris, *Glossaire j'y serre mes gloses suivi de Bagatelles végétales*, Louis Yvert (ed.), Paris: Gallimard, 2014.

from its utilitarian, universal or national obligations is to engage with the fate of words, and understand the pressures imposed on them as the scene of this fate from which they may perhaps be wrested. Therein the question of their fate finds diversions, is suspended or at least pronounced languorously and with as many pauses as possible. Leiris's *Glossary* maintains a connection with the Greek root of gloss (interpretation) 'tongue, speech' which stands for 'that which is projected' or 'a projecting point'. A Glossary is a 'collection of glosses [interpretative fragments or notes]; a partial dictionary'.[21] Leiris *Glossaire* interprets terms with the tongue breaking them into constituent parts, suturing them with sonically or visually proximate words and forging new connections.

A few examples are reproduced on the facing page:

21 *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Ernest Klein (ed.), London, Elsevier, 1971, p. 315.



cohérence — en ce roc sans écho enserrez les errances ! 39
cohue — colle au chaos et au chahut. 73, 85
colère — un choléra… 85
colère — elle secoue l'air. 39
Colisée — silo où se coalisent les siècles ankylosés. 85
colonel (ô le con !). 73, 85
comique = qui moque. 26
communisme (comme un isthme humain issimement miné). 85
con — monde nocturne de cocons, balcon des chrysalides. 85
concavité — vacuité des conques avides. 39
concept — tresseur de pont ou sceptre de con ? 39
concerto aux tons clairs et hauts. 85
confession — nous effondrant de fond en comble, les faits que nous confions… 85
39

Image: Michel Leiris, *Glossaire j'y serre mes gloses suivi de Bagatelles végétales*, Louis Yvert (ed.), Paris: Gallimard, 2014, p.56

cohérence– en ce roc sans écho enserrez les errances.

Coherence – in this rock without echo the wanderings encircle.

The last part of the word '**cohérence'–** rence' – becomes *en ce* (in this), whilst this same sound has a partial reversal and refrain (or echo) in the 'enserr' of *enserrer* (to encircle) and 'errance' of *errances* (wanderings). Errancy's archaic English meaning is wandering, but its present meaning is closer to error. Coherence therefore functions as a rock which prevents wanderings or traps them, or shuts them up, within itself so that they circle as though in a cave. Suggestively since they encircle rather than circle, perhaps coherence is itself surrounded by wanderings towards which it mutely shuts itself off. The contradiction here, and this is possibly a fault of my translation, is that 'this rock' is something impenetrable which contains something external to it.

concept– tresseur de pont ou sceptre de con?
Concept– bridge braider or sceptre of the stupid.

Tresser is a verb meaning to braid, plait or weave. *Sceptre de con*, sounds very close to *cette heure de con* (the time of the stupid or damned). The concept can be a 'bridging concept', it can weave together ideas like a plait, but whether the concept is a bridge braid (which sounds more promisingly transversal) or a sceptre, its fate is to be wielded by the stupid.

The problem of the concept, or thinking in concepts, could take up an entire other publication, as could a study of bridge braids. Suffice to say, we can

trace a whole line of communist epistemology from Marx to Adorno breaking and reconstructing the concept as a given in western philosophy.

communisme– (comme un isthme humain issimement miné)

Communism– (like an excessively mined human isthmus)

Communism is an excessively mined territory. The concept is close to its death or environmental exhaustion. This seems appropriate in 1985, when Leiris wrote this gloss, with the forthcoming fall of the Soviet Union, officially dissolved in 1991. However, its rendering as a 'human isthmus', a 'narrow strip of land connecting two land areas otherwise separated by water' suggests the both the polar oppositions of landmass of cold war fantasy and more promisingly, communism as a thread leading us back to the human. As a (or thread, threat or fantasy), it is perhaps a little worn, providing near-impossible and half-destroyed linkage to an as yet unknown human continent. Its recovery will definitely not involve any more mining.

To use this pamphlet as a device of divination ask it a series of questions then let the pamphlet fall from your hands to a desk or to the floor. Identify a phrase on the page upon which the pamphlet has fallen open, this is the answer to your questions. Note: the binding (usually staples) of pamphlets does not allow for much contingency, it will likely fall either on the centrefold or cover. We are sorry that under present conditions your choices are so limited.

Leiris published his first 'Glossary' under the title *Glossaire j'y serre mes gloses* (1925), with its multiple homophonic allusions (*serre* – clenched,

closely argued, hold tight, bring together) is rendered in English *(My Glosses's Ossuary* or, *I squeeze my glosses there)* as an exquisitely macabre pun. Counter to its title, the *Glossaire* actually animates the comparatively 'dead words' of the dictionary, yet there is still a suggestion that the act of publication arrests this process, burying words by printing them. In a sense they are interred more like fungal spores to erupt and develop unpredictably. Leiris considers his glosses 'poetic puns' but generally the *Glossaire* blurs the line between definition, interpretation and word play. The *Glossaire* more often deploys homophony (similar sounding or looking words with different meanings) rather than polysemy (using or arranging an existing word to generate different meanings). The 'glosses', interpretations or word descriptions, produce drifting movement and recursion. In their first publication Leiris framed this movement as a form of guidance through labyrinthine space by alluding to several myths: evoking the Delphic oracle, Theseus' journey through the Cretan labyrinth to confront the Minotaur, and the Tower of Babel.

> By selecting words we like, without bothering about conforming either to their etymologies or to their accepted significations, we discover their most hidden qualities and the secret ramifications that are propagated through the whole language, channelled by associations of sounds, forms, and ideas. Then language changes into an oracle, and there we have a thread (however slender it may be) to guide us through the Babel of our minds.[22]

In the context of the *Glossaire*, Leiris defines the true meaning of a word as 'the particular, personal signification that each individual ought to assign to it,

22 Michel Leiris, 'Glossary: My Glosses' Ossuary' (1924) in *Brisées*, op. cit., p.3.

as his mind pleases'.[23] This feint has led commentators to refer to the work as a 'personal dictionary', suggesting a primarily biographical function. However, considering the site of original publication in an organ of surrealist research and understanding Leiris' 'we' to be an invocation to other surrealist writers and researchers, we might understand the author's proposition as the outline of a collective investigation into that which mediates between the impersonal and the personal, language as living, elastic and poetic matter. It is this quality of the *Glossaire* which Anne Greenfield proposes as a form of 'linguistic intersection' into the "vast network of interlocking and related meanings".[24] Elsewhere Leiris proposes writing procedures – such as those devised by Raymond Roussel which pose a set of (ultimately irresolvable) problems for us to decipher – as a way to treat language itself as a 'creative agent'[25] and he again connects this form of creativity closely to the generation of myths. The delimiting puns of *Glossaire* are revelations about language 'through which [words] remember their kinship.[26]

As we shall see further on, exposing the standardising form of the dictionary to deviations through personal language and apparently subjective, or just arbitrary, association – the pun's 'insubordination' – has the twin result of revealing latent connections within the semantic field which are closer both to the actual course of the generation of new language through association and distinction and what the surrealists understood as 'the revelation of essential

23 Ibid.
24 Anne Greenfeld, 'Pun-Poems and Word Delimitation in Michel Leiris' *Glossaire, J'y Serre Mes Gloses*'. *Dalhousie French Studies*, No.28, 1994, p.153.
25 Michel Leiris, 'Conception and Reality in the Work of Raymond Roussel' (1954), (trans. John Ashbery) in *Raymond Roussel: Life, Death, and Works*, London, Atlas Press, 1987, pp.79-80.
26 'Pun-Poems and Word Delimitation in Michel Leiris', op. cit., p.153.

connection and unity between apparent contradictions'.[27] These connections and contradictions are historical, even if Leiris' interpretations do not directly draw our attention to the specific histories of the associations they invoke. This attention to 'hidden qualities' and 'secret ramifications' permits us, perhaps, to study the fate of language in a contradictory society as a mobile and changing (Marx) 'unity of the diverse', a patchwork of problems, obstacles and blind passages to rupture and break through.[28]

Image: Simone Kahn-Breton taking dictation from Robert Desnos at the Rue de Grenelle, Paris c.1924-5

Office Games

These were techniques Leiris marshalled against the parlour games which turned out to be office games of automatic writing practised at the Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes at Rue de Grenelle, Paris between 1924 and 1925.

27 Ibid., both quotations p.152.
28 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, New York, Random House, 1973, p.101.

Huddled around a typewriter, male surrealists would dictate their dreams to a female typist. In order that this was not understood simply as a confession, the elements of modern bureaucracy and impersonality were emphasised. The originally 'blind' nature of typewriters (until 1897 typists were not able to see what they were typing onto paper), and the fact that the typewriter itself retains nothing of the writing it has written, (the instrument has no memory), were, alongside card indexes, files and memos intended to render objectivity and indexicality to the recordings of irrational 'facts' at the Bureau.[29] André Breton wrote:

> Surrealism has always suggested they [the unexpected facts of life] be written like a medical report, with no incident omitted, no name altered, lest the arbitrary make its appearance. The revelation of the immediate, bewildering irrationality of certain events requires the most severe authentication of the human document conveying them.[30]

Breton had experience writing, or dictating, medical reports in the chaos of WWI. The lack of 'creativity' or even consciousness he advocated is transposed to the female typist rendered as an instrument of transcription, in this case Simone Kahn Breton, who was the only woman pictured in the room amidst the cohort of Breton's surrealists. The surrealist endeavour to remove expressivity from writing and 'to detect organization in what is unknown' or even to reconstruct 'the organization of desire itself' was a highly gendered affair which required the suppression of female agency lest it interfere.[31] This

29 Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy,* Cambridge, Mass.:MIT Press, 2017), p.81.
30 André Breton quoted in Ibid., pp.98-99.
31 Ibid., both quotations p.103. The Surrealists mimicry of scientific procedure suggests the assignment of the role of 'modest witness' to those producing the experiment, however, whereas, as Donna Haraway documents, those gendered as

scene also recalls the picture of anti-fascist assassin Germaine Berton surrounded by mugshots of leading male surrealists.[32] The feminine agent of proletarian vengeance and radical transformation of the social order is pictured surrounded by her male observer-accomplices, dreamers of the act. The surrealists' relation to the armory of paper machines (indexes, filing cards, memos, filing cabinets, typewriters) which populated their research centre and crop up as ready-mades in their art work (cf. Duchamp) was one of distance. Overwhelmingly the technologies' application is attributed to the feminine side of the gendered division of labour. Though Duchamp typed, his typing was a parody of the industrial typing generally carried out by women.

THE SECRET OF TYPEWRITING SPEED

building	national	died	even
direct	near	fair	evening
does	nearly	get	fire
fact	nothing	injunction	interest
late	number	less	least
officers	o'clock	statement	letter
own	others	within	once
question	received	broken	officer
story	senate	cars	opinion
away	though	children	placed
best	asked	course	result
called	come	effect	see
girls	done	form	streets
know	election	give	want
large	go	himself	according
name	government	known	anything
off	high	making	automobile
open	hours	me	believed
press	lost	mother	candidate
soon	matter	pay	cause
women	political	sent	company
yet	primary	too	cost
almost	show	weeks	family
feet	side	whole	father
few	water	world	ground
however	celebration	amendment	half
injured	complete	board	hour
law	conference	boys	husband

96

4.13
List of "friendly words," in Margaret B. Owen, *The Secret of Typewriting Speed* (1917).

women were excluded from Enlightenment scientific experiment, the surrealists assigned women a passive role as a kind of device of registration at the heart of the process. See Donna Haraway, *Modest Witness at Second Millennium: Female Man Meets Oncomouse: Feminism and Technoscience*. London: Routledge, 1997.

32 See https://loneberry.tumblr.com/post/746685532/homage-to-claude-cahun-and-germaine-berton

Image: Germaine Berton in the centre of a collage of male surrealists arranged by Man Ray published in *La Révolution surréaliste*, no.1, April, 1924. The quotation from Charles Baudelaire translates as ‘Woman is the being who projects the greatest shadow or the greatest light in our dreams.’

The secret of typewriting speed is of course, as with any industrialised labour process, a question for effective management. The eruption of 'the unexpected' must be understood to be mediated and preempted by the management techniques which would obviate true surprises and canalise them into routine language. As today forms of idealist materialism tend to idle in wonder before machines which turn out to be of an historical and politically instrumental character.

The Mental Machine

At this time, Friedrich Kuntze was advocating a revolution in techniques of intellectual labour via the creation of a *geistige Maschine* consisting of precisely those technologies the surrealists assembled at their bureau.[33] Under Kuntze's system the card index which indexed the researcher's material and notes from other researchers' work allowed 'their users to regroup their elements freely and repeatedly' configuring the writer as a kind of operator, enabling power over 'the complete overhaul of the system as a whole'.[34] Placed at the centre of this media assemblage the feminine operator was not positioned as master over, but rather constrained inside it as a neutral conduit of the machines' transmissions. Kuntze's aim to convert writing 'into a form of mechanical computation'[35] was at one with the surrealist's hope that the machines would register psychic and social phenomena with the minimum mediation or creative interference. Just as the card index promoted the power of key words and concepts under which smaller entries could be gathered, the technical operations and structuring geometries of these technologies' drive

33 Ibid., pp.85-87.
34 Ibid., p.86.
35 Ibid.

towards mechanised speed was productive of punctures, intervals, gaps, stoppages, discontinuities.

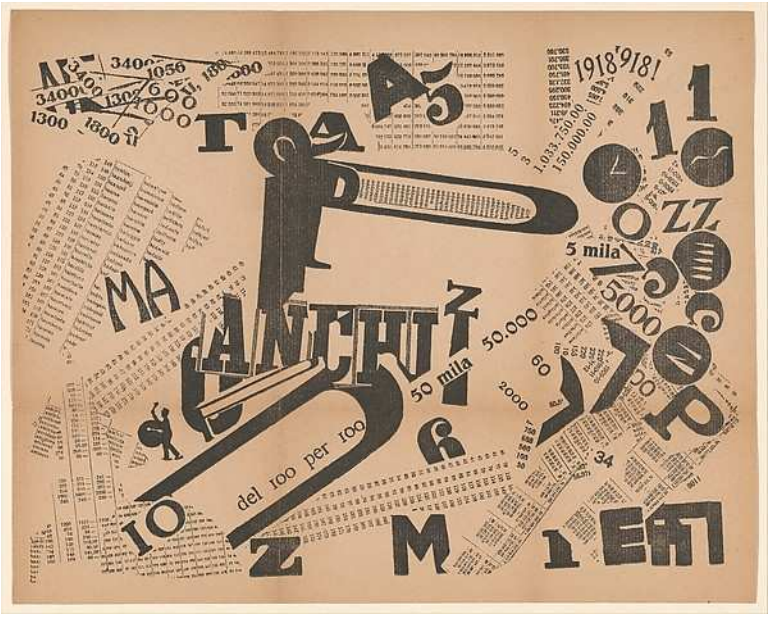
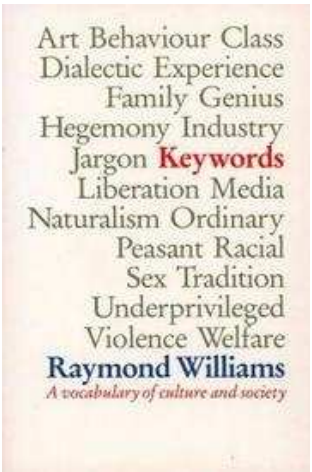


Image: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *A Tumultuous Assembly. Numerical Sensibility*, 1919



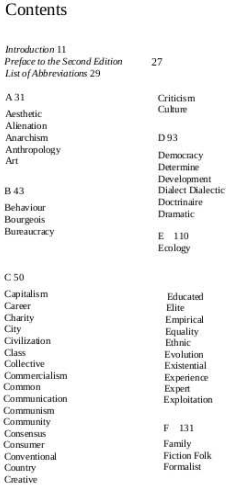


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Image : Contents page from Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 2015.

A delirious aphasic riot of machined language is exploited in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's collage poem, which also harbours the suggestion of an 'collective assemblage of anunciation'[36] or even political assembly erupting from its chaos. It is an image against which I want to juxtapose Raymond Williams' *Keywords*, an important work which presents an optimistic prospect of the Marxist historical and critical taming of an irrational society through means of the analysis of language. These two images represent the poles between which our critical glossaries organise themselves. On the one hand there is the attempt to deconstruct and make inoperative modernity's barrage of functional language and to participate joyfully in its aggregated incoherence. The other approach participates in a sort of intellectual road race with history to track changes and try to place egalitarian rationality ahead of the irrational social processes of a society based on technological reason and profit. By no means do these poles retain their separation, they are centres of direction around which projects circulate and deviate towards their own specificity. Rather, the exploratory nature of many of the glossaries assembled here tend to reorganise these polarities generatively and to humorous ends.

With the pamphlet in your hands try folding pages inwards or outwards to impose the text on one page or another. By folding two pages at a time you will find you can leap over page divisions and make montages between more distant elements of the text and its illustrations.

36 A phrase coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, (Trans. Dana Polan), Minneapolis, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

DOCUMENTS

ARCHÉOLOGIE
BEAUX-ARTS
ETHNOGRAPHIE
VARIÉTÉS

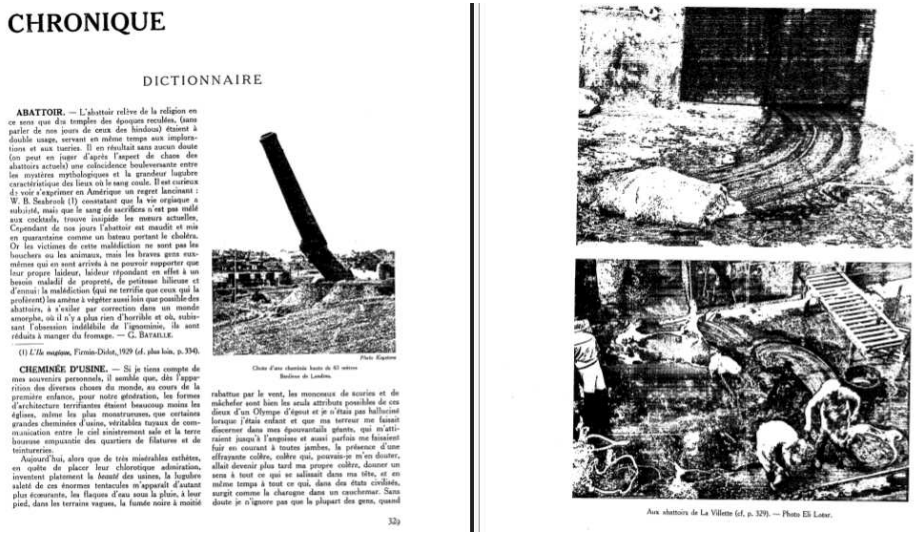
7

Magazine illustré
paraissant dix fois par an

André SCHAEFFNER. Le Capriccio d'Igor Strawinsky. — Michel LEIRIS. Une peinture d'Antoine Caron. — Roger VITRAC. Gaston-Louis Roux. — Dr Pierre MÉNARD. Le Marquis de Sade : étude graphologique. — Georges BATAILLE. Le « Jeu lugubre ». — Les portes de bronze de San-Zeno de Vérone. — Robert DESNOS. Imagerie moderne.
Chronique par Georges Bataille, Robert Desnos, Carl Einstein, Marcel Griaule, Michel Leiris, Georges Henri Rivière.
Photographies de Jacques-André Boiffard.

PARIS, 106, Bd Saint-Germain (VIe)

Image: Cover *Documents*, No.7, 1929



CHRONIQUE

DICTIONNAIRE

ABATTOIR. — L'abattoir relève de la religion en ce sens que d'un temples des époques reculées, (sans parler de nos jours de ceux des hindous) étaient à double usage, servant en même temps aux immolations et aux tueries. Il en résultait sans aucun doute (on peut en juger d'après l'aspect de chaos des abattoirs actuels) une coïncidence bouleversante entre les mystères mythologiques et la grandeur lugubre caractéristique des lieux où le sang coule. Il est curieux de voir s'exprimer en Amérique un regret lancinant : W. B. Seabrook (1) constatant que la vie orgiaque a subsisté, mais que le sang de sacrifices n'est pas mêlé aux cocktails, trouve insipide les mœurs actuelles. Cependant de nos jours l'abattoir est maudit et mis en quarantaine comme un bateau portant le choléra. Or les victimes de cette malédiction ne sont pas les bouchers ou les animaux, mais les braves gens eux-mêmes qui en sont arrivés à ne pouvoir supporter que leur propre laideur, laideur répondant en effet à un besoin maladif de propreté, de petitesse bilieuse et d'ennui : la malédiction (qui ne terrifie que ceux qui la profèrent) les amène à végéter aussi loin que possible des abattoirs, à s'exiler par correction dans un monde amorphe, où il n'y a plus rien d'horrible et où, subissant l'obsession indélébile de l'ignominie, ils sont réduits à manger du fromage. — G. BATAILLE.

(1) *L'Ile magique*, Firmin-Didot, 1929 (cf. plus loin, p. 334).

CHEMINÉE D'USINE. — Si je tiens compte de mes souvenirs personnels, il semble que, dès l'apparition des diverses choses du monde, au cours de la première enfance, pour notre génération, les formes d'architecture terrifiantes étaient beaucoup moins les églises, même les plus monstrueuses, que certaines grandes cheminées d'usine, véritables tuyaux de communication entre le ciel sinistrement sale et la terre bourrée emmurée des quartiers de filature et de teintureries.

Aujourd'hui, alors que de très misérables esthètes, en quête de placer leur chlorotique admiration, inventent platement la *beauté* des usines, la lugubre saleté de ces énormes tentacules m'apparaît d'autant plus écœurante, les flaques d'eau sous la pluie, à leur pied, dans les terrains vagues, la fumée noire à moitié

Chute d'une cheminée haute de 85 mètres Banlieue de Londres.

rabattue par le vent, les monceaux de scories et de mâchefer sont bien les seuls attributs possibles de ces dieux d'un Olympe d'égout et je n'étais pas halluciné lorsque j'étais enfant et que ma terreur me faisait discerner dans mes épouvantails géants, qui m'attiraient jusqu'à l'angoisse et aussi parfois me faisaient fuir en courant à toutes jambes, la présence d'une effrayante colère, sœbre qui, pouvais-je m'en douter, allait devenir plus tard ma propre colère, donner un sens à tout ce qui se saisissait dans ma tête, et en même temps à tout ce qui, dans des états confusés, surgit comme la charogne dans un cauchemar. Sans doute je n'ignore pas que la plupart des gens, quand

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Aux abattoirs de La Villette (cf. p. 329). — Photo Eli Lotar.

Image: *Documents*, No.6, 1929, pp.329-330

Documents' Dictionnaire Critique

From 1929-1930 the short-lived journal *Documents* embodied a rival tendency to the mystic-scientific-psychoanalytic approach of *La Révolution surréaliste* drawing instead on the growth of the radical claims of sociology and ethnography to develop an effervescent theory of society and practice of community. There is a family resemblance and indeed a close bond of friendship and working collaboration which conjoins Leiris' *Glossaire* with the *Dictionnaire Critique* published in the journal *Documents* (1929-1930), edited by Georges Bataille. The contributors to this meta-project within *Documents* were: Anonymous, Jacques Baron, Georges Bataille, Arnaud Dandieu, Robert Desnos, Carl Einstein, Marcel Griaule, Michel Leiris, Zdenko Reich. The *Dictionnaire* began its life as an autonomous section from the second issue of the journal at the suggestion of Carl Einstein after a

dispute over an article by Bataille in the first issue.[37] Thereafter the section appears to have been Bataille's responsibility, he later described *Documents* as 'an art review offset by an anomalous (*hétéroclite*) section'.[38] Initially titled, *Dictionnaire critique*, in such a way as to recall Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697-1702), from issue four the section was simply named *Dictionnaire*. Bayle's sceptical relationship to Enlightenment thought was enthusiastic but vexed, his wayward encyclopedia provided Bataille a model of subversion evident in Voltaire's admiring quip: 'the greatest master of the art of reasoning that ever wrote, Bayle, great and wise, all systems overthrows'.[39]

Leiris worked as a sub-editor for *Documents.* His friend and colleague's surname finds its place in his own *Glossaire* as '**Bataille** – *abattage d'humain bétail'* (**Battle** – slaughter of human cattle). Bataille and Leiris indeed shared a sympathy for human crowds, cattle and a hatred of war. References to the slaughter of animals appear frequently in *Document*'s *Dictionnaire* ('Man', 'Slaughterhouse', 'Metamorphosis') most famously in the entry 'Slaughterhouse' alongside Eli Lotar's high contrast images of the abattoirs of La Villette. There, Bataille related the slaughter of animals to humans' fear of their own animality and 'to a flabby world in which nothing fearful

37 Georges Bataille et al., *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, (trans. Iain White et al), London: Atlas Press, 1997, p.10.
38 Georges Bataille, 'Notice Autobiographique' in *Oeuvres completes VII*, p.460, translated in Ibid., p.10.
39 Voltaire, 'Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake' cited at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bayle. Voltaire's own *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (1764) was inspired by the encyclopedic dictionaries of Pierre Bayle, D'Alembert & Diderot, organised alphabetically, affordable and portable because 'revolutionary material must be small enough for people to carry with them'. Voltaire quoted in Roger Pearson, *Voltaire Almighty: A Life in Pursuit of Freedom*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2005, p.298.

remains'.[40] Man himself is in turn defined in the dictionary by the average energetic, mineral and economic value of his corpse:

> The bodily fat of a normally constituted man would suffice to manufacture seven cakes of toilet-soap. Enough iron is found in the organism to make a medium-sized nail, and sugar to sweeten a cup of coffee. The phosphorus would provide 2,200 matches. […] These different raw materials, costed at current prices, represent an approximate sum of 25 franc.[41]

Utility, it seems, for *Documents*, was best confronted with overidentification. In the same entry, 'Man' is assessed, again in quantitative terms, by the volume of traffic through the 'Christian's bloody slaughterhouses' of Chicago and assayed by how many ocean liners would float in the blood produced each year. The image of the cow, humanity's dependence upon it and its relegation to abjection in the human world, surfaces many times in Bataille's work because it is an apt image through which to think through humankind's aspiration to the ideal and his practical entrapment in animality, sexuality, shit and blood. For Bataille, 'There is, in every man, an animal thus imprisoned, like a galley slave, and there is a gate, and if we open the gate, the animal will rush out, like the slave finding his way to escape.'[42] Bataille's problem here is that his enmity with bourgeois universalism brings out worse universal affirmations, for proclaiming men as slaves as animals betrays the kind of anti-racist racist essentialisms that would later also give *Négritude* a bad

40 Georges Bataille, 'Slaughterhouse', *Documents*, Volume I, No.6, (1929), this translation by Annette Michelson from *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, op. cit., p.73.
41 Anon. 'Man', *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, op. cit., p.57.
42 Georges Bataille, 'Metamorphosis', translation by Annette Michelson from *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, op. cit., pp.58-60.

name.[43] These assumptions have of course as much to do with German Romanticism as anti-colonialism and within both these traditions the role of poetry as a point of connection – against discursive knowledges' detachment – of life, intellect, intuition and language, validates the subversion of the dictionary in the project of the intensification of life. According to Bataille then, behind 'senile idealism' lurks a formless animal intensity, a 'negation of human nature', which would be best brought forth through the study of 'social facts', 'raw phenomena' and 'direct interpretation'.[44] Bataille's reflections on '**Materialism**' and human nature assume respectively 'formlessness' and impermanence as their appropriate states; through the gaze of a pessimistic optimism human nature transforms the nature of humanity. Through the columns of the *Dictionnaire* and *Documents* Bataille worked to denature 'human nature', finding the key to the subversion of philosophical systemicity through an anti-systemicity , or scepticality towards systems, contained within the roots of Critical Enlightenment itself.

> scientific knowledge by definition is only applicable to homogeneous elements. Above all, heterology is opposed to any homogeneous representation of the world, in other words, to any philosophical system.[45]

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43 Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism, and Modernity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, pp.150-163.
44 Georges Bataille, 'Materialism', translated by John Harman in *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, op. cit. p.58.
45 Georges Bataille, 'The Use Value of De Sade' in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-39*, translated by Allan Stoekl, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p.9. A complete translated series is presented in alphabetical order in the *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, assembled alongside a related project in which Bataille was involved, the *Encyclopedia da Costa*, published in Post-War Paris. It goes without saying that severing the content of each issue of the journal from its corresponding Dictionary entries has both advantages and disadvantages.

This approach to the production of a sum of knowledge which proceeded to build a complex whole through the partial and fragmentary of course could be understood to emulate a Medieval epistemology of incrementally building upon existing knowledge through slow mimetic accumulation. However, medieval encyclopedists such as Isidore of Seville, whose 7th century *Etymologies* have been described as 'a cross-section of the debris of scientific thought at the point where it is most artificial and unreal [...]',[46] tended to reproduce existing knowledge verbatim with commentary, not produce new thought through observation and imagination.[47] Where scholars of the middle ages emphasised importance of the spiritual world as opposed to direct observation of phenomena, *Documents Dictionnaire critique* tended to lend authority to subjective responses to phenomena where they ruptured the field of the edifice of established knowledge. Though a medievalist himself, Bataille's innovations in the *Dictionnaire critique* instead emulate an Enlightenment recovery and self-conscious sharpening of the mostly preservative projects of the middle ages. The multi-authored collaborative critical project of the *Encyclopédie* developed the theme of 'writing in common' in early romanticism, as Novalis imagined it,

> Newspapers are already books made in common. The art of writing jointly is a curious symptom that makes us sense a great

46 Ernest Brehaut, *Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville*, PhD., New York: Columbia University, 1912, p.8.

47 Isidore of Seville's definition of etymology is itself revealing: 'The knowledge of a word's etymology often has an indispensable usefulness for interpreting the word, for when you have seen whence a word has originated, you understand its force more quickly. Indeed, one's insight into anything is clearer when its etymology is known.' His etymologies frequently bent the true root of certain words in order to teach important lessons about Latin grammar to his readers, laying the emphasis on mnemonics rather than philology. Isidore of Seville and Stephen A. Barney (ed.), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.22.

progress in literature. One day, perhaps, we will write, think, and act collectively.[48]

ROQUETAILLADE. RORARIUS. 2599

rum. On assûre † qu'il étoit grand Theologien & bon Philosophe. Je ne sçai s'il mourut en prison, mais je croi que ceux qui disent qu'on (G) le fit brûler se trompent. Jaques Foders ‡ raporte qu'il fut enterré à Villefranche au Diocese de Lion dans le couvent de son Ordre. Raynaldus qui (H) a tâché de se prevaloir d'une prophetie de ce Moine, a été refuté fort solidement par Mr. Baluze.

RORARIUS (JERÔME) Nonce de Clement VII. à la Cour de Ferdinand Roi de Hongrie, a composé un ouvrage * qui merite d'être lu. Il entreprend d'y montrer non seulement que les bêtes sont des animaux raisonnables; mais aussi qu'elles se servent de la raison mieux que l'homme. L'occasion qui l'engagea à faire ce livre est curieuse & tout-à-fait singuliere. Il s'étoit trouvé dans une conversation, où un sçavant homme avoit dit que Charles-Quint n'égaloit pas les Othons, ni Frideric Barberousse. Il n'en falut pas davantage pour faire conclure à Rorarius, que les bêtes sont plus raisonnables que l'homme, & tout aussi-tôt il se mit à composer un (A) traité sur ce sujet. Ce fut au tems que Charles-Quint faisoit la guerre à la ligue de Smalcalde. Ce livre n'est pas mal écrit, & il contient quantité de faits singuliers sur l'industrie des bêtes, & sur la malice de l'homme. Ceux qui concernent l'habileté des animaux, embarrassent tout à la fois les sectateurs (B) de Mr. Descartes, & les sectateurs d'Aristote: ceux-là

(a) Ibid. pag. 349.

(†) Le second continuateur de Guillaume de Naugis apud Dacher. spicil. to. 11. pag. 822. raporte que ce Moine consulté sur l'avenir par l'Archevêque de Toulouse l'an 1356. repondit, Ego sicut unus vilis & abhominabilis peccator ea quæ dico, non dico de capite meo nec

† Trithem. de scriptor. Eccles.

‡ Jacob. Fraina in histor. Prophetiæ Sancti Bonaventuræ pag. 318. 322. apud Baluzium not. ad vitas Paparum Avenionensium pag. 943.

* Rorarius, quod animalia bruta ratione utantur melius homine, lib. 1. pag. 57. edit. Amstelod. 1654.

„nier à Avignon la 8. année du Pontificat de Clement „VI. dans la prison que l'on nomme Soldan. au mois de „Novembre l'an de l'Incarnation MCCCXLIX. ... „(a) L'autre ouvrage de la Roque-taillade est son Va„de-mecum in tribulatione. Dans ce livre, qu'il nom„me librunculus, il déclare qu'il n'est pas Prophete, „comme ceux qui avoient reçu des révelations immé„diates de Dieu, & qui disoient, en les rapportant: „Ainsi a dit le Seigneur; mais que Dieu lui avoit don„né le talent de voir, par l'Ecriture, ce qui devoit

que l'Antipape sera élu (i) au deshonneur de JESUS-CHRIST, & du vrai pontife, & que l'Antechrist soutiendra la cause de l'Antipape. (k) Illud scandalum erit majus quia Antichristus partem Antipapæ sustinebit. Il refuse de là manifestement qu'il ne tenoit point le Pape pour l'Antechrist.

(A) A composer un traité sur ce sujet.] Il y a deux épitres dedicatoires à la tête de cet ouvrage; l'une à l'Evêque d'Arras datée du 1. de Mars 1547. l'autre au Cardinal Christophle Madruce Evêque de Trente.

(i) In contumeliam

Figure 3 Detail of Figure 2 emphasizing the diversity of the marginal notation and the paucity of article text. Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 2nd edn. (Rotterdam: Leers, 1702), 2599. © John J. Burns Library, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA.

In the pages of *Documents* the application of the practice of 'writing in common' to the dictionary structure takes its starting point as scepticism towards systematic thinking. Though adhering to the alphabetic ordering of its precursors, its structure is fragmentary, forming small alphabetic pockets of collected entries amidst the individual journal issues, which bound together would each contain small dictionaries of alphabetised sequences rather than running together as an index or glossary at the end of all issues.

48 Novalis quoted in Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, (trans. Susan Howard), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p.358.

Entries were on occasion *versioned* by several contributors in succession. The *Documents Dictionnaire* probed at the suppression (but not abolition) of individual authorship through three notable formal devices: the liberal inclusion of anonymous authors and quoted sources, the submission of more than one gloss per dictionary term and the reduction of authorial attribution to initials signed at the end of each gloss. If newspapers and other serials were already 'books made in common' then the *Dictionnaire*'s plural writing formed a surprising meta-commentary, field of interpretation and response to the contents of *Documents* itself and without, the growing mass-media of photography, music and dance. Like Pierre Bayle's complex metacommentaries, running around and underneath the main text, *Documents* revisited the practice common in the Middle Ages of adding glosses in the margins of texts. The *Dictionnaire* combined humour and edification (as explored by Voltaire), but its criticality as a 'magazine within a magazine' and as a 'war machine against received ideas' (a reference to Gustav Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pecuchet*) was directed both outwards and inwards, delivering not the final word but a threshing energy within the channel of communication insisting we strain our thinking organs towards its difficulties.[49] Carl Einstein the regular contributor and ostensible editorial line manager to Bataille on *Documents*, who would subsequently develop his own apotheosis of fragmentary form in his unfinished *Bebuquin II* project, authored two terms '**Absolute**' and '**Nightingale**'.[50] Though Bataille and

49 In Arabic *Makhzan* signifies a storehouse or warehouse of goods or ammunition.

50 Devin Fore's recent book contains a chapter on, but no reproductions of Einstein's *Bebuquin II*. See Devin Fore, *Realism After Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature*, Cambridge Mass.: October Books/MIT Press, 2015, pp.187-242. Carl Einstein, 'Absolute', pp.31-32 and Carl Einstein, 'Nightingale', *Encyclopaedia*

Einstein are often presented as opposed in their editorial roles at *Documents*, both their entries play along with the ludic form of dictionary and its critical currency. The first, treats the **Absolute** in Bataillean terms, relating it to man's fear of death, energetic expenditure, the void and his imprisonment through his external inter-subjective creations. For Einstein since words are primary amongst these prosthetic 'fetishes' they must be related to the fear of death, a blockage, in vitalist terms, to the all important love of life.

> People must begin by seeing words through death, and it is thus that they become immortal spirits like the latter. Words, created by man, become his nightmares, and notions are the padded cells of the logicians; it is by means of notions that duration is conned.[51]

An Aggravated 'We'

In his gloss on **Nightingale** whose definition is much more playful, imagistic and satirical, yet carefully tied by Einstein to the **Absolute**, words are again assaulted: 'With words we designate vague opinions rather than objects; we use words as adornments for our own persons. Words are, for the most part, petrifications which elicit mechanical reactions in us. They are means to power proposed by the wily and the drunken.'[52] This Bergsonian image of the hard and mechanical carapace of established words which elicits from the subject, us, 'mechanical reactions' is also emphasised by Ambrose Bierce in his legendarily satirical *Devil's Dictionary* (1911). Serialised in numerous different weeklies and dailies over three decades, Bierce eventually compiled and published his *Cynic's Word Book* with the new title under fierce

Acephalica, op. cit., pp.66-67.
51 Carl Einstein, 'Absolute', *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, pp.31-32.
52 Carl Einstein, 'Nightingale', *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, pp.66-67.

competition with copy cats and plagiarising opportunists. Its creation, in angular disalignment with the columns arrayed around it, was a process not dissimilar to the one which Michael Richardson ascribes to *Documents dictionnaire*:

> It is in this manner that the Dictionary took shape: as an edifice lacking architecture but emerging through the process of construction from the ground up, like a medieval cathedral or a minaret. As such it would become 'haunted', shaped not by human intention but by the very process of its own enactment.[53]

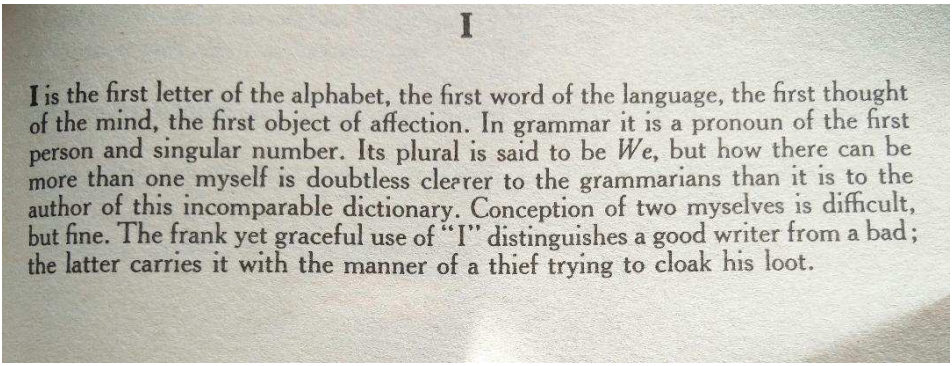
Karl Einstein, who left Paris to fight in the Spanish Civil War, wrote during his time spent with the Durruti Column of the need to 'restore the collective meaning of grammar' and that through Durruti's suppression of I, the first-person pronoun, 'namelessness and communism are one and the same'.[54] Einstein's death in Spain soon after this statement points to 1936 as a high point of convergence between avant-garde writers and international communist struggle, but also the moment of its eclipse. The namelessness immanent to the impersonal authorship conjured by the constraint of the philosophical dictionary can be further qualified by the late contribution to the tradition represented by Wealth of Negations' short series of glossaries published as *Terms and Conditions*.[55] Here, there is no suppression of the I – let alone an overcoming of it – without antagonism. Bierce is more sanguine: 'The frank yet graceful use of 'I' distinguishes a good writer from a bad; the

53 Michael Richardson, 'Dictionary', in *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille & Documents*, Dawn Ades and, Simon Baker, (Eds.), *Undercover Surrealism, Georges Bataille & Documents*, London: The Hayward Gallery & MIT Press, p.92.
54 *Realism After Modernism*, p.242.
55 Wealth of Negations two published glossaries and assorted other projects can be found at, https://www.wealthofnegations.org/

latter carries it with the manner of a thief trying to cloak his loot.'[56] The burgeoning commercial conditions of the modern press which Bierce navigated did not permit him to renounce his writings' status as literary property, despite its population with invented aliases. Yet, his position points up and satirises the society of self-interest at every opportunity. As evident in Wealth of Negations' embattled navigation of twenty first century management jargon, Einstein's incomplete 'novel' *Bebuquin II* written on filing cards and Bierce's denigration of the novel, the growth of technical, industrial and legal infrastructure around writing from the nineteenth through to the twenty first century instantiated new levels of precision and concentration concerning the direct material from which new writing would be made.

Again with the pamphlet in your hands try folding pages inwards or outwards this time trying to press specific words together. What new compound words can be made in this manner? Consider isolating, by cutting and joining these words together, or permanently gluing the pages together to make new words and sentences.

56 Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*, pp.53-54.



I

I is the first letter of the alphabet, the first word of the language, the first thought of the mind, the first object of affection. In grammar it is a pronoun of the first person and singular number. Its plural is said to be *We*, but how there can be more than one myself is doubtless clearer to the grammarians than it is to the author of this incomparable dictionary. Conception of two myselves is difficult, but fine. The frank yet graceful use of "I" distinguishes a good writer from a bad; the latter carries it with the manner of a thief trying to cloak his loot.

Image: Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*, pp.53.

WE

(1.) Aggravated 'I'.

(2.) A class assured of its own security has resurrected: *We are all in this together*. At a 1% remove stands: *We are the 99%*.

Image: Wealth of Negations, Terms and Conditions: Management Edition, 2013

Positioning Words in the Social War

In 1966 Mustapha Khayati, a member of the Situationist International, announced the project of a Situationist dictionary.

> Our dictionary will be a sort of code book enabling one to decipher the news and rend the ideological veils that cover reality. We will give possible translations that will enable people to grasp the different aspects of the society of the spectacle, and show how the slightest signs and indications contribute to maintaining it. In a sense it will be a bilingual dictionary, since each word has an 'ideological' meaning for power and a real meaning that we think corresponds to real life in the present historical phase. Thus we will be able at each step to determine the various positions of words in the social war. If the problem of ideology is how to descend from the heaven of ideas to the real world, our dictionary will be a contribution to the elaboration of the new revolutionary theory where the problem is how to effect the transition from language to life.[57]

The project was never ultimately launched, although a later project, *The Encyclopedia of Nuisances*, initiated by pro-situ Jaime Semprun and ex-situationist Christian Sebastiani did attempt to revive it in 1984, garnering a series of anonymous entries by Guy Debord and others.[58] The project for a dictionary drew from the lettrist international's practice of subverting language but gained political traction through the philosophy of language proposed by the SI.

> Words work – on behalf of the dominant organisation of life. Yet they are not completely automated […] they contain forces that can upset

57 Mustapha Khayati, 'Captive Words: Preface to a Situationist Dictionary', (1966), available, http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/10.captivewords.htm

58 See http://www.notbored.org/EdN.html

> the most careful calculations. Words coexist with power in a relation analogous to that which proletarians (in the modern as well as the classic sense of the term) have with power. Employed by it almost full time, exploited for every sense and nonsense that can be squeezed out of them, they still remain in some sense fundamentally alien to it.[59]

In the SI's praxis of linguistic resistance the systematisation of language is one and the same with the ruling mode of production. Each is mutually complementary and reinforcing in a society based on domination. The SI's critique was immanent to the planner state during the cold war, the introduction of insubordinate wordplay was an attempt to blast new meaning out of a sedimented and contained literary philosophical canon which had been mastered and suppressed within post-war and cold war planning. A status quo evident, in Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's words, wherever 'the rigidity and exclusivity which concepts have necessarily taken on wherever language has consolidated the community of the rulers for the enforcement of commands'.[60] Horkheimer and Adorno's own forays into the glossary form: *Dawn and Decline* and *Minima Moralia*, respectively, present perhaps late attempts to respond to Benjamin's surrealist-influenced project.[61] This search for an aphoristic form – exacting a fascination across the work of several Frankfurt School thinkers would combine the structural and the particular – can be understood, in the words of Peter Osborne, as 'a reflexive

59 Situationist International, 'All the King's Men', *Internationale Situationniste*, No.8, Paris, January 1963.
60 Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford M.A.:Stanford University Press, 2002, p.17.
61 Max Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline - Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969*, (trans. Michael Shaw), New York: Seabury Press, 1978 and Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott, London: Verso, 2005.

means to overcome the illusory self-sufficiency of specific knowledges, immanently and speculatively, via reference to the absent whole.'[62]

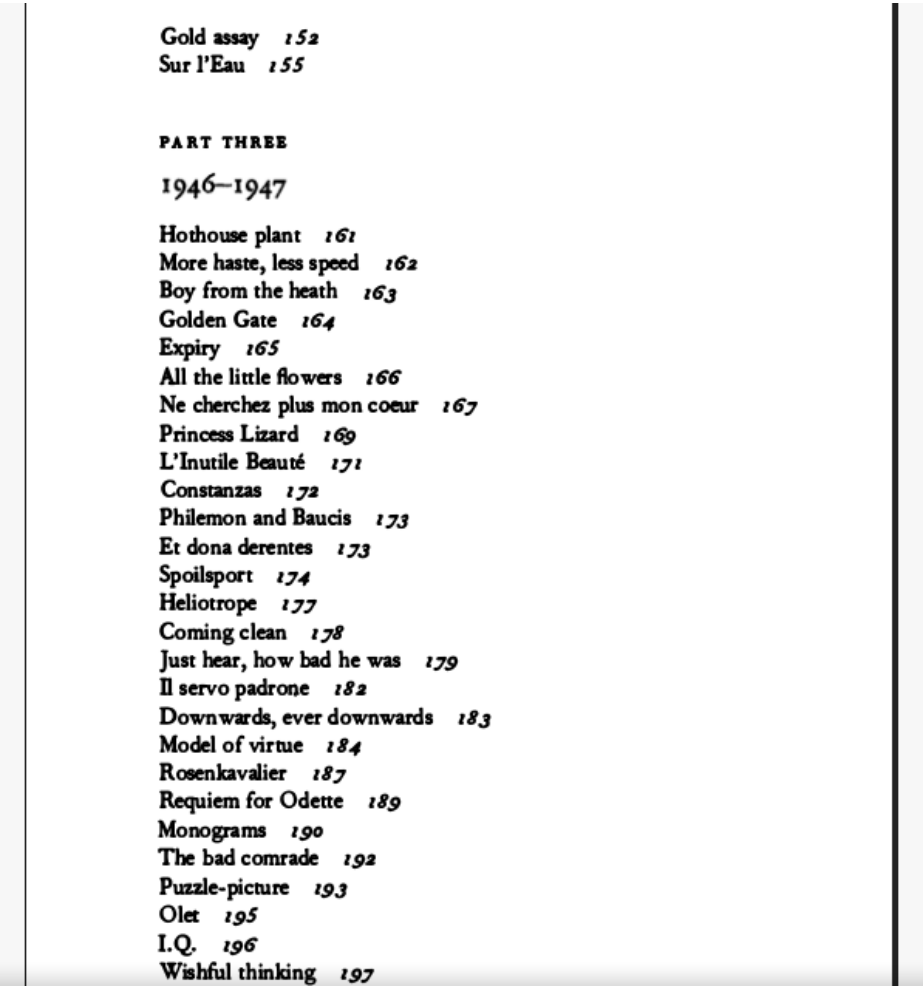


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Image: Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, (1951)

62 Peter Osborne, 'The Reproach of Abstraction', *Radical Philosophy*, No.127, September/October 2004, pp.21-28, p.25.

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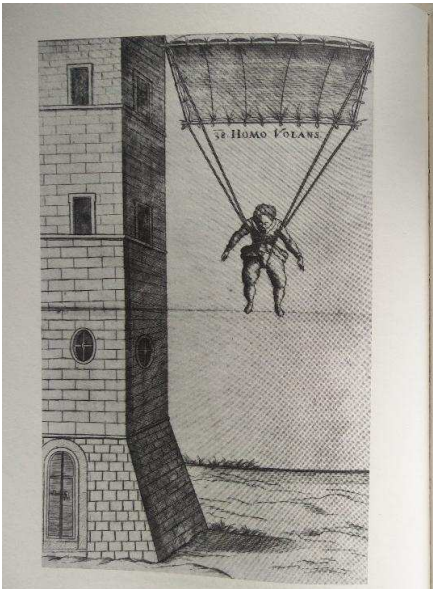
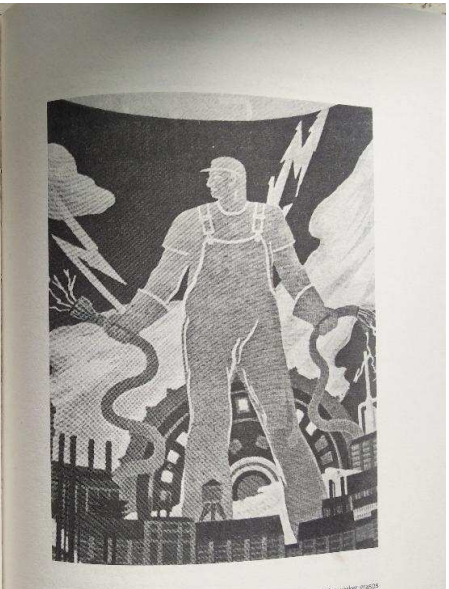
Image: Contents page to Max Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline - Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969*, (1978)

Horkheimer's work particularly deserves more attention than it has received. Reading *Minima Moralia* and *Dawn & Decline* together make for a sustained and melancholy meditation on the blocked paths to communism. Despite the extreme sense of isolation evident in each of these aphoristic glossaries, they each suggest a search for dialogue and attempts to loosen the restraints of academic philosophy on a search for truth which is both subjective and collective.

If at first we might wonder why communists increasingly adopt apparently solipsistic forms across the 20th century? If this is first an attempt to outpace the functional streamlining of scientific thought and language by adopting the universalism of critical enlightenment, it quickly synthesises with a melancholic response to the collapse of the prospects of a mass revolution (in the 1920s in Germany, in the 1930s in France). Surveying a century of political publishing from the perspective of the persistence of the glossary form, what is immediately evident is the ways in which the intellectual illusion of a coherent mass subject gradually crumbles away, this generates a pressure upon such texts to produce a subject from within the resources of the texts themselves. After 1989, after the definitive collapse of 'really existing socialism' small, resolutely minor, formations return to such experiments to develop forms of micropolitical expression, including self-publishing and developing the glossary as expressive fields from which to undo the capitalist subject and develop a new contingent group subject. These are evident across the political spectrum of the autonomous and ultra-left, from small self-institutional sub-groupings, academics, para-academic culturalist crypto-facists (CCRU), to fellow travellers of the communisation current.



Homo volans. (Fausto Veranzio, *Machinae Novae* (Venice, 1616), plate 38)



A 1939 convention poster from Chicago. As if grasping snakes, the all-powerful worker grasps three-story-high power lines that otherwise would blow up the city. Lower center, a real but unrecognizable laborer at the window of a building. (Alexander Kluge Archive)

Homo volans

For more than two thousand years, the FLYING HUMAN has been represented from the point of view of the fall. Icarus fell. At the same time, however, flying is an ideal in all reformation movements of the twentieth century. RELATED CONCEPTS: ➔ Homo sapiens; ➔ Homo compensator; ➔ Homo faber; ➔ *Robo sapiens*.

The Collective Worker (*Gesamtarbeiter*)

A central category in Karl Marx's *Capital* (see *Capital*, section 4, chapter 15, "Machinery and Modern Industry"). Initially it referred to a so-called real abstraction designating the (theoretical) alliance between all labor powers and labor capacities throughout the entire world, without which the capitalist world economy would be inconceivable. Later on, this collective worker developed into something real, but without the ability of being autonomous (as a relationality) and without its objectively interrelated elements ever being observable as a unity. Effectively ignored by the public sphere, everyday experience, and science, all human developments—odysseys and progress alike—run their course on the level of this collective worker. On another level, the idea of the collective worker is the motif for posters and other memorials of labor.

Image: Alexander Kluge & Oscar Negt, '*Homo Volans* and The Collective Worker', from *History and Obstinacy* (2014).

An A-Z of key aspects of communisation theory, by Gilles Dauvé.

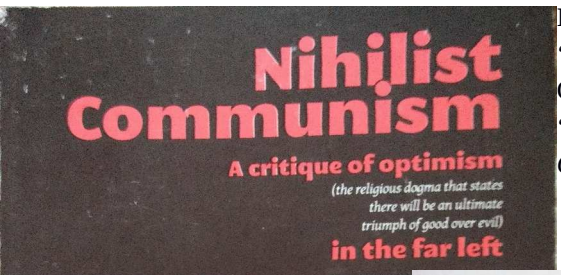
"Some people will find our propositions insane or naïve. We do not expect to convince everyone. If such a thing were possible, it would be very disturbing.

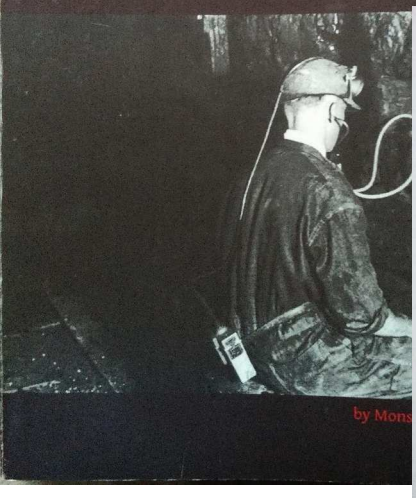
We would rather have readers who have to rub their eyes before granting credence to our positions."

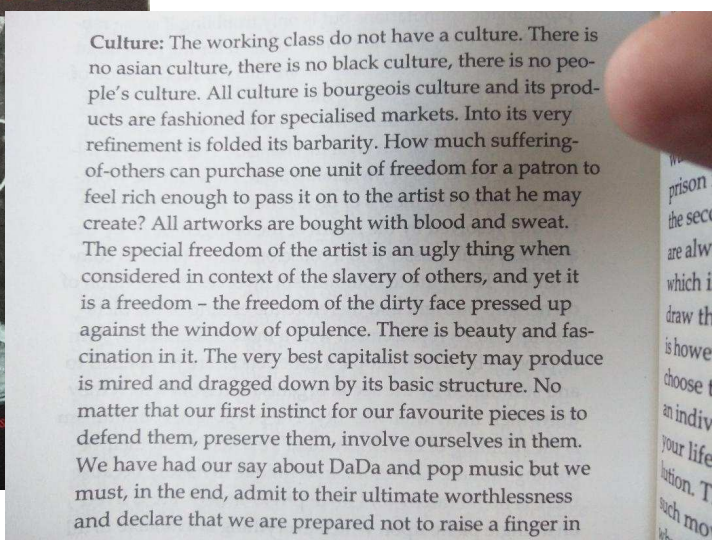
A World Without Money: Communism, 1975

AUTONOMY **BLUE COLLAR** **CLASS** **DAILY LIFE**

ECOLOGY **FAMILY** **GIOTTO** **HABITAT** **INSURRECTION**






Culture: The working class do not have a culture. There is no asian culture, there is no black culture, there is no people's culture. All culture is bourgeois culture and its products are fashioned for specialised markets. Into its very refinement is folded its barbarity. How much suffering-of-others can purchase one unit of freedom for a patron to feel rich enough to pass it on to the artist so that he may create? All artworks are bought with blood and sweat. The special freedom of the artist is an ugly thing when considered in context of the slavery of others, and yet it is a freedom – the freedom of the dirty face pressed up against the window of opulence. There is beauty and fascination in it. The very best capitalist society may produce is mired and dragged down by its basic structure. No matter that our first instinct for our favourite pieces is to defend them, preserve them, involve ourselves in them. We have had our say about DaDa and pop music but we must, in the end, admit to their ultimate worthlessness and declare that we are prepared not to raise a finger in

Images: Gilles Dauvé & Bruno Astarian, 'An A-Z of Some Aspects of Communisation Theory', (2010). Cover and 'Culture' from Monsieur Dupont, *Nihilist Communism*, (2003)

Turbulent Times
Alphabet of desire

A
Association of Autonomous Astronauts, Apple Computers, A.I.N., Academy 23, AKCT, Autotoxicity, Ambush

B
BM Box 3641, London WC1N 3XX, England UK

C
Chaos, Aleister Crowley, Cults & Culture, Fred Carter, Coldcut, corrupt disks, Copyright, charts, Cold Spring

D
Decadent Action, Distro, Thee Database, Dead by Dawn, Dragon, Dust Devil, Disciples of Belial,

E
Eden, "Everybody is a Star", erratic publishing schedule, Endura, Expansions

F
Finsbury Park, free photocopying, Filemaker Pro, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Fallout

G
Grievous Angel, Gyrus T, godhaven, golem, Green Lanes N4, Kitty Genovese, Growl graphic

H
Phil Hine, Head Magazine, Hip Hop, The Hidden Persuaders, Headbutt, Hackney Anarchy Week, Hard Knox

I
Thee Instagon Foundation, Invisible Colleges, "I didn't do nuthin'" exhibition, industrial music for industrial people

J
Junk Mail Backlash, Justify My Hate

K
Kali, knitting, King Tubby Meets Rockers Uptown, keeping it surreal

L
London Psychogeographical Association, Lorna, Luther Blissett Project, Lists, Leighton Buzzard, Little Red Riding Hood

M
Terence McKenna, Magico-Marxism, Mind Invaders, Mother Destruction, Manchester Area Psychogeographic, Mitch, Mexica-aztecs, Merzbow

N
Neoist Alliance, New Lettrist International Congress, Nightmare Sleepwalk Remix, Nocturnal Emissions, Not Breathing, NASA/TREK, nettworking

O
Occulture, Out of Order Order, OKOK Society, Ov Magazine, orange balloon assault, off-set litho

P
Psychogeography, Lee "Scratch" Perry, pritt-stick, Praxis, public transport, Prague, Physics, plagiarism, pink walls, P.U.R.E. Thoughts

Q
Quantum Psychology, Quark Xpress, Questionnaires

R
Runes, Runciter Corporation cartoons, reviews, Ratio3 series, Rapid Eye, Raido, Rubber Stamps, Recipe for Designer Religion, red eyes and R.S.I.

S
Satan is Dead, Stoke Newington, Sheets Project, scarification, south London drum 'n' noise scene, Smile, Space 1999, Sabon, Skint, Smoke Demon, sigils, Skycutter, The Sekhmet Hypothesis, Sesame Street toys

T
Temple ov Psychick Youth, Towards 2012, taoism, 23rd Current, techno and meditation, Talking Stick, Thought Crime, tai chi, technology works/technology delivers?

U
Urban Takeover, Underground, up for the downstroke, U.N.I.T.

V
Viral TX, Vienna, variables, Vision Temple

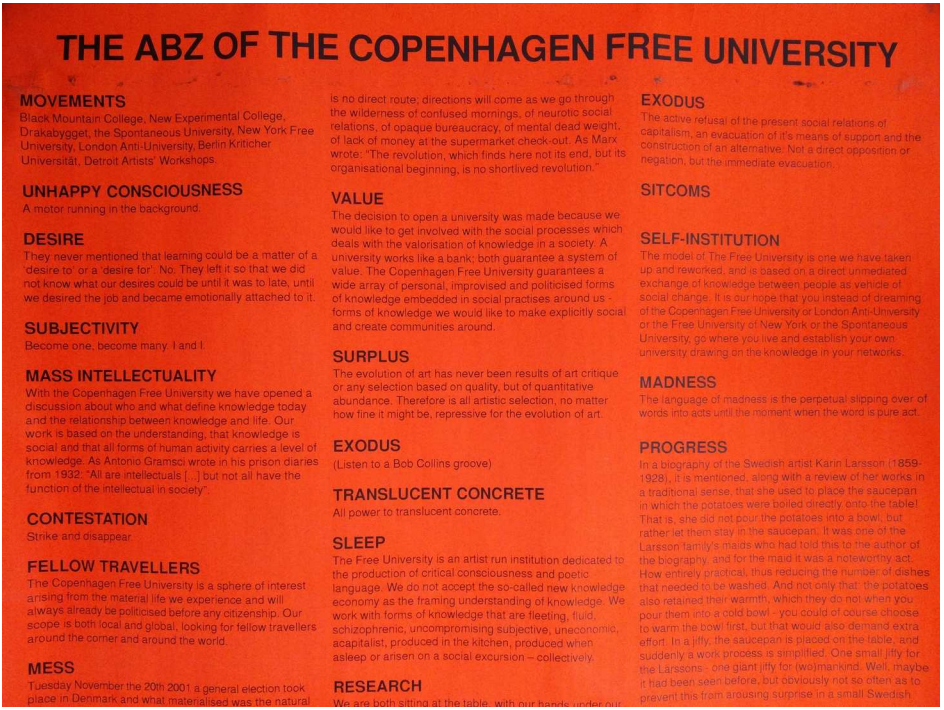
W
www.uncarved.demon.co.uk

X
XXX-Tripping, xtians

Y
Youth culture mashed up with ideology

Z
Zombification, zen, zines, Z'ev

Image: Turbulent Times, 'Alphabet of Desire', *Infotainment*, No.2, 1998.



THE ABZ OF THE COPENHAGEN FREE UNIVERSITY

MOVEMENTS

Black Mountain College, New Experimental College, Drakabygget, the Spontaneous University, New York Free University, London Anti-University, Berlin Kritischer Universität, Detroit Artists' Workshops.

UNHAPPY CONSCIOUSNESS

A motor running in the background.

DESIRE

They never mentioned that learning could be a matter of a 'desire to' or a 'desire for'. No. They left it so that we did not know what our desires could be until it was to late, until we desired the job and became emotionally attached to it.

SUBJECTIVITY

Become one, become many. I and I.

MASS INTELLECTUALITY

With the Copenhagen Free University we have opened a discussion about who and what define knowledge today and the relationship between knowledge and life. Our work is based on the understanding, that knowledge is social and that all forms of human activity carries a level of knowledge. As Antonio Gramsci wrote in his prison diaries from 1932: "All are intellectuals [...] but not all have the function of the intellectual in society".

CONTESTATION

Strike and disappear.

FELLOW TRAVELLERS

The Copenhagen Free University is a sphere of interest arising from the material life we experience and will always already be politicised before any citizenship. Our scope is both local and global, looking for fellow travellers around the corner and around the world.

MESS

Tuesday November the 20th 2001 a general election took place in Denmark and what materialised was the natural

is no direct route; directions will come as we go through the wilderness of confused mornings, of neurotic social relations, of opaque bureaucracy, of mental dead weight, of lack of money at the supermarket check-out. As Marx wrote: "The revolution, which finds here not its end, but its organisational beginning, is no shortlived revolution."

VALUE

The decision to open a university was made because we would like to get involved with the social processes which deals with the valorisation of knowledge in a society. A university works like a bank; both guarantee a system of value. The Copenhagen Free University guarantees a wide array of personal, improvised and politicised forms of knowledge embedded in social practises around us - forms of knowledge we would like to make explicitly social and create communities around.

SURPLUS

The evolution of art has never been results of art critique or any selection based on quality, but of quantitative abundance. Therefore is all artistic selection, no matter how fine it might be, repressive for the evolution of art.

EXODUS

(Listen to a Bob Collins groove)

TRANSLUCENT CONCRETE

All power to translucent concrete.

SLEEP

The Free University is an artist run institution dedicated to the production of critical consciousness and poetic language. We do not accept the so-called new knowledge economy as the framing understanding of knowledge. We work with forms of knowledge that are fleeting, fluid, schizophrenic, uncompromising subjective, uneconomic, acapitalist; produced in the kitchen, produced when asleep or arisen on a social excursion – collectively.

RESEARCH

We are both sitting at the table, with our hands under our

EXODUS

The active refusal of the present social relations of capitalism, an evacuation of it's means of suppon and the construction of an alternative. Not a direct opposition or negation, but the immediate evacuation.

SITCOMS

SELF-INSTITUTION

The model of The Free University is one we have taken up and reworked, and is based on a direct unmediated exchange of knowledge between people as vehicle of social change. It is our hope that you instead of dreaming of the Copenhagen Free University or London Anti-University or the Free University of New York or the Spontaneous University, go where you live and establish your own university drawing on the knowledge in your networks.

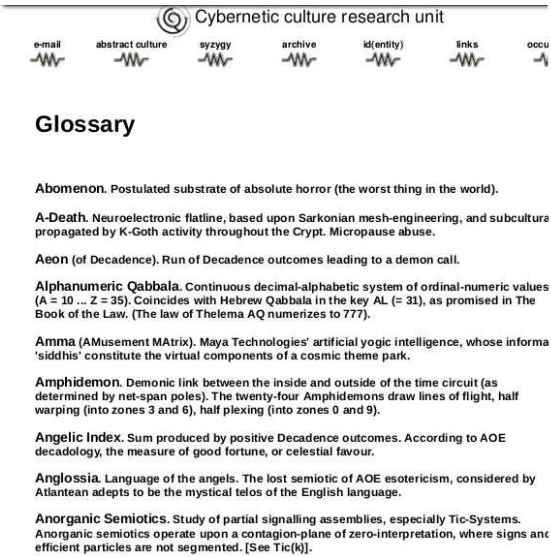
MADNESS

The language of madness is the perpetual slipping over of words into acts until the moment when the word is pure act.

PROGRESS

In a biography of the Swedish artist Karin Larsson (1859-1928), it is mentioned, along with a review of her works in a traditional sense, that she used to place the saucepan in which the potatoes were boiled directly onto the table! That is, she did not pour the potatoes into a bowl, but rather let them stay in the saucepan. It was one of the Larsson family's maids who had told this to the author of the biography, and for the maid it was a noteworthy act. How entirely practical, thus reducing the number of dishes that needed to be washed. And not only that: the potatoes also retained their warmth, which they do not when you pour them into a cold bowl - you could of course choose to warm the bowl first, but that would also demand extra effort. In a jiffy, the saucepan is placed on the table, and suddenly a work process is simplified. One small jiffy for the Larssons - one giant jiffy for (wo)mankind. Well, maybe it had been seen before, but obviously not so often as to prevent this from arousing surprise in a small Swedish

Image: Copenhagen Free University, 'The ABC of the Copenhagen Free University', c.2000



Cybernetic culture research unit

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Glossary

Abomenon. Postulated substrate of absolute horror (the worst thing in the world).

A-Death. Neuroelectronic flatline, based upon Sarkonian mesh-engineering, and subcultura propagated by K-Goth activity throughout the Crypt. Micropause abuse.

Aeon (of Decadence). Run of Decadence outcomes leading to a demon call.

Alphanumeric Qabbala. Continuous decimal-alphabetic system of ordinal-numeric values (A = 10 ... Z = 35). Coincides with Hebrew Qabbala in the key AL (= 31), as promised in The Book of the Law. (The law of Thelema AQ numerizes to 777).

Amma (AMusement MAtrix). Maya Technologies' artificial yogic intelligence, whose informa 'siddhis' constitute the virtual components of a cosmic theme park.

Amphidemon. Demonic link between the inside and outside of the time circuit (as determined by net-span poles). The twenty-four Amphidemons draw lines of flight, half warping (into zones 3 and 6), half plexing (into zones 0 and 9).

Angelic Index. Sum produced by positive Decadence outcomes. According to AOE decadology, the measure of good fortune, or celestial favour.

Anglossia. Language of the angels. The lost semiotic of AOE esotericism, considered by Atlantean adepts to be the mystical telos of the English language.

Anorganic Semiotics. Study of partial signalling assemblies, especially Tic-Systems. Anorganic semiotics operate upon a contagion-plane of zero-interpretation, where signs anc efficient particles are not segmented. [See Tic(k)].

Image: The Cybernetic Culture Research Unit, 'Glossary', c.1998

> Communists are not isolated from the proletariat. Their action is never an attempt to organise others; it is always an attempt to express their own subversive response to the world […] the revolutionary task is not primarily one of organisation; the task is to express (in a text or an action) a subversive relation to the world. However big or small it may be, such an act is an attack against the old world.[63]

This point of view may seem individualistic and spontaneist, but its critical content resulted from the thorough critique of prior militant politics: self-management, councilism, Leninism, social democracy. Influenced by 1930s critiques of party forms and unions, as well as the 1970s theory of leftist groups as 'rackets', this tendency in left communism and anarchism tended to eschew any engagement with recruiting organisations, instead recognising in informal acts of resistance: theft at work, rioting, wildcat strike, dropping out, shoplifting, forms of self-activity which could not be coerced into a political programme or policed by the left, unions or the state. For the self-publishing milieu in which such texts were circulating, I think many would recognise their own activity in such statements as the 'task is not primarily one of organisation; the task is to express (in a text or an action) a subversive relation to the world.'[64] *Inventory* seemed to concur with this understanding that the social forces of capital produced subjects who were '[r]esigned to what appears to be the most crushing of social and economic forces.'[65] On the other hand, their resignation is balanced by revolutionary impulses, although these are tentative: 'one cannot help but make tentative explorations, feeble forays into a landscape that is dark and sweet, painful and exhilarating.' For *Inventory*, this is a 'landscape whose laws are dictated by a chance that is at

63 Gilles Dauvé and François Martin, 'Preface to the Preface to the Japanese Edition of No.1 and No.2 of *Le mouvement communiste* (January, 1973)' in *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement*, op. cit., p.9.
64 Ibid.
65 Inventory, 'Requiem for the Empty Quarter', *Inventory*, Vol.4 No.3 2002, p.92.

once resigned and revolutionary.'[66] In opposition to structurally oriented critiques, this seems in some sense a better measure of the balance of forces than that those who tend to see capital's latest stage of evolutionary development as a completed system. As with Dauvé's statement above in *Inventory*'s statement there is a levelling or at least ambiguity produced between text and action reproduced, and these statements each seem to recall Benjamin's statements on surrealism as bringing about moments 'where an action puts forth its own image' and his prescription, in *One Way Street*, for publishing formats which engender 'a strict alternation between action and writing'.[67]

The problem of communist objectivity reveals itself to be the problem of how to address an other. The problem of speaking in another's language, one which has been specifically designed in order to maintain, rather than undermine, illusions. The problem of speaking to someone who isn't listening, who is tired from being forced to listen. As Horkheimer puts it, in *Dawn and Decline*, 'A neat trick, the criticism of the system is to be the prerogative of those who have an interest in it.'[68] Therefore the necessary experiment with a form which invoked the systematic but smuggled in experience. The philosophical glossary as a system of stoppages and blocked routes to automatic thinking continues to provoke thought and disquiet, it continues to imply an reader, a collective subject which is, I hope, yet to be.

Holding the pamphlet with the palm of your hand and fingers, squeezing and rolling the pamphlet into a tube, try to imagine the pamphlet's earlier form as

66 Ibid.
67 Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism' *One Way Street*, op. cit, p.239. And 'One Way Street' in Ibid., p.45.
68 *Dawn & Decline*, p.31.

a small part of a gigantic roll of paper containing 80 kilometres of paper sheet, 8.5 metres wide and weighing 120 tonnes. Try to imagine the quantities of chemicals used to bleach and prepare the paper, both for the roll and for the small pamphlet.

Criminal Argot

Against perhaps its own totalising expectations, the vaunted SI dictionary brings us also to a contemporary project which takes seriously the precursors surveyed above in order to make a destructive intervention into the professional field of etymology and lexicography: Alice Becker-Ho's series of glossaries of dangerous class slang. Though Becker-Ho initially concentrated on the influence of the encounter between Romani people travelling from the East arriving in Europe during the Middle Ages on the French language the scope of Becker-Ho's project has become 'the sum total of every criminal argot'.[69] Her glossaries and the etymologies they contain make an intervention in order to free the fate of words from what she understands as a professional field overcrowded with mugs (*le cave*, French) and suckers (*daim – ex rotwelsch damian* (*dumm* in German): silly stupid).

As was almost certainly known to Becker-Ho and others close to the SI's milieu, Robert Desnos had already got the ball rolling on this front, with his contribution to an entry in *Documents dictionnaire* on the '**Eye'**. He writes:

69 Alice Becker-Ho, 'The Language of those in the Know', *Diagraphe*, 1995, (trans. John McHale), London, 2001, http://cddc.vt.edu/sionline/postsi/language.html (Accessed 05/06/2002)

> Argot, that poetic language, rich in poetic imagery, and accursed, has naturally made much use of the organ of sight*: le quart d'oeil* (commissariat of police) derives – and in the process outdoes it – from the classical proverb *ne dormir que d'un oeil*. *comme le gendarme* [to sleep with one eye open, like a policeman]. *Coco bel oeil*, which has passed from slang into polite usage, with a certain old-fashioned military whiff about it, alludes less to the organ of sight than to one of its functions, *l'oeillade*, the amorous glance or ogle. The eye's fragility quickly led to its being made a term of comparison with something precious *j'y tiens comme à la prune/le de mon oeil*, I treasure it/him/her like the apple of my eye; then again, by extension, as a sensitive spot not to be touched without good reason, as it emerges from the very formula of lynch law, *oeil pour oeil*, an eye for an eye.[70]

Desnos ends his article by thumbing his nose at the linguistic authority of the *Académie française*, a first assault which likely was not taken very seriously. However, Becker-Ho's persistent work in this area – the scene of great controversy – has been harder to ignore. The term *argot* (brotherhood of rogues) – '*ach* denotes brother in Hebrew and *guit*, rogue in Dutch – the latter derived from the German term *gauner*, itself borrowing from the Hebrew *ganaw* [a thief].'[71] Argot names both 'a discrete language and the community who speaks it'.[72] As Becker-Ho notes, these communities (Jews, criminals, Roma, homosexuals) or their speech have been scarcely been legible as an

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70 Robert Desnos, 'Eye', *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, op. cit., p.44.
71 Alice Becker-Ho, 'The Language of those in the Know', *Diagraphe*, 1995.
72 Alice Becker-Ho, *An English Translation of Les Princes Du Jargon: Un Facteur Négligé Aux Origines de l'argot Des Classes Dangereuses = The Princes of Jargon: A Neglected Factor at the Origins of Dangerous Class Slang*, (trans. John McHale), Lampeter & New York: Edward Mellen Press, 2004, p.17.

VAGUER (c. 19): to work in the sense of to steal, to solicit, tout for
1) in the sixteenth century the Fr. verb *vaquer* underwent a change of meaning from the original thirteenth-century sense of "to be empty," deriving from the Latin *vacare* and passing into legal language (vacation [recess]), to the modern one of "to attend to, to see to" [*vaquer à*]
2) the German *wagen* (ex MHG *wage*): to dare, to risk, to venture, to attack, is visibly closer to the Fr. slang meaning: "Robbery [*le* VAGUE], this passion of mine," VAGUER *les poivrots* [to rob] or VAGUER *le trottoir* [to explore]

FLIC, FLICARD, FLICAILLE: the police in general (this term only begins to appear in the nineteenth century, since which time it has managed to achieve currency among the police themselves)
flek (Yid. ex Ger. *Fleck*, Du. *vleck*): dirt, stain, blemish. A term from diamond-cutters' jargon, where it means a flaw or (colored) speck in the stone [Fr. *paillette, crapaud, gendarme, dragonneau*]
whence FLAQUER, DÉFLAQUER, NAQUER DU FLA [in butchers' slang]: to defecate, to vomit, to give birth, to drop. The derivatives FLAQUE [excrement], FLAGADA [exhausted], and a few metaphorical constructions in French such as *"clair comme un tas de boue dans la gueule d'un flic"* [lit. as clear as a load of dirt rammed into a copper's mug], or again *"du poulet on en bouffera encore quand eux boufferont de la merde"* [we'll still have chicken (*du poulet*) to eat when coppers (*les poulets*) are eating shit] serve to underpin this image
for the expression FLIC *à dard*, see AS above
in typographers' slang, CHOUFLIC means a bad workman
fink (slang): bastard, shit, strike-breaker, policeman, informer; *to fink*: to inform, to chicken out, to back out, to fall through, to fail, to flop

ensemble except as inhabitants of the concentration camp.[73] Legibility requires that we grasp what she names the 'deltaic principle', the principle that this language 'appears, transforms itself and disappears only to reappear, without our ever being able to know its origins or the paths it has taken with any degree of accuracy.'[74] Appropriately, for a language which is constantly transformed by its practice and dependent on its proximity to those who might overhear it, its totality has never been accurately documented or recognised. Those who have attempted such a task are precisely its enemies – cops – 'whose unceasing professional concern is knowledge of the movement and the whereabouts of people and things'.[75] Cops and their various appellations are more frequently than not the material distorted and disguised in argot. Money is another bearer of lexical invention and transformation. Death, particularly violent or state-induced death is as commonplace, if not more than, sex. However negative towards established linguistic authority and enthusiastic for the inseparability of the language and unruly lives of those who spoke it Becker-Ho's glossaries of argot present an anomaly in that the motivations of those have previously submitted argot to classification circulated primarily to inform, scare and titillate the class of people of whom its speakers were sworn enemies.[76] Initially keen to distinguish slang from argot, insisting that '[t]he Gypsies are our Middle Ages preserved' and that 'nothing […] would induce them to talk the recent slang embraced by all and sundry.', Becker-Ho's project has latterly laid testament to the intense convergence between argot and slangs

73 Alice Becker-Ho's *The Princes of Jargon: A Neglected Factor at the Origins of Dangerous Class Slang*, translated by John McHale, (Edward Mellen Press, 2004), p.87.
74 Ibid., p.95.
75 Ibid.
76 As Becker-Ho acknowledges, 'it is impossible to compile an authentic dictionary of slang etymology that is trustworthy', *The Essence of Jargon*, op. cit. p.95.

in other national languages.[77] This has lead many commentators to misconstrue an equivalence between the lives of the dangerous classes then and now, even while Becker-Ho's point is precisely the impossibility of their conflation.[78] The class dynamics at work here deserve to be studied further. For Becker-Ho the gradual transition from dangerous class to popular slang is to be summed up with the formula: 'the playful content increases the further one gets away from serious matters.'[79] That is to say, in situations of danger, necessity and urgency, words work harder. Yet, in her account of argot as a worldview, necessity as a driver of creation in language remains shrouded in carefully construed mystification, it is a truth that is elsewhere, an implied theoretical absence which the negation of wage labour, from which unruly language and life reproduce themselves, only gestures towards.

> *Ever tailor your words accordingly in situations where danger stalks anything you may say.*[80]

Materials for a Dictionary

Allied in some specific senses to the scene of invention surveyed by Becker-Ho is Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig's *Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary* (1979). Citing authorities of its own invention these entries establish a lesbian Eden whose past and present is without men and whose future is the concern of a speculative fragment penned by Sappho in 600BC.

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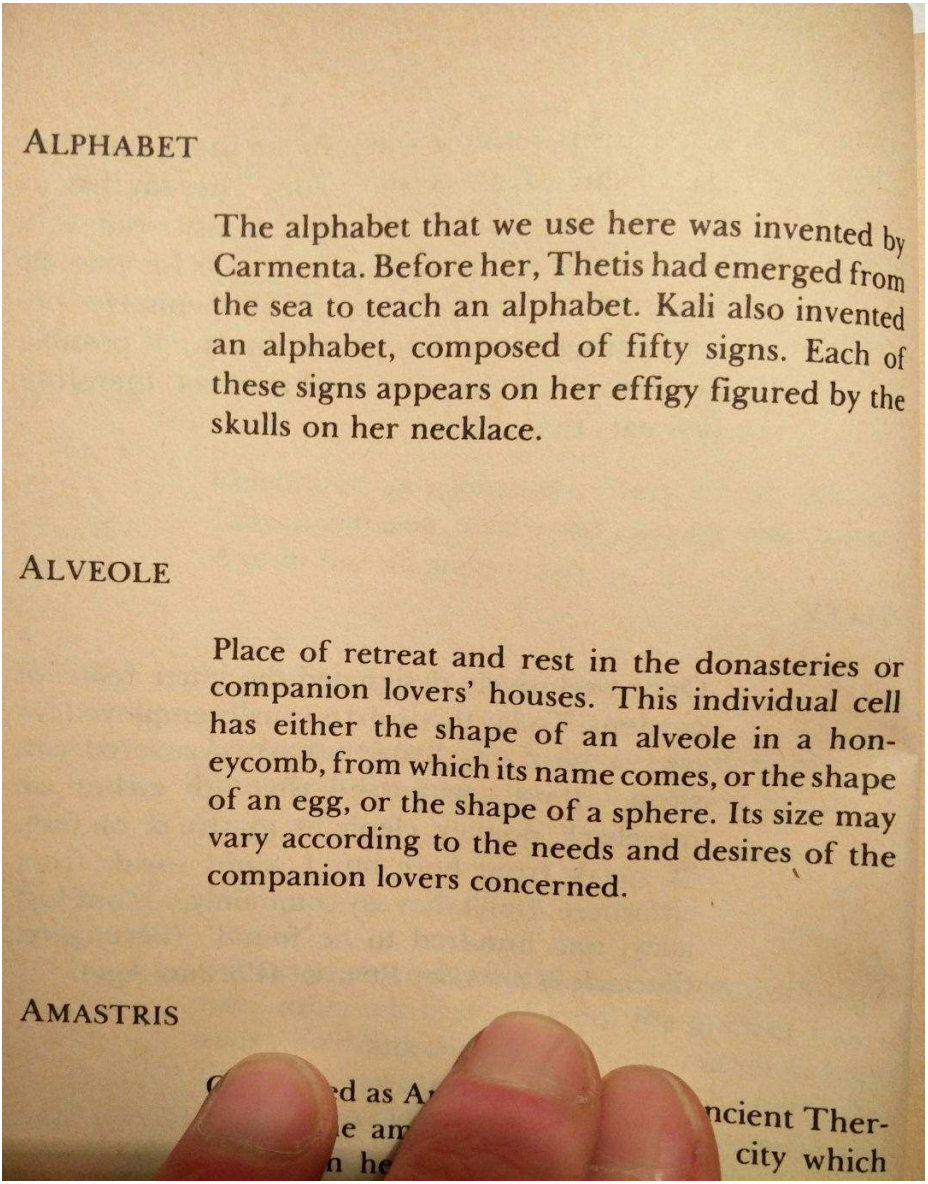
77 *The Princes of Jargon*, op. cit., p.67 and p.69.
78 See, for example, Roger Farr's introduction 'Gangland and Linguistics', in Alice Becker-Ho, *The Essence of Jargon*, pp.7-36.
79 *The Princes of Jargon*., p.161.
80 Charles D'Orleans quoted in Alice Becker-Ho, *The Essence of Jargon*, translated by John McHale (New York: Autonomedia, 2015), p.85.



ALPHABET

The alphabet that we use here was invented by Carmenta. Before her, Thetis had emerged from the sea to teach an alphabet. Kali also invented an alphabet, composed of fifty signs. Each of these signs appears on her effigy figured by the skulls on her necklace.

ALVEOLE

Place of retreat and rest in the donasteries or companion lovers' houses. This individual cell has either the shape of an alveole in a honeycomb, from which its name comes, or the shape of an egg, or the shape of a sphere. Its size may vary according to the needs and desires of the companion lovers concerned.

AMASTRIS

ncient Ther-
city which

Image: Monique Wittig and Sandra Zweig, 'Alphabet' in *Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary* (1976)

Otherwise its pre-history is moot – 'the lesbian peoples do not hold themselves responsible for the confusions, contradictions, incoherences of that history.'[81] This fugitive glossary outlines a myth of its own foundations and the struggles through which it was made – 'a bibliothec, assemblage of books and fragments from the past, salvaged by the companion lovers during the last chaotic period' – which has marked it as substantiated by its 'lacunary' quality.[82] This is somewhat different from the unfinished status of many other dictionaries and glossaries discussed here, although as a draft it is also unfinished, what is suggested is that it misses something from before itself as well as after, and that it misses or omits deliberately as a core aspect of its construction. The *Materials for a Dictionary* also concerns the origin of a lesbian front; created in a German city in the late Concrete Age. A 'real' event in which its authors participated (Frankfurt, October 1974). The image of happiness which the *Materials* conjures in the roaming, perfumed idleness of the 'companion lovers' it celebrates is not without an account of the necessity of violence, conflict, opposition and rebellion which has passed. The entry for **Alphabet** mentions the goddess Kali's invention of fifty words, a fact omitted from Bataille's entry on **Kali** in *Documents*: 'each of these signs appears on her effigy figured by the skulls on her necklaces.'[83] If heads had to roll for a dictionary to take shape and be remembered, so words are crushed in order to be stored. As a dictionary suturing what is missing to what needs to be brought into reality via the medium of fantasy, *Materials for a Dictionary* is also a dictionary for the prevention of understanding by ones' enemies.

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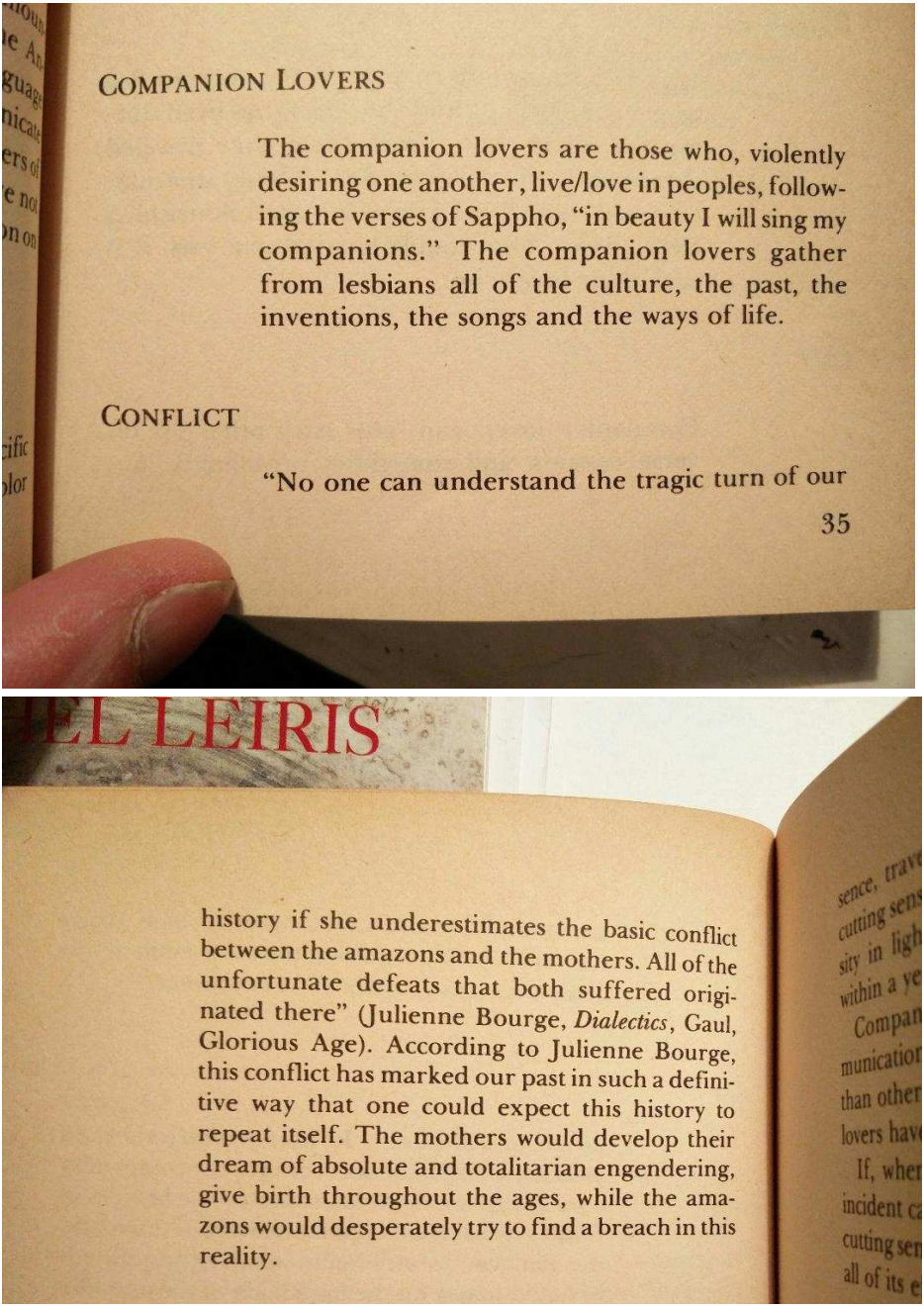
81 Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig, 'Age', *Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary*, London: Virago, (1976), 1980, p.1.
82 'Damophyla', and 'Dictionary', in *Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary,* p.39 and p.43.
83 Georges Bataille, 'Kali', *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, pp.54-55. 'Alphabet', Ibid., p.4.



COMPANION LOVERS

The companion lovers are those who, violently desiring one another, live/love in peoples, following the verses of Sappho, "in beauty I will sing my companions." The companion lovers gather from lesbians all of the culture, the past, the inventions, the songs and the ways of life.

CONFLICT

"No one can understand the tragic turn of our

35

EL LEIRIS

history if she underestimates the basic conflict between the amazons and the mothers. All of the unfortunate defeats that both suffered originated there" (Julienne Bourge, *Dialectics*, Gaul, Glorious Age). According to Julienne Bourge, this conflict has marked our past in such a definitive way that one could expect this history to repeat itself. The mothers would develop their dream of absolute and totalitarian engendering, give birth throughout the ages, while the amazons would desperately try to find a breach in this reality.

Image: 'Companion Lovers' and 'Conflict' in *Lesbian Peoples*

Fear Intrusive Speech

It seems those enemies feel especially weak at times when explosive language and acts riot in the streets not so much unheard as incomprehensible. The entangled violence of superstition, words and acts emerged as a site of ruling class fear early during the course of the 2011 UK riots:

> black and white, boy and girl operate in this language together, this language which is wholly false which is a Jamaican patois that's been [sic.] intruded in England which is why so many of us have this sense of literally a foreign country.[84]

'Wholly false', the enemy growls, visibly clawing at the air trying to conjur categories to pour unstable contents back into. Stating the axiom, from which both Becker-Ho and Wittig & Zeig lift off – 'In the enemy language it is necessary to lie.' – Sean Bonney, writing in the wake or midst of seven days of rioting, waves of media and judicial repression, turns this equation on its head:

> A while ago I started wondering about the possibility of a poetry that only the enemy could understand. We both know what that means. […] Don't pretend you know better. Remember, a poetry that only the enemy can understand. That's always assuming that we do, as they say, understand.[85]

84 David Starkey, 'Interview for Newsnight' from 12 August, 2011.
85 Sean Bonney, *Letters Against the Firmament*, (London, Enitharmon Press, 2015), p.8

Rather than a secret coded patois, a socially metabolic materialisation of counter-reality, Bonney proposes the fantasy of a poetry that would undo the enemy's capacities. I imagine this as a sort of oral-aural weapon, painful and disorientating forced into the ears and mouths of cops and judges. If language is integral to social synthesis and, as Bonney says, 'we have to derange that', then instead of the search for a language of full alterity, one which Becker-Ho describes as both lost and preserved but deactivated in contemporary slang, what remains is the prospect of a crafted or patterned, destructive occupation of our enemies' language.[86] The lost unity of language and life, which so many avant-garde movements tried to reconstruct or simply smash their way through alienation towards, continues to motivate parties either side of the barricades, nonetheless, if the twentieth century failed to overcome separation, it is perhaps in the direction of asymmetrical negation that we might best direct ourselves. There, as a provocation to the lacunary, the philosophical glossary as a system of stoppages and blocked routes to automatic thinking continues to provoke disquiet and thought.

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86 Ibid., p.141.

Walter Benjamin consulting the *Grand Dictionnaire universel du dix-neuvième siècle* at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, 1937. Photo by Gisèle Freund. Copyright © Gisèle Freund / Agence Nina Beskow.

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