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OLEH KOLIADA'S PROJECT

CONTEMPORARY

ENGLISH DRAMA

#2

MARTIN
BLADH

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	6
PART I: Interview with Martin Bladh	8
Interviewed by Oleh Koliada	8
Interviewed by the post-grad students	18
PART II: Agenda, Action, Analysis of Bladh's Art	30
Marty Page (2018)	32
The Torture of the 100 Pieces – a work in progress	44
On The New Revelations of Being (2018)	53
The Island of Death (2012 / 2014)	67
DES – I'll be the Mirror, Performance (2013)	79
Mark. 9: 43-49 (2010)	100
The Death of Narcissus / The Death of Narcissus 2 /	
The Death of Narcissus 3 (2007)	107
Three Studies for a Crucifixion (2007)	127
Porn Pigs (2005) / The Rorschach Text (2014)	147
Sensation is Everything (2004)	167
PART III: The Theatre of Cruelty	173
PART IV: Antonin Artaud: Art and Life	182
PART V: Francis Bacon: The Crucifixions	191
PART VI: Hermann Nitsch: Orgies and Mysteries Theatre	200
ABOUT THE ARTIST MARTIN BLADH	208
REFERENCES	221
CONTACT DATA	234

FOREWORD

Swedish-born Martin Bladh is a contemporary multimedia artist who has resided for a decade in London, England and established himself as a unique proponent of the New Theatre of Cruelty adhering to the original Antonin Artaud's disrepute legacy. Hybridising genres of drama, poetry and fiction Bladh gravitates toward performance art, actionism in particular, with its main focus on stage performativity based on *Wiener Aktionismus* (Viennese Action Art movement) of the 1960s to purposely shock through self-torture actions. Solidly accompanied with music and photography Bladh's theatrical arsenal transcends the subject-matter traditionally tabooed by the mainstream, including the objectives of death, necrophilia, sadomasochism, pornography, narcissism, lustmord and monomania.

The 2nd issue of the "Contemporary" series traces Bladh's artistic genesis analysing his works throughout a 2004 – 2019 period to revisit the concepts of cruelty and violence as segments of the current underground art, a built-in element of the counter-culture superstructure. All the presented literary analyses are exclusively supported by the authorial photographs and collages, both disturbing and fascinating, therefore 21+ readers' discretion is advised: nudity and acts of torture are graphically reproduced without condescension or censorship as homage to the artist's intentions.

The edition also includes the recent interview with Bladh as well as a substantial cross-cultural entry on his genre fundamentals: the Theatre of Cruelty retrospective and three influential artists, Antonin Artaud, Francis Bacon, and Hermann Nitsch, the artist finds relevant to his method.

O. V. Koliada, July 2019



Martin Bladh
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PART I: INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN BLADH

Interviewed by Oleh Koliada

(30/04/2019 – 19/06/2019)

1. Do you think theatre is capable of reforming society and bring about substantial changes at large?

I don't care. I don't have any vision of a better-reformed society. What I do I do for myself out of necessity, even if I enjoy a certain kind of communication with my audience.

2. Can you be identified as a contemporary representative of the Theatre of Cruelty? If so would you consider this type of dramatic art flexible enough to evolve or you basically deal with the original surrealist form introduced by Antonin Artaud in the 1st half of the 20th c.?

I can identify myself as a representative of 'cruelty' in an Artaudian sense – pretty much everything I do is centred around the concept of cruelty – but I don't see myself as a man of the theatre and have no real interest in contemporary stagecraft. I still see Artaud's project as pretty much unrealised or misused by most artists that claim him as their inspiration. I've very little or nothing in common with people such as Jerzy Grotowski^[1], Peter Brooke^[2] or Patti Smith^[3].

3. Why do you think radicalisation of the artistic means of expression is a norm today, taking into account a huge reaction towards Artaud's performances back then and him being ostracised because the genteel theatre public did not

tolerate such *modus operandi*?

No one really cared about Artaud's work during his lifetime. His ideas were unrealised, and today he's usually dropped as a footnote in books about modern drama, the theatre of the absurd, performance art, or as a case study of outsider art. To me, it seems like art is becoming more politically concerned and 'safer', and so, it moves further away from cruelty. The credo is originality for the sake of originality even if there is nothing to be expressed or no experience to be had.

4. *The Theatre and its Double* as the *First Manifesto* of the Theatre of Cruelty, published on February 1938, outlines its core poetics in the form of textual sacrilege focusing on other inter/intra-theatrical means to introduce a new alphabet of signs through a renewed exorcism of language. Which aspects of the manifesto do you find effective then and valid today?

I believe *The Theatre and the Plague* is the most inspiring text in *The Theatre and its Double*. It sets the standard for the grandiose possibilities/impossibilities of Artaud's vision and how far he was prepared to take it. It stands out as one of the cruellest texts on the arts written in the 20th century. There are no limits or safety wires attached to it, no safety zones or trigger warnings. Speaking of the First Manifesto I would like to quote this short passage, it speaks for itself: "*The theatre will never find itself again except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior.*" Artaud's text is timeless, it was effective then, now, and as a publisher of his work, I'll see to it that his legacy will prevail.

5. How would you interpret a symbolic title of the Theatre of Cruelty Manifesto? Why do you think it is still not

fully attainable and to some extent remains a theoretical virtuality rather than practical reality?

No one dares to read Artaud's literally. To realise his work according to its full potential would be criminal as it might involve people being hurt, or at least gravely 'offended', and it would be extremely hard to get the financial funding to execute it today. It's better suited for the eccentric 'mecenates' (edit.: patrons) of ancient Rome or the Middle Ages. Emperor Heliogabalus springs to mind.

6. Is your theatricality completely irrational to reach individual emotions and intuitions or it has a very precise rationalised attitude to make first think and then feel?

I want the nervous system to be aroused, the time for thoughts and contemplation will follow afterward. Experience and lasting impression are what is most relevant.

7. Freudian idea of the subconscious region that liberates the human psyche of the suppressed anti-productive negativity should balance your art and social obligations since you have worked at the London Museum of S. Freud and, on the one hand, can to some extent academically revisit provocative features of the theatre, can you? On the other, does it defy the initial Artaud's idea of his theatre that rejected a common language as suitable means of communicating anything?

I find some of Freud's concepts very intriguing and poetical. I love the concept of the lust principle locked in constant war with the death drive, the uncanny – the aesthetics of anxiety, sublimation, etc. I guess Freud's ideas change you, even unconsciously once you've been exposed to them, they've infiltrated the whole western world of thinking, both for the better and the worse. I've found his symbolic language useful to work with, and to be fair, he is the greatest 'myth-maker' of the 20th century. There are similarities between the universal hieroglyphs Artaud was

looking for and the Freudian symbolism of the unconscious, but I haven't given it that much thought.

8. How important is a myth, mythopoetic (myth-making) to you regarding a huge ritualisation of the Theatre of Cruelty stage directions?

I use mythological and religious themes frequently. Greek and Christian myths and symbols have always fascinated me. I'm not a spiritual person at all, but these motives are so symbolically charged and are so deeply embedded within our culture, that they have proven to be excellent source material for an interesting mise en scene. Although, I believe that I've (at least in some way) been able to create a mythological system of my own. My pantheon, a perverted mixture of personal gods, heroes, and leitmotifs.

9. Can you in any way relate the Double and the Doppelgänger?

Yes, I found the idea of the Doppelgänger to be useful. Probably not in the 19th century romantic sense of the word, but as a vessel for sadomasochistic fantasies and extreme role-play. I believe I took this concept to the extreme in works such as *Marty Page* and *DES*. In the former, I tried to engage an idealised, younger version of myself into a sadomasochistic love/hate relationship – to be victim and executioner, one and the same – and to see where that might lead. In the latter, I set out to use the serial killer Dennis Nilsen as my double and submerge myself into his fantasy world of death. Nilsen was to be my dark looking glass reflection; I would let the killer himself use me as a medium for his voice; the body of my work.

10. Reversibly life is the double of theatre (like theatre is the double of life). Arthur Miller once observed that acting was imminent and unavoidable once a person walked out into society, ruled by the performance arts, by verbal acting. Do you agree that human life is a theatrical performance?

To a certain degree, yes. I need to playact daily in my nine-to-five job, something I've always felt to be draining and humiliating. If people found out what I really think about them and their 'needs', nobody would ever employ me again

11. In the most famous Macbeth's soliloquy life is compared to a walking shadow and a poor player, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury. Do you find Shakespeare cruel?

Shakespeare has had an indirect influence on my work for sure: that all violence should be acted out on the stage and not behind the curtain as in the classical drama. But to me, his use of cruelty manifest itself most profoundly in the language – it tends to stick with you, just as the word phrasings of great Greek tragedy authors did. I know that some contemporary directors have been going to great lengths to bring out the bloodshed of the Elizabethan dramas on stage, whether they have succeeded, I couldn't say.

12. What is your definition of the extraordinary, especially when it is relevant to the Theatre of Cruelty that reflects it?

I don't particularly enjoy performing and I'm seldom aroused by aesthetic experiences. There's just an obstinate will to endure, and there's nothing extraordinary about it. I usually like to watch the reproduction of the work if it came out satisfactorily. Hopefully, there is still a piece out there that can blow me away someday.

13. Entering a hypothetical realm of metaphysics, dealt with eternal universalities, is it possible you explain a higher (hyper?) form of reality Artaud strove for?

I believe some universalities are profound to the human species, or a human condition, such as the urgency of pain, the constant relation to and fear of death, the strife for immortality, etc. I'm quite convinced that a successful

work of art lies somewhere between what is deeply personal and traditional, a kind of concentration where my own pathological and aesthetic obsessions blend together in perfect unity. My own body is always the origin of the work, but I'm still able to communicate with an audience due to its recognisable expressive powers. I don't believe performance should be mundane, relaxed, or 'natural', it demands a dramatic heightening, or numbing of the senses, and whether this may tear away some veils to disclose some 'higher kind' of reality I do not care as long as the experience is there.

14. Do you think that only a tragedy is capable of catharsis deliverance?

I'm not really concerned with the concept of catharsis anymore. My work has become a deadlock without any final purgation and the stakes increase with time. What's left is an itch, a nagging desire for the impossible. I would rather say that tragedy is the only means to deliver beauty.

15. If one of the postulates of the Theatre of Cruelty reduced a text as an authorial root source to formality, then improvisation took its leading part and it primarily dealt with interpretation of the original text. How important is an author in the Theatre of Cruelty?

The concept and the backstory are always of great importance to me, but I don't hold anything sacred, and if I base my work on an outer source, I dabble with the source material as much as I like. Everything I do is related to a specific text or a patchwork of fragments that form a condensation that is uniquely my own.

16. Which form of interaction do you find more effective on the stage: monologue or dialogue?

The monologue. My performances seldom involve other actors and if a text is being read it's because of its poetic qualities to bring another nuance to the piece.

17. A non-verbal approach in the Theatre of Cruelty seems to be an exaggeration, or at least it views language as a handicap, does it?

No, I don't see it as a handicap. Language – if it's understood by the audience of course – has the power to increase the theatrical experience. Here I do disagree with Artaud.

18. How much do you consider physiognomy and body plasticity when it comes to a stage production?

Well, I work with what I have, my body that is. The scripts are written to suit its capacity and limitations. There are no standards or 'ideals' to live up to and I don't do any specific exercises before a performance, but I like to leave the stage in a state of total exhaustion.

19. What would you prefer: movement or immobility?

It depends on the context. Although my later pieces have tended to be more static and centred around my own body.

20. Don't you think that Theatre is on the stage and Cruelty is in the minds of the audience?

No, I like to see myself as an agent of cruelty working from the stage and the audience is my target.

21. What kind of relationship between an actor and the audience do you find the most adequate and significant? Do you agree that the Theatre of Cruelty plays were meant to be staged in chamber parlours for the elitist privileged or maybe those were closet plays (not meant to be staged at all)?

When I was younger, I loved the response my work would trigger, whether it was positive or negative, bliss or disgust it didn't matter, but I found myself caring less and less about it. I believe that a certain kind of communication with my audience is of importance – even if it's only to serve my

narcissism – but I don't have it in mind when I write, and I don't care who it is. I've always been thrilled by impossible dramas, performance pieces that technically 'could' be realised, but will never be because of the devastating effect it would have on the actors and the audience alike.

22. Jerzy Grotowski, while talking on the *Theatre of the Poor & Oppressed* and in a way having polemics with Artaud outlined an interesting method of elimination, when a director eliminates a play of conventional décor leaving something very elemental, raw and yet vital on the stage: an actor. Is it in any way applicable to you? In this respect don't you find it ironic in Samuel Beckett's *Catastrophe* play where an actor turned into a sculpture on the pedestal? Interestingly, the ancient Greeks in their classical period wanted to breathe in life into monuments whereas today we wish exactly the opposite.

My theatre is pretty much a one-man drama. I like to use a sparse but effective decor: the backdrop of the film, my microphones, some simple tools, and props are all there is. Sometimes the simplest way is the most effective one, but I'm still seduced by the prospect of doing something more grandiose, even baroque if I ever receive the funding and opportunity.

23. How do you use the stage space? Do you follow Artaud's idea of the mobility of the audience and the performance takes place alongside the whole perimeter, which is a multi-dimensional experience?

It all depends on the venue, the gallery or the club, in which I perform. I don't really care that much about the audience as long as they don't interfere with my performance and that everything that happens on stage is visible and audible.

24. Since the Theatre of Cruelty audience is literally trapped, which forms of artistic influence do you find

particularly violent in their regard?

The idea of locking the doors to the venue and not letting anyone out of the room until the performance is over is intriguing. The sense of claustrophobia might exalt nervousness and feelings of terror. Unfortunately, it's hard to realise this kind of event in this day and age with all its safety zones and trigger warnings. Loud blocks of sounds in combination with silence, a certain kind of flashing imagery, and acts of mutilation tend to be effective. The sense of smell is also of importance; I've been burning human hair and burst animal intestines in some of my performances to invoke feelings of death and atrocity. I guess this might be perceived as sadism, which it also is to a certain extent, but I still believe that I'm the one who suffers the most.

25. Dwell on the sound effects you use in your production. What proportion is there between voice, noise, and silence?

Dynamics are important, the shift between extremely loud passages and complete silence, and the combinations of high and low frequencies. Basically, it's all about the content of the text (if there is one) which works like a film manuscript; if reciting a monologue, it's of great importance that this part is audible and that the chosen sounds will not drown it. This might sound like a complete contradiction to how I used my voice in the post-industrial band IRM where the lyrics, at least when performed live, were pretty much unintelligible.

26. Do you utilise any stage props or other conventions? If those are totally obsolete to you, what do you rely on to have a message get across?

Yes, I've used lots of different props and tools over the years like mirrors, small rows of footlights, a director's chair, mattresses and bed clothes, polaroid cameras, plastic tubes, animal intestines, human hair, blood, jockstraps, jumpsuits, plastic pig masks, talcum powder, black shoe polish, scalpels, and razor blades. Some I've given up on and some have stayed with me.

27. What is the totality of the Theatre of Cruelty?

An attack on all the five senses which encompasses both my own experience and that of the audience in its totality.

28. Opposite to Bertolt Brecht and his *Epic Theatre*, where any initiative on the actor's behalf was unacceptable, do you find it encouragingly liberating to allow an actor live on the stage through direct self-expression?

No, everything must be rigorously planned in advance. There is no space for improvisation, my work is constructed around a rigorous, often monotonous and sometimes primitive system.

29. Do you agree that even Theatre of Cruelty is subject to stereotyping?

To a degree yes, the term is dropped all too often as a footnote in the entertainment industry, in articles and books on the cinema, theatre, and other performing arts to a degree that it doesn't seem to bear any relevance anymore. *The Walking Dead* series is a descendant of cruelty!? Very few artists deserve to be considered agents of the Theatre of Cruelty, at least in an Artaudian sense.

30. What is the greatest challenge one encounters submitting to the Theatre of Cruelty?

I speak for myself and my work only. When walking down the path of cruelty it is hard to know when you have pushed yourself too far and when you might enter into genuinely dangerous territories. Death by art is indeed a seductive concept, to be honest, it's an obsession of mine. I've no idea where my work might lead me and how it will end.

Interviewed by the post-grad students

*who took part in the project (a 2018/2019 academic year, the
Institute of Foreign Philology, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State
University)*

(19/06/2019 – 28/09/2019)

31. Artaud in his work *The Theatre and its Double* states that the Theatre of Cruelty is not metaphorical, albeit then he claims gesture is a kind of a metaphor. Is there some sort of contradiction? The origins of Actionism (which views the human body as a metaphor) is the Theatre of Cruelty. Ergo, may one say that the Theatre of Cruelty is metaphorical to some extent?

First of all, I do not use *The Theatre and its Double* as a rule book. I am just an artist inspired by the work of Antonin Artaud and a publisher of his work. I would not even use the term The Theatre of Cruelty to categorise my work, even if I did use the name The New Theatre of Cruelty as a means to separate my input from Bo. I. Cavefors' project Theatre Decadence, as part of a collaboration we did together back in 2008. Artaud was seeking out a psychical, magical body language – “a metaphysics of speech, gesture, and expression” – an artistic condensation that would bring the theatre back to its violent, magical relation to reality and danger. When Artaud wrote the book he did not know how to realise his ideas practically, but I do not believe the text should be read in a metaphorical sense (like Grotowski did). I am quite sure that Artaud could see his vision, in all its complexity, being fully materialised on a stage, even if it was a work for the future.

32. Do you see the body language as a kind of universal language, easy perceivable by others, paying attention that in different cultures some gestures have diametrically

opposite meanings?

Yes, I believe some gestures or actions might be perceived as universal (e.g. the shedding of blood). My work is foremost grounded in the European tradition which is my heritage. In 2008 I stopped writing and recording in my native Swedish language and swapped it for English; the sole reason is to reach out to a broader audience as most of my followers lived on the European continent or in North America. So, there is a wish to communicate and be understood employing a broader (if not universal) use of language, but I have not paid specific attention to how my body movements might be interpreted in different parts of the world.

33. Your art is surely being interpreted by many people. Do you think there can be wrong interpretations of an art piece, or every interpretation is correct and every person can see the art as they will?

Well, it happens that I hear lazy and clueless responses from people who have not interacted with the work properly; some of my pieces need a basic knowledge about their specific leitmotifs, and if you do not know anything about the concept there might be confusion. I try not to care about and I do not try to defend my art against 'wrong' interpretations. Then, it also happens that someone might point towards parallels and qualities which I have not thought about myself that can prove to be inspiring in the end.

34. What do you think about the mass culture's present fascination with the image of a serial killer, the relationship between the torturer and the victim? What do you think about the current exploiting of this imagery in popular TV shows, movies, and pop literature? You asked Dennis Nilsen about this topic and now it would be great to hear your point of view.

I enjoy it to a certain degree. The serial killer has become somewhat of an antihero in our society as he has broken the most profound taboo on several occasions. Mankind has

always been and will always be fascinated by killers, and the pathological, 'motiveless' serial killer – just as the compulsive artist – is even more fascinating as he often cannot stop his obsession whatever the costs and consequences might be. The recent media interest in Edmund Kemper^[4], Ted Bundy^[5], and Charles Manson^[6] (although not a serial killer, constantly referred to as one) is a proof of that. They are icons of evil, black diamonds, and their modus operandi sometimes shares similarities with the artist's aesthetic expression. It also fascinates me how a victim can reach a certain celebrity status (even being sanctified) by being murdered by the serial killer.

35. Can there be a limit to an artistic expression and its means?

No, I do not believe so. At least that is what I choose to believe. Some critics say that the Japanese author Yukio Mishima's ritualistic suicide was a mere fit of madness, or a naive and badly planned coup d'état, when in fact it was a rigorously planned work of performance art and the culmination of his whole lifework. No, there are no limits to artistic expression or its means.

36. Can we call anything art or there are certain requirements, limitations, or directions to be followed by a person for their work to be called art? Can we call anybody who expresses themselves somehow an artist?

If you have the right platform, CV, or gallery behind you, yes, you can call anything art. I pretty much despise most of the established art world and their representatives and I don't care what the current trend or political agenda is. This whole debate tends to be very tiresome and silly. Then you have talented artists without any established platform who manage to build up a following by themselves over the years because their work is truly genuine. To me, there are three kinds of art, good, bad and mediocre, but that is, of course, my personal opinion and my judgment on this matter is ruthless.

37. One of the characters of Mark Ravenhill's in-*yer-face* play *Faust* intellectualizes self-mutilation as an 'initiation rite' and also 'a moment of control', only to receive a pretty mock-heroic response "Either that or he's a loser who cuts himself". In other words, the latter is sceptical and highly critical of the mutilation trend in performance art. "People who are powerless find the only thing they can control is their bodies", Ravenhill mentions. Have you ever thought about or encountered such scepticism on the chic fascination of people cutting themselves just to gain hype or notoriety?

I never practice self-mutilation outside the context of my work. I was never a 'cutter' during my adolescence, even though I was involved in some extreme Black Metal circles where this practice was sometimes the norm. The act itself needs to be a heightening of the senses that takes me out of my everyday experience and not some kind of personal angst dampener. I do not do what I do to feel good or to get an endorphin rush, my performances are rare in numbers, so if that was the reason the result would prove to be very unsatisfying. There is, of course, a certain kind of will to power, to endure, which is linked to a strong physical sensation, but it's a mere byproduct. Anyway, I do not do it for the sake of provocation. If I did, I would have chosen a completely different topic and method, probably something involving some urgent political hotbed. The hurting fills an aesthetic need and it is one component of a bigger whole that involves language, sound, and moving images. To answer your question: yes, I have been accused by some lazy critics as "being a loser who cuts himself". But I can assure you that there is no "hype or notoriety" to gain from works like this.

38. Can you give your definition of "art" and "real artist"?

To make art is an impossible strife for immortality, to leave a mark, no matter how insignificant or futile the result might be. I am most intrigued by the 'pathological artist'. Someone who expresses himself artistically out of necessity, who does not care about the established art world, market,

trends or political agenda. Names like Henry Darger^[7] and David Nebreda^[8] immediately spring to mind. There must, of course, be some kind of talent or will to deepen the game and explore the obsession further; I would not call a mental patient who draws the same naive drawing compulsively year after year an artist.

39. Why have you chosen collage as a better outlet for your ideas rather than drawing or painting?

Some twenty years ago I wanted to be a painter – depicting the human body in extremis – but the result was far from satisfying and I never had the patience to master the craft. I do draw and the result often ends up as parts of my collages or other mixed media pieces. I like condensation and the collage is the perfect medium to manifest several ideas and leitmotifs in one (or a series) of explosive and violent image(s); I can literally get all my obsessions compressed within the parameters of the frame. Then, I cannot deny that there is a certain, physical sensation involved in cutting up or ripping images apart and then gluing them back together as unique, distorted and maimed bodies.

40. Have you thought about expanding the means of expression in your art and trying something new?

I have recently turned more towards experimental prose writing, and I discovered that I enjoy working with fiction. I used to believe that I was cutting myself out of the work if I did not stick to my usual autobiographical wanderings (e.g. *DES*, *The Rorschach Text* and *Marty Page*). Instead, works like *The Hurtin' Club* and the yet to be published novella *Braquemard – The Clavicle of Gilles de Rais*, helped me to dig deeper into new (and old) territories and bring up images I had not come across before. I have also started to do readings accompanied by slideshows, which has proven to be an easy but adequate way to perform a text for an audience. At the moment I am working on an installation video based on E. T. A. Hoffmann's short story *Der Sandmann*^[9] for the Freud

Museum's *The Uncanny: a Centenary* exhibition in London together with Karolina Urbaniak. There are of course many other things that I would like to do if I had the finances; writing and directing a full-length feature film would be one example.

41. When during the performances you put yourself into different roles of victim or abuser to get the sensations, don't you feel any destructive impact of it on your psyche or personality? What role brings more satisfying sensations to you?

I have a keen interest in the tension between the victim and the perpetrator; both parts are of equal importance to me and I could not side with the former or the latter. My aesthetic criteria determine that a work of art is ineffective if it cannot seduce and at the same time to put me into a state of discomfort. Does it have a destructive impact on my psyche or personality? I would not know, there are always risks involved in these kind of practices and I have gradually become numb to aesthetic sensation, so the stakes increase with time.

42. Can you agree with a notion that text is a tyrant over the meaning? Do you believe that some things can only be explained by performance and physical expression rather than described by words or you insist that language can express absolutely everything?

In my work, the text is one component in the bigger amalgam which includes sound, moving prerecorded images, and physical expressions; it all blends together into a total work of art, the Gesamtkunstwerk.¹

43. In the Theatre of Cruelty the term "cruelty" does not mean the act of physical violence, though in your performances one can observe the acts of cruelty in its

¹ Gesamtkunstwerk is total art work; an artistic creation, that synthesises the elements of music, drama, spectacle, dance, etc.

physical form. Do you accept the notion of Cruelty as stated by Artaud or you have your specific understanding and definition of cruelty?

Artaud envisioned a cosmic cruelty which had no necessary need for physical violence and bodily laceration. He speaks about living metaphysical forces of poetry that have the power to stage real-life crime much more terrible than how the actual deed was committed. According to him all life, creation, and transformation is cruel: "cruelty signifies rigour, implacable intention and decision, irreversible and absolute determination". But he never dismissed physical violence as a part of his theatre: "a little real blood will be needed, right away, to manifest this cruelty". During the writing of *The Theatre and its Double*, he was looking for hieroglyphs and signs to manifest a universal alphabet of cruelty. I can accept plenty of Artaud's notions of rigour and cruelty, but he was also occupied with magical (delusional) forces which had an active influence on his life, his vision of the world, and his own personal notion of cruelty. I am not searching for any universal truths or hieroglyphs, I follow my aesthetic vision which is centred around personal obsessions, which I, through lack of a better word address as cruel, both on a physical and intellectual level. I do not need manifestos or rule books, nor do I feel the need to engage in or engage other people in any avant-garde movement.

44. Do you often reflect upon the reaction of the audience to your performances? Is it a necessary part of your creative process or you just concentrate on your sensations?

To a certain degree, yes. Every artist needs an audience even if it is an imaginary one. Having said that, I am more concerned about my effort and whether it is matching up to my expectations. There are so many things that can go wrong when you are working within the context of multimedia and it is hard not to focus on all the failed and negative aspects of the performance such as missed cues,

inadequate screening facilities, or bad sound systems. With all this in mind, it is sometimes hard to read the audience reactions until you leave the stage. But I do enjoy strong reactions from the audience, either good or bad.

45. Can you recollect any cases when the audience reacted inadequately or somebody tried to disrupt your performance?

Not really. There was one incident when the actual organiser cut the power. I believe it had more to do with the strained schedule of the evening than the content of my performance; anyway, it was one of my most intense performances to date and the ignorant stupidity of the management infuriated me nonetheless.

46. In one of your interviews (by Peter Sotos^[10]) you said: "Just as with Bacon, sensation is the central key to what I'm doing, but compared to him I'm far too eclectic and there's a long way to go before I reach such a genuine and personal way of expression." After more than a decade do you feel that you have come closer to that very genuine and personal way of expression?

Yes, I think so. I do not look to other artists for inspiration anymore. I do not try to follow a tradition or carry on a historical art legacy like my younger-self did. I am of course aware that some of my heroes' influences are deeply cemented in my artistic expression, but I never go back to look at their work for 'guidelines' before starting a new project. I usually get most of my ideas when I am watching movies and drink wine late in the evenings. Then there are times when I have been invited to participate in projects related to specific artists and their work; the multimedia piece *On The New Revelations of Being* performed at the Artaud & Sound event (2018) and the video work *Sandmann* (based on Hoffmann's short story and Freud's essay *Das Unheimliche*) for the Freud Museum's *Uncanny* exhibition, both being collaborations with Karolina Urbaniak, are

examples. Lots of things have happened since I had that correspondence with Peter Sotos back in 2006. My work has become much more autobiographical and self-indulgent. In many ways, I think that I have invented a 'Bladhian' mythology, the concepts and leitmotifs of which I am bound to revisit all too often.

47. Is there any link between your performances and psychodrama (the therapy method) in terms of getting the insight into your inner self and solving some personal issues?

I believe that is an accurate way of describing my initial experiences when I started to perform around 2002-2004. I used to be plagued by inhibitions, which were deeply rooted in my hypochondriac childhood and neurotic adolescent years, and putting myself through these extreme situations helped me to exorcise them. But it was foremost an aesthetic urge that I needed to fulfill. This kind of violent expression was the ONE superior way of making art: the Vienna Actionists, Paul McCarthy^[11], Chris Burden^[12], David Nebreda and (early) Marina Abramovic^[13] consumed most of my spare time, and I yearned to do work which was as powerful and challenging as theirs. To a certain degree, I even mistrusted originality – the legacy of art had already been laid down and most attempts of the new avant-garde were whorings for the galleries. Over the years I have lost a great deal of interest in the canonised body arts. I do not believe that my work holds any therapeutic qualities anymore, it is not about catharsis (at least not on a conscious level), it is all about obsessions, and I just keep doing what I do, whatever the cost or outcome.

48. Getting back to the ancient period, plays were accompanied by choirs. From your point of view, can this tradition be successfully resurrected in contemporary theatre, or used as a part of Actions?

If the choirs are used within the right context of the play (piece, action, performance, etc.), I guess they could.

49. The Actions usually take place behind closed doors. Do you think that some of them can be performed in the open air for the sake of setting changes? For instance, on the streets, as it goes for several closed festivals like BDSM festival in New York. Can such changes positively improve Action's experience for the audience and the actors?

As I don't like spontaneous interactions with the audience or any other kind of improvisation for that matter, I am quite happy to perform behind closed doors where I have more control of the performance's outcome.

50. Current society's morality together with countries' policy or at least the morality of some communities is a huge obstacle for performing Actions, freely sharing materials from them etc. Do you believe that some kind of adequate opposition should be formed? If so, what exactly should be done?

I am not concerned with politics. I believe that when an artist gets demonised or suppressed by society he either increases in strength or he choses to shut up, and if he chooses the latter he was not serious about what he was doing in the first place, and the world will get rid of yet another mediocre sham artist. Do not get me wrong, I do not believe in any kind of censorship and I believe that all information should be free, but oppression tends to strengthen the 'pure' artist who will continue to do whatever he does even if he breaks the law. If my work is ever considered acceptable according to the tastes of a great majority of people, then I would know for sure that I have lost it somehow. This might sound like the words of a privileged western white man but it is my opinion nonetheless.

51. What multimedia's synthesis within the Actions do you find to be the most striking, valid and relevant?

I want to aggravate all the human senses; each component is of equal importance when they blend in symbiosis: the total artwork.

52. Can the Actions be generalized as well as the whole Actionism movement into some basic scenario "patterns"?

My performances are carefully planned in advance and I write annotated scores for them which I learn by heart before entering the stage. I have no interest whatsoever in the 'poetry of everyday life', like some of the artists of the Fluxus movement who found artistic qualities in drinking a cup of coffee or vacuum cleaning an apartment.

53. You have already mentioned in one of your interviews that you have performed some of your Actions so many times, that all your moves and acting have become automatic. Nevertheless, do you find them to be chaotic and full of improvisations?

I believe that particular statement concerned me performing live with my post-industrial band IRM, which is much different than my individual performance pieces. When I was the frontman of this band my 'moves' came out spontaneously (sometimes in response to the amount of alcohol consumed) and I never rehearsed or practised anything in advance. This is not the case with my 'Martin Bladh' pieces, where there is no place for any kind of improvisation.

54. Stoic practices lived up till nowadays and still considered as a worthy philosophy to follow. Do you think that your Actions can serve as a contributor for forming a stoic individual?

I can understand why people who are interested in and share stoic or nihilistic life views might be attracted to my work. I prefer to refer to myself as a romantic nihilist: I believe in my art, its futility and impossibility, and I will stand by it to the end.

55. Do you agree that most of the modern people don't witness any cruel and terrible things regularly whereas violence is a part of human nature, and the lack of such an

experience should be fulfilled? Can Actions serve as some sort of “therapy”, or at least aiming at that?

I think there is some truth in that; a point which Hermann Nitsch has been arguing for since the late 50s. In the modern Occident most people have never witnessed an animal being slaughtered nor have they seen a dead person if not at a funeral wake. These things were everyday experiences for people some generations ago; we do not have to go further back than 150 years to experience eagerly attended public executions on the town squares all over Europe. Instead, death and violence have moved into the world of fiction through media such as film, television, and computer games. Even if we can access graphic material of atrocities being perpetrated by terrorist groups on the internet, the experience gets desensitised. Some people have an extreme pathological need to indulge in cruel violent acts of abreaction while others need it to a lesser extent, and then we have the extreme opposite of the spectrum with individuals that have become so removed from the taboo that they do not even have the nerve to sit through a violent feature film without fainting. This is not a concern of mine though, as I am neither a therapist or a shaman.

PART II: AGENDA, ACTION, ANALYSIS OF BLADH'S ART

Choice of words: carefully selected, concrete, precise, tone-focused, bias-free, taboo-free.

Choice of sentence structure: simple sentences, stylistically refined to the level of stage directions, simple grammar, standard punctuation.

The writer's voice:

tone (writer's attitude toward a subject): matter-of-fact, unemotional, authoritative;

narrator/point of view: auto-perspective (1st and 3rd person narrators), fetishist, split, paranoid;

narrative mode (writer's methods to tell a story): third-person narrative, unengaged, morbid; present narrative tense; processed mechanical narrative voice, aloof;

authorial personality: omniscient, ever-present.

Narrative environment/photography ('stories told in correspondingly designed space'): pedantically crafted locales, chosen meta-textual literary extracts or factual memories, restored crime scenes, highly-detailed photos, nude photos, exhibitionist photos, mirrors; reenactment of crimes; cross-cultural corresponding between reality and art; non-linear perspective; post-mortem aesthetics.

Artistic principle: **agere contra.**

Style: there is a suggestion that some 3000 words are necessary to establish $\frac{3}{4}$ of everyday communication, so Bladh is definitely minimalist in self-expression: his language is formal, economic and restrained, devoid of a true dramatic effect, artificial at times, apathetic and frigid, all aimed at numbing spectator's consciousness through slow-paced, unconcerned

and stomach-churning objective depersonalisation. The author primarily cleanses the perception of the audience once a director shouts "Action!". Such emotional monochrome, linguistic neutrality is counter-parted with spastic, sudden, instinct-derived and overwhelming toxicity of a real performance to evoke an uncommon feeling of singularity, defencelessness, exposure, trauma on the audience behalf. Through mind-nauseating and sense-debilitating self-torture Bladh, in fact, revives a true, natural, reactionary response, a counter-action, when it is impossible to remain unmoved: the artist gives his larger than life performance for the viewers fidgeting at the edge of their seats since it is not clear how the action resolves. Textual amorphousness versus actual suspense, subzero diction versus hot-livered manifestation, museum still-life versus Circus Maximus theatricality characterise Bladh's style.

Subject of study/object of obsession: the artist himself (Bladh)/a body, a dead body, death.

Ultimate objective: scarification, body modification (either aesthetic or a rite of passage), self-identity.

Type: from a dramaturgical point of view Bladh's art is a multimedia **figurative cruelty performance** with a particular attention to the postures of an artist on the stage and **actionist documentary** and **photorealism** focused on actuality without words, a performative type of a 'raw footage' or even rarely meant to be staged, rather a closet play, aimed at showing certain subjective experience, essentially re-creationist in form and highly disturbing in procedure. It is a monodrama behind a fallen curtain, so that audience peep into to get voyeuristic pleasure or pain.

Dramatic genre: the **New Theatre of Cruelty**, the **Theatre of Mind**.

Marty Page (2018)

Agenda (*original text is copyrighted and unavailable to be reproduced in full*).¹

All quotations taken from **Bladh, Martin. Marty Page. Amphetamine Sulphate, 2018.**

Action & Analysis:²

Thomas De Quincey's^[14] epigraph on nature of duplication, doppelganger and jealousy forewords one of recent Bladh's multimedia projects *Marty Page*: "*Any of us would be jealous of his own duplicate... who went about personating me, copying me, and pirating me, philosopher as I am.*" De Quincey seems to be a natural choice for the author to quote, since the former known for his libertine ideas on murder as one of fine arts aesthetically conceived and satirically executed, transcending morally ossified concepts into the regions of pure imagination of the Romantic period, now revisited to reinforce the dubious fascination about homicide.

The protagonist of the performance, Marty Page, seems to be average when it comes to his exterior, and special pointing out his favourites in arts: a typical Caucasian male profile is non-typified by his occupation, a muse, and his artistic inspirations drawn from Yukio Mishima,^[15] Georg Trakl^[16] and Franz Schubert^[17] to name a few: "*Name: Marty Page / age: 23 years / hair colour: mouse-coloured / occupation: muse / outlook: aesthete / favourite book: Yukio Mishima's Confessions of a Mask / favourite poet: Georg Trakl.*" The script covers four days in the life of the character and presents a diary form in minute detail.

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2 © All texts' analyses in CONTEMPORARY Issue #2 are by O. V. Koliada.

Day 1 enters the spectator into a parlour where a certain ritual is carried out: someone takes polaroid pictures of a presumable tormented or inanimate double in disguise, naked, gagged, blindfold, in various positions focusing on precision of the body when snapshot: *"09:00 / naked / back to mattress / wrists tied together / ankles tied together / cloth in mouth / gagged / duct tape / covering eyes and ears / polaroid."* Later the executioner uses an attribute 'Wound Man' which best sums up the idea: *"... the late medieval depiction of the Wound Man: figure posed in S-shaped posture / face calm – stoic expression – eyes wide open / skin covered with bleeding cuts... stabbed."* The script reveals an ambivalent account of the consequences of harm induced, introducing a Beckettian director || actor relation (from his 1982 *Catastrophe* play), bleak, monotonous and minimal. The actor is dehumanised and turned into a flexible material to sculpt anything the director pursues. In the absurdist poetics, the actor is being purified through stripping down all the unnecessary that extracts him from the panorama. Bladh restrains from a pedestal model of a puppet that Samuel Beckett utilises and instead proceeds with disfiguration and mutilation of the Wound Man reenacting a dark age martyrdom juxtaposed to modern lynching to be stored in a series of polaroids. In other words, Bladh wishes to literally strip an actor down his flesh and bones to celebrate a sacrificial ceremony. A set of present polaroids is mixed with several past photographs: a forensically accurate study of the photos of famous lynch processes in China and the USA in the early 20th c. brings about a need for aesthetic reproduction, duplication, and mass serialisation of the horrific act of cruelty when cruelty itself turns *"into an act of mercy"*: *"The Lynching of Leo Frank, August 17, 1914, Georgia. Gelatin silver print. Lithographed postcard. Superimposed over the image: "The end of Leo Frank hung by a mob"... The execution of Wang Weiqin, Beijing, 1904."* Using the printed material as a medium Bladh links the temporal facts and non-temporal

art into an artifact to be thrilled by the spectator: a graphic content of the photo overshadows a moral aspect of the real crime: *"[The Lynching of Leo Frank] He is handcuffed, his legs tied at the ankles. A wound on his throat... has reopened. He is hung by a manila rope thrown over the branch of a tree, which forced his head backwards and broke his neck... Members of the mob and crowd can be seen... posing in front of the body... [The execution of Wang Weiqin] The executioner began the operation by slicing off pieces of flesh from the victim's chest... Wang's heart was then penetrated with a stab... proceeded methodically to sever the limbs, wrists and ankles... three dozen cuts were made."*

Day 2 states dream digressions: the tormented, Marty Page, is lifeless beside the tormentor, Martin, on the mattress; the double, Marty Page, is alive as a bystander in the crowd or tries to strangle Martin in the next scene: *"I find MP lifeless beside me... He is not breathing. I try to revive him, slapping his face, poking him with the scalpel, giving him mouth to mouth resuscitation.. He is still warm... I feel a deep sense of loss and despair... I rush upstairs, through the apartment and out on to the street... At the far end of the street I perceive a group of people standing in a semicircle... Before I break through I accidentally lay my hand on one of the bystanders. He turns around and I recognise the face of MP. I am filled with an enormous relief... MP appears in front of me. He wrestles me on the floor... while closing his hands around my neck."* A split personality concept that naturally merges a tormentor || tormented relation into one entity initiates a striking idea *"I hereby choose to believe that what I do will hurt both others as well as myself"*, when the spectator eventually witnesses deep paranoia of the character who is assumably writing open letters to oneself, a murderer victimising oneself: *"the creative necessity of cruelty"* in *"what we make the spectator to suffer we suffer tenfold"* based on Artaud's manifesto. Further examination of Rembrandt's *The Blinding of Samson* ^[18] canvas is correlated with the present-day psychotic self-

torture zooming in Buñuel's *An Andalusian Dog* ^[19] allusion of the eye-opening with a razor-blade: *"Samson's left eye is squeezed to implode in a grotesque grimace. The right arm and leg are raised in a spastic reflex, the toes bent in a convulsive act of pain... Delilah casts a fleeting, but excited gaze at her victim when she leaves the scene, the scalp in one hand, the pair of scissors in the other... 22:38 / reproduction: / right eye forced open / nervous reaction... / blade pushed into centre of eye... / blade into skull / clear liquid – un chien andalou / teeth clenching... / bleeding profusely... / eye rinsing / compressor / polaroid."* Therefore, Bladh uses actionist manifestation of the pictorial art, a correspondence between a famous origin and its infamous self-engagement, self-identification to make audience get impressed to express themselves, so the author becomes a medium to channel triggered sensations in a particular direction: an instinctive wish to close one's eyes and forced staring at a cruel scene with its 'merciful' relief through razor-slashing an eye not to see anything, cruelty including.

Day 3 repeats a check-up and time-out routine and introduces a draft suicide note by Marty Page to his double, Matin, yet aborted by a need of the latter taking his anatomical photos: *"Dearest Martin, / We will never give up our ideals [?!], and as so will hold reality in contempt. You promised me that if anything unworthy should befall us we would leave together."* In the ever-going introspective open letter now Martin addresses Marty specifying an important aspect of the tragedy: our body is the principal actor of the drama to be documented in- and off-stage practising, rehearsing acts of cruelty to eventually communicate the ultimate performance more effectively – death, more precisely suicide, *"As the principal actor of the drama our body is the projection screen upon which obsessions and fantasies, words and flesh, blend together into a Sisyphean patchwork of cruelty... some of the efforts, which were inflicted on stage, were documented in the aftermath of the actual performance. Thus the finished result might*

sometimes consist of the traces of our actions... The great pioneers had strict rules for how their performances should be documented and experienced by the spectators, and how a series of carefully selected photographic documentations should communicate with the viewer as a multifaceted, static panorama. We must never forget how the act can impact us more violently when we watch its reproduction afterwards." The way this self-sacrificial performance is described – rational, detached, casual yet insightful – leads to a supposition that a modern age of cruelty is still an age of reason with its rationalist basis, a lack of sentimentality and yet enlightenment of the true art. Bladh offers the spectators to use medicine instead of perfumes, scalpels, and compressors as instruments of the resurrection of the flesh to become fully operated in "an operation theatre": *"The 'operations' which are being executed have clear similarities to sacrificial rituals; the closed, sterile space could either be an operation theatre, as well as an altar of sacrifice... the Faustian bargain, the stroke of genius, and just before paresis sets in come lengthy episodes of creative euphoria, electrified excitement and joyous, creative energy, giving dazzling insights, and an almost mystical knowledge, with long periods of crystal clarity... complete loss of all previously held ethical values."* A body as an altar of sacrifice is exposed against the black glass surface is a triumphant grotesque. This section of the performance interacts dramatic with cinematic drawing from Bergman^[20] whose art is famous for all sorts of artists who fail trying to bridge the individual with the collective and desperately seek identity but find personae, the double: *"(I've always had the impression that the protagonist... in Bergman's The Hour of the Wolf is committing a symbolic suicide in the dreamlike scene with the boy on the cliff edge above the water. Out of pure frustration he tries to kill off an unwanted part of his own being (what Bergman refers to as a demon). But the outcome is anything but satisfying... The 'closet corpse' just won't disappear... These doubles are inseparable. They*

can't exist without each other." Bladh's fascination with the body seems to evolve when the author speculates various types of death and pain inflicted to a body to annihilate it, finalising the initial idea of the projection screen in Camus' existentialist myth. The multiple-choice list is presented with tick-off boxes for further consideration to choose from, still undecided: *"amputation (genitals) / bleeding (to death) / cut throat / drowning / experimental surgery / hanging (by neck) / poisoning (rat poison) / poisoning (sleeping pills) / stabbing / starvation / strangulation (with hands) / strangulation (with rope) / suffocation (plastic bag over face) / suffocation (pillow over face) / suffocation (duct tape over mouth and nose) / sacrificial Ceremony (stab to heart)."*

Day 4, a short dream entry in the protagonist's log, loosely follows an absurdist tradition of the trial with false accusations and biased verdict of an innocent convict. The character points out an interesting dichotomy of vulgarity and intellectuality, the former is achieved through use of language, the latter is contrasted with *"capacity of expression"*: the collective inability to communicate individually is reconsidered by an antithesis of potentiality of corporal multifaceted clarity: *"I'm accused of a silly incident... It's a false accusation... My interrogators are aware of my innocence... I despise the vulgarity of their gestures and use of language. Their moronic arguments move around in languid circles as they lack the intellectual capacity of expression."* Martin, the dreamer, meets Marty, the double, in school, executing a plotted mass murder of the classmates: the act, according to the laws of a dream, is indefinite and it is not clear if it is a mimetic game or a desire comes true: *"My old elementary school... I just remember how much we hate the people in this room. We know I have to kill every one of them, here and now. We open our school desks and pick up the sub-machine-guns that we've placed there for this certain moment... The kids are looking at us as if we're performing some kind of stupid*

students farce... I turn around, facing the guy sitting behind me and shoot him in the head. We proceed systematically around the room, kid after kid... When we get in the fourth classroom our guns start to malfunction... we have to mimic the 'bangs' ourselves and push the kids down on the floor, railing at them for not following the rules of the game... I feel MP's hand on my shoulder as he whispers – "we are cheating and shouldn't be allowed to live." What impresses the spectator, instead, is honesty and gravity of the actor to experience his mind-gaming, to take a farce way too seriously to the point of fatality. This part of the play ends in the character's imminent encounter of the spiritual twin to become one.

A Postscript, a final section of the play, is Marty's suicide note to Martin on issues of narcissism as opposed to ugliness. Beatitude of death is what matters, *"self-destruction is an act of free will"*: life is a dream, hence sending shock waves of death to the mob is an act of life preservation: *"Confronted with ugliness the beauty of death must be our obvious choice. To live a beautiful life means choosing a beautiful death. If life is ugly the beauty of death will equal it out and we leave this world triumphant in beatitude. The time is ripe, no one but ourselves chose this moment... Self-destruction is an act of free will... Our choice is in fact life-preserving."*

Marty Page is a contemporary example of an avant-garde genre **actionism**. Actionism is the English variant of the German term for Performance Art, in particular, used for an Austrian group *Wiener Aktionismus* (Viennese Action Art) founded in 1962 to deliberately shock, often including self-torture, through actions. The key members of the group were Günter Brus^[21], Hermann Nitsch^[22] and Rudolf Schwarzkogler^[23], who Bladh draws from and relates oneself with, referring to in the text. The actions of *Wiener Aktionismus* were intended to fixate the endemic cruelty and violence of humanity in general performed as a sacrilegious ceremony using the blood and entrails

of animals with special focus on viscera. Nitsch, in fact, gives his ceremonies the title of the Orgies-Mysteries Theatre. The terms 'performance' or performance art is widely used in the 1970s, yet the history of performance in arts traces back to futurist and dada productions of the 1910s. In the prewar period of the 20th c. performance is seen as an unconventional way of art-making, for example, to gain aesthetic gratification through cruelty, as Bladh states "*the creative necessity of cruelty*", that is for artistic purpose. Actionism is based on in-*yer-face* plausibility and feasibility, exact liveness, physical movement and variability to offer artists options to the stasis of other inactive forms of art. In the post-war period, performance is a synonym to conceptual art because of its often immaterial nature. Today this generally accepted visual art genre utilises digital video, photography and installation artworks as principal forms of representation, as in case with Bladh, through which the actions of performers and audience are filtered. In other words, this art form engages directly with contemporary social reality specifying the dimensions and politics of identity, when performance evolves from an artwork medium to a mindset about how art relates to the world.

Actionism is closely interrelated to body art that includes such **performance art**, where the artist is directly concerned with the body exploration in the form of impromptu or choreographed actions, happenings and staged events. Body art is generally preoccupied with issues of gender and personal identity. A major subject matter is the relationship of body and mind, studied in work consisting of experimental feats of physical endurance set to test the limits of the body and the ability of the mind to sustain pain. **Body art** also demonstrates the splanchnic or despicable aspects of the body, focusing on contrasts such as those between clad and nude, internal and external, the parts and the whole to manifest a body seen as the substitute for language, a reform for communication. While

giving an account of a body modification in the script Bladh uses two names: Rudolf Schwarzkogler, the artist, and Hans Cibulka, the model, two famous performance artists closely associated with the Viennese Actionism group. They are best known for the photographs depicting series of closely operated "Aktionen" featuring such iconography as a dead fish and chicken, bare light bulbs and coloured liquids, bound objects like a man wrapped in gauze, a patient's head swathed in bandages being pierced by a corkscrew producing a bloodstain under the bandages, an act of a simulated castration with a sliced open fish covering a groin. Such materialisation of special themes definitely fuels and generates speculations and myths about art, the lives of the artists in particular. Contextually Bladh relives all the bodily experiments himself, literally having a body as a scarred wasteland with dozens of traces of former rituals like a palimpsest to prove an actionist dogma: an artist is a subject of art, a docudrama. Bladh shocks but not to provoke odour even if inflicting pain. As the author states in his currently ongoing project *The Torture of the 100 Pieces*: *"I want to make it very clear that this work has nothing to do with S&M subculture or any titillating erotic game... The injuries are usually inflicted by myself... The need for the other to inflict the injury is for purely practical reasons... Just like Bataille I am particularly fascinated by the tension between the victim and the perpetrator. Both parts are of equal importance to me. This dualism is perhaps best captured in Baudelaire's poetic sublimation – 'I am the wound and the knife'; so is my desire to be the tortured and the torturer... when I am putting myself under the knife, I adopt a victim's persona. When I make use of authentic voices of real-life victims or lift a piece from a 'humanitarian' scholar's text to put into a new context... as a component of a cruel drama staged and directed by myself, I wear the mask of the perpetrator... The masks I wear take me into territories where I would not have ventured, had I not chosen to wear them. My body is performing the text... it has never been my*

*intention to put on a... horror show in the Aristotelian sense. My work is a deadlock that lacks catharsis."*¹

Bladh's style is rigid, monotonous, unemotional though the author deals with his nature to sublime and to conquer. With De Quincey's foreword in mind, Bladh progresses polemics on the matter of homicide, attempting the crime of oneself (suicide is still a murder). Such a journalist approach depersonalises the subject and turns a being into a paradox when the author wishes *"to have no feelings whatsoever. To always exist on a static horizontal level would be living perfection. If I could deal with pain and be totally devoid of a nervous system. A piece of meat, a chopping block taking the blows without showing any emotions."* From the introduction profile of the performance score (Bladh names his art as a *theatre of the mind*), the spectator gets to know that Marty, the double, is a muse, an absolutely irrelevant immaterial abstract sensation to inspire Martin, the real, who hides his nature to suppress. Stylistically Bladh relies heavily on allusions and symbolism of Faustian duality exemplified by Stevenson, Wilde or Conrad, when pious nature of (Victorian) society forces people to suppress their desires, resulted in questioning their 'goodness' as a human being because those are condemned as 'evil'. Bladh reveals a binary oppositions of the human *natural* to investigate *supernatural* via actionist 'scientific' development: Martin's open letters are an open discourse on alternating personality to explore taboo subjects and cultural concerns, such as repression or transgression. As a psychoanalytical researcher of oneself Bladh empirically approves on practice that body and mind are one, at least through degeneration of a body the spectator views devolution of mind, and, on the contrary, mental regeneration through a metamorphosis revives corporal. A muse is an abstraction, that is the mind to be numbed, paralysed, if necessary

1 Martin Bladh. The Torture of the 100 Pieces. A work in progress by Martin Bladh and Karolina Urbaniak, Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts, 23:8, pp. 99-101.

dissected, therefore as a pathological diagnostician (*"true art must be pathological"*) the author makes a portfolio of crime scenes to comprehend his ambivalent drama: sensation is everything and yet to experience emotions is unbearable. One would assume that double personality is a disease, but it is in fact not – it merely posits a question about one's identity which is never one, but two and *"a living spectacle... of one breathing organism."* Bladh stresses on exceptional fundamental significance of pain, accumulated by the double, carefully archived and at hand when suicide occurs to get it erupted to intoxicate the audience. The Wound Man of the performance undergoes pain yet he is never pictured in pain, or agony as if pain takes time to get used, ignored like those *"blocks taking the blows."*

Marked in the text in brackets and italics are the author's stream of consciousness speculations on the essence of pain, its co-sharing and polymorphism. Pain seems to be inborn, intrinsic; when in pain because of any malfunction (bad cold, toothache, nervous fit) the host outbreaks into emotionality, *"before was a state of numbness devoid of emotions"*, that is pain causes emotions, so the most obvious way to block them is to neutralise the cause yet for a real Martin pain is a trigger, because *"I've never felt so much alive as during circumstances of sickness or great distress"* and as a contemporary alchemist Martin wants to produce *"a vaccine for the 'real' disease."* Cruelty as a token of love sporadically emerges in the text in a form of a rhetoric question whether *"love is anything less than a chemical process... without nearness of another body, you are thrown into a state of abstinence."* Logically, since the body and the mind are the author's, the spectator is naturally exposed to a narcissist phenomenon, an "autistic game" with apathy to the outside and empathy to the inside excessively: *"(With these words, thoughts, fantasies and constructed scenarios, I hereby choose to believe what I do will hurt both others as well as myself. When I watch myself in the mirror, from this position, everything gets concentrated into*

one single frame: a cruel condensation. Then, the obvious question arises – what kind of role can One body play in this situation? When does this (pathological?) necessity become idiocy, a mere autistic game?)" The narcissist reveals the true purpose of his log, which is an altruistic evil, a greater cause of inflicting and submitting pain: *"(It is legitimate to call this art decadent, if the word decadent refers to moral or cultural decline as characterised by excessive indulgence in pleasure or luxury – the luxury or pleasure being my sole enjoyment of this log as a work of art.)"* To experience pleasure and pain is psycho-biologically relevant to the protagonist who shows emotional attachment to the objects around, even to the extent of the verbal rendering, stoic enumeration of all the tortures described in detail to self-gratify. Every position of the tormented double is marked, filed, and shot, so consequently, a series of polaroid snaps turns in fact in a pre- or post-mortem still-life catalogue, a sacred obsession and the only possession of the tormentor to refresh memories, to relive an act over again when viewed. A beast and an aesthete collide and unite in the performance like actionist aggressively tactile art that seems to nullify a notion of morality as unnecessary (many of the members of the movement were arrested for indecent behaviour (like masturbating when the national anthem is sung or smearing oneself with own feces to name a few)) or public immorality, like Egon Schiele who is mentioned in Marty Page's profile as the favourite painter. The spectator almost has a feeling as if a random day in a serial killer's life put on repeat and begs a question why he is not apprehended but inadequacy and imbecility of the world outside the torture chamber makes the spectator doubt, hesitate. *"We do not seek beauty for the sake of love... but to send shock waves and raise terror among the cretins that we left behind"* are the final words of Marty's suicide note which is an amalgam of delinquency and egotism of a Maximalist Action.

The Torture of the 100 Pieces

(a part of an ongoing M. Bladh's essay, 2018 –)

Agenda & Action *(original quotes & pictures):*

"Lingchi, translated variously as 'death by a thousand cuts', 'death by a hundred cuts', 'death by slicing' or 'the lingering death', was regarded as the most extreme execution method reserved for the very worst crimes (for example, parricide or state betrayal) and was practised in China from 900 CE [edit.: Common Era] until it was banned in 1905. It was not a torture as such that it invited the victim to end his suffering; its intention was not to produce any kind of information, indeed death, while inflicting the greatest possible amount of torment, was the only inevitable outcome. Its purpose was not just to induce death and degradation of the body, but to destroy the soul as well, as a dismembered body made it impossible to pay the karmic debt in the afterlife, and thus the victim had no chance of being reincarnated and would become trapped in the in-between world as a hungry ghost [edit.: Confucian ideals prohibit the mutilation of a body]. Lingchi methods have varied throughout the centuries, including torture sessions that could last as long as three days, to executions that didn't last longer than fifteen to twenty minutes; the amount of knife cuts inflicted has been documented to everything from 3,000 to a few dozen." [24]

Exquisite Corpse¹

1:1

Michel Surya – *Bataille, an Intellectual Biography*^[25].

These photographs obsessed him. He often spoke of them, and always kept them. One day, the torturer would become the object of his terrified attention: 'The Chinese executioner of my photo haunts me: there he is busily cutting off the victim's leg at the knee'; on another, it would be the victim: 'The young and seductive Chinese man... left to the work of the executioner, I loved him.' One day sadism informed the scene, providing its key: 'My purpose is to illustrate a fundamental connection between religious ecstasy and eroticism – and in particular sadism' (one cannot help but think of the erotic sadism of saints kneeling at the foot of the cross). On another, sadism was quite absent: 'I loved him with a love in which the sadistic instinct played no part: he communicated his pain to me or perhaps the excessive nature of his pain, and it was precisely that which I was seeking, not so as to take pleasure in it, but in order to ruin in me that which is opposed to ruin.'

2:1

Mark Nelson and Sarah Hudson Bayliss – *Exquisite Corpse, Surrealism and the Black Dahlia Murder*.

Some writers maintain that, because of the differing ways in which the body was manipulated, the Black Dahlia murder was the work of more than one killer. This raises the gruesome spectre that whoever killed Elizabeth Short was

¹ An abridged summary chapter from *The Torture of the 100 Pieces* called 'Exquisite Corpse'. It contains three patches about Bataille's Lingchi obsession, three about how different people respond to the third card in the Rorschach deck, and three about surrealism and sadism, all accompanied by the pictures reproduced respectively. Every text fragment/photograph is supposed to represent a cut from the Lingchi executioners knife. The subjects vary quite a lot, but what brings everything together is the connection between art and cruelty.

playing a surrealist game – Exquisite Corpse – with a real human being. Someone familiar with surrealism, inspired by the strains of the uncanny and violent eroticism that run throughout surrealist art, may have tried to create a horrific masterpiece from the body of a young woman. In keeping with the general idea of Exquisite Corpse, multiple assailants may have taken turns with the body inscribing their signatures on the victim's legs, torso, breasts, and face. It is conceivable that someone (or more than one person), seeking the heady state of surrealist exaltation – the almost druglike state of delirium experienced by those participating in the Exquisite Corpse games – could have found this state in killing Elizabeth Short. Thus inspired, they would have created what they viewed as the most exquisite corpse of all.

3:1

**Anonymous patient reacting to Rorschach card III in
Richard Mangen's *Psychological Testing and Ritual Abuse*:**

Two ladies... that look like they are murdering babies... cutting the baby and pulling it apart... Actually, I think it's dead babies... because there's blood in the picture... They removed the hearts of the babies... here's the lady on each side... There's the dead babies ... Here's the blood so you know they're really dead... it looks like blood running down... it starts off and ends in a pool... it's the color... The babies, here and here, because they don't have any legs or any... you can't live that way... especially with your heart out.

1:2

Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon, Gregory Blue – *Death by a Thousand Cuts*:

The execution of Wang Weiqin unfolded in the middle of a crowd of soldiers and onlookers who had gathered to watch the most severe legal penalty the Qing state could

impose. Two soldiers brought forward the basket holding the knives that the procedure required. Others stripped the victim and bound him by his queue to a tripod in such a way that the front of his body was fully exposed to the state executioner and his assistant. The executioner began by slicing off pieces of flesh from the convict's breasts, his biceps, and his upper thighs. Before the slicing went any further, the executioner punctured Wang's heart with a swift stab, putting the man to death. Thereafter he proceeded to methodically sever the limbs, first at the wrists and ankles, then at the elbows and knees, lastly at the shoulders and hips. His final cut severed the head from the body. A practised executioner made roughly three dozen cuts to reduce his victim to an incoherent scattering of body parts, though this number could vary. His work completed, he turned toward the officials and called out, "Sha ren le!" The person has been killed.

2:2

Hans Bellmer – *A User's Guide*:

The pen or etching needle can be used on wood without taking any particular precautions... we can also try them out on the model. In order to preclude inflammation of the tissue, just before the operation, the plate that covers the place concerned is removed by pulling the end of the bandage. As soon as the affected organs have been completely drawn out of an opening, two long, wide right-angled triangles are cut out of the mucous membrane of the front and back partition walls Threads are then used to sew the aligned triangles step by step, beginning with a series of seams beneath the surface.

3:2

Psychotic felon reacting to Rorschach card III in Carl B. Gacono's and J. Reid Meloy's *The Rorschach Assessment of Aggressive and Psychopathic Personalities*:

Two people's reflection in the water with a pair of lungs in between, two splots of blood on each side. (I?) This is a person right here. One there and one there. The pair of lungs is in the water. That's the pair of lungs in the water. That's the pair of lungs in the middle. That's a splot of blood. (Lungs?) They just look like or resemble lungs that's how I see them, that's how they are to me.

1:3

Kate Millet – *The Politics of Cruelty*:

And when the book [*The Tears of Eros*] arrived I opened it as a gift, not even registering that it was Bataille at first, too late realizing that it would have that photograph, the photograph of the victim of the Chinese torture. Still, it was a shock to see it. To experience that vertigo, a trauma that lasted for days, many hours debilitated and infuriated by the context: why has Bataille chosen to present this abomination as erotic? I would have to face the last argument of cruelty and torture, the "turn on."

2:3

Jonathan P. Eburne – *Surrealism and the Art of Crime*:

Alberto Giacometti's *Femme égorgée* (*Woman with Her Throat Cut*), [is] a sculpture that signals how certain surrealists would respond to Bataille's theories in the early 1930s. Composed after Giacometti's period of involvement with Bataille's Documents group and his subsequent affiliation with the surrealists, the 1932 sculpture explores Bataille's Sadean theories of voyeuristic participation within the immediate physical context of murderous violence. In the sculpture, which depicts a splayed female figure writhing in agony, this violence is overdetermined, multiplied through its bodily affect rather than explained or mastered. The titular cut throat is oddly minimized,

represented as a small notch in the figure's equally dwarfed head. And while the mouth is indeed open in an arrested scream, the figure's arched body instead becomes the primary means of expression. The contoured limbs double as pools of spilled blood, and the jagged right leg resolves into a double row of sharp points: the teeth of a trap, perhaps, or the bared bones of a broken rib cage. Even as the sculpture's title beckons toward the cut throat overshadowed by the body's spatial composition, Giacometti's titular isolation of the throat disguises the more gruesome possibility that the figure has also been disembroiled, éventrée as well as égorgée, for the jagged points along the spine – which has been displaced onto the figure's right leg – suggest a second order of violence unmentioned in the title.

3:3

Martin Bladh reacting to Rorschach card III in Martin Bladh's *The Rorschach Text*¹:

(^)

1. Two skeletal piccolos; legs spread wide, they're rotating around a bowl. (W)
2. Two African females engaged in a tribal ritual. (W)
3. Blood butterfly. (D)
4. Insect; Predator, huge fangs and claws. (W)

(v)

5. Ant lion. (W)
6. Burnt bodies; heads and torsos. (D)

1 *The Rorschach Text* (2014) tries to unlock childhood anxieties, dreams, and fantasies through aesthetic creation and free association. Bladh has subjected himself to Hermann Rorschach's inkblot test (the standard deck of ten cards), and used the verbatim association texts as blueprints for ten mixed media collages – "the layman's desperate attempt to translate an unconscious desire." Each specific picture has later been linked to a certain memory, recurrent fantasy, dream, artifact or objects of significance related to the artist's childhood, bringing together a unique autobiographical document.

Some additional information on the project is in chapter 3.9 *Porn Pigs* (2005)/ *The Rorschach Text* (2014).

7. Bloodstains. (D)

(<)

8. Mountain; Norwegian, partly covered in snow. (D)

Analysis:

Generally lingchi, a cut-by-cut torture method, may be classified as the most terrifying capital punishment in world history leaving behind other sensational tortures like boiling to death, the Viking 'Blood Eagle', impalement, keelhauling, the 'Roman Candle', a 'Dungeon of Rats', flaying, defenestration, and Persian 'the Boats' or scaphism.

In the photograph under consideration surrounded by the executioners we see a man tied to a stick with the deep cuts on his arms, legs and chest; his ribs to be seen for all those who are curious. Stunning as it seems some are curious, men and women, kids, all ages. This sight naturally drops a bomb question: *Why are people interested or even thrilled to see the torture and death of others?*

Down the history lane, the examples of this phenomenon can be found in different periods of human existence. a) The first thing that comes to mind is the gladiatorial combats in Ancient Rome. The spectacle gathered verily huge crowds of jubilant Romans, who were attracted by the abundance of blood and death, as well as the opportunity to personally decide the fate of the survivors and emaciated opponents with the help of *pollice verso* (a Latin phrase for "with a turned thumb"). The whole mob gathering at the Colosseum turned into classical Greek *deus ex machina* fatal blow to arbitrate. b) Next, when Christians became 'the kings of the castle', they invented the Inquisition and kept enjoying the performance in the real theatre of death and suffering disguised for a tribunal against heresy. Needless to say, public executions were an extremely popular entertainment back then, with whole families thronged for such an occasion. c) Also, it should not be forgotten about lynching (lingchi || lynching) and American public executions that were pervasively popular, let alone the more recent executions of immediate history, like that of Ted Bundy, during which the ecstatic crowd literally was out of its wits showered with happiness and joy. Agreed on Bundy was a serial killer, one doubts whether this kind of behaviour

coincides with the image of a good Christian who follows a decree of *"whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"* [Matthew 5:39].

Those macabre times are gone, at least in the western civilization, and now most people live in a would-be comfort and safety, but it does not deny the popularity fact of the crime genre nowadays: people like to watch survival or horror shows, near-death experiences or videos that document the last seconds of someone's life, live streams that host suicides, etc. In the USA a teenage girl urged her boyfriend to commit suicide via messages,^[26] and another teen killed himself via live stream, being encouraged by the viewers.^[27] Needless to say, these cases went viral.

Apparently, the (possible) reasons for such interest or even proneness to death-related experiences are:

1. A cave conformism, an instinct of group conformism that helped people survive in a tribe. It can explain why people who are about to do some cruel act in the crowd lose their ardour once they have to do it alone.

2. Blood lust deep in human DNA, which is now slowed down or completely blunted by laws, government, and morals. It is Cain's first sin or post-Freudian Thanatos – even law-abiding citizens indulge themselves from time to time by watching something gut-wrenching.

3. Feeling of mortality and power over others. Seeing others die and being safe at the same time makes some people experience a true pleasure of existence.

4. Mental purification. Some susceptible individuals outlive a true catharsis, taking the role of the victim (or the torturer) upon themselves to experience life and death of someone else without actually dying.

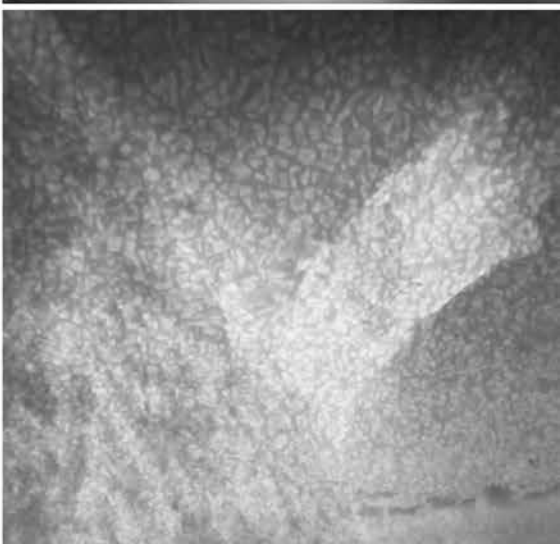
5. Feeling of justice. As in Ted Bundy's case, the crowd thought he deserved what happened to him and expressed its true feelings (of quite a herd mentality).

6. Sexual pleasure.

7. A great ego booster. Some people love to watch others' suffer just because that's not them. They better watch and enjoy someone being unlucky/stupid/evil enough to get into such a situation and praise themselves for being smart and safe.

02:00

Video stills and photographs from the *Artaud & Sound: To have done with the judgement of god* festival, Misconti Studio, London 2018
Photographed by Pawel Hubert Haraszkievicz and Karolina Urbanak



On The New Revelations of Being (2018)

*(Libretto & voice – Martin Bladh
Sound & visuals Karolina Urbaniak)
Agenda & Action (original text & pictures):*

(By the edge of the stage stands a music stand with a microphone placed on each of its sides. In the middle of the stage behind the music stand and the microphones stands a wooden chair. On the left part of the stage stands a black table. On the table lie/stand: a wooden block, a sharp knife, a razor blade, a bottle of talcum powder, a box of shoe-polish, one orbitoclast with a hammer, and a megaphone. A huge white projection screen frames the whole backdrop of the stage. The film starts: a digital dial against a black screen counting down from 2:00 min to 00:00 while MB's prerecorded voice reads the preface.)

**Another 50 to 60 million human beings will be
exterminated...**

**What is that to the useless 8 or 9 billion who inhabit
the Earth.**

**Most of these, so-called "beings", spend their life
doing nothing,
damned to relive their mistakes and fall back into
their corpses.**

I embrace extinction.

Death has singled me out from the masses.

**I myself am holocaust,
and as such, I exist as the all-engulfing funeral
pyre of man.**

I am the Great Divider - the cosmic guillotine.

**Infinity opens, it separates, demarcates,
and I have seen my reflections a million times in
the shattered corpse of God.**

**But these are my reflections no more.
I am the corporeal void envisioned - all illusions
cast aside.
I am the void incarnate,
and so have become death,
the destroyer of worlds, and men.**

My name will be...

(Loud blocks of sound. The film shows a montage of explosions on the surface of the sun, solar eclipses, and blood moons. The noise ends after 1 min. The sound of blowing wind. The film shows a montage of desert storms, hurricanes, women masturbating (pornography), and ISIS beheadings. MB enters the stage dressed in a black shirt and black slacks. He positions himself in front of microphone 1. The sound of the falling blade of a guillotine. MB starts to read the text in an agitated manner. References: American TV evangelist, Joseph Goebbels.)

**Revolution,
rejuvenating mother of mankind;
destroyer and fulfiller, sweeps across the globe.
Her regal head held high in vanity.
Her punitive eyes lecherous with deceit.
A dagger in the right hand, a torch in the left.
Her footsteps fall in ruins everything once noble
and sublime,
while the hem of her dress sweeps at the glories of
times passed.
• Shaking fiercely at the handiwork of man.
• Slitting the throats of her newborn sons in
voluptuous rage,
 one by one.
Barefoot and bare-breasted,
Great Liberty descends her pedestal of corpses,
the Phrygian cap of 1789 on her head.**

**A whore's makeup smears her face,
and the open skirt flashes the pregnant belly,
legs and labia spread wide to groom her spouse.**

(An organ drone is introduced. The film shows a montage of desert storms and Filipino crucifixions. MB continues to read.)

**And this divine spouse, as opposed to the elements
of nature, he is called God,
removes her skirts, one by one, until she is bare
naked.**

**But God, out of envy, can't stand the sight of labia.
He takes the cross - his firstborn son - pushes him
up her uterus,
all the way up, until she has miscarried and spilled
her content all over the earth.**

**Father, Lust Murderer, Mutilator of Liberty,
swings the sword of retribution.**

(High pitched frequencies. The film shows a montage of cadavers being eviscerated on dissecting tables. MB positions himself behind the black table picks up the knife and starts to stab it violently into the surface of the wooden block while a prerecorded robotic female voice reads the text.)

**SURFACE OF ABDOMEN AND THIGHS REMOVED
ABDOMINAL CAVITY EMPTIED OF VISCERA
BREASTS CUT OFF
ARMS MUTILATED BY JAGGED WOUNDS
FACE HACKED BEYOND RECOGNITION
TISSUES OF NECK SEVERED ALL DOWN TO BONE
VISCERA FOUND IN VARIOUS PARTS
UTERUS KIDNEYS AND BREAST UNDER HEAD
OTHER BREAST BY RIGHT FOOT
LIVER BETWEEN FEET**



**INTESTINES BY RIGHT SIDE
SPLEEN BY LEFT SIDE OF BODY**

(Execution drum rolls. The film shows a montage of weapon manufacturing, executions, and ritualistic floggings. MB picks up the megaphone and positions himself behind microphone 2, he starts to read the text in an unemotional, slow, amplified voice.)

**The left hand cut off and thrown to the furnace.
A new order established - the order of Right.
The calculated objectivity of the masculine mind,
kings, counts, dukes, jailers restored everywhere.
Death will reap all that is left:**

- **democracy,**
- **humanism,**
- **socialism,**
- **feminism.**

**The masses will once again submit to the yoke,
and the slaves will bow down to the scourge of the
eternal law.**

**The reign of the Abrahamic God will be absolute.
The new proclamation will sound out:
TO HELL WITH LIBERTY.**

(Bizarre cabaret waltz. The film shows a montage of scavengers feeding on carcasses and sex-change operations. MB puts down the megaphone and positions himself behind microphone 1, he starts to recite the text in a drunken, clownish manner. Reference: Monty Python)

**But this God is also a wanton libertine,
contaminated by lust and sodomitic desire,
jealous of the deviant femininity of the revolution
he culled.**

**He has a perverted yearning to feel the female
within:**

- God the Goddess
- Queen of holy whoredom.

So, gripped by an impulse of female irrationality,
he tears away his genitals - both member and
scrotal sac.

And as God betrays his own manhood,
and throws it defiantly before the four elements,
he has betrayed the eternal law,
and thus provoked the barbarous,
un-humanised forces of nature.

These furies will hunt this squealing harlot down,
drag her by the hair through the palace of heaven,
before they throw her into the open latrine,
the private parts shoved down her throat.

A forage of flesh, steel, blood and excrement will
commence:

(Loud blocks of sounds. The film shows a montage of
volcanic eruptions, thunderstorms, tidal waves, and Tibetan
sky burials. MB positions himself in front of microphone 2
and screams the text at the top of his lungs.)

**SHIT GOD SHIT GOD SHIT GOD SHIT GOD SHIT GOD
GOD SHIT GOD SHIT GOD SHIT GOD SHIT GOD SHIT**

**SHIT OF GOD
SHIT THAT IS GOD**

**EARTH WATER SKY FIRE
FIRE SKY WATER EARTH**

**DROSS VINEGAR VITRIOL SULPHUR
SULPHUR VITRIOL VINEGAR DROSS**

**SARIN ANTHRAX NAPALM CYANIDE
CYANIDE NAPALM ANTHRAX SARIN**

(A faint sound of buzzing flies. The film shows a montage of maggots swarming over a carcass. MB positions himself in front of microphone 1 and whispers the text.)

**And from that sewer,
all respiration returns back into the four elements.
And from that dung heap,
that pile of shit,
the new element rises...**

(Drone. The film shows a montage of swarms of locusts, mass graves, viruses, and lobotomy instructions. MB's pre-recorded voice reads the text in a calm, sedated manner. MB takes off his shirt and starts to powder his face, neck, and chest with talcum powder, he then paints the space under his eyes, his lips, and the tip of his nose with the black shoe-polish, he slashes the right side of his chest with the razor blade, picks up the orbitoclast and hammer, climbs the chair behind him and stands as if crucified – the orbitoclast in his left hand and the hammer in the right – while the blood pours from his wound.)

**A shooting star,
more cruel and terrible than nature
and the treacherous prospect of time.
Unlike the cruelty of nature's volatile laws,
the judgment delivered upon the meek will be swift
and resolute.
Nature as executioner works in accordance with its
elements:
pestilence, famine, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves,
and earth convulsions to slaughter thousands and
thousands of men.
But in a larger sense,
it is nothing more than weather conditions.
Likewise, the progress of mankind has been slow.
It has henceforth been counted in millennia and**

centuries,
generations upon generations of gravelands and
crumbled bones.
History's evolution and manmade discoveries have
annihilated millions and millions of beings in their
wake.
Unremarkable, nonetheless.
The Great Divider -
the all-encompassing inversion of the diseased,
degenerate movement of times past will accomplish
more than all these lesser efforts in one cataclysmic
blow.
The Hebrew God parted the Red Sea.
The enemies of the Israelites were drowned in an
instant.
This same God is now rotting underneath the blood
of that sea.
The cruelty of destruction is revealed.
Everything perished.
Infinity Land opens.
The new Being.

Then nothing...

(Loud blocks of sound. The film shows a montage of explosions on the surface of the sun, solar eclipses, blood moons, and open brain surgery. Silence. The stage turns black.)

Analysis:

A multimedia project between Martin Bladh and Karolina Urbaniak¹ that epitomises the present-day post-apocalypse through Bladh's semiotics: *"based on Antonin Artaud's apocalyptic manifesto from 1937 it envisions the end of the world and the death of God through a series of*

¹ Karolina Urbaniak is a photographer, multimedia producer and co-founder of Infinity Land Press. <https://karolinaurbaniak.com/projects>



cataclysmic occurrences of Artaudian cruelty" (taken from the press release).

Apocalypse: Artaud's original proclamation *The New Revelations of Being* ^[28] is a quasi-astrological prediction by "an unpardonable brute" through Tarot symbolism to embrace the *Void*. Artaud foresees the Supernatural Man who would abide by a new World-Cycle via "transmutation of the four elements in concert" liberating a natural force, "death-force". The supremacy of Woman comes to an end ("the Left, the Republic and Democracy"), sexuality is burnt down as a debasing factor to commence a new "Initiation in the darkness" guided by the *Mind*. Nature would fall upon men and withdraw *Life* through *Revolution*. Artaud offers the world a *Fool*, a Tarot card of the Major Arcana, a trickster and solitary sage who is in balance with the opposites, fanaticism, and absurdity. A Fool armoured with a *Sword* will spread infernal Fire "unconsciously desired by everyone". A *Tortured Man* will direct men into the fire of *Absolute Destruction* and *Absolute Realisation*: "Everybody Thought the Tortured Man a Fool... The Other Side of the Fool was a King." The Absolute Fool has a Right to divide, a *Divider King*, by *Power of Death* to accomplish human destiny, that is of death. The whole prophecy is so densely-packed with occult calculations and imagery of the *Madman & Recluse* that it is accurate to abstract it as an ongoing parable from Artaud's apocalypse to Bladh's post-apocalypse.

Post-Apocalypse: The corpse-paint and familiar sharp objects of self-torture are to be utilised both as a symbolic trope and a physical means to propagate an eschatological message, with an orbitoclast in view, an instrument of lobotomy, adding a new culminating overtone to the performance: a drastic operation on the brain. First practised on cadavers, what an irony, an ice pick is used for the transorbital act of cruelty, when an orbitoclast enters the brain through eye sockets, being gently tapped by a hammer to break in and cut through the bones and nerve

fibres that keep the gray matter and carry corresponding messages by electrical impulses. Psychosurgery is revisited dramatically by Bladh's *modus operandi* to represent the whole world as a schizophrenic who, doctors say, needs cure, a lobotomy – a controversial operation that alters emotional mania or depression at best and never improves cognitive sphere, at worst turns a person into a mentally disabled walking dead.^[29]

Hieronymus Bosch's *The Cure of Folly*, a trepanning picture as a prototype of the treatment in question (craniotomy), summons an image and summarizes a condition of the human being to be changed by the revelation of death: *"I myself am holocaust... I am the Great Divider – the cosmic guillotine. Infinity opens, it separates, demarcates... all illusions cast aside... and so have become death, the destroyer of worlds, and men."* Like an infamous Dr. Freeman, the greatest known lobotomy practitioner who used his lobotomobile to popularise it, Bladh turns into an evangelist of the cause to spread the news and struck the brain with the advent of the imminent. A cut-up kaleidoscope of the projected images blends in with partly dehumanised digital proclamations, violently intensified by the actor's rabies on the stage: *"The film shows a montage of cadavers being eviscerated on dissecting tables. MB positions himself behind the black table picks up the knife and starts to stab it violently into the surface of the wooden block while a prerecorded robotic female voice reads the text."* A shock therapy procedure magnifies another act of cruelty against nature: *"Revolution, rejuvenating mother of mankind... Great Liberty descends her pedestal of corpses... God, removes her skirts, one by one, until she is bare naked... He takes the cross - his firstborn son - pushes him up her uterus, all the way up, until she has miscarried and spilled her content all over the earth. Father, Lust Murderer, Mutilator of Liberty... TO HELL WITH LIBERTY."* Being lobotomised against one's will is compared to God's will, imposed though absolute, to discredit both: *"God is also a wanton libertine, contaminated by lust and sodomitic*

desire, jealous of the deviant femininity of the revolution he culled. He has a perverted yearning to feel the female within... God betrays his own manhood... the eternal law... forces of nature." Bladh is categoric on the matter of intrusion into a natural order that always results in a schism, an anarchic revolt: *"The cruelty of destruction is revealed. Everything perished. Infinity Land opens. The new Being."*

Lodged in the brain, extracting the stone of madness by a charlatan doctor is a valid Boschian metaphor of the contemporary act of mental and sexual castration, of encoding norm above nature to naively think that a disordered mind resides only in a mental institution or deny that with a tincture of madness a genius is born. Bladh bleeds on stage (note, traditionally phlebotomy is a form of medical intervention to treat possession of madness) unconsciously recreating an act of medieval therapy (a farcical tableaux rather) to restore balance in nature, elementality instead of instrumentality, to defy global folly by his post-apocalyptic rabid autonomy. The prophecy Bladh announces is a catastrophe the simpleton endeavours to escape as from a predicament and the mad bids welcome willingly as resolution via *"the cruelty of nature's volatile laws... Nature as executioner works in accordance with its elements."*

Based figuratively on the biblical tradition with its Revelation of the Christ, the Apocalypse, and the unveiling of the Second Coming, Bladh's interpretation is naturally heterodox, rejecting as incoherent any supernatural cause and, instead, establishing a man-made holocaust to embrace the triumph of imminent Death, summoned through a 'vicarious' bloodletting. The artist as a messenger of Death hails revelation in Nature and its natural retribution: millions cast in the cult of blood to break the tradition, to seed a new one. As an element of self-destructive nature, a man is to work in accordance – on the level of chemical agency *"SARIN ANTHRAX NAPALM CYANIDE"*: man-generated cyanide products reveal themselves in

the bloodstream to cause lethal poisoning, for example Zyklon B, a gas used by the Nazis in the death camps, and recently in Syria, or a nerve-gas agent, Sarin gas, released in the Tokyo subway system in 1995 as a revelation of the doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo to name a few. "*DROSS VINEGAR VITRIOL SULPHUR*" as the alchemical elements from the Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis are substituted with the chemical agents "*SARIN ANTHRAX NAPALM CYANIDE*" as a progenitor of a new element: "*A shooting star, more cruel and terrible than nature and the treacherous prospect of time.*" More cruel than nature and time is a man-made meteoroid that leaves craters times its size, a weapon of mass destruction to evaporate millions. Make a wish and Death will grant it.

Throughout the performance, Bladh's manner of declamation sways from agitated to unemotional, from clownish to violent, from at the top of one's lungs outbursts to a subsiding whisper to mark not only an intonational scope but an attitudinal resonator. Monty Python juxtaposed to Joseph Goebbels to an American TV evangelist to the French Revolution to the Hebrew God are both referential signifiers and a coordinate system to analyse a new Being embedded within a contemporary *commedia dell'arte*. A serious tone melts into a mockery and backward to articulate a Day of Judgement trite semantics with its fatal un-alternation even by a subterfuge: no one is believed to consider those postulates gravely after millennia of fin-de-siecle recurrent successions. Bladh's rhetoric is classical *ego sum vox clamantis in deserto*, a dissuasive claim to join in an idealistic discourse; therefore, the author redirects its vector introspectively and addresses himself in the form of generic criticism.

As a striking symbol of death, transformation and rebirth, tides of maggots wax and wane to give a momentum to a greater purpose of existence, a new Being, to be born.

There is a curious parallel to be drawn between *On The New Revelations of Being* and poems by Bryan Lewis

Saunders, whose art is the subject of the first issue of the 'Contemporary' series.¹ The poems under discussion are called *The Meaning of Life*, *I am a Vulture*, and *Subject in Question*. The first deals with such topics as the senselessness of the human life, the mere coincidence that caused the existence of humankind, and the way life is spent when one follows the basic instincts like lust. In *On The New Revelations of Being* the following unfolds: "Another 50 to 60 million human beings will be exterminated ... What is that to the useless 8 or 9 billion who inhabit the Earth. Most of these, so-called "Beings", spend their life doing nothing, damned to relive their mistakes and fall back into their corpses". Definitely, a similar motive of the lack of sense and feel of the covert depreciation of humankind is exposed which also turns a reader back to *The Meaning of Life* where Saunders compares humans to a virus. In the second poem called *I am a Vulture* there appears an image of a creature that feeds off from death and is a purifier, likewise *On The New Revelations of Being* manifests: "I embrace extinction. Death has singled me out from the masses. I myself am holocaust, and as such, I exist as the all-engulfing funeral pyre of man". The image of the executioner a holocaust impersonates is revealed. In the third above-mentioned poem by B. L. Saunders called *Subject in Question*, it goes about a schizophrenic who needs to take his medicines, and who appears to be God. In *On The New Revelations of Being* there is also a discouraging (for those who believe) image of God who needs treatment juxtaposed the whole world prescribed to undergo the same operation respectively. Also, there is a similarity in the manner of performing – screaming.²

1 Oleh Koliada. Contemporary #1. American Poetry. Bryan Lewis Saunders. O. Yevenok, 2019.

2 The paragraph is contextualised by Ruslana Marusevych (see the contact data entry of the book).

The Island of Death (2012 / 2014)

Agenda & Action (*original text & pictures*):

<i>The Island of Death (2012)</i>	<i>The Island of Death (2014)</i>
<p>Prologue</p> <p>In front of the stage stands a podium.</p> <p>Beside the podium – on the left and right side – stand two microphone stands.</p> <p>In the middle of the stage facing the wall stands an empty chair.</p> <p>On the right side of the stage stands a table.</p> <p>On the table lies/stand: a plastic pig mask, a bottle of talcum powder, a box with black eye shadow and two razor blades.</p> <p>The stage is pitch dark.</p> <p>M dressed in black clothes enters the stage. He positions himself in front of the podium and starts to take his clothes off. Underneath the black clothes, he wears a white T-shirt and white boxer shorts. M sits down on the chair in the middle of the stage, face against the wall</p>	<p>Sendak's voice.^[30]</p> <p>The film shows waves and dead bodies on a shore.</p> <p>A noose hangs from the roof in the middle of the stage.</p> <p>On the floor underneath the noose stands a stool.</p> <p>On the right-hand side of the stage stands a note stand, two microphones, and a small table.</p> <p>On the table stands/lies a small mirror, a bottle of talcum powder, a can of black shoe polish and a razor blade.</p> <p>The music starts (Drone 1 goes on for 5 min).</p> <p>Martin enters the stage fully clothed (in black).</p> <p>He climbs the stool, positions himself underneath the noose, and starts to undress.</p> <p>He drops the clothes on the floor around him and places the shoes neatly on the stool.</p>

back turned against the
audience.

The film^[31] starts –
projected on the stage wall
behind M.
[01 THE ISLAND OF DEATH
- Prologue]

The Sandman

Spotlight on the podium.

M turns around and
positions himself behind
the podium.

M whispers a children's
rhyme in microphone 1:

*Warte, warte nur ein
Weilchen,
Bald kommt Haarmann
auch zu Dir
Mit dem Hacke-Hacke
Beilchen
Macht er Rind-Gulasch aus
Dir.*

*Warte, warte nur ein
Weilchen,
Bald kommt der Schwarze
Mann zu dir,
Mit dem kleinen
Hackebeilchen
Macht er Schabefleisch aus
dir.^[32]*

M grabs microphone 2 and
shouts the lyrics of the
children's rhyme.

[02 THE ISLAND OF DEATH
– The Sandman]

He is now naked except
for white underwear and
socks.

A red x-mark has been
drawn on the right side of
his chest.

The Killers

M puts on the pig mask,
picks up one of the razor
blades and climbs the
chair.

M cuts a deep gash into his
right thigh.

M stands still on the chair
while the blood trickles
down his leg.

[03 THE ISLAND OF DEATH
- The Killers]

The Lamb

M removes the pig mask,
steps down from the chair
and positions himself
behind the podium.

M recites the lyrics in
Microphone 1 and 2:

**To release the pig in me,
though only swine may
enter into perfection,
I lose myself in your
glamour
your flesh:
rotten kisses of your
tongue.
I burst out laughing:
a sudden outburst,
skyscraping the ceiling,
a leap,
then falling...**

The windows are

Drone 2 goes on for 5 min).

Martin descends from
the stool, walks up to the
microphone and reads the
text:

**To release the pig in me,
though only swine may
enter into perfection,
I lose myself in your
glamour
your flesh:
rotten kisses of your
tongue.
I burst out laughing:
a sudden outburst,
skyscraping the ceiling,
a leap,
then falling...**

The windows are:

imploding!

*The pressure is too high!
Birth/Death smiles back at you:
rotten fruit of thy womb!*

**Nailed to the wall
depression
the full void of death...
resemblance?
The portrait:
Joan/Sebastian!
(bright) - (young)
untouched by the world.
Sharp outlines...
the bright violence of the
mirror glass reflection...
the redness of the mouth...
(the moist muteness of
atongue)
...about to speak!**

*I've always been here,
embraced your touch,
hid beneath the skin sheet,
bricked up behind the bone
cellars attic walls.*

*A pair of scissors in my
hand.*

imploding!

*The pressure is too high!
Birth/Death smiles back at you:
rotten fruit of thy womb!*

**Nailed to the wall
depression
the full void of death...
resemblance?
The portrait:
Joan/Sebastian!
(bright) - (young)
untouched by the world.
Sharp outlines...
the bright violence of the
mirror glass reflection...
the redness of the mouth...
(the moist muteness of a
tongue)
...about to speak!**

Martin powders his face
torso and arms with talcum
powder.

(Drone 3 goes on for 5
minutes).

Martin continues to read:

*I've always been here,
embraced your touch,
hid beneath the skin sheet,
bricked up behind the bone
cellars attic walls.*

*A pair of scissors in my
hand.*

Double!
Hanging from the branch in
the garden where I left you!

Double!
Is that you spewing from
my wound?

Double!
Sill exposed to the cold
light of the cameras!

Walk in, set bombs at 11:09,
for 11:17

Leave
Drive to Clemente Park.
Gear up.

Get back by 11:15.
Park cars, set car bombs for
11:18

get out, go to outside hill,
wait.

When first bombs go off,
attack.
have fun!

Together we mount the
barbed wire fences...
the stages and gallows
erected between Heaven
and Earth.

Our trophy (iron cross)
carved into our shoulder.

Our severed member
lodged in the cavity of our
wound/womb

5:00 up

Double!
Hanging from the branch in
the garden where I left you!

Double!
Is that you spewing from
my wound?

Double!
Sill exposed to the cold
light of the cameras!

Together we mount the
barbed wire fences...
the stages and gallows
erected between Heaven
and Earth.

Our trophy (iron cross)
carved into our shoulder.

Our severed member
lodged in the cavity of our
wound/womb.

Martin smears the black

6:00 meet at KS
 7:00 go to Reb's house
 7:15 he leaves to fill propane
 I leave to fill gas
 8:30 meet back at his house
 9:00 made d. bag set up car
 9:30 practice gear-ups
 Chill
 10:30 set up 4 things
 11:00 go to school
 11:10 set up duffel bags
 11:12 wait near cars, gear up
 11:16 HAAAAHA

[04 THE ISLAND OF DEATH
 - The Lamb]

The Sacrifice

M puts on the pig mask,
 picks up one of the
 razorblades and climbs the
 chair.

M cuts a deep gash in his
 left thigh.

M stands still on the chair
 while the blood trickles
 down his leg.

M removes the pig mask –
 holding it in his right
 hand, steps down from the
 chair and positions himself
 in front of the podium,
 grabs microphone 2 and
 recites the lyrics:

Holy terror!
 (- desolate mother's empty
 socket)

shoe polish on his face
 – making it resemble
 a death's head - while
 looking into the mirror.

(Drone 4 goes on for 5 min)
 Martin climbs the stool and
 cuts himself along the lines
 of the x-marks.

He stands still on the stool
 while the blood flows from
 the wound down his chest.

(Noise goes on for 10 min).
 Martin descends the stool,
 walks over to the
 microphone and starts to
 scream the lyrics PE [edit.:
 power electronics] style:

Holy terror!
 (- desolate mother's empty
 socket)

Holy terror!
 (- impotent father's empty
 socket)

Holy- terror- coming-mother!
Step right up!
Holy- terror- coming-father!
Step right up!

Blood rushed to the groin,
anxiously awaiting the
impact!

Of sacrifice and murder!...
Of action and carnal
sensation!...
Of chance and accident!...
Of beauty and the wound!...

Coitus...
will you become me?
Coitus...
will you enter me?

M throws the pig mask into the audience, turns around and faces the wall in the middle of the stage. After circa 40 seconds M turns around and walks over to the table, picks up the talcum powder, powders his face and arms carefully, picks up the box with eye shadow and paints his lips and eye sockets black with it.

[05 THE ISLAND OF DEATH

Holy terror!
 (-impotent father's empty
 socket)

Holy- terror- coming-mother!
Step right up!
Holy- terror- coming-father!
Step right up!

Blood rushed to the groin,
anxiously awaiting the
impact!

Of sacrifice and murder!...
Of action and carnal
sensation!...
Of chance and accident!...
Of beauty and the wound!...

Coitus...
will you become me?
Coitus...
will you enter me?

The Sacrifice]
[06 THE ISLAND OF DEATH
- Infinity Land]

Epilogue

M positions himself in
front of the podium.

The lights go out.

The film ends.

M sings Nick Drake's Black
Eyed Dog into microphone
1 with a fragile whispering
voice:

*A black eyed dog he called
at my door*

*The black eyed dog he
called
for more*

*A black eyed dog he knew
my name*

*A black eyed dog he knew
my name*

*A black eyed dog
A black eyed dog.*

*I'm growing old and I
wanna go home*

*I'm growing old and I don't
wanna know*

*I'm growing old and I
wanna go home...*

The stage is pitch dark.

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/theislandofdeath2012>

The lights go out.

The film ends.

M sings the first verse
from Robert Johnson's

Hellhound on my Trail with
a fragile whispering voice:

*I got to keep movin',
I got to keep movin'*

*Blues fallin' down like hail,
blues fallin' down like hail
Blues fallin' down like hail,
blues fallin' down like hail*

*And the days keeps
on worryin' me*

*There's a hellhound on my
trail, hellhound on my trail
Hellhound on my trail*

The stage is pitch dark.

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/island-of-death-2014>



The Island of Death, Slimelight, London 2012. Photographed by Karolina Urbaniak





Analysis:

Non-sanitised version of an old nursery rhyme chock-full of atrocities lures the audience into 2012 performance with Bladh's, probably, deepest self-inflicted cuts on both thighs ever; they look like ulcers open on the leper's body. In 2014 production the cuts are made on the chest and in both versions the wounds left bleeding till the end of the performances. Accompanied with facial disguising eloquent clusters of symbolic abominations are protruded above the surface of the stage set against *The Island of Death* amateur movie snippets. A womb is compared to a wound, auto-gashed, therefore, a caesarean section implied, especially with a noose in 2014 version that reminds an umbilical cord either to be cut or hung on during birth delivery. A coitally inexperienced character, assumably an adolescent persona, transfers energy into planning bomb attacks across the town to release one's post-natal stress, *"nailed to the wall depression the full void of death"*, accumulated in the images of parents' skulls, *"desolate mother's empty socket... impotent father's empty socket"* clinging to an idea of miscarriage or abortion, *"spewing from my wound."* The act is also a stillborn foetus's self-realisation: *"hid beneath the skin sheet, bricked up behind the bone cellars attic walls"*, so that birth is associated with bomb explosion or holy terror with *"the stages and gallows erected between Heaven and Earth"* to mount as *"the barbed wire fences..."* Bladh breaks the walls through cuts – the waves sweep a body ashore the island of death as a conceit of birth. A complex analogy is further related to *"Joan/Sebastian! (bright) – (young) untouched by the world."* Joan of Arc and Saint Sebastian, both relapsed heretics and martyrs, tortured and mortified at the stake, are x-marked as targets but evoked as symbols of virginity, *"untouched by the world"*, by Bladh's ecstatic rant. Male and female virgins are viewed as not simply an idealised virtue but as double confessors in and heralds of a highly utopian yet conceivable world, a secret never disclosed, a kingdom never comes. Bladh is appalled

at the ever focused *"coitus...will you enter me?"* external confrontation or *"coitus...will you become me?"* narcissist self-seduction, hence strategically retreats to a torture to keep chastity pure if in blood.

A Mother Goose's rhyme to a terminated embryo is a dirge (performed in whisper and scream in 2012 / 2014 versions respectively) one hears the uterus: *"our severed member lodged in the cavity of our wound/womb... blood rushed to the groin, anxiously awaiting the impact!"*, ultimately summed up by the funeral blues of Nick Drake and his "black-eyed dog".^[33] Bladh's action is a delivery: abortion is safer than pregnancy, death is safer than life. Coitus ≠ foetus = foeticide.

DES – I'll be the Mirror, Performance (2013)

Agenda & Action (original text & pictures):

The room is a black rectangle. In the middle of the room lies a mattress with a white pillow and sheets. On the floor on the right side of the mattress stand/lies a basin filled with water, a sponge, a towel and a black pillow-case. On the wall, facing the head of the mattress hangs a rectangle-shaped mirror. In the right upper corner of the room next to the mirror stands an old stereo set. On top of the stereo set stand/lies a bottle of talcum powder, a box with eye shadow, a scalpel, and a Polaroid camera.

1.

Shane enters the room through the audience, he is wearing black trousers and socks and a white t-shirt. He walks over to the mirror and the stereo and puts on Track 1 (radio news report from 1983). He looks at his reflection in the mirror for a couple of seconds and starts to undress (everything but the socks). He picks up the scalpel which lies on top of the stereo set and cuts the name SED into his chest and watches the blood trickle. He picks up the Polaroid camera and takes a picture of his reflection in the mirror; he shakes the photograph in his hand and attaches it to the wall next to the mirror with a paper-clip. He walks over to the mattress and lies down on his back.

2.

Martin enters the room through the audience, he is wearing black trousers and a white t-shirt walks up to the stereo and puts on Track 2 (Martin Bladh – Dream Scenario 1). He walks over to the mattress, straddles Shane, picks up the sponge, dips it into the water and starts to wash Shane's body from top to toe, he then picks up a towel and dries Shane's skin. When Martin is finished he picks up the

Polaroid camera and takes a picture of Shane, he shakes the photograph in his hand, walks over to the mirror and fetches the picture with a paper-clip to the wall next to it. Martin stares at his mirror reflection for some seconds.

3.

Martin puts on Track 3 (Carl Stotter interview). He walks over to the mattress and starts to powder Shane's body from top to toe with the talcum powder, he then blackens Shane's lips and the spaces under his eyes with the eye-shadow. Martin picks up the camera and takes a picture of Shane, he shakes the photograph in his hand, walks over to the mirror and attaches the picture with a paper-clip to the wall next to it. Martin stares at his mirror reflection for some seconds.

4.

Martin puts on Track 4 (Martin Bladh – Dream Scenario 2). He walks over to the mattress, kneels in front of Shane and arranges his body according to three different *Sad Sketches* position numbers: 8, 12 and 13; after each position, he takes a photograph with the Polaroid camera and shakes the photos in his hand. He then walks over to the mirror and attaches the pictures with paper-clips to the wall next to it. Martin stares at his mirror reflection for several seconds.

5.

Martin puts on Track 5 (Nilsen TV interview 1992). He walks over to the mattress and puts the black pillow-case over Shane's head (Shane stops breathing), he walks back to the mirror and starts to apply talcum powder to his face and throat, then blackens his lips and the spaces beneath his eyes with eye-shadow. Meanwhile, Shane is pissing himself over the mattress. Martin picks up the camera and takes a picture of himself in the mirror, he shakes the photograph in his hand and attaches the picture with a paper-clip to the wall next to the mirror. Martin stares at his mirror reflection for several seconds.

6.

Martin puts on Track 6 (Scott Walker – *The War is Over* ^[34]). He walks over to the mattress and lies on top of Shane, embracing him until the music is over.

The curator thanks the audience and asks them to leave the room.

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/des>

Analysis:

A page-long *I'll be the Mirror*, *Performance* has, in fact, a mammoth 150-page backstory *DES* published in 2013. Disturbing and alluring at the same time, *DES* is a correspondence exchange between Bladh and one of Britain's most famous serial killers, Dennis Nilsen,^[35] on the issues of mutual interest like psychosis and death. Nilsen's necrotic aestheticism finds beyond impossible resonance in Bladh's perception, a seed cast into a fertile soil ploughed by Artaudian aesthetics of cruelty. *I'll be the Mirror* act stars Shane Levene,^[36] the son of Nilsen's fourteenth victim (Graham Allen), so that in Bladh's own words "*the wheel has come full circle*", explaining his paradoxical need of such a grim interaction: "*I had a craving to sink even deeper into this fantasy world. I needed something more tangible, something authentic, and God forbid, real! I needed the man himself. DES would be a platform for Nilsen to speak from. I would let the executioner himself use me as medium for his voice, the body of my work. Dennis as the echo, the ghost voice to guide me through my own vision of his imaginary nether world, Dennis to comment upon and complete me at times, to spur me on and cut me open. Then suddenly out of nowhere another voice appeared and a strange and unique story begun to unravel. Shane Levene, the son of Nilsen's fourteenth prey Graham Allen, literally became the echo of a dead man and gave an authentic voice to the victims. Another dead ringer. Victim and Executioner, the wheel has come full circle.*"¹ Bladh roughly recreates one of Nilsen's

1 All quotes taken from a private digital version of **Bladh, Martin. *DES*. Institute Of Paraphilia Studies, 2013.** Page 6.



DES, Last Tuesday Society, 2013, London.
Photographed by Karolina Urbaniak





murders, involving Shane to impersonate a moribund victim and himself, a passionate hangman, to relive fantasies of strangulation with a ligature in the most scandalous way, taking into account Shane is the victim's son.^[37] Processing polaroid pictures is a characteristic technique Bladh uses when a ghoulish trophy shot signifies a memento of the horrendous crime.

The pace of the performance is slow, sinister and fatal. The level of implicit intimacy between the two is electrifying counterbalanced with gruesome accuracy and disciplined conduct overall, yet the way Bladh approaches Levene and administers him in bed is akin to Pietà and veneration of the cross sacrament. The body is a relic, a sole object of worship and ever-present reminder of martyrdom – the attributes Bladh indulges most impulsively (Levene – compulsively) in cruel adoration documented on tape: *"The relation between criminal and artistic expression: the artist's yearning for the outlaw, his criminal world and desires and arguably the criminal's need to express himself in an artistic, often theatrical way has attracted me for years, and the Nilsen case seems to be possibly the most prominent example of this discourse... I personally want to see everything. All the violence has to be registered, consumed and ground into a concentrate... I want to experience a drama, performance-piece, or film which has been directed by a full-fledged sadist. A work in which the cast either consist of willing masochists, but most preferable unwilling victims. A production in which the sadist is locked within his own pathological trap: the implosion of private fantasies which now evolves into explosive expression; the balance between instant sexual gratification and sublime aesthetic immortality; the carnal itch caught somewhere in middle of what's sacred and profane – all of it concentrated in the eye of the camera which reflects the terror in the eyes of cast and crew."*¹

1 Bladh, Martin. DES. Institute Of Paraphilia Studies, 2013. Pages 7-8.

To fully comprehend a double-edged state of mutual dependency of both actors *DES* corpus also unveils an interview of Levene conducted by Bladh who reflect || refract each other with Nilsen lurking in the mirror. *"Martin: As a child and adolescent did you try to imagine how your father suffered in the hands of Nilsen? the gruesome tale about the dismembering and the disposal of his body must have been a very stark and abstract mental image for a child to muster... one of the reasons I bring this up is because of your painting "Portrait of My Father during His 15 Minutes of Fame" which is an explicit and excellent study of a dismembered body. Can you feel that Nilsen and the murder got you closer to the man that now 'turned out' to be your father?"*

Shane: I've never thought of it like that, but now you ask the question, yes, in certain ways it did. It was because he was murdered, never really having a chance to know him, that I became as interested in him as I did. In many ways I even replicated his life, living what he was living up until the day he disappeared. My initial addiction to heroin (in part) was an extreme kind of method acting... getting to know my father and his life and struggles through completely immersing myself in the kind of life which he led. But yes, certainly the murder made me want to rediscover the person who was murdered... to understand my father that little more, and even to better understand some of the more subtle events of that night. Still, paradoxically, more than get me closer to my father, the murder (and especially the manner and the details of it) gave me an urge to get closer to the killer... to discover just what kind of a man would do something like that and why?

Yes, I did imagine what my father went through; for a while I was preoccupied with it. I couldn't believe that someone I knew, had come from, had ended up being killed and then disposed of in such a way... and because I knew we had a personal bond, it also gave me this weird feeling like I was somehow, somewhere in Nilsen's flat that night too. That's hard to explain, but because I was a part of him

the events felt very close. Concerning the actual murder I always saw that through two different perspectives: 1) my mother's 2) my own...

The other perspective I viewed and thought of the murder from was my own, and that was a very different outlook. I found the murder fascinating (even as a 7-year-old), and would always ponder and linger over the most gruesome parts, and wonder what my father looked like removed from life, and how bizarre it would be to have a headless torso on the floor, or even a body with the hand or arm removed. I'd imagine his head boiling away on the stove, but never with horror or disgust, always with a curiosity for the macabre. And really, from a very young age, I decided that the dismemberment meant nothing to me, that maybe it wasn't even a crime??? That if anything was serious it was the murder – the taking of life – and anything that came after to get rid of the body was nothing in comparison to that. So for me, the worst thing Nilsen did was to kill, and what he did to the body after more fascinated me from the perspective of 'what kind of man would do that and why?' and 'could I do that myself?' So the actual dismemberment finally brought me back to Nilsen (not my father), attracted me to someone I found fascinating and wanted to learn more about. If my father had been merely strangled or killed in a fight, I really wouldn't be interested in the killer at all, but this was different, there was something much more behind this and in its own unique way expressed a desperation, isolation, and a vulnerability to which I immediately related...

Like many, during that study I was completely wooed by Nilsen, by what came out of his mouth and from what his mind and hands had done. It finally came that I was even proud that it was Nilsen who killed my father and no-one else. So the murder led me to ponder many things – discover the people involved, discover my mother, and more importantly, discover myself and my thinking under extreme circumstances...

Martin: You have turned the tragedy into a source of

creativity, artistic inspiration and personal growth, but you've also used it as an ego boost – "I'm the artist whose father was killed by Dennis Nilsen"- am I right? Isn't it Nilsen that you actually identify with? Am I totally lost if I would maintain that he's your muse?

Shane: I've never used the Dennis Nilsen angle as an 'ego boost' but rather as a 'career boost' (albeit a genuine one)... you're correct, I certainly do identify more with Nilsen than with my father. I've had the privilege to discover Nilsen where I've never had the chance to discover my father. My father wasn't a vagrant but led a very vagrant kind of life and as a result, didn't leave much trace or history behind him. Outside of the stories from my mother and step-father, there was no other way to find out anything else about him. But I also identify with Nilsen in other respects, especially his feelings of loneliness, his desperation for company while possessing a personality that made it very difficult, and also that obsessive loyalty which he seemed to seek from living things which finally always seemed to disappoint him. I understand completely why and how he could love a dog above all other things. But more than that I understand Nilsen's expression... I understand and relate to DENNIS NILSEN THE ARTIST..

It was a tragedy, sure, (and for him just as much as for anyone else) but in a way I kinda sense he was finally a resolved man after being caught... I also think it probably calmed certain urges and gave him an inner peace, and to some extent even allowed him to express his fantasies and desires and thoughts and feelings in a safe environment: prison. So I have discovered Nilsen and identify with him in the same manner I have discovered yourself or Francis Bacon. But as for Nilsen being my 'muse', no, that's not the relationship I have towards him. I have NO muse except the consequence of life."¹

So basically Nilsen makes both emotionally deranged

1 Ibid. Pages 117-118, 120.

dreams come true: Shane identifies himself as a victim and Martin as a homicide on the shared grounds of victimology. Both are hurt, tortured, eventually killed or oppressed by power and situation, ruined or made to suffer in the pursuit of an object, or for gratification. What perplexes the most in this rite of victimisation is surreal dedication and actors' credibility, 'morbid self-absorption' (by the way, it is a literate dictionary definition of autism). They both are aware of what is about to happen and, moreover, make an impression they have agreed upon the procedure, entrusted each other, performing antagonist parts. Far from a credulous instant decision, such metaphysical bond is a result of one of those rarest coincidences that occur only because they are next to impossible. Levene offers Bladh his own body covered with bruises and scars, razor-blading a *DES* inscription with syringes pierced through the flesh, further explaining his affiliation: *"Shane: I certainly see all the similarities that you point out between your own theater and Nilsen's, and I also see and understand they are fundamentally different. It was on realizing that which finally lead to me taking the step and contacting you...My real fear was of contacting you and that sparking off a chain of events which led to a bizarre repetition of history, namely us somehow meeting up and you taking the opportunity to murder me in an exact replica of my father's death – thus you gaining instant infamy for your art, and the two of us going down in history together as having one of the most bizarre internet encounters ever struck up (outside of German cannibals!)"* [edit.: Shane means Armin Meiwes, the Rotenburg Cannibal, and the criminal case of March 2001, when his voluntary victim, Bernd Brandes, found via the Internet, agreed to be eaten, thus contributing to the most notorious crime in history ever] *I saw work with an artistic integrity... something I could smell and breathe in and knew that behind anything that powerful, that staged and managed was a man who was dangerous as an artist*

*but not dangerous as a human being...*¹ Nilsen is a buffer for both Bladh and Levene to keep their identities intact and shared artistic principles conserved. A genuine cabal.

Featured in *DES* printed version as intentionally blurred, the photographs of Nilsen and Bladh nevertheless do reveal a striking resemblance between the two physiognomically. Such ambiguous nebulous nature of the photos defines a perspective to look at them – from a certain distance when they become almost animated in their obscurity. Filmy as if seen from sleep the pictures capture to some extent one person in retrospect at different periods of one's life due to age difference in 30 years between Nilsen and Bladh, so that Bladh is a younger Nilsen's incarnation mirrored. Studied from various spacial aspects, their faces exhibit the so-called "Dark Triad of Personality": Narcissism (selfishness), Machiavellianism (deceptiveness), and Sociopathy (counter-conduct). Nilsen is definitely a high Mach, self-relying, prioritising power over infatuation, totally focused on one's ambition yet struggling with identifying own emotions or consequences of the actions. Nilsen's frail curvy features remind those of Niccolò Machiavelli himself, a philosopher in the Renaissance period, whose infamous *The Prince* treatise justifies harsh attitudes of the privileged toward the underclass as means of glory, power, and survival; the original source of "the ends justify the means" advocacy (effectiveness is more important than morality). "Machiavellianism" describes the art of being deceptive to advance through manipulation and exploitation, cynicism of goodness and low empathy. Bladh, following Genet's tenet *"that even though he was obsessed by the idea of committing murder he would choose the poetics vision to express himself, instead of the poetic expression of the deed per se"*,² is obviously a low Mach yet when combined with the other two above-mentioned personality traits tends to

1 Ibid. Page 129.

2 Ibid. Page 7.

gravitate closer to admiration (Narcissus), manipulation (Mach) and insensitiveness (Psycho) of Nilsen's profile, the latter's face is never a mugshot though but an expressive theatrical performance to get thrilled along.

Something is unnerving in Nilsen wearing Luxe Aviator Retro Fashion Glasses (in a photo of his apprehension at least) – a creepy detail, yet totally fetishised and a part of serial killers' iconography. Perched on his nose in *DES* shots, they intrigue a magnetising effect as if through lenses he breaks the blurry surface of the pictures to reach a beholder. From cat-eye to horn-rimmed, thrilling Big Brother impact a pair of spectacles make, turns them simultaneously into a threat and cult accessory of the mainstream, redefining demeanour under constant surveillance. Bladh does not wear glasses, therefore, his expression is clearer off an extra barrier. Notwithstanding, copycatting a killer receives a new interpretation in Bladh's desire to emulate Nilsen's appearance aspects on the camera saving memory about him even after death.

Why do people lip-synchronise listening to their favourite song or cross-dress as a celebrity they fancy about? It is a part of a Narcissist miming – an exceptionally performative art using body motions alone, no speech. Moreover a mime, or a mummer (performer in disguise, literally 'a silent mask'), traditionally a part of English public pageants, always bears an allegorical mission, coming out of the blue, unexpectedly entertaining yet in a bewildering manner. Since it presupposes impromptu, as well as well-trained artistic skills, miming generally is highly appreciated for its creativity and inventiveness, ingenuity. A mime selects and exchanges a range of masks to put on for more startling effect achieved only when an actor identifies oneself with a role a mask hints, to be expressed facially and bodily. It is a miracle of transition, abandoning one's body but never really reaching somebody else's, stuck in-between – the hand in the glove, exposed and hidden at the same time. And it is also having a double revealed: a megalomaniac Narcissus

absorbs another object and amplifies oneself, a surplus of self-adoration. It is fascinating to note that even some Roman emperors (historically miming fully flourished under the Empire) favoured this act of performance (Caligula) or even acted as mimes themselves (Nero) embodying ferocity, tyranny, extravagance, cruelty, and sociopathy. Enacting a scene or a person is to carefully transfer drama into a silent body and enliven it in the way a ventriloquist does. Bladh on stage is a contemporary mime lip-synching and mimicking Nilsen, observing meticulously all dramatic dichotomies: action/pause, gesture/hesitation, influence/resistance and suspense/surprise – a genesis of dramatic art in general. Bladh confides Nilsen using one's body as a metaphor, a frozen, what a symbolic tautology, or even dead metaphor¹ (it is a valid figure of speech by the way), though one should remember that metaphors suggest similarity and do not denote exact identity. The same is true about the photographs of the two Narcissist-grounded, Machiavellian-instigated and psychopathologically-driven karmic twins, Bladh and Nilsen.

Bladh's psychopathy bursts from a non-typical narcissistic dilemma: he idolises his body yet does not want it to be abused by someone else, ergo he methodically tortures himself which means the body is not a cult and his fancied submissions to be or not to be spared by a killer are extremely complicated evidence of his virginity pledge or surrogate apotheosis. Using art as a means of sublimation Bladh steadily progresses from incel-dom (being an incel,^[38] "involuntary celibate") toward martyrdom that includes spiritual celibacy and supremacy.

Next below are three tests to undergo and check oneself on the Mach-scale, Narcissus-scale, and Psycho-scale respectively (the results can be obtained within a second when online).

1 A metaphor that has occurred so often that it has become a new meaning of the expression. A figure of speech whose metaphorical meaning has become so familiar over time that its literal meaning is forgotten or goes unnoticed. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dead%20metaphor>

The MACH-IV Test^[39]

Developed in 1970 to measure Machiavelli's traits. 20 multiple questions, each with an answer to choose from the following: *Disagree/Slightly disagree/Neutral/Slightly agree/Agree*.

1) Most people who get ahead in the world lead clean, moral lives.

2) It is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there.

3) Honesty is the best policy in all cases.

4) Anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.

5) P. T. Barnum^[40] was wrong when he said that there's a sucker born every minute.

6) It is possible to be good in all respects.

7) The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.

8) People suffering from incurable diseases should have the choice of being put painlessly to death.

9) It is wise to flatter important people.

10) Most people forget more easily the death of their parents than the loss of their property.

11) It is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when they are given a chance.

12) One should take action only when sure it is morally right.

13) Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.

14) Most people are brave.

15) When you ask someone to do something for you, it is best to give the real reasons for wanting it rather than giving reasons which carry more weight.

16) There is no excuse for lying to someone else.

17) Generally speaking, people won't work hard unless they're forced to do so.

18) Most people are basically good and kind.

19) The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that the criminals are stupid enough to get caught.

20) All in all, it is better to be humble and honest than to be important and dishonest.

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory Test^[41]

Developed in 1979 for the measurement of narcissism as a personality trait in social psychological research. It is based on the definition of narcissistic personality disorder. The test consists of 40 pairs of statements. For each pair, you should select the one that you feel best reflects your personality.

1) I have a natural talent for influencing people.

I am not good at influencing people.

2) Modesty doesn't become me.

I am essentially a modest person.

3) I would do almost anything on a dare.

I tend to be a fairly cautious person.

4) When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed.

I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so.

5) The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me.

If I ruled the world it would be a better place.

6) I can usually talk my way out of anything.

I try to accept the consequences of my behaviour.

7) I prefer to blend in with the crowd.

I like to be the centre of attention.

8) I will be a success.

I am not too concerned about success.

9) I am no better or worse than most people.

I think I am a special person.

10) I am not sure if I would make a good leader.

I see myself as a good leader.

11) I am assertive.

I wish I were more assertive.

12) I like to have authority over other people.

I don't mind following orders.

13) I find it easy to manipulate people.

I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people.

14) I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.

I usually get the respect that I deserve.

15) I don't particularly like to show off my body.

I like to show off my body.

16) I can read people like a book.

People are sometimes hard to understand.

17) If I feel competent I am willing to take responsibility for making decisions.

I like to take responsibility for making decisions.

18) I just want to be reasonably happy.

I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world.

19) My body is nothing special.

I like to look at my body.

20) I try not to be a show off.

I will usually show off if I get the chance.

21) I always know what I am doing.

Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing.

22) I sometimes depend on people to get things done.

I rarely depend on anyone else to get things done.

23) Sometimes I tell good stories.

Everybody likes to hear my stories.

24) I expect a great deal from other people.

I like to do things for other people.

25) I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.

I take my satisfactions as they come.

26) Compliments embarrass me.

I like to be complimented.

27) I have a strong will to power.



Power for its own sake doesn't interest me.

28) I don't care about new fads and fashions.

I like to start new fads and fashions.

29) I like to look at myself in the mirror.

I am not particularly interested in looking at myself in the mirror.

30) I really like to be the centre of attention.

It makes me uncomfortable to be the centre of attention.

31) I can live my life in any way I want to.

People can't always live their lives in terms of what they want.

32) Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me.

People always seem to recognize my authority.

33) I would prefer to be a leader.

It makes little difference to me whether I am a leader or not.

34) I am going to be a great person.

I hope I am going to be successful.

35) People sometimes believe what I tell them.

I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.

36) I am a born leader.

Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop.

37) I wish somebody would someday write my biography.

I don't like people to pry into my life for any reason.

38) I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public.

I don't mind blending into the crowd when I go out in public.

39) I am more capable than other people.

There is a lot that I can learn from other people.

40) I am much like everybody else.

I am an extraordinary person.

The Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale Test^[42]

Developed in 1995 for use in psychological research. It measures on two scales: primary psychopathy (psychopathic emotional affect) and secondary psychopathy (psychopathic lifestyle). The test consists of 26 statements that could apply to you. You must rate each on how much you agree with it on a scale: *Strongly disagree/Disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/Agree/Strongly agree*.

1) Success is based on survival of the fittest; I am not concerned about the losers.

2) I find myself in the same kinds of trouble, time after time.

3) For me, what's right is whatever I can get away with.

4) I am often bored.

5) In today's world, I feel justified in doing anything I can get away with to succeed.

6) I find that I am able to pursue one goal for a long time.

7) My main purpose in life is getting as many goodies as I can.

8) I don't plan anything very far in advance.

9) Making a lot of money is my most important goal.

10) I quickly lose interest in tasks I start.

11) I let others worry about higher values; my main concern is with the bottom line.

12) Most of my problems are due to the fact that other people just don't understand me.

13) People who are stupid enough to get ripped off usually deserve it.

14) Before I do anything, I carefully consider the possible consequences.

15) Looking out for myself is my top priority.

16) I have been in a lot of shouting matches with other people.

17) I tell other people what they want to hear so that

they will do what I want them to do.

18) When I get frustrated, I often "let off steam" by blowing my top.

19) I would be upset if my success came at someone else's expense.

20) Love is overrated.

21) I often admire a really clever scam.

22) I make a point of trying not to hurt others in pursuit of my goals.

23) I enjoy manipulating other people's feelings.

24) I feel bad if my words or actions cause someone else to feel emotional pain.

25) Even if I were trying very hard to sell something, I wouldn't lie about it.

26) Cheating is not justified because it is unfair to others.

Bladh's tests results (with higher scores indicating more inclination towards corresponding traits):

Machiavellianism: **78/100**

Narcissism: **22/40**

Psychopathy: **2.7 & 2.2/5**

Interpretation of the results data:

Bladh scoring the highest on Machiavellianism means he tends to use his social charm to manipulate others, focused on self-interest, personal gain; scoring above average on Narcissism means he seeks admiration, expresses if chanced superiority and has an ongoing grandiose self-concept (but not aggrandisement) on the level of private access; scoring average/below average on Psychopathy shows a combination of controlled impulsivity paired with low-mid empathy.

Bladh's appearance is misleading because it is charismatic, a body expression and voice timbre including. A frequent use of a podium is typical for charisma disposition to launch tactics of banding audience together to achieve a particular goal. Bladh is ubiquitous (mercurial)

and prepotent on stage usually occupying the entire premise with either gestures or vocals which cluster like a magnet. When speaking his pronunciation is accentuated (distinct yet with a slight (natural born) Swedish accent) that adds to gain extra attention and interest boosting self-confidence. This captivating Mach-effect merges with well-balanced narcissist and psychotic features to present an enigmatic person who leads a double life: humble offstage and unrestrained onstage. Therefore, the Double concept works quite accurately in Bladh's persona to establish a unique rapport with others and charm the pants off.

Bladh pulls power via tête-à-tête and vis-a-vis type of performative interaction that induces a clickbait reaction – to know more about the artist. A paradox of his appearance is that beauty is only skin-deep yet what you see is what you get: it might be deceptive yet irresistible and genuine at the same time.

Mark. 9: 43-49 (2010)

Agenda & Action (original text & pictures):

Mark 9:43-49: ⁴³*If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.* ^{44 45}*And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.* ⁴⁶*And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell,* ⁴⁸*where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'* ⁴⁹*Everyone will be salted with fire."*

1.

talcum powder: torso - throat – face - arms

He was missing out on something

sertraline (25mg) - water

He thought himself not worthy

plastic glove (right hand)

He thought himself being chiefly responsible

cleansing - torso (right side)

He had always wanted to be an actor

razor – vinegar

He believed himself to be a fraud

incision - skin side - horizontal (right side)

He was an empty vessel

cleansing – skin side – horizontal (right side)

He lay open to desire

razor – vinegar

He insisted he was asexual

wine – water - albumin

He claimed that touch defiled

2.

ashes: torso - throat - face - arms

He owed it to his mother

aspirin (25mg) - water

He owed it to his father

cleansing - vinegar - right hand

He was the mirrored image of mother

cleansing - skin side - horizontal (right side)

He was the mirrored image of father

salt - skin side - horizontal (right side)

He often simulated injuries

milk - urine - yolk

He was afraid of being looked upon as a cheap thrill

hair - fire

He made clumsy attempts

ultraviolet light

He attempted to expiate the burning itch

3.

talcum powder: torso - throat - face - arms

He was the sole persecutor

sertraline (25mg) - water

He was the sole jury

cleansing - vinegar - right hand

He sought out a victim

cleansing - torso (right side)

He sought out an executioner

razor - vinegar

He would enact the role of victim

incision - skin side - vertical (right side)

He would enact the role of executioner

cleansing - skin side - vertical (right side)

He lost his voice among other voices

razor - vinegar

He invented a voice of his own

wine - water - albumin

He drilled himself into an instrument



Photographs by Mikael Oretoft





4.

ashes: torso – throat – face – arms

He maintained that he lived his words

aspirin (25mg) – water

He invented a language of his own

cleansing – vinegar - right hand

He invented a mythology of his own

cleansing – skin side – vertical (right side)

He invented heroes of his own

salt – skin side – horizontal (right side)

He made a heroic attempt

milk – urine – yolk

He brought about the amputation

ultraviolet light

He expressed no regrets

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/>

mark943492010

Analysis:

A stoic post-modernist performance executed in a cause || consequence manner is an artistic diptych in which re-evaluated biographical facts result in consequential actions aimed at transforming intimate into exhibitionist. The 3rd person narrative dissociation informs on the actor's vulnerability and self-discouragement by analogy and connotation: *missing out, not worthy, a fraud, empty, asexual, simulated, afraid of, cheap, clumsy, sole, victim, lost, amputation, no regrets*. Invoking a self-loathing image Bladh insults himself role-playing the ordeal to get atoned. Vows of celibacy and leprosy are implicitly credited, *touch defiled, burning itch*, to keep distance and be kept distance. Rearranging the shuffled text into a linear composition helps to trace a genesis of a self-made man, a heroic actor alongside rich mythology and language, into a self-cursed man responsible for a self-designed trap. Bladh's commitment to get out of the carnal predestination through sanguinary *heroic attempts* is distressing: a man does not want to be touched and therefore desecrates himself to block sexual energy (if anything is blocked it is being accumulated and gradually overpowers unconsciously). *To be an actor* is not an odd choice: an artificial temporarily lived-through role mobilises resources and accentuates the effect of accomplishment, finality. A desire of staged reality, surreality, hyperreality without clear-cut distinctions between what is true and false, is a self-imposed paradigm to be consumed by a perfect fabrication. Bladh is alive and real only on the stage; only in a highly decorative, ornamental milieu it is possible to let oneself loose, *brought about the amputation: cheap thrills* of the real world are a burden, but *empty* replicas of one's role model multiplied endlessly are a fundamental bliss, when reproduction substitutes engagement. The simulacrum of reality is more powerful because it stimulates the actor, whereas reality makes one simulate, *simulated injuries*. Bladh rejects old heroes and turns oneself into a hero, an "authentic fake", as

Umberto Eco said on hyperreal similarity so that the artist himself embodies the *jury* and passes an instrumental verdict to be fulfilled. The *empty vessel* is filled with flesh and bones: faked reality and authentic hyperreality collide in the act of cruelty, in a desperate need to obtain an ideal that does not exist.

The textual parallel construction of the practical operation upon one's body is a repetitive algorithm that includes interchanges of talcum powder and ashes cover, incision and cleansing exposure, wine, vinegar, urine and salt for acute pain and water, albumin, yolk, and milk for relief. The afore-mentioned ingredients are used in certain patterns and successions mixed with medicament alongside appropriate clinical ultraviolet light shrouded in smoke of burnt hair. The procedure utilises basic elements and is elemental in its core, unaffected and impersonal. Vertical and horizontal cuts on the front upper part of the torso crisscross to form a target image that imitates the transfixed Christ's wound. Bladh's face though remains calm, almost apathetic that modifies an obvious salvific leitmotif of the substitutionary sacrifice into a grotesque with a satirical undertone since there is nothing religious in the act, rather sacrilegious instead or apocryphal at least, so that the verses from the *Gospel of Mark* as a title of the performance are ambivalent for interpretation. Blood from a wound that flows in a rivulet down in any Bladh's performance can be viewed as the Eucharist and since a body dies the author reconsiders materiality of reality as dead.

Correlating the two perspectives – a cursed actor and an evangelist patient – Bladh casts himself in his most desirable metaphysical environment to dwell in indefinitely long. A cyclic structure of the performance reveals a limbo mythically inhibited with iconoclast lost souls, rotating in a circle, permanently attached to the core. A framed structure of the text seals this rotatory action: a self-oblivious actor in the foreground is left untouched.

The Death of Narcissus / The Death of Narcissus 2 / The Death of Narcissus 3 (2007)

Agenda & Action (*original text & pictures*):

The Death of Narcissus

Actors:

Actor.

Fellow Actor.

Film:

Matt 5: 29-30.

Music:

Study for a Theatre of Cruelty.

1 mattress,

1 white sheet,

1 mirror placed in the middle of the mattress,

2 ramps of footlights (at the head and foot of the mattress),

2 kidney-shaped metal bowls filled with human hair (each of them placed on the right respective left long side of the mattress, 1 m apart).

1 table (approximately 3 m from the mattress.)

On the table lie/stand:

1 bottle of talcum powder,

1 bottle of solvent liquid,

1 black rag,

1 plastic glove,

1 box of matches,

1 hammer,
1 pair of scissors,
1 Polaroid camera,
4 test tubes: milk, egg yolk, blood, water.

The film/music starts.
Lights.

The Actor enters, places himself behind the table.
He takes off his black clothes.

He is naked except of a jockstrap with dried bloodstains.

He powders his torso and the inside of his thighs with talcum powder.

He puts the plastic glove on his right hand.

He lies down on the mattress; places the groin on the mirror – legs apart, gripping his groin with his right hand.

The Fellow Actor wears a white protective suit and a protective green face-mask over his mouth.

Part 1:

The Fellow Actor pours solvent liquid on the rag and places it over the actor's face.

The Fellow Actor lights the hair in metal bowl 1.

The Fellow Actor pours the milk from test tube 1 on the mirror.

The Fellow Actor photographs the groin + mirror.

The Fellow Actor waits until the Polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it on the table.

Part 2:

The Fellow Actor pours the egg yolk from test tube 2 on the mirror.

The Fellow Actor photographs the groin + mirror.

The Fellow Actor waits until the Polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it on the table.

Part 3:

The Fellow Actor lights the hair in metal bowl 2.

The Fellow Actor pours the blood from test tube 3 on the mirror.

The Fellow Actor photographs the groin + mirror.

The Fellow Actor waits until the Polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it on the table.

Part 4:

The Fellow Actor pours the water from test tube 4 on the mirror.

The Fellow Actor smashes the mirror with a hammer blow.

The Fellow Actor photographs the groin + mirror.

The Fellow Actor waits until the Polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it on the table.

The film/music stops.

Lights out.

The Death of Narcissus 2

Actors:

Actor.

Fellow Actor.

Mattress:

1 white sheet covers the mattress.

2 mirrors (mirror 2 + 3) placed on the mattress head and foot.

2 ramps of footlights (stands above the head + foot of the mattress)

2 kidney-shaped metal bowls filled with human hair drenched in lightning fluid (bowl 1 + 2) (1 m from the left and right long sides of the mattress)

Table:

1 mirror (mirror 1) lies in the middle of the table (along its right long side).

1 egg + 1 white plastic glove lies on the mirror surface.

2 metal trays containing ashes + 1 polaroid camera stand above the mirror.

2 blood containers (1/2 + 2 L) stands beside the mirror (on the right side).

1 milk container (1 L) stand beside the mirror (on the left side).

Between the table and the mattress stands a large TV which shows the film Matt 5:29-30.

The movie soundtrack is played out loud through giant speakers (on the left and right side of the stage).

The Actor stands behind the table's right-hand side, he wears black clothes.

The Fellow Actor stands behind the table's left-hand side; he wears a white protective suit and a green protective face-mask covers his mouth.

Part 1:

Wolfgang Georg Fischer – Egon Schiele,^[43]

The Theater of the Self:

*In the oil **The Self-Seers** (**Death and Man**, 1911) there is a pale, hazy phantom image – as at a séance – behind the darker portrait in the foreground, and it is as if this phantom had been called up by the hand that rises from depths. The portrait sitter's eyes are wide in alarm, his eyebrows raised, as he sees his second image as Death behind him. The doppelgänger as mask and death mask; the opposition of the present and a menacing, fateful future. The recurring death motif in his work prompted Schiele to offer a written comment. For him, life and death were co-present, as the doppelgänger images imply. In a poem of 1910 or 1911, he*



wrote: "I am a man, I love death and love life."[...] For an artist to give such preferential treatment to his own body and face, to use his available person so insistently, to look so addictively into the studio mirror, is inconceivable if the artist is not also narcissistic beyond the usual.

The Actor takes off his clothes.

The Actor is naked, except for a jockstrap with dried bloodstains.

The Actor puts the plastic glove on his right hand, picks up the egg, crushes it in his hand and pours the yolk into his mouth.

The Actor kneels in front of the table/mirror, rests his head on mirror 1 and releases the egg yolk from his mouth onto the mirror's surface.

Polaroid: head/mirror.

The Fellow Actor waits until the polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it down on the table.

The Fellow Actor gives the scissors to the Actor.

The Actor kisses the mirror.

The Actor smashes the mirror with the handle of the scissors.

The Actor walks over to the mattress and lies down; head resting on mirror 2.

Part 2:

John Nathan – **Mishima, a biography:**

In mid-September Mishima posed for the young photographer Kishin Shinoyama for the first of a series of photographs called **Death of a Man**. The series was Mishima's inspiration and Mishima designed the scenes. They included Mishima drowning in mud, Mishima with a hatchet in his brain, Mishima beneath the wheels of a cement truck, and of course Mishima as Saint Sebastian, arms roped above his head to a tree branch and arrows burning deliciously into his armpit and flank. The photographs were intended for publication in a magazine called **Blood and Roses**, but when

Mishima died, Shinoyama could not bring himself to release them. The photograph that most unnerved him was one he had taken in jest; Mishima sits naked on the floor with a short sword buried in his abdomen, and standing behind him, with a long sword raised waiting to behead him on his signal, is Shinoyama. What can Mishima have been thinking? Were these moments when stage blood and the real thing became confused in his mind and he looked forward to his actual death as simply another more sensational pose? In all the hours of talk about each scene while it was being planned and photographed, Shinoyama's only impression was that Mishima was intensely serious about the project, "the most demanding and the most cooperative" model he had ever had.

The Fellow Actor lights the hair in metal bowl 1.

The Fellow Actor pours the milk from the container into the Actor's mouth.

The Actor coughs up the milk.

Photograph: head/mirror.

The Fellow Actor waits until the polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it down on the table.

The Fellow Actor gives the scissors to the Actor.

The Actor rises up on his hands and knees, grabs his scrotum and kisses the mirror.

The Actor smashes the mirror with the handle of the scissors.

The Actor rotates and lies down; head resting on mirror 3.

Part 3:

Jean-Luc Mercié – **Pierre Molinier**,^[44] **a retrospective:**

On the fixed date – 3 March – at the appointed time of 7:30 p.m., Molinier lay down across his bed in front of the mirror and shot himself in the mouth. This was the last encounter of Eros flouting Thanatos, eye to eye, until the final spasm of detonation. Baudelaire would have surely hailed the courage of this dandy, who lived and died in front of his mirror. An artist's scruples, a last concern for his appearance

prevented Molinier from photographing the fatal moment. It would have been easy for him to use string to attach the trigger – although he would have surely preferred the term “finger piece” – to attach the finger piece of the revolver to the cable release. He didn’t do it, undoubtedly so as not to leave the subtle operations of development and printing in the hands of strangers. What does exist, however – worlds apart from the Molinier method, for here, nothing is touched – are the photos for the Criminal Records Office. Only a handful of us have viewed them. A drizzle of blood runs from his nostril, another from the top of his skull. The gun’s kick sent the barrel back out of his mouth, and the Colt lies on his chest. One bullet and sputters of a flash were enough to wipe out any misunderstanding.

The Fellow Actor pours the blood from the container into the Actor’s mouth.

The Actor coughs up the blood.

Photograph: head/mirror.

The Fellow Actor waits until the polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it down on the table.

The Fellow Actor gives the scissors to the Actor.

The Actor rises on hands and knees, grabs his scrotum and kisses the mirror.

The Actor smashes the mirror with the handle of the scissors.

Part 4:

Dennis Nilsen quoted in Brian Masters’ – Killing for Company:

When I had the privacy of my own room as an N.C.O. [edit.: non-commissioned officer] sexual expression became more complex. The novelty of one’s own body soon wore off and I needed something positive to relate to. My imagination hit on the idea of using a mirror. By placing a large, long mirror on its side strategically beside the bed, I would view my own reclining reflection. At first always

careful not to show my head, because the situation needed that I believe it was someone else. I would give the reflection some animation, but that play could not be drawn out long enough. The fantasy could dwell much longer on a mirror image which was asleep.

The Actor lies on his stomach; face down, both hands on his groin.

The Fellow Actor lights the hair in metal bowl 2.

The Fellow Actor pours the ashes over the Actor.

Photograph: full body.

The Fellow Actor waits until the polaroid has developed, cuts it up with the scissors and puts it down on the table.

The music/film stops.

Lights out.

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/deathofnarcissus22007>

Analysis:

The scripted performance has three dimensions to focus: A a *textual memento*, a snippet taken from the memoirs on iconic figures to Bladh: Egon Schiele, an expressionist painter, Yukio Mishima, a decadent writer, Pierre Molinier, a fetish photographer, and Dennis Nilsen, a serial killer; B a *stage direction* for the actor and stagehand; C a *polaroid picture* that recreates the above-mentioned A and B phases by the actor. The props include a table with trays and containers, a mattress and three mirrors to be used in a certain succession (variants of the performance include additionally tubes with water and a hammer utilised likewise). The action is accompanied by a soundtrack taken from Bladh's movie *Matt 5:29-30* which is on during the performance. The action itself is an initiation ritual by a naked artist who is exposed to the following procedure: an egg's yolk sipping and releasing it onto the mirror, milk, and blood first drinking then coughing those up, and finally

ashes of burnt hair taken from a metal bowl scattered all over the actor's body; the mirrors after each stage are being smashed by an actor with the handle of the scissors while his body is photographed, the pictures put on the table. An actor, Bladh himself, kisses his reflection in the mirror before destroying it because initially an attractive self-exposure is deformed by vomiting reflexes, since the artist's face and body are covered in yolk, saliva, milk, blood, ashes intentionally self-provoked and monitored or supported by the stagehand to reproduce a gradual mortification of the self. The photos attest transformation, the final one represents the actor's semblance to a victim's corpse after an unnatural death, suicide or homicide based on the motivational memoirs of the phase A. Basically Bladh fantasises on self-annihilation through a repugnant yet visually impeccable action of a contemporary version of a Greek myth based on the self as a sexual object of obsession, hunted down yet unattainable.

Four artists mentioned in the contextual backdrop of the performance script are embodiments of an up-to-date Narcissus: all memorably transgress social conventions, ranging from reconsidering an age of consent to homosexuality meeting radical nationalism to boudoir transvestitism to mass murder psychology studied. Bladh seems to accept those as the only comprehensible and adequate because the very artists sacrificed themselves for their beliefs and what is more important did that in a highly aesthetic manner. A photograph of a controversial dead celebrity gives you a hard-on – isn't it a perversion? Of all millions swept away by 1918 Spanish flu epidemic one thinks of a 28-year old well accommodated post-war artist? A seppuku ritualised beheading is another reason to check one's reflection in the mirror? A photographer who made a dildo his object of fascination to be reproduced as a recognisable stylistic feature? A serial schizophrenic who murdered men is the only person in the world you want to interview? If you answer 'yes' then welcome aboard the ship

without destination yet en-route. Bladh is obsessed with death conceived artistically, recorded and framed when dying flesh still reacts and blood trickles to co-experience a sensation unimaginable, wild, true as if only a dead artist is a real artist – a death of Narcissus is a tragedy. It is not accidental homage or courtesy that human memory fixes both – dates of birth and death, the latter is presumably more lingering, as if an act of birth is forgettable whereas a rite of death is haunting and relevant, a code of self-identification. The artist identifies himself with the four dead personae through graphic development of the snapshots for a motive exposed yet cryptic. The fellow actor (a stagehand) wears a protective suit and face-mask to stay clear of the stage plague which defines the leading actor as a highly aggressive disease to handle with caution without getting in direct touch; for whatever reason even the very artist touches scissors hand-gloved provoking an association with a random serial killer's victim wearing one stocking left, missed. A maniac attention to one's physique and its environmental disposition throughout the action isn't simple accuracy – it is a ritual password of passage of the initiation that occurs once. There is no coming back or editing the footage: the previous scene is acted out and smashed to bits in the mirror that kept its record. In other words, a Narcissus destroys physical forms of oneself yet the problem is that the image he is obsessed with is in his mind, not in a reflection. Broken glass gives the actor a masochist pleasure in palpable pain yet it does not blind him spiritually to get rid of it altogether. The actor is handed down the scissors, an instrument of change, by the fellow actor in disguise and that establishes a type of relations in-between the two: assistance is integral and calculated, timing is, in fact, important. The fate of the actor is actually in the hands of the stagehand who provokes instrumental changes of the former: heterogenic in origin and appearance the two represent a hybrid form of interdependence.

A dead model poses perfectly because only death is real. Bladh wants to be remembered through a series of death shots since they bring about more personal data than life itself: the way one is captured dead in a photo, either staged or casual, reveals their individuality and tells a lot about. Now think about playing dead – does it mean a person emulates life? Now, moreover, think about the nature of a photograph in general: a person is always dead therein even if still is alive – the very effect of stillness turns any snapshot into a post-mortem memento, so paradoxically all photos are images of the dead. The stagehand develops polaroids of the actor – a transition process that probably should not be taken for granted since it is film processing that fixes the borderline between life and death.

A video backdrop of the performance is a direct reference to the biblical text, Matthew 5:29-30: *"29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."* A paraphrasis of earlier quoted Mark. 9: 43-49 and in spite of explicit claims of self-harm the text reinforces a hidden message behind a Narcissus myth – the mind's eye is the source of suffering, not an eye or hand as body parts, so dismemberment even if desirable is futile: the blind are leading the blind because they are sinners likewise. To redirect or avert oneself from stumbling is to literally accept an occult left-hand path, obsolete black magic, Crowley's leap into the abyss or, in contemporary terms, denunciation of imposed morality. Bladh assumably follows the biblical myth literatim since the movie based on the two quotations demonstrates alchemy of narcissist self-mutilation. Fanatically ardent and sincere the actor fails to comprehend that even broken mirrors reflect deformity through an act of self-cruelty emerges to fade in blackout and silence.

Death of Narcissus 3

Agenda & Action (*original text & pictures*):

A small table. On the table, the following items are placed: a bottle of talcum powder, a black lipstick, a box with black eye shadow, a bowl with mixed oil paint (darkly red), a couple of handcuffs.

A mirror, at least 100 cm long and 50 cm wide, positioned on the wall a couple of meters away from the table.

A mirror, at least 170 cm long and 80 cm wide, lying on the floor between the table and the wall mirror. Three scalpels are forming an arrow in the middle of its surface.

1.

Sound:

Media reports about the Dennis Nilsen case from 1983.

Spotlight:

M dressed only in black underwear and black socks positions himself behind the table, looking into the wall mirror in front of him.

M powders his upper body, torso, belly, arms, throat, and face with the talcum powder.

M paints his lips with the lipstick and darkens the area under his eyes with the black eye shadow.

M uses the oil-paint to simulate three bullet holes in his chest.

M puts on the handcuffs, places his hands in front of his groin, watching his reflection in the wall mirror.

Darkness 45 seconds.

2.

Sound:

High pitched noise, strings or electronics.

Spotlight:

M sits on his knees, head bowed, in the middle of the

floor mirror surface (the three scalpels lying in the space between his legs) watching his reflection.

M starts to move his cuffed hands around the mirror glass (he follows the outline of his face reflection like an Ouija board).

M pulls down his underwear underneath his knees.

M picks up the first scalpel and cuts a small x into his chest.

M picks up the second scalpel and cuts a small x into his chest.

M picks up the third scalpel and cuts a small x into his chest.

The xs correspond to the three faked bullet holes in the reversed order.

M lies down on top of the mirror surface, arms raised over his head.

M kisses his face reflection, leaving a black lipstick mark on the mirror surface.

M breaths on the surface causing condensation on the glass.

Darkness 45 seconds.

3.

Sound:

Home-recorded acapella version of Nick Drakes' *Black Eyed Dog*, old muffled tape.

Spotlight:

M has turned around on the mirror facing the ceiling, mouth open, eyes wide open.

Darkness.

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/island-of-death-2014>

Analysis:

In a recent variant of the performance, Bladh disguises his torso with talcum powder, paints his lips with a black

lipstick and darkens his eyes with the black eye shadow for contrast. Caught by two mirrors, on the wall and the floor, the artistic image is reproduced in several perspectives, generating a confusing illusion. The actor uses oil paint to simulate bullet holes on his chest, further used as marks wherein to cut small x symbols with the scalpels. Self-handcuffed the actor watches his reflection, moving his hands around the mirror surface, slowly bleeding. A kiss leaves a lipstick trace on the mirror glass, smeared and condensed. The performance ends in the actor turning around on the mirror to face the ceiling, mouth, and eyes wide open, resembling a dead body. The spotlight action is accompanied by two sound ambiances: media reports on Dennis Nilsen, a serial killer, in the beginning, and an old half-muted tape of *Black-Eyed Dog* song at the end of the scene. Basically, Bladh reconstructs some final moments of the serial killer's victim, self-identifying with on the physical level. The obsession with oneself in this version is more pensive than ruinous, involuntary convulsions replaced with meditative gestures in prolongation: such beatification of the horrific act is reminiscent of how it might have been perceived by the killer, so the actor, in fact, reproduces mental processes not of the victimised, but the one who idealises his victim, the killer.

In all three variants Bladh examines a body and its ultimate extension, a corpse. Interest in hanged, disembowelled or decapitated corpses is, actually, academic, especially when it comes to the origin of tragedy as a genre that brings in dead bodies on the theatrical stage. Before entering the playhouse premises a corpse is publicly displayed via capital punishment, for example in Renaissance England, attracting crowds. A curious fact is that first permanent theatres in London are constructed during the same period, late 16th c., as the first stationary sites for public executions.^[45] Bladh develops an insatiable taste for body transformation into corpse through a variety of violent acts against the body causing horror

and sympathy on the audience's behalf alike: the texts are extremely anatomical, cadaverous and intimate at the same time. Such a myriad of emotions the very early playgoers might experience back in the day is still relevant today. An anatomical illustration of the bodily vulnerability in Bladh's presentation is essential: the body, even in a corpse form, is still animated on the stage and retains its performative theatricality personifying death as a signifier of universal impersonation. The corpse for an incomprehensible reason has more power than an alive character and serves as a catalyst of cruelty and violence capacities to explode. The corpse disrupts a course of life and brings epistemological inaction into an actionist performance. Christian mythology, mentioned above in Mark or Matthew's gospels, centres rejection of the human body and instead imposes idealisation of the afterlife, life of the corpse after death, its presence in a special form of idiosyncratic reality – necrorealism. Without delving into theological speculation Bladh surprisingly emerges as a contemporary Puritan reformer with adherence to the text and its materialisation in action. The corpse is transcendental: beautification of the dead to resurrect. Bladh does not hide the dead in the sheets or a coffin but wishes to be seen in a slow degeneration, disfigurement, demystifying a natural process because the actor in corpse-paint is the very mediator: the corpse does not defy the law of nature.

Self-harm is legally sanctioned and authorial overindulgence of the carnal aesthetic is a self-conscious reflection in Bladh's silent era theatre (the focus is always on visual, and never on the verbal spectacle). Starting with the Globe Theatre back in the 16th c. bones, intestines, and blood of dead animals are used for special effects, so revisiting this old-established convention Bladh particularly concentrates on blood, since *the life of all flesh is its blood* (Leviticus 17:13-14). The orthodox tradition strictly forbids to consume animal blood as it is the ransom the believers pay God at the altar through a sacrifice of a beast. Blood and

Bladh are homophones of the vital principle since animal blood is subordinate, instrumental, and human blood of the actor is the true price offered: blood is expiatory, a means of atonement. From drips to flows, a dramatic effect blood causes to astound the audience can not be underestimated yet there is something meta-theatrical in Bladh's approach that separates him from a merely sensationalistic 20th c. Theatre le Grand Guignol which mixed glycerine with carmine to get fake blood to shock en masse. Bladh loses his blood, vigour, energy to glorify the corpse transformation mixed with unbearable sight, smell and touch of the animal from the slaughterhouse when animalist and humanist substances mingle.

The Grand-Guignol^[46]

Théâtre du Grand-Guignol in Paris (1897-1962) is an iconic 'Theatre of Horror', a legend showing explicit violence and blood-freezing terror that a local doctor is called for to treat the numerous visitors who faint during performances. Idiomatically, the phrase '*grand-guignolesque*' has entered the everyday language to describe a display of tightened, ruthless horror. An in-depth analysis of the Grand-Guignol reveals a theatre that presents an extreme repertoire of trademark mini-plays, 'horror' drama with comedies in the French social satire tradition. The plays are model works of one or two-act drama presenting a dexterous control of dramatic tempo and conciseness, and requiring an original use of stage technologies, and a troupe of multifaceted performers. The Grand-Guignol has an extraordinary place in the history of popular theatre established by the powerful composite of its location and design, its repertoire and stagecraft, reputation and rumour.

The Grand-Guignol is an almost obliterated theatrical tradition with an incalculable, yet substantive, impact on other dramatic and cinematic genres. Particularly remarkable is its use of and influence on other forms. This

is apparent in the way in which it unionised nineteenth-century melodrama (especially the sensational nature of the crime genre of the *Boulevard du Temple* theatres), contriving it for the twentieth century. Furthermore, it drew on the avant-garde modes of naturalism and rough *Théâtre Libre's comédies rosses* (heinous revelations of the depravity and bestiality *dies rosses* (depictions of the Parisian underworld)), the polished simplicity of symbolism, the mood, and style of expressionism and even the disruptive violence of surrealism. Ultimately, it would proceed to determine the poetics of successive suspense drama and a wide spectre of movies of the horror and thriller genres.

Initially, the Grand-Guignol is a theatre that utilises the passant 'reality' of naturalism in its dramaturgy. A performance at the Grand-Guignol strives to terrify and tickle the spectator through a mixture of consternation, laughter and the amatory. A typical evening's show reveals a psychological expertise of the contemporary audience's fears, taboos, and desires to problematise the relationship with the amusement of bourgeois morality.

The Grand-Guignol has a small stage so that the audience in the front row can shake the hands of the performers, an indication of both intimate and claustrophobic nature of the auditorium. The stage is strictly proscenium, a forestage (invaluable for the effective special effects) and the confinements of the stage area restrict action and setting thus dictating the plays written for it: frequently set in prison or asylum cells, execution courtyards, lighthouses, barbershops, opium hideouts, apartments in brothels, or operation rooms. This oppressive phobia is exploited to the full, whether the audience is witnessing a victim trapped in a chamber with a lunatic or under a surgeon's stiletto; the close space is used to increase panic and encroaching menace either from beyond the wall or coming naturally from within.

The Grand-Guignol scenery and stage itself look

naturalistic, the gestures and expressions are amplified to the extreme, the use of make-up is exaggerated, reminiscent of German expressionism. The Theatre of Horror is famous for its morbid glamour and tricks far from a simplistic gore-fest splatter show, but rather amazingly crafted realist works, slick comedies that demand technical grandeur and an enormously focused performance art (intensity, energy, and precision).

This is achieved by the use of dramatic irony and recognizable narrative structures, allowing the audience to anticipate the anagnorisis. The process of suspense and tension become fretted since it is not a question of what is forthcoming, but rather when and how. Furthermore, when it does happen, this is intensified by suggestion in the speech and the nature of its delivery, allowing the audience to 'see' things that are fictional. This brings into account the concept of the desirable suspension of disbelief, reflecting the compelling mechanics of the dramatic expectation narrative and the audience's participation in creating the illusion to be visualised: the spectators are active participants implicated in the creative process of effect and meaning. Therefore, the so-called fourth wall is dismantled and the true meaning is actualised in the space between audience and performer, thus representing a break from the naturalist tradition where the audience is passive observers of real-life drama.

The Theatre of Horror is not Gothic, though gruesome, it rather requires sadists than monsters. Rarely does the Grand-Guignol explore the supernatural: its horror presents an unremittingly realistic depiction of the worst excesses of the human-animal via death, insanity, and sex, sharing an obsession with the excesses of the savagery and its potential: a veritable extrapolation of *la bête humaine*, the human beast. The psychological motivation of the Grand-Guignol action in horror or comedy is instigated by primal instincts, or unpredictable mania, compounded by grotesque coincidence or haunting irony.

The Grand-Guignol is a twentieth-century phenomenon

and helps to state its moral complexity. It is an updated form of melodrama into a post-Nietzschean world: the elements that drive the universe are presented as a problem and not as a black and white struggle between good and evil – a godless universe where determined boundaries are blurred and our instinctual or nurtured polarities become interdependent as principles of pleasure and pain.

The Grand-Guignol usually follows a traditional moral structure, partly due to the very Guignol, an allegorical puppet, a part of the French theatrical lore. Hence the flawed and hypocritical are punished, those who lived by the sword meet an appropriate nemesis in true moral fable style. Yet a more accurate interpretation of the Grand-Guignol is that of a morally erratic performance, set in an indifferent universe with no justice but retribution, albeit far from divine. This explains the theatre's ambition for mimesis both in the verisimilitude of violence and reflection of the crises of modern consciousness in a nihilistic world.

As for the Grand-Guignol's explicit moments of carnage, there is an enthralling parallel between its graphic demonstration of taboo, a body *in extremis* (at the point of death) and the performance art itself inviting the spectator to undergo pain or pleasure to investigate the sexual, social and moral values in their legibly modern/postmodern contexts. It would definitely be naive to assume that performance practice at the Grand-Guignol remained unchanged throughout its sixty-five-year history: it continually redefines itself tilting towards cultural and technological changes in society. Nevertheless, what emerges from a speculation of the Grand-Guignol is that it is essentially a theatre of contradictions: naturalism meets melodrama, physical action – dramaturgy, visible and invisible collide, anticipation breaks in surprise, familiarity – in strangeness and disgust – in titillation.

<http://www.grandguignol.com/>

Three Studies for a Crucifixion (2007)

Agenda & Action (original text & pictures):

A passion-play by Martin Bladh & Bo I. Cavefors^[47] in three acts dedicated to Francis Bacon.^[48]

Actors: Bo I. Cavefors, Martin Bladh, the Whip Man, the Naked Man, the Fellow Actor/Executioner.

Act 1

Music: organ drone.

Spotlight; a microphone on the edge of the stage. On the floor next to the microphone the following items are placed: a bottle with body oil, an empty leather pouch and a director's chair. Above the microphone, from the ceiling hangs a naked light bulb.

Five minutes: darkness and organ drone.

A large wall projection of the left panel of Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* (two men, one wears a dark suit, the other is naked) starts to materialise on the wall behind the stage during these five minutes.

Bo enters, wearing dark trousers with a leather-strap, dark jacket, necktie, white shirt and glasses (association: Francis Bacon's *The Man in Blue Studies*, 1954). Bo positions himself behind the microphone.

Tattooed Naked Man enters the stage; his body has been powdered with talcum powder. He positions himself on the right side of the microphone, where two kidney-shaped metal bowels stand; one contains human hair, the other 1 litre of blood. He sets fire to the hair in the metal bowl with a match. Another tattooed Naked Man – the Whip Man, enters the stage from the auditorium. The Whip Man positions himself directly behind Bo.

Bo takes off his glasses, takes the leather-strap from his trousers and gives it to the Whip Man, takes his clothes off,

and puts them on the director's chair. A stagehand takes away the clothes. Bo takes off his cock rings and puts them in the leather pouch which is placed on the chair (= totally naked, shaved, etc.) (association: Francis Bacon's *Study for the Human Body*, 1949). The music/organ drone fades out when Bo is completely naked. Silence. Foreskin pulled á la greque. Bo stands still, non-active, provocative.

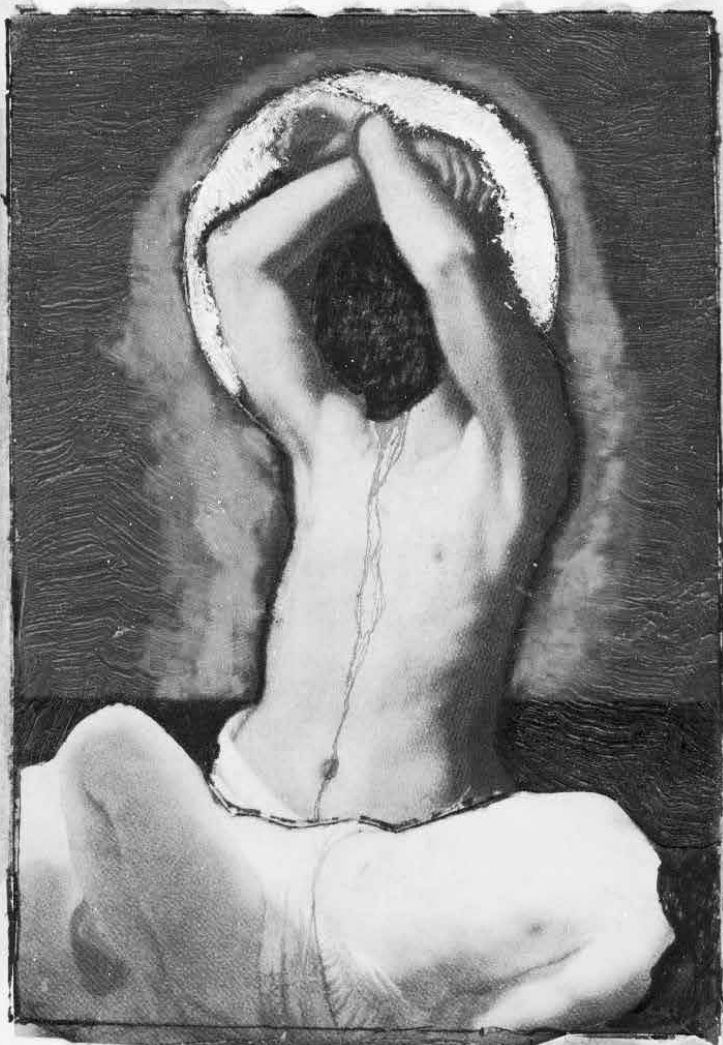
Bo smears the body oil all over his body, in his anus, masturbates slowly, dreamy, pleasurably, pulls the foreskin back: cock-head visible, lies down on his back with his legs drawn upwards towards his body, shows the audience his anus, starts to masturbate, the Whip Man strokes the anus with the leather-strap, the strap wanders over Bo's cock, belly and chest up towards his mouth, Bo sucks the strap. Bo rises to his feet and continues to masturbate while reading.

Bo starts to read his text *The Miracle*:

I will tell you a story. Once upon a time, about two hundred years ago. The story takes place in a little town in northern Italy, in Piemonte. In the outskirts of the town, there was an old marble tower. There the authorities had placed a leprous man and his sister, who also was a leper. The sister died. The leprous man felt ashamed of his sickness, although the upholders of the law claimed that all shame had been extinct, that no one had anything to be ashamed of anymore. The Leper thought about killing himself, but the fear of God's wrath prevented him. So, by mere chance, the Leper was saved from eternal damnation. During the days the leper meditated, admired the roses his sister had planted, enjoyed the beautiful view of the valley and the town in the distance. The only company the Leper enjoyed was during those rare occasions when a traveller stopped by, and from a safe distance, spoke with him.

Bo moves to the left side of the stage. Sits down on the chair, places his right leg over the left (association: Francis Bacon's *George Dyer with Dog*, 1968 and *Portrait of John Edwards*, 1988). Caresses himself, spreads the legs,

bladh/cavefors: tre studier för en korsfästelse
ett passionsdrama i tre akter.



three studies for a crucifixion: (left panel)

masturbates pleasurably and continues to read:

No, it wasn't really that bad. A little dog had joined the Leper. Why the dog had sought sanctuary at the Leper's side no one knows. The leper claimed that it might be because the dog was as ugly as himself. The dog had been thrown out, and had also been rejected by the people, who had terrorised it, harassed it, bad-mouthed and taunted it. But to the Leper the dog was worth its weight in gold. Out of gratitude for the mercy that God had showed by giving him the dog, the Leper called him the Miracle. A rather awkward name for such an ugly dog. A mongrel, tangled, limp, dirty. A bastard. A bastard. (Bo shows his erect cock.) But the Miracle was like every other male dog. Sometimes he escaped to the town in the valley. Away from the Leper in his marble tower. What was the Miracle doing there? He did what every other male dog who sought freedom does. He was fucking. Preferably other male dogs. The Miracle lived the same life of transgression which Gombrowicz speaks about in his books, especially in his memoirs. And which the painter Francis Bacon depicts in his religious paintings of men making love. Men making love, but always in the presence of God. The Miracle was hovering between the safety, the meditative stillness, love, and gloominess of the Leper in his square-shaped tower of white marble, and the wild and swinging sexuality that was practised in the parks and backyards of the town. Some of the town citizens, embittered revolutionaries, became upset, indignant of the Miracle's freedom, and filled an acclaim of his behaviour to the town council, they wrote long letters to the local newspaper and announced a petition to get the Miracle out of the town. Shouting: get the Miracle out of this town! But the Miracle wasn't just limp and crippled and a dirty bastard, his hearing wasn't very good either. So the Miracle stayed in the parks and backyards as long as he dared to before he finally was forced to seek shelter in the Leper's tower. Later on, the aggravated moralists claim that they didn't want to get rid of the Miracle because he was a dog,

but because they were afraid that he was spreading an infection, that the Leper's disease could spread from the Miracle to the town citizens. But all these explanations were nothing more than excuses. The truth is that their anger was nothing more than pure jealousy directed towards the Miracle's anarchistic freedom. They said that the Miracle should be ashamed. Ashamed of what?

The organ drone returns. Rising slowly, when Bo reads the line "*The truth is that their anger...*" to reach its full power when the reading is finished.

Bo rises from the chair, walks towards the audience, provocatively; his cock is erect. In the meantime the Whip Man leaves his station and walks over to Bo, strokes him with the strap. Bo falls down to his knees, licks the Whip Man's scrotum, sucks his cock, caresses him (association: Francis Bacon's *Study for a Nude*, 1951). The Whip Man walks around Bo and starts to whip him with the leather-strap. The Whip Man puts the strap around Bo's throat when he reaches the section of the text where the soldiers and the Miracle leave the Leper. The organ drone fades to a whisper. Whipping alternately stroking intensifies along with Bo's masturbation during the reading of the following text section. Bo ejaculates during the reading. Collects the sperm in his cupped hand, licks it up, and smears some of it over his body. At the same time the Naked Man stationed by the kidney-shaped metal bowls pours the blood over his head (alternative: pours the blood into his mouth and lets it flow, slowly in a rivulet over his chest down to his feet).

These moralists had a couple of years earlier like French revolutionaries marched under the banners and craved for liberté, fraternité and l'amour. Now, united together for a mutual attack against the Miracle's freedom. They paid their respect to the town commandant, who was depending on the citizen's loyalty and tax revenues. The commandant gave the order that the Miracle should be put to death, to be killed, immediately. A couple of soldiers accompanied by these moralising citizens went up to the Leper's tower

to execute the cruel order. The soldiers ordered the Leper to surrender the Miracle to them. They referred to some section of a law that states: it is forbidden to hide fucking dogs. They could be disease carriers. In the presence of the Leper they fetched a heavy rope around the Miracle's neck and dragged him along with them. When the soldiers, the lynch-mob and the Miracle passed the gate in the wall that surrounded the white marble tower, the Miracle turns around and looks back at the Leper with helpless, begging eyes. But the Leper doesn't do anything to help or try to save his friend... The soldiers' intention was to drown the Miracle in the river that runs through the valley, but the mob was already there when they arrived, the rabble, the bourgeois traitors were already there carrying rocks in their hands and they killed the Miracle with these rocks. The Miracle was stoned to death. The Leper could hear his friend's cry. But he returned to his cell in the marble tower. His trembling knees could hardly hold him up. He throws himself on the bed. Shed some tears. OK. For the second time this day he betrayed the Miracle. Later on, the Leper claims that he, in the order to execute the dog can't see anything but the cruel moralising and the barbarisms of the authority in charge. But the Leper doesn't realise, he might not even suspect that the Miracle was only the first victim, and that he, the Leper, could be the next victim and then follows victim after victim after victim of deviants who do not fit into the aggravated citizens' - in the new moralists and the authorities' normative hysteria. These dissidents are growing tumours in the body of society. Maybe the fags want to rape the animals, cute little puppets. How do we make action out of words? How do we remove these tumours? Through decapitation or the electric chair, like in Texas? With rat poison? The Leper himself became a victim of this mass hysteria, of this immoral morality which is being preached by newspaper journalists, preachers, and neo-Nazis, when he later says that he is ashamed of his sentimentality. Ashamed, ashamed! Ashamed of his

sentimentality! Ashamed of the shame of being born...

Lights out.

Total darkness.

Act 2

Music: the organ drone has increased in power and is empowered by a harsh piano cord (IRM's *Sebastian* (instrumental, high volume)).

Projection: Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*, mid-panel (alone, naked man in a bed).

Spotlight lights up the bed placed in the middle of the stage. The bed is made with white sheets, pillows, and blankets. Rows of light bulbs have been fastened to the bedsteads, which are lit as soon as Act 2 begins (association: a theatre stage (a stage on the stage), an altar of sacrifice, martyrdom: Christ/Sebastian; slaughtered cattle, peep show, blood-red curtains). Martin lays naked (except for a jockstrap with dried bloodstains on it) in the bed.

Martin's body posture imitates the Bacon painting. Upon Martin's stomach lays an intestinal canal filled with faeces. At the head of the bed stands the Fellow Actor dressed in a white protection overall, a pair of plastic gloves and a green face mask protects him from the risk of infection (association: surgeon, executioner, coroner picking bodies after a tsunami catastrophe).

Behind the Fellow Actor stands a small table. On the table are: ten containers of blood containing 5 litres (association: an adult human contains approximately five litres of blood), a plastic tube with a funnel, a sponge drenched in vinegar.

The Fellow Actor rinses his hands with the sponge. The Fellow Actor inserts the plastic tube into Martin's mouth. The Fellow Actor pours the blood from the container down into the funnel; the blood runs through the tube into Martin's mouth. Martin inserts his right hand into the intestinal canal; kneads it, gently, sensually. Martin releases the

blood from his mouth, it pours out into bed, undramatically. After each litre of blood has been consumed the Fellow Actor walks over to the bed and rinses Martin's mouth with the sponge. When 2 litres have been consumed the action starts to become more intense and violent; Martin vomits and spits out the blood, which splashes in every direction. Martin kneads the intestine canal more and more violently until it bursts and the faeces pour out into the bed. To conclude the action, the Fellow Actor rinses his hands with the sponge.

The Naked Man follows the course of events, he walks over to the bed by the end of the act, takes Martin's right hand, kisses it, kneels and remains in this position during the rest of Act 2 and during the whole last act (like a mourner at the foot of the cross).

During the whole second act Bo and the Whip Man continue to act. Mutual masturbating, kissing, caressing. Meditative, dreamy, non-active. When Martin's act becomes more intense and violent, they start to copulate. After the sex act is over the Whip Man rises to his feet, lights a cigarette, spills the ashes over Bo.

Lights out.

The music stops.

Act 3

Projection: Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*, right panel (crucified animal/human carcass).

An intense light lights up Martin's lifeless body in the bed, the Fellow Actor has covered Martin's face with a white rag (association: a public execution; "evisceriato", lustmord; Jack the Ripper's last victim Mary Kelly, a spectacular accident).

After a couple of minutes the Whip Man leaves his place at Bo's side, walks over to the bed's left side, takes Martin's left hand into his, kneels and remains in this position during the rest of the act. The Whip Man and the

blad/cavefors: tre studier för en korsfästelse
att passionens drama i tre akter



(Handwritten text, mostly illegible)



three studies for a crucifixion: (mid panel)

Naked Man smear their faces, chests, and arms with the "holy" communion – blood, flesh, faeces. Finally they bury their faces in the bloody sheets and blankets of the bed. Stillness.

After a couple of minutes before the third act is finished Bo rises to his feet, walks over to the bed and lies down upon Martin, chest to chest, and remains in this position until the end. Stillness – a living sculpture (association: Muybridge's *The Human Figure in Motion* (naked wrestlers), 1887; Francis Bacon's *Two Figures*, 1953 and *The Two Figures in the Grass*, 1954).

Alternative, Bo walks over to the bed, the Naked Man and the Whip Man rise up, offer their cocks to Bo who sucks them and smears the sperm over his body.

Music: Bo's prerecorded voice reads *Revolt in the Kasbah*:

The empire of the great moguls were stronger than ever: immoral power had been transformed into morality, ethic replaced by rhetoric. The freedom being degraded into the right of being supervised and the society was ruled by two classes, the ruling class and the classless ones that didn't even have any mutual belonging. Only true morals can replace the morality and join the classless ones in the struggle against the immorality which the great moguls proclaim as morality, where the unwillingness towards humanity was clouded by a shameless exposing of pitiless humanism. In a situation like this, the Kasbah has to be liberated and the beige clad people delivered to be united with the classless ones, the outcasts, so that love becomes love, my brother my brother, my sister my sister.

The banners of the revolution are fluttering and the charismatic, flexible, young tiger leads the army of the infected and unwanted towards victory. When the sun rises in the east, when a new day dawns after the night has been endured, he brings together aids victims, blackheads, skinheads, disabled and cripples, Jews and Arabs, excluded bureaucrats, starving seniors, fools and terrorists,

unemployed tiger cubs and all those that have been hidden behind the training suits body armour. There he stands; legs wide apart, jeans unzipped; pulled down, caressing his yellow-brown thighs, stretching his beautiful cock, exposing the solid ribcage, giving the word for departure.

With twigs thrashing their backs, the leather straps flogging their naked buttocks, following the intense bellow of trumpets the crowd of flagellants march through the Kasbah gates. Wearing fool's motleys, with nails and lips tarnished in black, with green eyelids, with rings in their ears and around their ankles, with hair flaming in all the colours of the rainbow, with moist wide open vulvas filled to the brim with lingonberry sprigs and blossoming heather, with beauteous cocks, the heads of which are swollen as mellow blue plums, tempting every famished bird to pick its beak bloody. The army of the tiger marches out of the city, over the meadows, through the forests, away from society's tentacles, escaping the politicians purging bath of rosary water and she-ass milk. They leave the society that denounces them, that rejects them, and through organised debauchery experience a new night's ecstasy, where sublimation is replaced by orgasms as mighty as the cock in the same moment the juice gushes out to flood-swollen lips.

What can police and security companies, great moguls, rubber batons, teargas, and water cannons do against an army of sufferers, where every new affliction increases the ecstasy, makes the pain sweeter when death delivers and collective dying reconciles?

Marquis de Sade speaks about a must which shock civil masochists, but is it not these tears of passion that make extremely good excesses grow.

Music: an overwhelming noise collage adjusted to the reading. Reaches its climax when Bo's voice fades out.

Lights out. Music stops.

Lights on. Applause, but all the actors remain in the same position as during Act 3.

This could be repeated three times.

When darkness falls for the last time the actors disappear into the back-stage area.

(Translation from Swedish by Martin Bladh).

Appendix:

Appendix 1.

Lyndy Abraham – A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery:

Leprosy: the disease of metals, the impurity which metals have contracted in the mines of the earth where they are formed. The alchemists apply the epithet "leprous" to the "imperfect" metals (iron, copper, tin and lead), which have not yet matured into silver or gold. Thomas Tymme wrote: "Imperfect metals are in fact Gold and Silver, but their sickness and imperfections do hide their properties, which imperfections and sicknesses proceed of the causes... All these leprosy come by mixture of divers Sulphurs corrupting them, which was in their Mynes." According to the alchemists, ordinary fire cannot purge and cleanse the impurity from metals. This can only be done through the secret fire of the opus. These sick metals wrote Tymme, can only be transmuted into silver and gold if they are cured by the true medicine." Therefore as a sick man taking medicine is made sound, only by alteration... so metalline bodies, by the true medicine altering them, are made perfect and become pure and good Gold and Silver. The miraculous panacea or medicine which cures the leprous metals of their corruption and transmutes them into gold is the philosopher's stone or elixir.

Appendix 2.

Anonymous young male prostitute quoted from Michel Dorais *Rent Boys*:

"Clients are brutal with me at times, especially the big tough ones. They get violent when I suck them off. They hold my head and jam their dick down my throat until I

choke. When I have anal sex, some of them try to hurt me on purpose, as if they wanted to bust me open."

Appendix 3.

Francis Bacon – The Brutality of Facts, Interviews with David Sylvester:

"I've always been very moved by pictures about slaughterhouses and meat, and to me, they belong very much to the whole thing of the crucifixion. There've been extraordinary photographs which have been done of animals just being taken up before they were slaughtered; and the smell of death. We don't know, of course, but it appears by these photographs that they're so aware of what's going to happen to them, they do everything to attempt to escape. I think that these pictures were very much based on that kind of thing, which to me is very, very near this whole thing of the crucifixion." [...] "Well, of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher's shop I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal."

Appendix 4.

Dr Thomas Bond Autopsy-protocol Mary Kelly:

"The face was gashed in all directions the nose cheeks, eyebrows and ears being partly removed. The lips were blanched & cut by several incisions running obliquely down to the chin. There were also numerous cuts extending irregularly across all the features. The neck was cut through the skin & other tissues right down to the vertebrae the 5th & 6th being deeply notched. The skin cuts in the front of the neck showed distinct ecchymosis. The air passage was cut at the lower part of the larynx through the cricoid cartilage. Both breasts were removed by more or less circular incisions, the muscles down to the ribs being attached to the breasts. The intercostals between the 4th, 5th & 6th ribs were cut through & the contents of the thorax visible through the openings. The skin & tissues of the abdomen from the costal arch to the pubes were removed in three large flaps. The

right thigh was denuded in front to the bone, the flap of skin, including the external organs of generation & part of the right buttock. The left thigh was stripped of skin, fascia & muscles as far as the knee. The left calf showed a long gash through skin & tissues to the deep muscles & reaching from the knee to 5 ins above the ankle. Both arms & forearms had extensive & jagged wounds. The right thumb showed a small superficial incision about 1 in long, with extravasation of blood in the skin & there were several abrasions on the back of the hand moreover showing the same condition. On opening the thorax it was found that the right lung was minimally adherent by old firm adhesions. The lower part of the lung was broken & torn away. The left lung was intact: it was adherent at the apex & there were a few adhesions over the side. In the substances of the lung were several nodules of consolidation. The Pericardium was open below & the Heart absent. In the abdominal cavity was some partially digested food of fish & potatoes & similar food was found in the remains of the stomach attached to the intestines."

Appendix 5.

Francis Bacon quoted in an interview with Peter Beard:

"If you see someone lying on the pavement in the sunlight, with the blood streaming from him, that is in itself – the colour of the blood against the pavement – very invigorating... exhilarating... In all the motor accidents I've seen, people strewn across the road, the first thing you think of is the strange beauty – the vision of it, before you try to do anything. It's to do with the unusualness of it. I once saw a bad car accident on a large road, and the bodies were strewn about with broken glass from the car, and the blood and various possessions, and it was in fact very beautiful. I think the beauty in it is terribly elusive, but it just happened to be in the disposition of the bodies, the way they lay and the blood, and perhaps it was also because it was not a thing one was used to seeing... It was midday, when the sun was very strong and on a white road."

Analysis:

Based on two preliminary actions *Deadringer/Deadringer 2* (2006),¹ this is, hands down, the most provocative collaboration (written by Cavefors and staged by Bladh) incorporating acts of masturbation, fellatio, and homosexual coitus, R-rated per se. Despite a taboo subject matter, the play is controversy that breaks the barriers of genteel respectability using, now accepted as conventional, in-yer-face aesthetics in bold actionism. Nudity, sexual arousal, and ejaculation, mostly imitated on the stage, are not meant to offend though such lascivious behaviour erases the borderline between lechery and lust, both viewed as an obscenity by the prevalent morality. It is interesting to note that the word is derived from the Latin *obscaena* (theatre-related: *offstage*) when potentially offensive content, such as murder or sex, is depicted offstage in classical drama. In contemporary drama, instead, nothing is left to the audience's imagination; censorship, self-censorship including, lifted whereas freedom of expression is absolute. Either licentious, libidinous or liberating the homophile act is only a part of the reproduced triptych performance based on Bacon's *Crucifixion* so that three actions are shown simultaneously as separate panels impossible to avoid or exclude – eliminating one part of the trinity would compromise integrity. The spatial multi-dimensionality of the stage Bladh frames in a flat picture to commemorate every body's posture as an artwork, reproducing Bacon's panels.

Tripled visually the play is further split into double

¹ *Dead ringer* is an English idiom for "an exact 100% duplicate", derived from 19th c. horse-racing slang for a horse disguised under a false name and pedigree to defraud the bookies; *ringer*, a term for a duplicate, usually with implications of dishonesty (originates from a medieval British belief that when a person dies his spirit walks to his birthplace and rings a bell signalling the end of the physical life) and *dead* in this case means *precise* (as adverb, informal, when used to mean *very*, or formal to mean *absolutely, completely, exactly, straight, or directly*).

textually, introducing a parable within a play to set rich polyperspectivity. Genrewise the play is credited as a 'passion-play' to stimulate the subconscious and the irrational by the quasi-sensuous content even if it is imperfect in physical representation. From the stage design to the props to the special effects the play is an epitome of Bladh's dramaturgy. The allegorical characters (the Naked Man, the Whip Man, the Leper, the Executioner) are almost abstract: static, flat, one-dimensional, silent, self-absorbed. Their gestures and actions are mechanical, puppet-like, obtrusively repetitive and superficial (i.e. during an act of intercourse the actors remain *meditative* and *non-active* or Bladh, when is fed with blood to spit it, keeps his posture *undramatically*). Bacon's figurative and extremely distorted art is sublimed, in fact, asexually: passion mentioned in the title is a farce, rudimentary, unrequired or useless even when summoned. The omnipotent nakedness serves as an attribute of impotent sterility, routine, casualty, a reaction to the erotic potential; therefore passion should be sought elsewhere, but not in physical denominator.

A series of artistic associations, Bacon-related, are signifiers of central prostration of the action broken only in the final act when the actors cross the would-be frontiers of the panels and assemble in the mid-section. So popular in the Western tradition and religiously canonical the crux of the crucifixion is idolisation of a body on the cross, or a dead body, a corpse in Bladh's poetics respectively. The middle panel is a graphic blood transfusion from containers into his mouth to resurrect the dying body that ends in agonising bloodshed on the stage with the mourners communion over the corpse in *blood, flesh, faeces*. What iconographically is treated as a cathartic moment, in Bladh's version viewed as a fatal operation when a patient dies with a miracle none.

The Miracle, correspondingly, is a title of the metaphorical story the indulgent fetishist unfolds while masturbating. The protagonist of the parable is the Leper and his pet dog, Miracle, both ostracised under pretense of

spreading infection and sent outside the city walls to dwell in a marble tower. Enjoying their libertine being they cause resentment and hatred among the *moralists*, hence the dog is stoned to death and the Leper awaits his final hour ashamed. *The Revolt in the Kasbah* is the second story the hedonist shares that is desired resistance and escapist ecstasy facing the oppressors naked and erected, as the *army of the infected* leave their *kasbah* (Arabic for "fortress"). His diction is homopoetic yet *debauchery experience* he is prophesying is naive and decadent. When these allegories are projected onto the prostrated body in gory bed in the mid-panel of the dramatic triptych as a vertigo sound effect they, literally, transform the dead body into a Leper Lord who takes all the misfits along as a redeemer *when death delivers and collective dying reconciles*.

The final section of the textual version of the play is five appendices on as varied as the following issues: a) leprosy as an alchemical disease of metals; b) male sexual brutality; c) cruelty of the slaughterhouses; d) an autopsy report on Jack the Ripper's final victim; e) contrastive beauty of the dead bodies in blood. Stylistic metatextuality of the above-enumerated entries solidifies the sporadic spotlights of the action to be attached as approaches in the study of a crucifixion.

According to 2007 Manifesto by Bladh and Cavefors: *"the New Theatre of Cruelty leads an epic discourse with the universal theme: violence – sex – death – cruelty, and Theatre Decadence exposes the possibilities of **agere contra**¹ (acting against) as an answer to the norm-terrorism. Agere contra: the break with the fundamentalism of uniformity and the release of traditions from the ancient Greeks, the Roman Empire, the equestrians of the Middle Ages and from*

¹ To act against. A term in ascetical literature to describe the deliberate effort one must make to strive to overcome his evil tendencies by doing the opposite of that to which he is sinfully inclined. A person who lives *agere contra* is a contrarian, one who opposes or rejects popular opinion or current practices.

the decadence of today. The non-normative is the normal condition and the normative is the real morbid, artificial, obtruded and non-worthy. However, the actions are not outcries against the conformist society and its seers."

Bladh renounces every confrontation and has no political declarations. *"We manifest how humiliation can be handled when converted into enjoyment, sexual absolutism, exhibitionism and a strict acceptance of its most profound consequences: sperm, blood and the crack of the whip."* *"Ernst Jünger^[49] mentions the anark, the man who overcomes the power by ignoring it; an individual that resigns himself of normality. That's our position. In the words of Jean Genet: "If our theatre stinks it's because all other plays smell good."*

From 2019 perspective the arguments are ever relevant.

Another important feature of Bladh's theatre used in the play is nakedness. In fact, it is still arguable whether nakedness, nudity, strip-tease or pornography applicable to the non-prurient and asexual nature of his art, yet there is one intelligible point: men, stark-naked on the scene, do represent a gender aspect, in particular, gender identification. From the classical Roman drama that actually allows nudity for a dramatic effect towards 1960s' with emergence of the *Swinging Alternative Theatre* that uses it as a natural weapon to sensationalise the mid-class consumerist sensibilities, the stage undergoes an arena-like spot where different viewpoints combat if public nudity should be banned like in the times of early and medieval Christianity or tolerated and fully exposed in the way the *Living Theatre* does. An initial no-brainer is on the surface: religion, ethic, and morality abuse theatre, whereas theatre itself optionally uses or completely disregards the former aspects because they are secondary. Theatre transcends acute religious, ethical, or moral problems in the most humanist way, showing a naked body as an allegory of nature, innocence, defencelessness even if a mating act is conceived.

Censorship in theatre proves to be lasting, two

centuries of the Lord Chamberlain's dominion in British drama as an example, and absolutely futile likewise. A nude scene is traditionally a lavish element in the composition denouement so that today nudity presented headlong from the beginning is anti-climatic to remove a burlesque, music-hall or cabaret attraction and align it with the common, natural. Bladh is an ascetic, so his and accompanying nakedness is anchorite in expression, pointless to clothe and cover because such exposure is not afraid of the world, but of the world's futility. This is the moment when an unclad body signifies a protest, an instrument of conflict impossible to abstract. A gender marker of nude masculinity, in Bladh's Neo-Renaissance theatre devoid of women, is not simple materiality, but one culturally crafted corporeality, a semantic field to organise the action within and establish relations across.

Bladh's nudity is one of a concentration camp grim vitality: it makes the static performance extremely live and as obvious as a historic document. In other words, it is the naked truth the audience confronts. Bladh's pornography, respectively, is a de-stigmatising act of cruelty in Artaud's point of view: it is pure creativity, a life-giving energy off a limbo; there is nothing more alive than pornography and there is nothing more pathetic than the afore-mentioned action imitated. Being naked to Bladh means being active, productive, functional, that like Artaudian cruelty immediately changes and reestablishes relations on stage and between actors and audience.

Instead of censorship, Bladh initiates spectatorship, engaging a viewer actively into a guilty pleasure performance, treating theatre as an institutionalised place for visual gratification par excellence. Likewise with the dead body, the artist does not hide the naked body: a spectator does not gaze in privacy but is always spotlighted in complicit and explicit observation (*"the eye is a secret orator"*^[50]).

A naked dead body is presumably the ultimate decoder of Bladh's necrophilic predestination (note, conventionally necrophilia is exclusively male deviancy) based not on a blatant sexual intercourse but rather on intimacy of the dead, its proximity, an interrogating nexus of death and desire subjectivity. A naked dead body is a locus of idolatry and transcendence.

Porn Pigs – A Love Story (2005)

Agenda & Action (original text & pictures):

Dedicated to Hermann Nitsch/Collaboration with The Belacqua Project.

Actors: Actor 1, Actor 2, Passive Actor.

The room:
a white rectangle 4, 5 x 3, 8 m.

Along the northern wall stands a table covered with a white cloth. Placed on the table are:

- 10 ½-litres containers filled with blood,
- 1 metal bowl filled with pieces of animal skeleton,
- 1 glass jar with dead butterflies,
- 1 student dissection kit,
- 1 bottle of talcum powder,
- 1 5 kg salmon.

Along the southern wall stands a white metal bathtub. In the bathtub lie the intestines of two slaughtered pigs.

In the far left of the western wall, a door leads out into a corridor which exits the gallery. Two nails have been hammered into the far right corner of the same wall, from the nails hangs one plastic pig-mask and one conically shaped paper hat; the word *fool* has been written on the hat with clumsy letters.

The eastern part of the gallery consists of the main entrance and a great exhibit window. The door and the window have been covered with white sheets. On the window-ledge stands a TV and a DVD-player.

On the floor in the middle of the room lies a seedy mattress covered with a white sheet, on the mattress under



Deadringer 2 - After Francis Bacon's Three Studios for a Crucifixion (mid panel) 2006
Photographs by Ingela Hansson



another white sheet lays the Passive Actor; naked, belly down, his face covered with a white mask (only his outlines are visible).

At the foot of the mattress are placed a thick square-shaped wooden block and a stationary, electric fan. Placed on the wooden block are:

- 1 metal bowl,
- 1 rectal-syringe,
- 1 bottle of blue ink.

Behind the wooden block, leaning against the wall stands a big sledgehammer.

Two speakers are located in the gallery's northeast- and southwest corners.

The music starts: volume 1.

The TV-starts showing Stan Brakhage's film *The Act of Seeing With One's Own Eyes*.^[51]

The audience enters the gallery through the door in the western wall. They have approximately 10 minutes to wander around the gallery room; watch the requisites and inhale the smell from the blood, intestines and the raw fish.

Actor 1 and Actor 2 enter the room through the door in the western wall. Actor 1 wears a white t-shirt and trousers; Actor 2 wears a white vest and skirt (male/female); both are barefoot and wear green protective face-masks over their mouths. They walk over to the far end of the mattress, holding hands, staring with empty eyes at the sheet-covered exhibit window (approximately 3 minutes).

Actor 2 positions himself at the head of the mattress; he leans down and stretches the white sheet which covers the passive actor. Actor 1 picks up the scissors from the dissecting-kit on the table, walks back to the foot of the mattress, kneels and cuts the stretched sheet according to a straight line until the Passive Actor is visible. Actor 2 tears the sheet in half.

Actor 1 picks up a blood container; positioning himself in the northwest corner he puts on the fool's hat, raises the

blood container to his lips and pours the content into his mouth, releases the blood in a straight rivulet down his chin across the chest and belly down to the floor. The same procedure is repeated until the container is empty.

Meanwhile: Actor 2 puts on the pig-mask, picks up the fish from the table and puts it down on the wooden block at the far end of the mattress, fills the metal bowl and rectal-syringe with blue ink, walks back to the table, picks up a scalpel, walks back to the fish; cuts its belly open, tears out the intestines and sinks them in the metal bowl; picks them up and places them in a straight line across the Passive Actor's back, takes off the pig-mask and changes place with Actor 1 in the northwest corner.

Actor 1 takes on the pig-mask, picks up a blood container walks over to the bathtub, and slowly pours the blood over the intestines, kneels in front of the tub, touches the flesh – punches and kneads it under his fists for several minutes until the bowls are breaking, rises to his feet and changes position with Actor 2 in the northwest corner.

Meanwhile: Actor 2 picks up a blood container; he puts on the fool's hat, raises the blood container to his lips, and pours the content into his mouth, releases the blood in a straight rivulet down his chin across the chest and belly down to the floor. The same procedure is repeated until the container is empty.

Actor 2 puts on the pig-mask, picks up the skeleton bones and places them on the wooden block at the foot of the mattress, picks up the sledgehammer, crushes the skeleton parts with a series of hard blows, walks over to the table, picks up the bottle of talcum powder and the jar of dead butterflies, collects the smashed skeleton pieces and turns on the electric fan, grinds the collected material against the rotating blade of the fan (it spreads through the room like ashes, like gas), takes off the pig-mask and changes position with Actor 1 in the northwest corner.

Meanwhile: Actor 1 picks up a blood container; he puts on the fool's hat, raises the blood container to his lips and

pours the content into his mouth, releases the blood in a straight rivulet down his chin across the chest and belly down to the floor. The same procedure is repeated until the container's empty.

Actor 1 puts on the pig-mask and kneels in front of the foot of the mattress, puts his hands on the Passive Actor's buttocks, kneads them, pushes the snout against the anus, hurling himself against the bathtub, grabs an armful of intestines, drops them on top the Passive Actor and copulates with them. Actor 2 exits the corner, picks up a blood container and pours the blood over the copulating couple.

Actor 1 takes off the pig-mask, rises to his feet, he and Actor 2 walk over to the table, put on the green facemasks, walk over to the bathtub, pull out the remaining intestines, drop them on the Passive Actor's back, knead them, pour blood over them, crushing them under their fists.

(music volume: 1). The Actors drop the intestines, rise to their feet, turn the Passive Actor on his back. Actor 2 picks up the salmon and places it over the Passive Actor's genitals. Actor 1 and 2 walk over to the head end of the mattress, holding hands, staring with empty eyes at the sheet-covered exhibit window (approximately 3 minutes).

(music: stop). Actors 1 and 2 help the Passive Actor to his feet and together they exit the room.

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/porn-pigs-a-love-story-dedicated>



Video Stills from the documentation of *Porn Pigs – a Love Story*, filmed by Lena Mattsson



Analysis:

The details about the three characters on the stage (textually non-specified, though mentioned on the site in the anthology section of the performance):

Idiot	Pig/Killer/Rapist	Victim
<p>Dirge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - right corner - facing wall - mouth cup (of sorrow) - digesting - vomiting - bleeding - pee-pee (soaked pants and bib) - static, willing - (Goya painting, class fool) - mercury - husband/wife - 1 	<p>Excess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evisceration - kneading - TV-cook - surgeon - undertaker - camera execution - pornography TV - (Gregory Dark) - sulphur - husband/wife: family - love and union - 1 + 1 (hermaphrodite) 	<p>Vessel:</p> <p>BACK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rape - anal/ frontal (?) - autopsy (Stan Brakhage) - offal - blood - shit - toilet (container) <p>FRONT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - genitals: cut open - placed back into the cavity (container) - putting back to pieces - wash and dry - stone - 0 (rise)

The performance anthology, that Bladh finds relevant, also includes the following vague associations: Hermann Nitsch *The Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Louis Vincent and Clare Binns *Gilles de Rais: The Original Bluebeard*, Anna Gekoski *Murder by Numbers*, Lyndy Abraham *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, Ruth Bochner and Florence Halpern *The Clinical Application of the Rorschach Test*, Gregory Dark *The Shocking Truth*.

Author/Source (by M. Bladh)	Association (by O. Koliada)
<p>Hermann Nitsch – The Mysterium Coniunctionis^[52]: <i>the coniunctio, the union of opposites, closely resembles the sacrificial procedures of mythology: ritual murder, castration and the most diverse forms of sacrificial death and extinction of the personality – which aim at the attainment of an often supernatural renewal. the union of opposites can be equated with the nocturnal sea-voyage, the descent into the pit, into the grave, into hell, the underworld or the subconscious. the coniunctio is identical with the central occurrence that pervades most myths when the figure of light is sacrificed, sacrifices himself, disappears or descends into a seemingly negative realm</i></p>	<p>A formula <i>solve et coagula</i> (dissolve and coagulate) underlies the <i>opus alchymicum</i> symbolically understood as the process of psychic integration.</p> <p><i>Coniunctio</i> and the preceding stages of dissociation known in alchemy as the chaos or <i>prima materia</i> lead to a resolution of the conflict of opposites in the production of the <i>lapis philosophorum</i> (stone).</p> <p>Mercurius [Microcosm], the mediator between the warring elements, producer of unity, is conceived as “spiritual blood”, analogy of the blood of Christ. He makes the two one and breaks the</p>

in order to undergo regeneration and renewal. death and the descent into the lower realms, into chaos, is followed by resurrection. a typical example is the passion of jesus christ and his resurrection (sweating blood on the mount of olives, drinking the cup of sorrow, his imprisonment, his chastisement, the crown of thorns, death on the cross, his descent into hell and his rising again on the third day). this need for masochistic sacrifice, for diving into the subconscious and chaotic, is not only to be found in myths but also projects itself into alchemical procedures.

dividing wall "in his flesh." Flesh is a synonym for the prima materia, Mercurius. The "one" is a "new man." He reconciles the two "in one body," an idea figuratively represented as the two-headed hermaphrodite. The two have one spirit.

The Hermetic vessel is the vessel of transformation, also called the grave, the union a "shared death." This state is named the "eclipse of the sun."

The adepts were concerned with a union of the substances to attain the goal of the work: the production of the gold or a symbolical equivalent of it. A union of the "natures," or of an "amalgam" of a compound of sulphur and mercury is a symbol of a love-affair followed by the "bath" and "death", the paradoxical nature of the conjunction.

A. L. Vincent and Clare
Binns – Gilles de Rais^[53]:

The Original Bluebeard:

*This aspect of the subject
was founded upon certain
metaphysical abstractions
which, however vague
and intangible, were free
from extravagances of
black magic. Gilles de Rais
viewed the problem from
his original and distorted
standpoint. The axiom
of the mystical school of
alchemists, "What is above
is that which is below, and
that which is below is that
which is above," was by him
given a sinister application.*

*Likewise a saying of
Paracelsus that in order to
secure the prima materia it
was only necessary "to mix
and coagulate the rose-
coloured blood of the lion
and gluten of the eagle,"
was regarded by Gilles
as conveying an obscene
meaning.*

Anna Gekoski – Murder by
Numbers^[54]:

*Fred and Rose West began
by rehearsing sadistic sex in*

*"As above, so below, as
within, so without, as the
universe, so the soul..."*
Hermes Trismegistus.

*"Take only the rose-
coloured blood from the
Lion and the gluten from
the Eagle. When you have
mixed these, coagulate
them according to the
old process, and you will
have the Tincture of the
Philosophers", Paracelsus.*
**The Blood of the Red Lion is
the Sulphur of the Sun and
the Gluten of the White
Eagle is Mercury.**

**Frederick "Fred" West and
Rosemary "Rose"**

their fantasies, but soon it wasn't satisfying enough to merely fantasize about an act, they had to perform it, with each other, and then with real victims. Caroline and Anne Marie were almost like experiments, trial-runs, and they were bound, gagged, blindfolded and sexually assaulted in a variety of ways. Eventually, this was insufficiently exciting to the Wests, who had to keep inventing and enacting more extreme ways to make their victim suffer. It was almost inevitable that death would occur, as they became inured to lesser forms of torment and degradation. In some instances, the Wests may have had other reasons for their murders (as was the case with Charmaine, Rena and Heather), but even in these cases, the evidence shows that the victims were killed during sadomasochistic sex sessions in which murder provided the ultimate arousal.

West were a married duo of serial killers and serial rapists who killed at least a dozen young British girls, including several of their daughters. The Wests' victims were Caucasian females in their mid-teens to early twenties and sometimes related to them.

The ones who weren't were usually lured to the house under the premise that they would be hired as nannies or some other job. When the victim was under Fred and Rosemary's control, they would rape and torture her in elaborate and sadistic bondage acts for days and then strangle or suffocate her and bury her on the property. Fred's signature was cutting off the victims' fingers and toes and sometimes their knee caps post-mortem before burying them.^[55]

Lyndy Abraham – A
Dictionary of Alchemical
Imagery:^[56]

Chemical Wedding - Alchemy is based on the hermetic view that man had become divided within himself, separated into two sexes, at the fall in the garden of Eden and could only regain his integral Adamic state when the opposing forces within him were reconciled. The union of these universal male and female forces produced that third substance or effect which could heal not only the disease of the physical world but also the affliction of the separated soul. Metaphysically, the chemical wedding is the perfect union of creative will or power (male) with wisdom (female) to produce pure love (the child, the Stone). The creation of this Stone always involves some kind of sacrifice or death. Thus emblems of the chemical wedding almost always include symbols of death which overshadowed the coniunctio. The amorous birds of prey copulate while

The 17th c. allegorical tale *The Chemical Wedding* is a story revolves around the alchemical adventure of Christian Rosenkreutz. The Chemical Wedding is the connectedness of all things that comes through the interplay of polarities. The Chemical Wedding is the 'ultimate phase' of the alchemical process that purportedly transforms base metals to gold, in the elusive pursuit of the philosopher's stone.

*devouring each other.
The sixth emblem of "The
Rosary of the Philosophers"
shows the united lovers
lying on a coffin.*

*Hermaphrodite - In the
production of the stone the
alchemist must join sulphur
the hot, dry, active male
aspect of the prima materia,
to the cold, moist, receptive
female aspect, argent vive
or mercury. The union of
these two metallic seeds is
presented as the copulation
of two lovers, and later,
at a higher level of union,
the chemical wedding
of Sol and Luna, sun and
moon, king and queen.
This complete, undivided
unity, known as the rebis
or hermaphrodite, is the
perfect integration of male
and female energies.*

**Ruth Bochner, Florence
Halpern – The Clinical
Application of the
Rorschach Test:**

*Girl, compulsion neurosis,
age 11, average intelligence*

- 1. Two people fighting with
their hands.*
- 2. Fire and blood are around
them, and they're touching*

The alchemists, in their quest for philosophical gold, considered the world to be influenced and manipulated by a multitude of paired opposing forces, when harmonised and balanced through synthesis, result in creation. The Great Hermaphrodite is an amalgam of this union.

From a biological viewpoint, hermaphroditism is rare and considered anomalous.

The inkblot test (also called the *Rorschach* test)^[57] is a method of psychological evaluation. Psychologists use this test in an attempt to examine the personality characteristics and emotional functioning of their patients. This test is often employed in diagnosing underlying

*their hands together and fire
is touching their heads and
their feet.*

*3. The fire is looking at each
other.*

*They're not happy, but they
just look as though they
were a little smiling, no, not
smiling exactly.*

*4. There is a mark between
them, and their arms can't
go between that mark except
their hands.*

*1. Two skeletons holding two
girls' heads over skeleton
bones.*

*Their feet look like their
hands; they are far apart
from the rest of their body.*

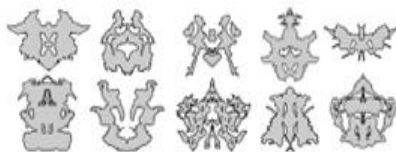
*2. Fish falling down, a little
like fish and a little like dogs.*

*3. There is a bow between
them.*

*4. There's a hole between
the skeleton bones they're
putting the heads on.*

*5. The heads are alive and
looking through that hole.
They look like children's
heads.*

thought disorders and
differentiating psychotic
from non-psychotic
thinking.



In 1917 a psychiatrist
Hermann Rorschach began
carefully splattering paint
on cards to study how
the mind works. Asking
people what they saw, he
observed a correlation in
responses from patients
with schizophrenia and
theorized that mental
health could be assessed
by how someone processes
visual information.

Rorschach's original 10
images were published
in 1921. The 10 blots are
probably the most analysed
paintings of the 20th
century.

Several of Bladh's *The
Rorschach Text* (2014)
collages are reproduced in
Interpretation Postscript.

Gregory Dark – The Shocking Truth:

Gregory Dark (born Gregory Brown, 1957-) is an American adult filmmaker and director. *Q: Tell me about the most disturbing sexual fantasy you've gotten off on?*

A: I... I've always been scared of letting anyone know this but I have this fantasy of getting raped.

Q: That turns you on? A: Yes very much so...Being raped means being taken over by a man in surprise really turns me on.

Q: You think men like your mouth because of the intelligent things you say or because you can suck dicks with it well?

A: I think men like my mouth because how...how well I can suck dicks because I don't think they're really interested in what I have to say.

Q: Tell me what do you think is your sexiest quality?

A: Uh... I think my sexiest quality would have to be my intelligence. I'm very intelligent.

Q: Did you like to please your father when you were

Interpretation

A performance operates alchemy, psychology, criminology, and pornography based on insightful associations to confront *nigredo* and *albedo* as a human-beast in transition to, presumably, enlightenment, perfection, immortality: from the *Shadow* towards the *Self*. There is something essential in merging of the alchemical and psychological tablets: Hermes Trismegistus tablet and Rorschach tablets trans-mutate. Likewise, there is interdependence of pornographic addiction and sexual arousal in its noxiousness leading to criminal activity.

Bladh primarily focuses on the act of raping: an interviewee, porn model, in *The Shocking Truth* tells being raped is her most fantasised desire; a girl with a compulsive neurosis in *The Clinical Application of the Rorschach Test* sees fire,

young?

A: *When I was young my father was never around...but I had a stepfather that I liked to please.*

Q: *Did your stepfather control you a lot?*

A: *Uh...when I was young my stepfather was always trying to tell me what to do...and basically tried to run my life.*

Q: *Did your stepfather look at you different when you grew breasts?*

A: *He started...well...following me around the house always looking at me strangely...just, always staring at me.*

Q: *Did you ever tease your stepfather, when you know he was watching you?*

A: *Um...when I knew my stepfather was watching I was always trying to tease him by walking around the house in a man's shirt with nothing underneath.*

Q: *What would your stepfather think if he saw you being banged in a porno film?*

A: *He would definitely be turned on by it.*

Q: *How do you feel about that?* A: *Um... I strangely get turned on myself thinking*

blood, and violence as probably a post-trauma or being deeply traumatised; Fred and Rose West in *Murdered by Numbers* indulge into sexual assaults and murder through sadomasochistic sessions; Gilles de Rais, also an alchemist, from *The Original Bluebeard* molests and rapes young boys before decapitating them, thus practises Black Arts via grave abuse of authority to reach the highest level of Gnosis; the creation of the philosopher's stone in *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* and *The Mysterium Coniunctionis* is described as a tense intercourse, physical invasion of nature.

A sexual coercion, copulation through dominance and violence among animals, clearly extrapolates a predator :: victim pair. Note: one of the features of such coercion in nature, alongside with aggression and intimidation, is immobilisation frequent among

*about how my stepfather
would get turned on by
watching me in a porno.*

*Q: Do you think you're able
to get back at men by using
sex?*

*A: I think I'm able to get back
at men by using sex because
I use them as my toys I get
what I want from them.*

*Q: Do you feel that you can
fool men easily?*

*A: I feel I can fool men
easily by just batting my
eyes
and tell them what they
want to hear.*

Q: Are you a liar sometimes?

*A: Men, give me what I want
if I tell them what they want
to do.*

*Q: Do you think I would
know if you were lying?*

*A: Um... I think, I definitely
think that you would know
if I was lying.*

*Q: What kind of man do you
find frightening?*

*A: Um... I think the kind of
man I found frightening
is the shy type of man...*

*Maybe a submissive type of
man that would like to be
dominated by me.*

*Q: In the future tell me what
do you think your children*

pigs and boars when a male species grabs female and manoeuvres the pelvis to lift the vaginal opening, thus facilitates copulation (the stimulation causes the female to be immobilized). Therefore, Bladh's choice of a pig is optimum: the relations between the three actors onstage are semblance of coercion, rape.

Alternatively, pigs are a powerful symbol in alchemy connected with the forces of the Earth to be drawn upon as aid by alchemists. The pig brings Earthly power, a natural attraction to knowledge and treasures along material and spiritual planes.

Pigs in Buddhism, on the contrary, are a symbol of ignorance depicted on the wheel of existence (three fantasies of man: fantasies of desires and thought, fantasies innumerable as particles of sand and dust, fantasies about the real nature of life), thus the pig prevents people from achieving Nirvana, the

would think of what you're doing?

A: In the future I think, my children would look up to what I'm doing 'cause I'll make it well known, I'll always tell them cause I'm not ashamed of what I'm doing.

Q: Do you like to be called a whore when you fuck?

A: When I fuck I would like to be called a whore, I like to be talked dirty to because it's a sort of role play, I like to get into it.

A: Um... I think the difference between being a whore and being in porno films is that a whore is someone who...sleeps around and has no respect for herself, you know...or her body...but being a porn star you have total respect for your body and...it's just totally different...and to me being a porn star is way better than being a whore.

Q: Would your stepfather think that you ought to be spanked.

A: Um... I think my stepfather would definitely think that I'd need to be spanked for making

highest state attainable in the Buddhist tradition.

In Christian symbolism, the pig signifies laziness and greed, while Muslims and Jews see it as something unclean.

Pig symbolism is also closely related to Wild Boars which are cruel and fast when hunting.

Pigs are omnivorous.

Amusingly enough, pigs are considered the smartest animal in the world with a mental age of a four-year-old, easily trained.

People falsely underestimate their intelligence, but pigs are indifferent to what others think of them.

A parallel with Bladh's *The Island Of Death* (2012 / 2014)

*"To release the pig in me,
/ though only swine may
enter into perfection..."*

The above-enumerated contradictory symbolism is expressed in Bladh's body language representing two states at a time: the alive, idiomatically through a mask, and the

*movies, and he would
definitely enjoy it as well
as I.*

dead, literally via swine
intestines.

A pig mask dictates a
certain mode of behaviour
and when smeared in
flesh and blood the actors
gradually lose gender
identities, change from
aggressively sexual
to passively sexless
(androgyny essence:
both the masculine and
feminine aspects of
nature combined in one
deity), though it is clear
a hermaphrodite is a
physiologic impossibility
because one person can not
be both fully male and fully
female.

To equalize this
discrepancy Bladh imposes
a moratorium on sex
insignia and focuses on
human-animal intersex
bloody stigmata.

Interpretation Postscript

Bladh's ***The Rorschach Text***
(2014) collages (selected by
the artist for this edition).



The Rorschach Text, Card I and Card II



Sensation is Everything (2004)

Agenda & Action (original text & pictures):

Actors: Actor, 2 Fellow Actors.

A white sheet lies across the floor (6 x 3m). Three circles have been drawn at each end of the sheet, across the two shortest sides of the fabric; each circle has been marked with a number 1 to 6. Beside every circle, 2 raw eggs and a container (1/2 litres) filled with blood have been placed. A large circle has been drawn in the middle of the sheet.

Part: Masochism

The music starts (volume 1). After approximately 5 minutes the Actor is led into the room; his hands are tied together with nylon rope. The Actor kneels in front of circle 1; he breaks an egg and pours the content into his mouth; picks up the container and pours blood into his mouth. The Fellow Actors give a sign; they start to drag the Actor from circle 1 towards circle 6; the Actor slowly releases the blood from his mouth - making a straight bloodline on the sheet; every time the Actor is dragged into a new circle the Fellow Actors give a sign; the Actor kneels in front of it; picks up an egg; pours the yolk into his mouth; picks up the container and pours blood into his mouth. When the Actor reaches circle 6 (music; volume: 2) the same ritual proceeds until the Actor has been dragged back to circle 1 again. The Fellow Actors drag the Actor diagonally over the sheet to circle 6 (the Actor still spilling blood from his mouth) and from there diagonally into the circle in the middle of the sheet.

Part: Sadism

The Actor lies still for two minutes. The Fellow Actors give a sign; they approach the Actor in the middle of the sheet; empty two buckets of pig intestines over the Actor

(music; volume: 3). The Actor lies still for two minutes. The Fellow Actors give a sign (music; volume: 4). The actor rises to his knees inside the mid circle; attacks the intestines, ripping them into shreds during a five-minute period (music; volume: 1). The Actor kneels inside the mid circle; staring at the sheet in front of him.

Silence.

Stop.

Anthology:

Gilles Deleuze - The Logic of Sensation: sensation acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh, whereas abstract form is addressed to the head, and acts through intermediary of the brain, which is closer to the bone... As a spectator, I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed. Colour is in the body, sensation is in the body, not in the air. Sensation is what is painted. That which is painted on the canvas is the body, not inasmuch as something represented as an object, rather as the subject of that particular sensation. Francis Bacon quoted in an interview with Peter Beard: If you see someone lying on the pavement in the sunlight, with the blood streaming from him...¹

Georges Bataille – Madame Edwarda: In order to reach the limits of ecstasy in which we lose ourselves in bliss we must always set an immediate boundary to it: horror. Not only can pain, my own or that of other people, carry me nearer to the moment when horror will seize hold of me and bring me to a state of bordering on delirium, but there is no kind of repugnance whose affinity with desire I do not discern. Horror is sometimes confused with fascination, but if it cannot suppress and destroy the element of fascination it will reinforce it. Danger has a paralysing effect, but if it is a mild danger it can excite desire. We can only reach a state

¹ See the complete quotation mentioned in "Three Studies for a Crucifixion" (2007), Appendix 5, analyzed previously.

of ecstasy when we are conscious of death or annihilation, even if remotely.

Sigmund Freud – Basic Writing: Sadism and masochism occupy a special place in the perversions, for the contrast of activity and passivity lying at their bases belongs to the common traits of the sexual life.

That cruelty and the sexual instinct are most intimately connected is beyond doubt taught by the history of civilization, but in the explanation of this connection, no one has gone beyond the accentuation of the aggressive factors of the libido. The aggression which is mixed with the sexual instinct is, according to some authors, a remnant of cannibalistic lust – that is, a participation of the domination apparatus.... The most striking peculiarity of this perversion lies in the fact that its active and passive forms are regularly encountered together in the same person. He who experiences pleasure by causing pain to others in sexual relations is also capable of experiencing pain in sexual relations as pleasure. A sadist is simultaneously a masochist, though either the active or the passive side of the perversion may be more strongly developed in him and thus, represent his preponderant sexual activity.

<http://www.martinbladh.com/performance/album/sensation-is-everything-2004>

Analysis:

A short but one of the most symbolic Bladh's early performances: a white canvas, an actor as an artistic brush, and blood as paint to reproduce a particular repetitive pattern in Deleuzian, Bataille and Freudian conceptology: repetition/creation, violence/horror, cruelty/sexuality. A two-act anthropometric action which follows Carolee Schneemann^[58] and Yves Klein's^[59] redefined approach to painting to evoke immaterial sensitivity. The body as a paintbrush is effective due to its anonymous print left notwithstanding the artist is involved overwhelmingly. Despite a recurrent set of actions in repetition nothing is

ever the same – there is only difference: repeated traces are always unique, everything is constantly changing, and reality is a becoming, not a being.^[60]

Splattering, dripping and pouring blood all over the canvas perimeter turns a picture into a totally accidental, with the stains coalesce randomly, yet also breathing concept: *"I imagine myself covered with blood, broken but transfigured and in agreement with the world, both as prey and as a jaw of time, which ceaselessly kills and is ceaselessly killed."*^[61] An artist does not need a medium, a brush, to establish relations between oneself and its work. With zero self-control (Bladh's body is tied and directed by force from the outside) an abstract image emerges on the flat surface to strike senses during a violent act of creation beyond boundaries. Using one's body as an art-tool undermines all identity-related aspects – gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity – and leaves messy visual agency to show universal body instead of a particular identity.

Additionally, implicit Marquis de Sade^[62] and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch^[63] are combined into a sadomasochistic action of pure vital energy. Sadism is directed outwardly and masochism is a form of sadism against oneself. Bladh's masochism is part of the passive sexuality to emphasise a sense of guilt or a need for punishment (submission to the Fellow Actors on the stage) whereas through a deep desire for mastery and to punish externally the artist shows the active element of sexuality, sadism (tearing up the pig intestines). These two attitudes become perversions when the masochist goes into self-abandonment and dependence on an abuser, and the sadist replaces sexuality for cruelty. Looking at the self-alienating artist in stare and stupor after a free-hands attack as a closure of the performance the audience, horror-struck and hypersensitive, contemplates whether they have just watched a universal cycle of creation and destruction or ultimately perverse cruelty.^[64]

Bladh's performance is a basic *sensation over perception* manual with the key senses – vision, audition, gustation,

olfaction and touching – being triggered alongside complex cutaneous sensations (pressure, pain) and proprioception (bodily position). Though it is disputable if the action is, actually, a contradictory example of a loss of sensation: apparent awareness of the body is dislocated (an enforced movement across the canvas sheet), smelling and consuming animal blood seems to be dysfunctionally neutral (no signs of disgust or nausea), deafness and blindness are intensified by the end (no reaction to audio signals and final blank focused staring). Such ambivalence also clearly states that sensation is everything but not everything is sensation, hinting at two major dogmas: human is not everything and human is mortal – the rest is a hypothesis. Either deadened or sharpened sensation is to be revealed exclusively through Bladh's sadomasochist action of mortality, *subject to death*, specifying as quite sparse arsenal of stimuli able to provoke sensoria commotion that results nevertheless in catalepsy. What initially perceived as an act of liberation (human brush strokes) is ultimately sensed as an act of cruelty (ecstatic strokes, “a sudden disabling attack or loss of consciousness caused by an interruption in the flow of blood to the brain” (a medical definition of a stroke)).



Sensation is Everything, 2004
Photographed by Ingela Hansson and Camilla Nilsson



PART III:

THE THEATRE OF CRUELTY¹

(assembled from various sources and kept Artaud's original manner intact where possible)

1) The Theatre and Culture

The most significant feature of the New Age is a mess. The cause of the mess lies in breaking the links between the object and the word, idea or sign that denote it. Culture should be seen as an active idea to become a new organ or a second wind. Civilisation should not be separated from culture, because both of these concepts, in a certain way, carry one "spirit".

Theatre was created to play out and demonstrate the stealthy desires of a man. Any deviations of these desires from the designated cultural norm indicate that the internal energy, or urge, still exists, one has only to give this energy the right direction.

The notion of culture was ruined by its Western interpretation. The concept of culture is connected with the idea of protest. Protest against the interpretation of culture as a certain religion; protest against the separation of life from culture, because culture is a more subtle understanding of the essence of life.

The theatre has different shadows. They should break all boundaries because theatre is a movement, it isn't static and thus it can not be turned to a cultural stone. The theatre uses different languages: gesture, sound, word, fire, cry but does not fit into any of them. It might be born only in a

¹ The entry is contextualised by Ruslana Marusevych, Anna Savyna and Olesya Kononchuk (see the contact data section of the book).

case when our spirit requires a language to express itself outside. Any restriction leads to the language extinction. The theatre should not be limited to a certain form and language. It has to name its shadow and take control over it. To get closer to the real-life, the theatre should be recreated. The theatre is something that can help us to go beyond the established order of things and return the meaning of life.

Culture is a tool of suppression. Artaud does not set the task to create a "new theatre", instead he views the theatre as a director to acquire new properties. The task of the director's theatre is to give the possibility for expression and realisation through the instrument of the theatre.

2) The Theatre and the Plague

Plague is a disease, both physical and mental. A simple virus can not change human psychophysics, but plague can. Plague destroys the body not only physically – it can affect human consciousness, will, and mentality. There is a certain similarity between a plague patient who runs after his visions screaming and an actor who chases his feelings. The theatrical action and the plague are very similar to each other because they are both epidemic in their nature. The plague carries hidden images, chaos and puts them into action. Likewise, the theatre owns action and brings it to extremes. Both embody afflatus and revelation of hidden cruelty that dwells in the individual as well as in the whole nation.

The theatre shows internal conflicts and brings them to the stage. The theatre, like the plague, is a transitional stage. It is a crisis that allows people to pull off all masks and see themselves real. Plague is inherently evil because it contains both: a possibility of death and total purification. The theatre is also can be seen as an evil that offers the spectator two options: recovery or death. Nevertheless, catharsis may come only through the wickedness and death drive and then it will help to find a harmonious balance between impassioned person and our chaotic world. A real

theatrical play awakens clandestine feelings, releases the unconscious and pushes to a hidden rebellion, which is valuable only as long as it remains hidden.

3) Metaphysics and the Mise en Scene

A scene is seen as a specific physical space that requires to be filled and to be allowed to speak in its particular language. Artaud rejects the word for its sake and does the same thing with the verbosity of the modern theatre. Dealing with metaphysics one must first turn to physical means of expression, such as light, sound, and gesture as they are endowed with the power to arouse feelings that language and word can not awaken. Thus, it is possible to replace, for example, the poetry of speech with the poetry of space. Moreover, noteworthy that the poetry of space is capable of creating material images equivalent to verbal ones. Theatre must find its language which will not be based on the literary component. The author together with a written text loses the regular power in such theatre: instead, the director becomes a real creator. The theatre is an art in space. A real theatre has never been and never will be literary.

4) The Alchemical Theatre

Theatre and alchemy are similar in their origins and basic principles. They both refer to potential arts and their purpose lies in the nature of their real being. Theatre owns and uses the same symbols as alchemy. At the same time, it is, like alchemy, does not carry its type of reality. Otherwise, in a certain way, it becomes a double of the latter. However, theatre never reflects reality in its ordinary sense: it reflects a different, hidden reality, deeper and more important than is revealed in everyday social life.

5) On the Balinese Theatre

Artaud was fascinated by the performances of the actors from the Balinese theatre. Later this experience became a

solid grounding for his concept of the Theatre of Cruelty. The Balinese theatre excludes any possibility to use words for defining the abstract terms. On the contrary, it invents the language of gestures for that purpose. The gestures lose their meaning outside the concrete space. The theatre in that context appears as an intellectual space. It is a game of the psyche, silence, and thoughts that live between the words of a written phrase. The performance is shown not by textual means, but through the individual elements and projection of a certain number of colours, cries, and movements.

Every single detail in the Balinese theatre is calculated with incredible mathematical precision – nothing remains at the mercy of chance or personal initiative. Acting is orderly and impersonal but is full of meaning to create the maximum effect. The Balinese theatre resorts to a certain theatrical language with a system of hieroglyphs. However, this language is not the typical language of the word and the written sign: it is rather a language more archaic and influential that appeals to the audience's deep feelings; the signs of this language are gesture, sound, and colour. The performances of the Balinese theatre are somewhat reminiscent of religious ceremonies or rites – they eradicate any idea of pretence and imitation of reality from the spectator's consciousness. The action embodies wholeness, almost completely removing the drama of everyday life, so in this way, an exhaustion of 'cruelty' takes place.

6) Oriental and Occidental Theatre

The Occidental Theatre remains a branch of literature because it is limited to the text. This leads to the fact that now we can not separate the theatre from the idea of realising the text. Everything that goes beyond the text is perceived only as an element of direction and is seen as something secondary to the text. The language of the theatre merges with the direction, which should be understood as

the materialisation of the word in a plastic form. The word in the Occidental theatre is used to express psychological conflicts of everyday life, but the Oriental theatre instead focuses not on psychology, but metaphysics. The Oriental theatre considers the form of an object not only in the physical dimension but also in the spiritual one. For Artaud, the theatre is a definite worldview system that breaks with relevance and destroys the forms and boundaries of art.

The aim of the theatre is not to focus on social and everyday situations, as is typical for the Occidental theatre, but to move into the sphere of a universal, moral and spiritual aspect. For this purpose, it is necessary to get rid of the dictate of the word and the authority of the author. However, the word should not be completely eradicated from the scene. It is necessary to change the task of the word in the theatre, it must be correlated with the space of the stage and everything expressed in a specific form.

7) No More Masterpieces

It is necessary to abandon the idea of masterpieces that appeal to the elite and which the common public is not able to understand. The language of these masterpieces is outdated. The theatre that focuses on the social and psychological difficulties of everyday life can not cause anything but disgust. Artaud calls for an end to empiricism and individualism moving away from selfish and personal art. The theatre must return to the elementary magical idea.

It is necessary to abandon the empirical accumulation of images. The theatre enables us to return to the physical knowledge of artistic images and methods that can cause a state of trance. Artaud seeks to revive catharsis in its ancient sense: general purification outside the scope of art but by artistic means. The theatre is the only place and means in the world that can directly affect the human body so that this action cannot be avoided. The positive result of the impact takes place because of the cathartic process in which fear and compassion are lost. In theatre the spectator

should be under the hypnosis of strong physical images to feel as if he is captivated by higher forces. The theatre should talk about the unusual, discarding psychology.

Theatre is a place where no gesture can be repeated twice. The gesture takes place in time and space and has its beginning and end, so that theatre is primarily an action realised in space and no gesture can be repeated on stage.

8) The Theatre and Cruelty

The Theatre of Cruelty is a theatre that can wake up human feelings and heart. Any action contains cruelty, but only the idea of an action brought to an extreme point can give the theatre a new force. Cruelty should not be understood in its everyday 'bloody' sense. True cruelty is not about cutting people into pieces, instead, it strikes all human senses and reaches such depths where a traditional theatre with its descriptive methods can not reach. However, it is possible to resort to shocking images to awake an unprepared audience.

The theatrical action should be focused on famous personalities, cruel crimes, superhuman devotions without concentrating on images inspired by myths because only such a performance can awake dormant forces. The spectators plunge into dreams and believe them since they perceive them real and not an imitation of reality. Artaud advocates a revolving theatre which conveys all the important messages along with sound and visual signals to every spectator. It is necessary to recreate the idea of a total spectacle where analytic and plastic are inseparable. Artaud urges to abandon the analysis of feelings and passions and direct the emotions of an actor to the disclosure of the essence of external forces. It is necessary to bring the spectator out of balance, out of the comfort zone: the merging of life and art to play one's own life on stage. The spectator will have to undergo a real operation when he goes to the theatre (like to a surgeon or dentist) with the idea that he, of course, will not die, but will not leave the

theatre unharmed. Action is reality (what exactly happens on stage), unlike a conditional life or a reality implemented in everyday life. (Theatre for oneself, theatre as an instinct). Life imitates art, not vice versa. An artistic deed becomes a reality.

9) The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)

Theatre must, by all means, engage not only all sides of the objective external world but also the inner world, that is, the world of the human. One of the main tasks of the Theatre of Cruelty is to destroy everyday cruelty through artistic experience, not through cruelty in its usual sense.

Performance: any performance must have an objective material element that is accessible to everyone (shouts, visions, magical beauty of costumes, rare musical notes, colour of objects, sharp changes in lighting).

Stage language: giving words the same meaning they have in dreams; new means of marking the language similar to music transcription or encryption.

Music: the return to old, forgotten musical instruments, or the creation of new ones that make a terrible noise and repeat natural sounds, such as thunder noise.

Light: the usage of a full spectrum of coloured light, special light effects, such as light streams, fireworks, usage of filters; creating an atmosphere of cold, warmth, anger, fear with the help of light.

Stage: the perfect place is the hangar; renouncement of partitions or barriers – the stage and the auditorium should not be separated, spectators should be at the centre of the building and the action will take place around them on two levels: the floor and the gallery built around the perimeter of the building; the walls should be painted with lime to absorb light; props are excluded (the item itself is used); there is no scenery – it is replaced by bright costumes, masks, and huge mannequins.

The *actor* is an athlete of the heart. The requirement for the actor is to abandon playing, remove the mask: the

rejection of artificiality is not for the sake of everyday life, but for the sake of overcoming oneself, rejecting one's origin. The actors must feel and develop their sensuality because by living certain emotions on stage they convey experiences to the spectator, not at a rational or observational level, but a much deeper, ancient level. That is why the actor should perform certain exercises, including, above all, breathing exercises based on kabbalistic doctrine. They will assist the actor in forming his soul athleticism. All the movements and gestures of the actors must match a certain rhythm and each managed point should correspond to a certain emotion (feeling). The impulse that the actor sends is not directed to an external expression but to the "inside" to evoke a real feeling and a corresponding external manifestation.

Actuality: theatre must be far from the present and its problems, from everyday life with its conflicts, but it will never be far from universal anxieties, feelings that will always be relevant; a rejection of metaphor for the sake of a direct explanation (rejection of poetry) is also cruelty.

The *doubles* of the theatre are plague, ritual, metaphysics, and life.

10) The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)

Artaud combines theatre with life and creates a higher reality on the stage. Love, crime, drugs, revolt, and war – that's where people are looking for the poetic side of life. The purpose of creation of the Theatre of Cruelty is to show a real, passionate life, and cruelty should be understood as the extreme harshness and the utmost concentration of stage means. If necessary, one can resort to bloody means and methods to capture the audience's attention and subdue all its feelings.

The creation of the theatre is not for the sake of plays, but for the sake of learning to find everything that is in the spiritual life – everything dark, hidden and unmanifested, to show a spectator images that will be drawn directly to the psyche. Objects and scenery will be without any shift of

meaning: spectators will need to see not what those depict, but what they are.

Contents: universal, cosmic themes, ancient Mexican, Indian, Jewish and Iranian texts.

Topics: clashes of races and nations, social upheavals, natural disasters, accidents.

Characters: the rejection of the image of man and the social, religious and psychological aspects of their existence, instead use the image of a total man who appears to grow to the size of an ancient god, hero or monster.

Form: a rejection of the total influence of the text and the dictate of the author, the creation of a spectacle that would be clear to all classes of the audience, even the uneducated.

Space: the usage of scene space in its entirety in all subtexts and at all levels. The action takes place around the audience at all levels and in all points of space.

Language: the accumulation of images and movements, gestures, sounds, rhythm, intonation, play of colour and light, costumes to create another theatrical language that operates not by word but by sign. It is necessary for the entire space on stage and in the minds of the audience to be filled, which will thus reduce and close the gap between life and theatre.

PART IV:

ANTONIN ARTAUD: ART AND LIFE¹

Antoine Marie Joseph Artaud is the theorist of the Theatre of Cruelty and one of the most influential dramatists of the 20th century. During the education in Marseilles, he became interested in writing and at the age of 14 started a magazine dedicated to literature. After an attack of neurasthenia in 1914, he was treated in a rest home but due to the severe health problems, he spent five years in a sanatorium. After being prescribed the laudanum he got a lifelong addiction to opiates and it was the cause why he was discharged from the French Army after being conscripted in 1916. At the age of 19, he had the first nervous breakdown.

Though his father was against his career as a writer, Artaud moved to Paris in March 1921 to pursue his goal but still under medical supervision. Later his talent for avant-garde theatre revealed itself and the surrealist movement headed by André Breton became the subject of his interest. As he became the leading face of the Surrealist group, he participated as an editor in top Surrealist magazines of that time and his articles were published in periodicals like "Litterature". In 1923 Artaud published his volume of symbolist verse *Backgammon of the Sky*.

Artaud became an apprentice of Charles Dullin in 1921 and this experience influenced him greatly as an actor. After training and performing with Charles Dullin and Georges Pitoeff, he appeared in such films as *He Who Gets Slapped* (1923), *Fait Divers*, *Surcourt – le roi des corsairs*

¹ The entry is contextualised by Nazar Matiukha and Anastasiia Nychyporuk (see the contact data section of the book).

(1924), *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1924), and *R.U.R.* (1924). At the age of 27, he sent some of his poems (*L'Ombilic des limbes* (1925) and *Le Pèse-nerfs* (1925)) to the journal *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. Although they were rejected, the editor Jacques Rivière wrote back to Artaud. Their communication via letters became an epistolary work *Correspondance avec Jacques Rivière*, which was Artaud's first major publication.

Artaud's acting debut took place in Aurélien Lugné-Poë's Dadaist-Surrealist Théâtre de l'Oeuvre but in 1926 he abandoned the Surrealists after their leader André Breton became an ally of communism. In 1927 he performed as Jean-Paul Marat in Abel Gance's *Napoleon* and while acting he used exaggerated movements to express the fire of Marat's personality. Later he had the role of the monk Massieu in Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) and played in *Dreigroschenoper*, *Wooden Crosses*, *Montmartre*, and *Femme d'une nuit* (all 1930). Artaud also wrote the scenario for *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (1928), which was the first surrealist film.

In the years 1926–1928 Artaud ruled the Alfred Jarry Theatre with Roger Vitrac. During these years he produced and directed original works by Vitrac (who was a surrealist writer) and works by Claudel and Strindberg. Alfred Jarry Theatre was going to produce Artaud's play *Jet of Blood* (a farce about the creation of the world and its destruction by humans, especially women) but it was premiered only 40 years later in 1964, during the Royal Shakespeare Company 'Season of Cruelty'. Although the theatre existed only two years it was popular among the wide range of European artists including André Gide, Arthur Adamov, and Paul Valéry.

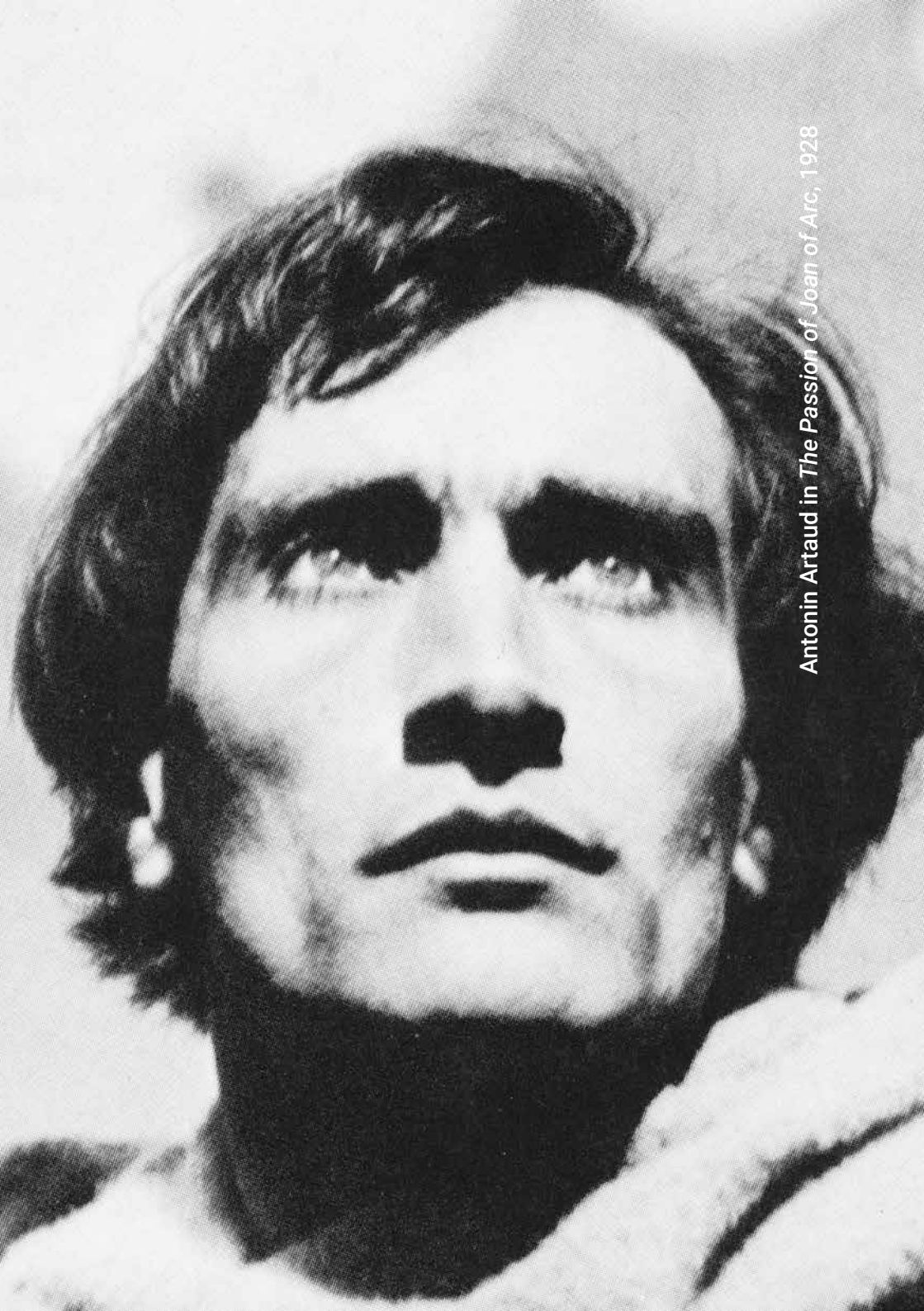
In 1931 at the Paris Colonial Exposition Artaud saw the Balinese dance which influenced many of his ideas for the theatre: "*Of everything that occupies the stage, everything that can be manifested and expressed materially on a stage and that is addressed first of all to the senses instead of*

being addressed primarily to the mind as the language of words". Despite the fact, that Artaud misunderstood some ideas of traditional Balinese performance, it inspired his theories on the theatre that were presented that year in Artaud's *First Manifesto for a Theatre of Cruelty* which was published in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*.

Artaud's masterpiece *Heliogabalus, or the Anarchist Crowned* was published in 1934. It dramatises the life of the infamous Roman Emperor Heliogabalus and its mystic-historical narrative can be described as a "non-anthropocentric biography", depicting the world in which the young Emperor rose and the resulting decadent reign. The turbulent life of the Emperor epitomises the Theatre of Cruelty itself as Artaud transfers his ideas on the theatre into the Roman setting of this work. There is a philosophical exploration of occultism, mysticism, anarchy, violence, and self-deification. As Artaud said: "*The entire life of Heliogabalus is anarchy in action... fire, gesture, blood, cry... Fanatical, a real king, a rebel, a crazed individualist.*"

In 1935 Artaud's adaptation of Shelley's *The Cenci* (incest-heavy verse drama) was premiered. *The Cenci* is a vivid example of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and the only full-length play that Artaud wrote to put his theories on practice. The play challenges conventional morality shocking the audience with scenes of violence, cruelty, rape, incest, and murder. There can be seen a distinct influence of Balinese dance theatre as characters strike the viewer with their strange and artificial manner of speech. This feature stands for the rejection of psychological realism and may symbolise universal forces instead of depicting realistic characters, which is typical for the Theatre of Cruelty. Although the play shows a spectacle of light and sound introducing the innovative sound effects and some electronic instruments, *Les Cenci* was a commercial failure and was closed after seventeen unsuccessful performances.

The next year Artaud decided to travel to Mexico, intending to give a series of lectures in Mexico City and to



Antonin Artaud in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, 1928

study contemporary and traditional cultures. His mission was aimed at seeking *"a perfect example of the magic spirit of primitive civilizations"*. The same year, in 1936 he met the Mexican painter Federico Cantú when he gave lectures on the decadence of Western civilisation. Artaud studied and lived with the Tarahumaran people (a group of native people in Mexico who are known for their physical stamina and long-distance running ability) and he also took part in their religious rites where they used hallucinogenic drug peyote. Artaud recorded this experience in a volume called *Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara* where he primarily concerned with the supernatural as well as in his later poems. Artaud's living among the Tarahumaras deeply influenced his theatrical ideas as he realised the value of mystical religious experience and later it found its expression in his theatre. His addiction to heroin made it all worse as he ran out of the last supply of the drug while riding a horse at a mountainside. Artaud also recorded his struggle of withdrawal from heroin upon entering the land of the Tarahumaras but later in his life he returned to opiates.

In 1937 Artaud returned to France where he took possession of a wooden walking stick which was given him by a friend, who received it from one Belgian painter. This stick had been bought on a flea market and was decorated with peculiar knots. Artaud thought it was a Christian relic Canne de St. Patrick or Bachall Isu as it is called in Dublin. It was believed that Bachall Isu (or Staff of Jesus) was the stick that Jesus had used to drive off Satan during his 40 days in the desert and later it was given to St. Patrick. The staff had hung in Irish Christ Church until it was publicly burned by the archbishop of Dublin in 1538 during the attempt of king Henry VIII to establish the state church in the Kingdom of Ireland.

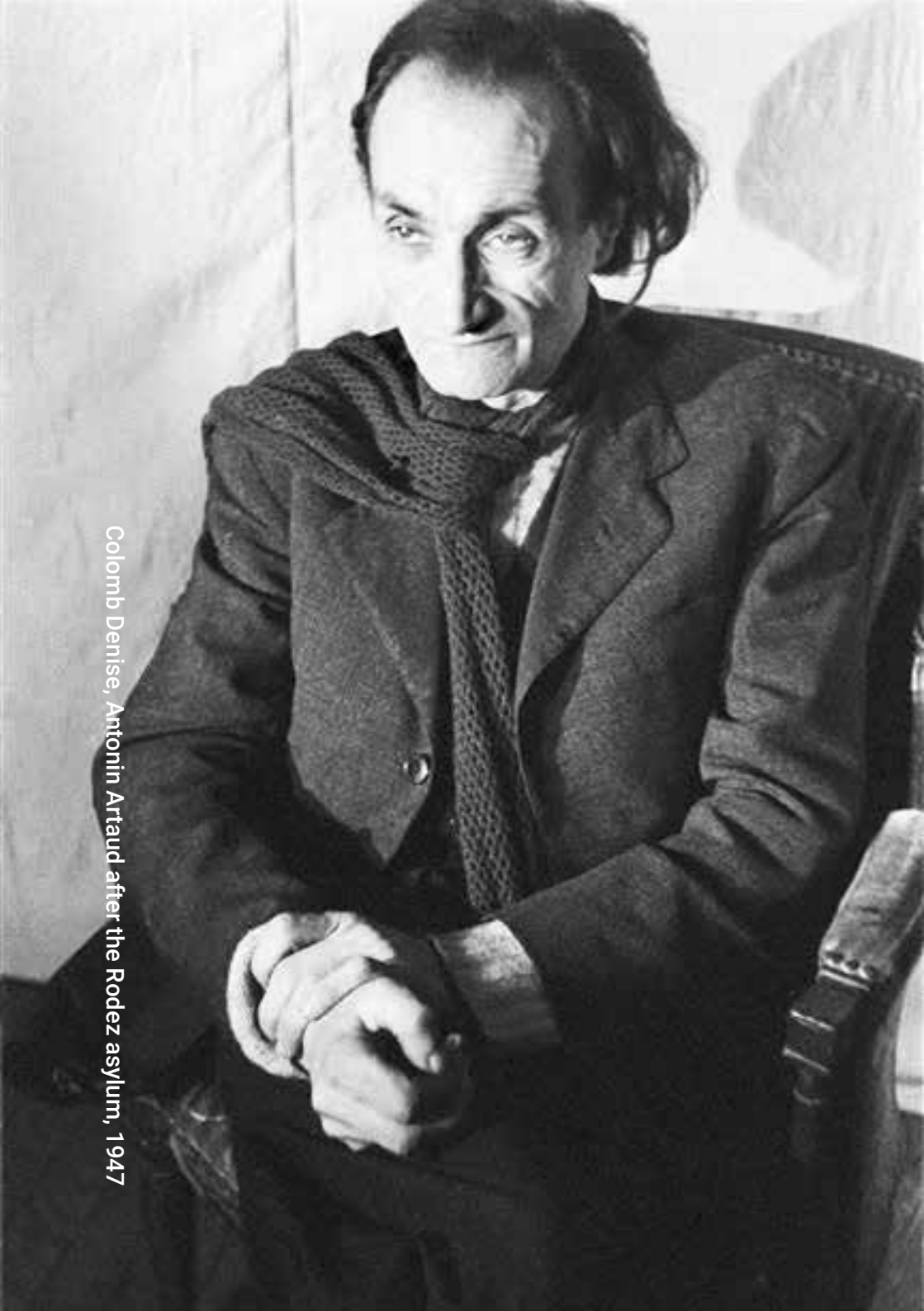
That year Artaud travelled to Ireland to return this sacred relic to the tomb of St. Patrick as he considered it to be his *"mission from Jesus Christ"*. During his trip from

Cobh to Galway, he was unable to pay for his expenses and put himself in debt. In an attempt to make his pilgrimage he lost the Bachall Isu, somewhere in a Dublin square presumably in a confrontation with local guardians. The next day he tried to enter the Jesuit community at Milltown College to confess the failure of his sacred mission. He wanted to meet some of the members of the community but was informed that the priests were on retreat and after refusing to leave, he was arrested in a hysterical state and confined in the Mountjoy Prison. After six days of imprisonment, he was deported as an undesirable alien and after his arrival to Le Harve he was forcibly put in a straitjacket as a mentally ill person suffering from *"ideas of persecution and hallucinations"*.

In 1938 was published his best-known work, *The Theatre and Its Double*, where he advocated for his Theatre of Cruelty. In his theatre, Artaud expressed his appreciation for the Balinese theatre and wanted to return to magic and ritual creating a new theatrical language combined of gestures, sounds, unusual scenery, and lighting that would appeal to the senses of a spectator. He believed that text had been a tyrant over meaning and wrote that *"words say little to the mind compared to space thundering with images and crammed with sounds."* As for the notion of cruelty, Artaud explained that: *"Theatre of Cruelty means a theatre difficult and cruel for myself first of all. And, on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, carving up personal anatomies, or, like Assyrian emperors, sending parcels of human ears, noses, or neatly detached nostrils through the mail, but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theatre has been created to teach us that first of all."*

After the return from Ireland, most of his lifetime Artaud spent in different asylums, being diagnosed with incurable paranoid delirium. In 1943 he was transferred to the

Colomb Denise, Antonin Artaud after the Rodez asylum, 1947



psychiatric hospital in Rodez when France was occupied by the Nazis. Artaud was put under the supervision of Dr. Gaston Ferdière who applied the electroshock treatment to eliminate Artaud's delusions and odd physical tics. Artaud also had habits of crafting magic spells, creating astrology charts, and drawing disturbing images and these were considered by the doctor as symptoms of mental disorder. Artaud described this treatment as "*horrible torture*", writing that: "*Each application has plunged me in a terror that endured each time for several hours.*" At the peak of his hysterical state, Artaud started attacking others.

It is unclear whether the controversial electroshock treatments were really helpful for Artaud's mental illness but after Ferdière began his art therapy Artaud started writing and drawing again. This therapy was useful for developing his creative abilities as he was encouraged to express himself in poetry, which was later published in the journal *Demain*. Despite the psychotherapy Artaud's shattered mental condition and his dependence on narcotics influenced his further art and life.

In 1946, after nine years of confinement, Artaud was released to his friends and placed in the psychiatric clinic at Ivry-sur-Seine, where he lived under medical supervision but was allowed to come and go whenever he wanted. He was physically exhausted, very thin and lost most of his teeth. His friends supported him and encouraged to continue his writing. After visiting the exhibition devoted to Vincent van Gogh in 1947, Artaud published his study *Van Gogh: The Man Suicided by Society*. The essay was written as the stream of consciousness and portrayed Van Gogh not as a crazy outcast but the extraordinary genius who revealed "*unbearable truths*".

The same year he recorded a radio piece *To Have Done With the Judgment of God* but the performance was censored by the director of Radio Broadcast French Vladimir Porche due to its anti-American and anti-religious references and also its accompaniment which consisted of cacophonous

sounds, screams, drum beats, recorded xylophone, onomatopoeia, and glossolalia. Artaud followed his Theatre of Cruelty concept that is why he reduced intense emotions and expressions into audible sounds. In this work Artaud introduced his famous term of *"body without organs"*, which was later popularised by Gilles Deleuze: *"When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom."* The ban of this performance caused strong indignation among the Parisian intellectuals and Fernand Pouey, the director of dramatic and literary broadcasts for French radio, assembled a panel to discuss the broadcast. The artists, writers, musicians, and journalists from the whole Paris gathered for private listening on 5 January 1948. Although they approved Artaud's work the broadcast was not allowed and Pouey even quitted his job in protest but it was shown only on 23 February 1948 at a private performance at the Théâtre Washington. French radio finally broadcast the piece only thirty years later.

In January 1948 the doctors found out that Artaud had inoperable colorectal cancer and predicted that his death would be very painful. On 4 March 1948, he died in a psychiatric clinic at the foot of his bed, grabbing his shoe. Supposedly his death was due to the overdose of a chloral hydrate but it is unclear whether he knew about the lethality of this drug. His family wanted a religious funeral but for his friends it was unacceptable as it would be the last insult to Artaud, considering his attitude towards the Church. The family yielded and the non-religious procession was arranged.

Artaud's role in the history of drama can not be overestimated as he influenced the Theatre of the Absurd and his ideas helped to shift the emphasis from language and rationalism in the contemporary theatre. His manifestos inspire many present day practices and there are still the followers completely dedicated to Artaud's principles of theatre.

PART V: FRANCIS BACON: THE CRUCIFIXIONS¹

Deformed grotesque figures isolated and closed in a serene space, bodies writhing in agony, mouths opened in silent scream – the first things that come to your mind when you hear the name Francis Bacon. The artist is the master of flesh horror, the exposé of raw human desires and absorbing anxiety. Challenging the culture and generally accepted rules, he tirelessly conveyed innermost feelings and fantasies. Bacon served in civil defence where he had observed enough of the mutilated human bodies. Therefore, his canvases express the anti-humanism of his time, all the irrational, bestial cruelty that is hidden in a man and reveals itself during the Second World War. Most of his late paintings depict the human figure in scenes that suggest alienation, powerlessness, cruelty, violence, and suffering.

In fact, Bacon redraws famous paintings, looking for alternatives to a classic vision, offering various versions and a different point of view. The artist works in the realm of instincts, if his paintings do reflect horror and despair, they are the original ones, inherent in a man from his very birth. Through the analysis of his deepest emotions and passions, he explores his rage and pain, transferring them to the canvas. It is a desperate attempt to say something to the world without profound illustrations as if he aims to create not an accurate image of reality but a concentration of life and world as it is – violent, cold and indifferent to a

¹ The entry is contextualised by Olesya Kononchuk, Nazar Matiukha, Ruslana Marusevych, and Anna Savyna (see the contact data section of the book).

man. Bacon seeks to influence the viewers, their nervous system through direct sensation. *"Painting is the pattern of one's nervous system being projected on canvas"*, Bacon states. However, the artist does not intend to shock, his works seem terrifying only because they are a direct reflection of our life. As long as taboo topics are part of human existence, Bacon didn't neglect to exploit them, *"If you can talk about it, why paint it?"*.

Francis Bacon's favourite form of artistic expression is a triptych. Despite the fact that a triptych usually depicts religious topics the artist does not really focus on them. The imagery of the crucifixion also plays a big part in his art. Bacon's crucifixion images make us perceive evil and suffering as an integral part of human existence.

Three Studies for a Crucifixion (1962) consists of three fragments that form a common puzzle. The whole idea was inspired by the work of Isenheim Altarpiece, and specifically by the work of Matthias Grünewald *Crucifix*. Despite the fact that Bacon draws on Christian symbols in his art, the work does not really reflect the death of Christ, it is secondary.

"European Art has a long tradition of portrayals regarding Crucifixion, so much so that it becomes a great armor on which to graft any kind of feelings and sensations. You could think it strange for a non-religious person to adopt the Crucifixion theme, but I believe religion has nothing to do with it here. Just think about the big Crucifixions we know about...we do not know whether they were depicted by men with a religious belief or not. <...> I think Greek mythology is far from us, even further that Christianity. One of key aspects of the Crucifixion is the fact that the central figure of Christ is positioned very high up and isolated from the rest, and this, from a formal point of view, offers more possibilities than having all figures on the same level. The level variation is, from my point of view, very important." Francis Bacon interviewed by David Sylvester. ^[65]

Three Studies for a Crucifixion, unlike traditional

religious triptychs, should be regarded as three independent panels. The scenes do not seem to interrelate or to tell a unified story, but they are connected by their monochromatic backgrounds where the shades of red-orange and blood-red colours predominate. These colour palette forms fascinating settings, it screams into the audience's face with its intensity and contrast. The complex figures stand out due to the homogeneous space around them. They look like slightly anthropomorphic creatures wrapped in unspeakable torment.

In this triptych we observe the usage of carcass-like figures, which reminds us human bodies turned inside out.

"We are meat, potential carcasses. Every time I go into a butcher's I am astonished for not being there in place of that animal. But that particular use of meat is a bit like the use one could make of the backbone: because we are constantly bombarded by body images seen through the x-rays, it is obvious that this affects the way you use your own body...." [65]

The idea of the carcass of beef symbolising a crucified figure has a long tradition in art history and Bacon's work was influenced by Rembrandt's *Slaughtered Ox* (1655) and Chaim Soutine's *Carcass of Beef* (1925). However, Bacon has a peculiar understanding of the flesh and crucifixion. He claims to be moved by photos of slaughterhouses and meat. Looking at these pictures, the artist gets the impression that animals suspect their ultimate fate.

"I have always been very attracted by images related to slaughterhouses and flesh. I think they are tightly connected to the Crucifixion. I have seen some extraordinary pictures of animals taken the moment before they were killed; and the smell of death... Of course we do not know for sure, but looking at these pictures it seems that they are aware of what is about to happen to them... They try to escape in any possible way. I believe these images show something that is very very close to the Crucifixion incident. I know that for religious people, for Christians, Crucifixion has a

totally different meaning. But for a non-believer like me, it is only a human behavior, a way of behaving towards others."^[65]

In Bacon's view, all of this is connected to the whole concept of the crucifixion. The triptych expresses the idea that *"we are meat, we are potential carcasses"*. Death is an ever-present part of life, as our existence itself is dependent on death.

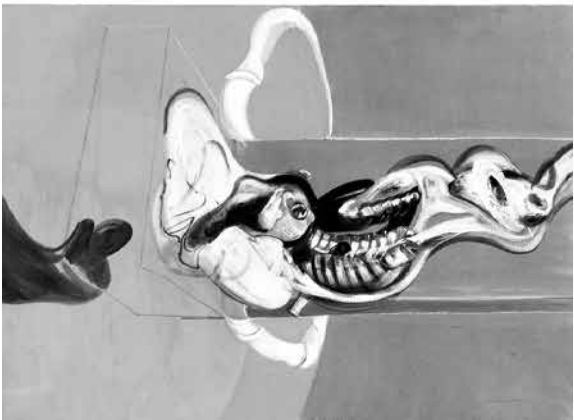
The left panel seems to present two men in a butcher shop with cuts of meat on the counter. Still, a viewer can't be certain of the origin of the meat, as it reminds the legs and the feet of a human. One can't also be sure about the location since nothing indicates that it takes place in a butcher shop. The body may be that of a victim of the perpetrators, or the object of some laboratory tests, or the dying (or dead) victim of the war. The men show no emotional response, they look at the meat with total indifference. These figures are heading to the dark obscure door. The only window in the piece doesn't bring any light. It spreads black all-consuming void out of it as well as it goes with the door. Two men remain in the centre of the room while the man on the right points to the entry with both of his hands. The metaphorical meaning is uncertain, as one idea it represents men who got through the horrors of war, witnessed rotten flesh, crippled bodies. They got "overdosed" with it and cannot handle the reality anymore. The men seek the way out of it. Nevertheless, the scene is full of tension that prepares us for the next panel.

On the central panel we see a bloodied human body writhing in pain on a bed. The windows don't spread any lights from them. To Bacon, the bed depicted in the triptych is the alpha and the omega. Red strokes are randomly scattered across the surface from the bed and to the central window. Some of them are clearly drawn, and some leave only a light bloody shadow. It is highlighted that Francis Bacon focuses on contrasts, particularly the contrast between black and red. It should be noted that the windows

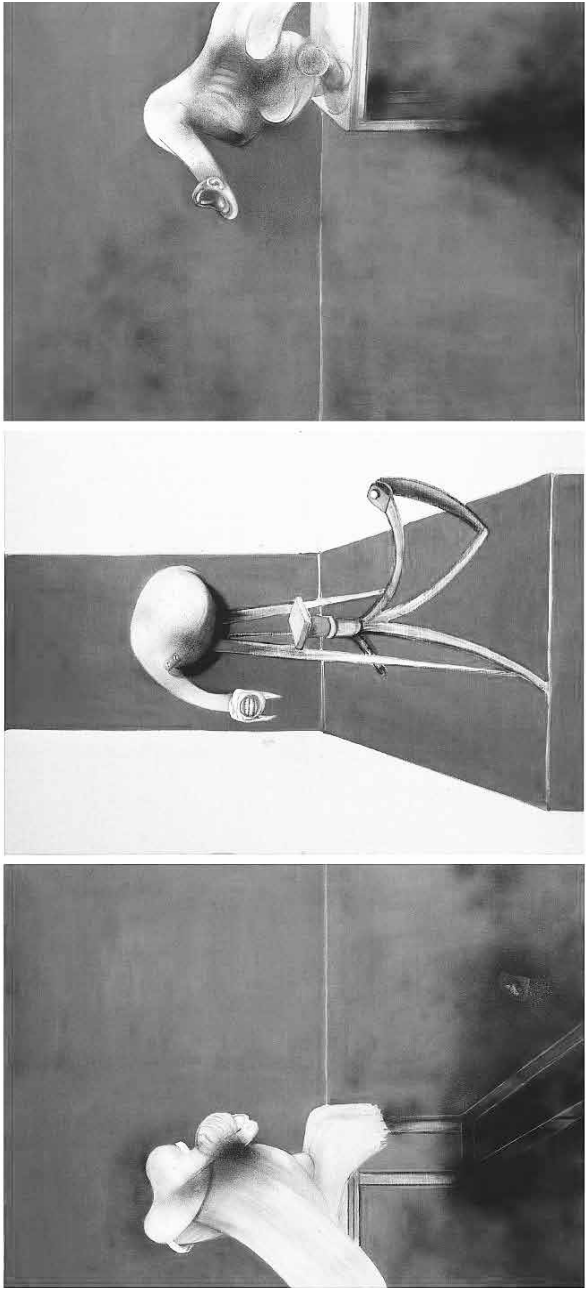
are curtained with black curtains and do not allow light to pass through. The space in the picture seems to be shrinking. Such an effect is produced due to the shape of the room, to be exact, semicircle. This form squeezes both the central human figure and produces a similar effect on the viewer.

The right panel holds the crucified figure which embodies the suffering and agony of death at the hand of a cruel and unjust world. Here we also see a mutilated body, a human or an animal, we can't be sure: flesh, protruding outward bones of the spine and bloodied ribs. The body seemed to freeze in a state of agony, suffering, and silent cry, which the viewer does not hear but yet can feel through the very atmosphere of the painting. The prevailing colours are still the same. An orange floor and a red wall roam from one part of the triptych to the next. Nevertheless, Bacon adds a new colour that also contrasts with red – a strip of green. At the bottom we can see a figure that reminds an image of a dog.

The work of Bacon deals with the flesh, the mutilation of the body, the senselessness, desperation, and still wholesomeness of the human condition in the world. The images of an animal in a butcher shop, a victim of the war and a victim of a perpetrator are equal, the atmosphere is static yet deeply strained. The three panels suggest a mesmerising vision of a closed space full of suffering and indifference to the suffering, and the only way out seems to be in the nothingness and the darkness of the eternal void. Nevertheless, the whole painting demonstrates a quite emotionless perception of the body, it is not aimed at throwing the image in the face of the viewer but rather at expressing a detached approach of the deepest aspects of the human instincts and fears. Therefore it is called *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*. The parallels can be drawn between the Bacon's work and that of Martin Bladh. One can note the relationships between the victim and the mutilator, the whole concept of body torture, the depiction of dead bodies,



Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for a Crucifixion*, 1962



Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for Figures at the base of a Crucifixion* (second version), 1944

and rather static, distant, scientific approach to the above-mentioned topics. Nevertheless, the work of both Bacon and Bladh does cause an emotional rebound and a change in a viewers' consciousness.

Francis Bacon concentrates not on illustration, but emotional and perceptual expression of his painting.

"I believe in being selfish. I have only myself to think of. I have hardly any family left and very few friends that are still alive. And a painter works with his human material, not with colours and paintbrushes. It's his thoughts that enter the painting. But I don't expect any certainty in life, I don't believe in anything, not in God, not in morality, not in social success ... I just believe in the present moment if it has genius – in the spinning roulette ball or in the emotions that I experience when what I transmit on to the canvas works. I am completely amoral and atheist, and if I hadn't painted, I would have been a thief or a criminal. My paintings are a lot less violent than me. Perhaps if my childhood had been happier, I would have painted bouquets of flowers." Francis Bacon interviewed by Francis Jacobetti (the last interview, 1992). ^[66]

His triptych indeed is a study for a crucifixion of the flesh, mutilation of the body, and detachment of the mind as a response to the true nature and essence of life which goes hand in hand with death.

"Since the beginning of time, we have had countless examples of human violence even in our very civilised century. We have even created bombs capable of blowing up the planet a thousand times over. An artist instinctively takes all this into account. He can't do otherwise. I am a painter of the 20th century: during my childhood I lived through the revolutionary Irish movement, Sinn Fein, and the wars, Hiroshima, Hitler, the death camps, and daily violence that I've experienced all my life. And after all that they want me to paint bunches of pink flowers ... But that's not my thing. The only things that interest me are people, their folly, their ways, their anguish, this unbelievable, purely accidental intelligence which has shattered the planet, and which maybe, one day, will destroy it. I am not a pessimist. My temperament is strangely optimistic. But I am lucid. <...> One day, when I was 15 or 16

years old, I saw a dog having a crap and I realised at that moment that I was going to die. I think there is a difficult moment in the life of a man. The moment when he discovers that youth is not eternal. On this day I realised this. I thought about death and since then, I think about death every day. But that doesn't stop me from looking at men even of my age, as if everything is still to play for, as if life could have a fresh start and often when I go out in the evenings, I flirt as if I was 50. You should be able to change the motor. That is the privilege of artists, they don't have an age. Passion lasts and passion and freedom is seductive. When I paint, I no longer have an age, just the pleasure or difficulty in painting."^[66]

PART VI: HERMANN NITSCH: ORGIES AND MYSTERIES THEATRE¹

It's difficult to find a more versatile personality than Hermann Nitsch. Born in Vienna in 1938 he was strongly influenced by the Second World War and became a non-political person: *"The war turned me into a cosmopolite and opponent of all nationalisms and all politics while just a schoolboy."*

"Because politics are the world's biggest nuisance. And politicians are a half-witted frustrated lot who try to administrate power...I had to greet peers with "Heil Hitler" when I was in elementary school around 1943. And then two years later, the country was liberated. After that, every occupying power—the Americans, the Russians, and so on—had their own newspaper. In those papers, the Americans badmouthed the Russians and the Russians badmouthed the Americans. It was then that I realized that all the politicians and whatever comes with being one—it's all a big sham."^[67]

This cruel episode of human history turned him into this extravagant, deep and unique personality. Being interested in art from his childhood he enrolled at the graphic art college and after completing his studies he became a graphic artist at the technical museum. Nitsch is not only a painter but also an actionist performer, composer and set designer. His figure impresses, his vision differs from other

¹ The entry is contextualised by Nazar Matiukha, Anastasiia Nychporuk, and Alyona Yukhymchuk (see the contact data section of the book).

artists, and his actions can produce shock and indignation, as they imply an understanding of human essence. He comprises into his artworks very intense religious feelings for life and sensations and psychoanalysis, philosophy, mysticism and myths have had a huge impact on his works.

Hermann Nitsch was the founding member of Viennese Actionism. Seeking the liberation from the representation and depiction, which was dominant in Actionism during the 1960s, he created the *Theatre of Orgies and Mysteries*. His theatre merges art and life focusing not on the theatrical portrayal of reality but its sensuous experience.

*"The orgy is a fantasy. I mean orgy as a maximal experience
– to use all of our senses."*^[68]

The artist demonstrates his ideas through taboo images, bloody scenes, and nudity.

"I'm very interested in taboos, mostly in their origins. I've spent my whole life involved with depth psychology, and my work is consistent with psychological dramaturgy. Sophocles's tragic plays, Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece—do you know that? It's brilliantly intense stuff. Again, I never meant to provoke. Maybe some of my colleagues did. But I also wasn't stupid enough not to think: "This could provoke.""^[67]

Nitsch is focused on creating art straight and direct which would appeal to life as it is manifested in blood, movement, entrails, etc. He uses bodies to action-paint striking images as well as the list of things that may represent the whole life cycle: in particular, milk, wine and blood that become birth, life and death, in general. In that way, Nitsch seeks to achieve a *"theatrical dramatic expansion of art"* working with material substances (blood, meat, milk) that can stimulate all the senses of the spectator.

His first successful exhibition was held in early 1960 when Nitsch presented a mutilated and skinned lamb. It

immediately spread his conception and ideas. The image of crucified lamb against a white wall, with its guts placed below a white table, was an unforgettable experience for the audience. The contrast of colours created a magnificent synergy. This event was accompanied by Nitsch's *Geräuschmusik*. His following art pieces included a lot of analogous elements: actors covered with blood, gutted animals, red and white liquids, rituals, dancing, and music.

While presenting Aktionen in Wien, Nitsch had some conflicts with the local authorities as he had used taboo images in the performances. The artist got into police "blacklist", and eventually his Aktionen were shut down.

"We are against the killing of animals. I never kill them. I buy the animals that I use from a slaughterhouse or a butcher. Society killed the animals I use for my performances, not me. Society kills animals for food. The museum's administrators have no understanding of art. They have no understanding of me, or my art."^[69]

As a result, Nitsch was imprisoned for evoked scandal and blasphemy. Nevertheless, he continued working on his Aktionen. He had staged his performances in the USA, Austria, Germany, Italy, France and many other countries.

Nitsch wanted to reduce the representational means to the minimum making them more material, shifting from the language into the action and from depiction into experiencing. He tried to explore all the aspects of reality, as well as apply the principles of Antonin Artaud and his Theatre of Cruelty. Nitsch believes that language itself fails to reach the depths, thus the Theatre of Orgies and Mysteries concentrates on the sensual experiences and orgiastic "Aktionen" to reveal what is suppressed in our consciousness. He introduces ritualistic and existential context into his works because the best way to get to our subconscious is through rituals. The subconscious is unable to understand common language which fails to influence

or affect our instincts, senses, fears, and desires. Therefore you can find many different rituals, sings, and actions in Hermann Nitsch's performances. He aims at causing the catharsis to liberate the human's consciousness. The celebration of reality and life is the main purpose. He writes: *"Why should my audience be affected only by the verbally quoted recollections of sensory feelings and perceptions. I demand from my audience direct sensory experience. The play had directives telling them to taste, smell, look, listen and touch. Flesh, innards and fruit were given to the audience to touch and feel. Odours were spread, incense and other materials were burnt, liquids like blood, fuel, vinegar, milk, urine, petrol, turpentine, ammoniac, hot water were poured throughout the theatre venue."*

"It is our flesh and blood I work with. People always ask me why I deal with blood, entrails, and so on. I say: Look, there are artists who are all about landscapes. For others it is portraits or still lifes. I am the artist who is into meat and blood, which is an incredibly interesting field. Also, there is more than one line of work that concerns itself with blood: physicians, for example, and hunters. And it's an important theme in many religions. It's just that for most people it's hard to get used to because they don't have to deal with it that much."

"There are no limits in art. In my opinion, everything can be art. Although at some point you might have to face the penal code and your own conscience. Sometimes I think: 'This I cannot account for, it could just cause too much distress.'"^[67]

At first sight, one is confused to understand how the purging of the emotions can be reached in that way but in psychoanalysis, it is called abreaction. It is a form of psychotherapy when a patient can be cured by dramatically reproducing a particular event which was a traumatic one. If we want to cleanse an event from its emotional repletion we have to get over it again. This process is often compared to surgery when a surgeon opens the tumour and removes it: it is not pleasant but a patient gets his release. This may be

the reason why the participants of Nitsch's performances are dressed in white clothes, like doctors, who help to remove the so-called tumours liberating. During all that process Nitsch is a priest who helps, guides and frees people from their conscious mind considering it a protective barrier to the deepest and most precious part – our unconscious. Therefore, pagan ceremonies, myths, sacrificial acts, naked bodies, slaughtered animals and their carcasses and blood are used. All these can be associated with resurrection and existential reality. During the performance people experience life very intensively and such synaesthesia is transferred to a normal yet cathartic life.

Martin Bladh is strongly inspired by Hermann Nitsch's activities. In his article Martin describes in detail the process, colouring, atmosphere and all those actions. Here are a few words from what happened during the performance: *"Some spectators are attracted –the drama has ignited a hidden spark within them. They watch the arena in a trance-like state and wish to join the gladiators of the heroic feast and thus become a living part of the orgy. Others are close to panic. They try to turn away, watching the shine of the shoes. But the theatre is too overwhelming, it consumes all senses. There is no way out of here. The horrifying sensation of the slaughter fills the entire block of vision. The smell of it can almost be tasted: it fills the nasal cavity and sticks onto the mucous membranes of the mouth."*¹

In his actions, Martin also pays a lot of attention to the sound accompaniment, because a spectator can become more immersed in the process and perception. Everything is important: it is substantial to use as many receptors of perception as possible to get to the subconscious mind of the audience. Sound accompaniment plays a great role in their performances. Martin notes in his review: *"Alarming monotony of the music is thrashing the eardrums and*

¹ Martin Bladh, 010804, 14.00 – Castle Prinzendorf's Chapel (First Floor). Heterogénesis No. 50-51, 2005.

the physical, claustrophobic feel of sweaty human bodies pressed together in a small rectangular space becomes unbearable. They're trapped, bound to witness the whole action through"¹ The task of sound accompaniment is not about being pleasant, but to support the motive and intensity of the action and raise the perception to the highest point possible. You can hear the "noise orchestra", "cry of the choir" and the traditional brass band with electronic amplification. Music enhances sensual impressions which are extremely important for deep immersing.

"Noise is a key factor... It [the music] intensifies the action, the action activates the music. It digs deeper into the abysses of the drama's catastrophe."^[70]

It is important to note that Martin uses similar elements as Nitsch's in some of his performances. One of his actions is dedicated to Hermann Nitsch and called *Porn Pigs*, where we can see blood and skeletons, white clothes and entrails. One of the actors picks up a blood container and pours the content into his mouth. This action is often seen in Hermann Nitsch's works when one of the participants fills himself with blood.

One may consider that these performances only aim at attracting attention and simply provoking shock but the meaning is deeper than it may appear to an unprepared spectator. The artist doubts the moral ethics of religions and the place of sacrifice in their doctrines. Even so he talks about an artist as a religious figure. Religious references are inalienable for Nitsch's Aktionen, he collates animal's intestines with canonical religious icons such as crucifixion.

"I believe in life, I enjoy nature. My 'religion' is the whole idea of creation, not a particular dogma, maybe a new religion. There was Buddha, there was Jesus Christ, there was also

1 Ibid.

Nietzsche; he was also a religious figure." "People ask me if I believe in God. I cannot answer this question. And, I would say, we have more interesting questions to think about than whether God exists. Everything exists in a way. The most important thing is that there is creation. Philosophy that goes back to Schelling and other early philosophers asks all these questions: 'why is there something rather than nothing'. And that is, for me, the important thing. And in this sense of being, everything for me is important, all Gods, all religions, everything matters to me."^[71]

The church plays the role of suppressor of human desires, it castrates or perceives a woman like a bag full of organs and something dirty. Martin Bladh writes about the image of a naked woman in Nitsch's actions: *"The pig/woman seems uncertain" or "Everybody is watching the pig / woman's lacerated vagina. Rinsing blood, menstrual blood. The liquid pours out through the fissures, spreads over the chapel floor unto the shoes of the spectators. Blood is splashed onto the altar, over the prayer benches and onto the camera-lens. The room has turned into an enormous bleeding wound, an abattoir – the slaughterhouse of God calling forth past centuries, martyrs, sacrifices and atrocities. The pig/woman is the tragic hero – a post-modern heroine waiting for redemption."*¹

Long live the Church of Nitsch!

¹ Martin Bladh, 010804, 14.00 – Castle Prinzendorf's Chapel (First Floor). Heterogénesis No. 50-51, 2005.

Prinzendorf, Summer 200



ABOUT THE ARTIST MARTIN BLADH

1976:

Born in Norrköping, Sweden.

1998:

Forms the industrial band IRM together with Erik Jarl.

1999:

IRM's self-titled debut album is released on Cold Meat Industry.

2000:

IRM's second album *Oedipus Dethroned* is released on Cold Meat Industry.

2001:

Forms the musical avant-garde unit Skin Area with Magnus Lindh.

2002:

Skin Area's debut album *New Skin* is released on Cold Meat Industry.

Performs at *Stockholm Spoken Word Festival* at Södra Teatern, Stockholm, Sweden; other featured artists are Wayne Kramer, Penny Rimbaud, John Sinclair and Jack Sargeant.

IRM start to perform live and soon develop a notoriety for their confrontational bloody spectacles; from the period 2002-2015 IRM perform numerous shows in countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France,

Spain, UK and the USA.

2004:

Participates in Hermann Nitsch's *2 Day Play* at Prinzendorf Castle, Prinzendorf, Austria.

Executes the performance work *Sensation is Everything* at Campus Norrköping, Norrköping, Sweden; the performance reaches the local headlines when entrails are found floating in the river the next morning, a police investigation is initiated but no charges are filed against the artist.

2005:

Shots and directs the short films *Pig and Tomboy* and *Talk Show*.

Executes the performance work *Porn Pigs – a Love Story* together with The Belacqua Project at Norrköpings Konsthall, Norrköping, Sweden.

IRM's third album *Virgin Mind* is released on Cold Meat Industry.

Bladh's first solo album *Umbilical Cords* is released on Segerhuva.

Exhibition *Matt 5:29-30* together with Malin Nikunlassi at Norrköpings konsthall, Norrköping, Sweden.

2006:

Shoots and directs the video works *Talk Show 2*, *Talk Show 3*, *Hole³* and *Injury*.

Exhibition *Victim and Abuser* at Kraftstationen, Norrköping, Sweden.

Executes the performance works *Dead Ringer* and *Dead Ringer 2*; the latter is executed at the opening of the *Victim and Abuser* exhibition at Kraftstationen.

Skin Area's second (double) album *Journal Noir/Lithium Path* is released on Cold Meat Industry.

Stages the mise en scene *Off-Stage Slideshow*.

2007:

Executes the performance works *Death of Narcissus* at New York Club, Vilnius, Lithuania.

Executes the performance work *Death of Narcissus 2* at Panora, Malmö, Sweden.

Starts to collaborate with Bo. I. Cavefors theatre project Theatre Decadence; *Three Studies for a Crucifixion – a passion play in three acts, dedicated to Francis Bacon* is staged at Fylkingen, Stockholm, Sweden.

Tre Studier for en Korsfästelse, Heliogabalus and Gilles de Rais collage series.

Displays the video installation *Injury* at Glömskans Museum, Norrköping, Sweden.

Shoots and directs the video work *Insult*.

IRM's live album *The Cult of the Young Men* is released on Annihilvs.

2008:

The book *Grymhetens Teater Dekadens* (three action plays), a collaboration with Bo. I. Cavefors, is released through H:ström.

The DVD/CD set which documents *Three Studies for a Crucifixion – a passion play in three acts, dedicated to Francis Bacon* is released on Firework Edition.

Exhibition *Grymhetens Teater Dekadens* together with Bo. I. Cavefors at Galleri 21, Malmö, Sweden.

The album *Dirge* a collaboration with Peter Sotos is released on Freak Animal.

The mini-LP *Indications of Nigredo* is released on Segerhuva.

Executes the performance work *Qualis Artifex Pereo* with Bo. I. Cavefors and Aryan Kaganof at Malmö universitet, Malmö, Sweden.

2009:

Starts to work on the multimedia work *DES*.

The soundtrack *Study for a Theatre of Cruelty* is released

on Annihilvs.

Executes the performance work *Qualis Artifex Pereo – Finis* together with Bo. I. Cavefors at Verkstad Konsthall, Norrköping, Sweden.

Qualis Artifex Pereo collage series.

Exhibition *Grymhetens Teater Dekadens* at Fylkingen, Stockholm, Sweden.

2010:

Executes the performance work *Mark 9:43-49* at Fylkingen, Stockholm, Sweden.

Exhibition together with Bo I. Cavefors at Konstateljé E, Malmö, Sweden.

IRM's fourth album *Order* ⁴ is released on Cold Meat Industry.

Oedipus Dethroned and *Anthology* collage series.

Requiem for a Theater of Cruelty scrapbook.

2011:

Stages the mise en scene *I See Through Me*.

The Cult of the Young Men – 8 Ghost Stories mixed media series.

The Island of Death and *Rothko Field* collage series.

2012:

Stages the mise en scene *Coup de Grace* in collaboration with the multimedia artist Karolina Urbaniak.

Coup de Grace – Postmortem series of drawings.

Masks of Nigredo mixed media series in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak.

The album *The Island of Death* a collaboration with Bo. I. Cavefors is released on Freak Animal.

Skin Area's third album *Rothko Field* is released on Malignant Records.

Ruby collage series.

Exhibition *Shadows of a Decaying Sun* together with Joel Danielsson at Detroit Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden.

Performs the multimedia work *The Island of Death* in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak at Slimelight, London, UK (causing severe damage to the artist's health).

Starts to work on the still unfinished multimedia work *The Torture of the 100 Pieces* together with Karolina Urbaniak.

2013:

Founds Infinity Land Press together with Karolina Urbaniak.

The book *To Putrefaction* a collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak is published through Infinity Land Press.

Exhibition *To Putrefaction* together with Karolina Urbaniak at Bubble Jar, London, UK; the opening of the show coincides with a performance with the same name.

The book/DVD *Qualis Artifex Pereo* a collaboration with Bo. I. Cavefors is released through Styx Förlag.

Stages the mise en scene *Closure...* and *DES: Still Life* together with Karolina Urbaniak.

Finalises the multimedia work *DES*; a book with the same title is published through Institute of Paraphilia Studies.

Executes the performance work *DES – I'll be the Mirror* at The Last Tuesday Society, London, UK; the performance coincides with the *DES* book launch.

2014:

Moves from Norrköping, Sweden, to London, England.

IRM's fifth album *Closure...* is released on Malignant Records.

The Skin Area/Jarl LP *Le Petite Mort* is released on Malignant Records.

The Martin Bladh/Sektor 304 album *Ruby* is released on Annihilvs.

Stages the mise en scene *No Breath of Sound – The History of Drowning* in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak.

The Rorschach Text collage series.

Performs *The Island of Death* in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak at Marie Antoinette, Berlin, Germany.

The DVD anthology *Victim and Abuser* is released on Epicurean Escapism.

After Rembrandt's *The Blinding of Samson* (1636), After Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* (1962), After Schwarzkogler's *Aktion 2* (1965), After Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son* (1823) and After Martin's *The Great Day of His Wrath* (1853) collage series.

2015:

Exhibits *The Rorschach Text* at Milk and Lead Gallery, London.

Writes and co-directs the feature film *Gasper* in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak.

Exhibits outtakes from *The Torture of the 100 Pieces* together with Karolina Urbaniak at Kosmo Kino Plaza, Paris, France.

Exhibits outtakes from *The Torture of the 100 Pieces* together with Karolina Urbaniak at Apex Fest VI, New York, USA.

Performs *The Island of Death* in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak at United Forces of Industrial II, London, UK.

Exhibits *The Rorschach Text* as a part of *The Festival of the Unconscious* at Freud Museum, London, UK.

The Rorschach Text catalogue is published by Freud Museum.

Darkleaks – The Ripper Genome and *Album – The Ripper Genome* collage series.

2016:

Exhibition *No Breath of Sound – The History of Drowning* together with Karolina Urbaniak at The Camera Club, London, UK.

Edom – The Necessity of Cruelty collage series.

The novella *The Hurtin' Club* is released through Kiddiepunk.

2017:

The book *Darkleaks – The Ripper Genome*, a collaboration with Jeremy Reed, is released through Infinity Land Press.

Exhibition *Darkleaks – The Ripper Genome* at The Horse Hospital, London, UK.

Illustrates Stephen Barber's novel *Thatcher's Tomb*.

2018:

Performs *On The New Revelations of Being*, a multimedia work produced in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak as a part of the *Artaud & Sound* event at the Visconti Studio, London, UK.

The novella *Marty Page* is released through Amphetamine Sulphate.

The Bladh/Urbaniak CD/DVD *On The New Revelations of Being* is released through Infinity Land Press.

The essay *The Torture of the 100 Pieces: a work in progress* by Martin Bladh & Karolina Urbaniak is published in *Performance Research*, volume 23 – No8.

2019:

Illustrates Antonin Artaud's *Heliogabalus – or, the Crowned Anarchist* and *Incubations and Succubation*, and Jeremy Reed's & Audrey Szasz's *Plan for the Abduction of J. G. Ballard*.

Reads at the *Surrealism & Psychoanalysis* conference at Freud Museum, London, UK.

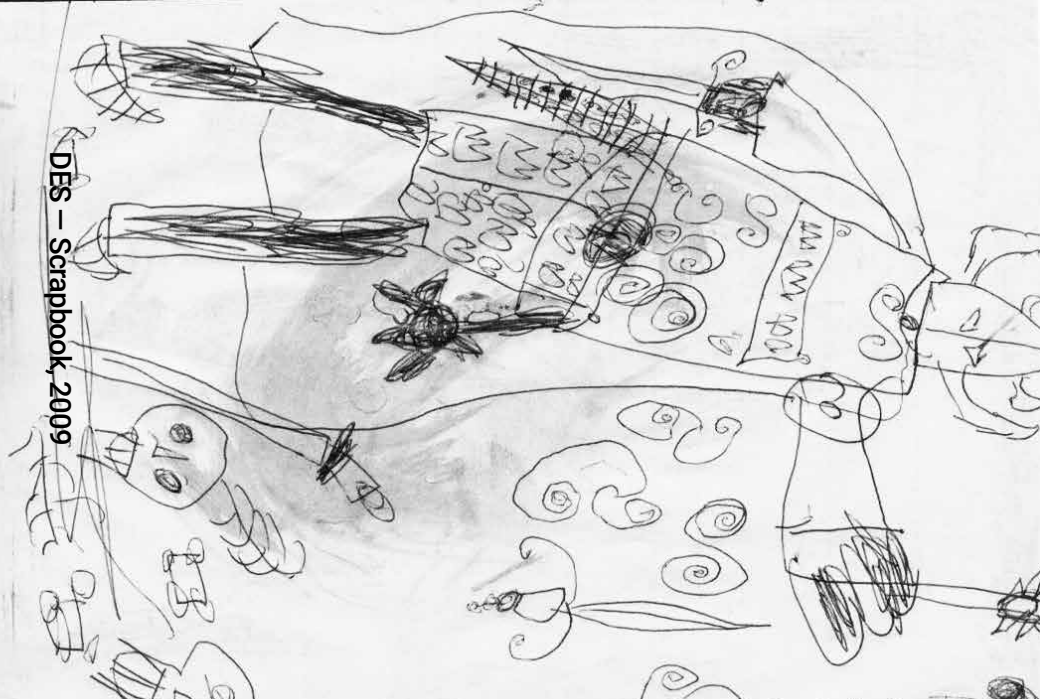
Performs *On The New Revelations of Being* a multimedia work produced in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak at Dark Sun, Athens, Greece.

Writes and co-directs the video installation *Sandmann* in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak for the Freud Museum's exhibition *The Uncanny – A Centenary*; *Sandmann* is exhibited alongside artists such as Hans

Bellmer, Elizabeth Dearnley and Martha Todd.

The Freud museum publishes an extended version of *The Rorschach Text* catalogue.

Performs *On The New Revelations of Being* a multimedia work produced in collaboration with Karolina Urbaniak at *Modern Panic Festival*, London, UK.

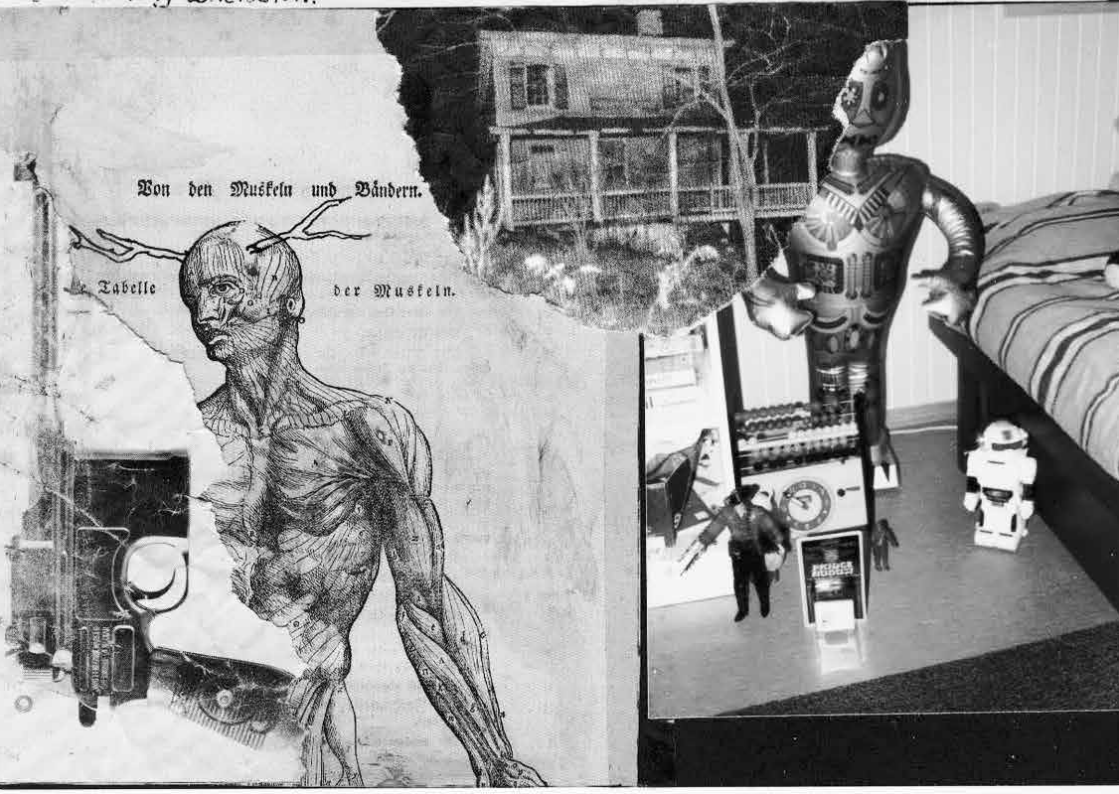


Des: Introspection is the key, we ignore our inner natures... We are attracted only to the darkness of others' lives, never our own. Our own demons are relegated to the subconscious. No one wants to believe ever that I am just an ordinary person come to an extraordinary and surprising conclusion.

Von den Muskeln und Bändern.

der Tabelle

der Muskeln.

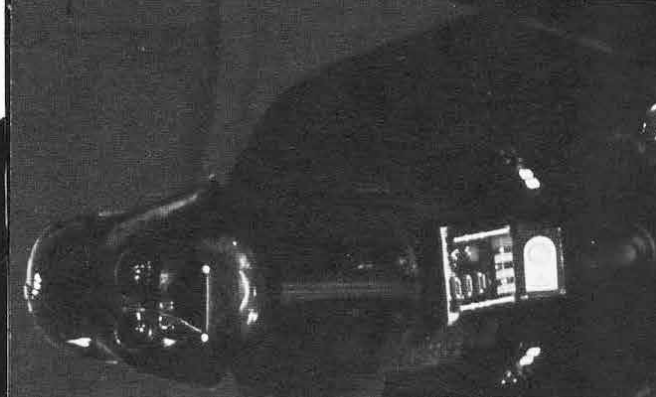


Des: I can't think of any slot to place myself in!
I can't begin to grasp it!



2. På den tiden skall finnas en vinård, rik på vin, och man skall sjunga så om den: 'Jag, Herren, är dess vaktare, och jag åter vattnar jag den. För att ingen skall skada den, vaktar jag den natt och dag. 'Jag vredgas inte på den.

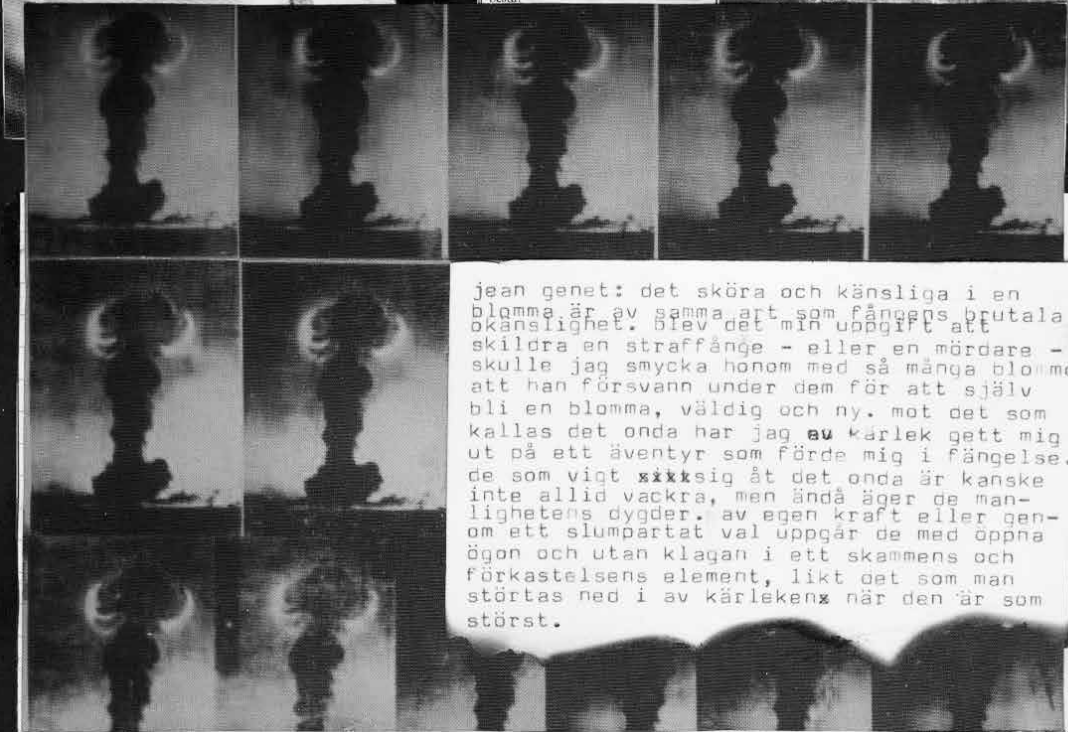




Des: I was a child of deep romanticism in a harsh plastic functioning materialism... I am an odd personality for today. There never was a place for me in the scheme of things... My inner emotions could not be expressed, and this led me to the alternative of a retrograde and deepening imagination. I turned to self-love and found myself competing against the advances of others to win my affection. I think (now) that I was jealous of giving myself to anyone completely. I led a dual life: one life was constantly pulling against the other. I had become a living fantasy theme in dark endless dirses.



12 Och jag såg när Lammets bröt de sätte sig till. Och det kom en väldig jordbävning, och solen blev svart som en tegelbrick, och hela världen blev som röd. Och himlens stjärnor föll ner på jorden, liksom höstkonen faller från trädet när det skakas av stormen. Och himlen drogs undan som när en bokrulle rullas ihop, och alla berg och öar flyttades från sina platser. Och jordens kungar och de höga herarna och härskarna och de rika och maktiga och alla slavar som fanns, gömde sig i hålor och bland klippor i bergen, och sade till bergen och klipporna: "Håll över oss och göm oss för honom som sitter på tronen, och för Lammets vrede." Ty deras stora vredeslag har kommit, och vem kan då bestå!



jean genet: det sköra och känsliga i en blomma är av samma art som fångens brutala okänslighet. Blev det min uppgift att skildra en straffange - eller en mördare - skulle jag smycka honom med så många blommor att han försvann under dem för att själv bli en blomma, väldig och ny. mot det som kallas det onda har jag av kärlek gett mig ut på ett äventyr som förde mig i fängelse. de som vigt sig åt det onda är kanske inte alltid vackra, men ändå äger de mångfaldens dygder. av egen kraft eller genom ett slumpartat val uppgår de med öppna ögon och utan klagan i ett skammens och förkastelsens element, likt det som man störtas ned i av kärleken när den är som störst.



Modern psychologists agree that the potential for criminal violence is engendered by childhood trauma within the family. Eventually the child learns that a violent response to abuse earns him respect and fear, and in this way he develops the belief that violence is his best way of dealing with people.

Des: I felt close to the land and to the things animated upon it. I would be repelled by the shooting of crows and rabbits. A rabbit, to me, was one of the least offensive creatures which hopped about. I was horrified by the sight of rabbits infected by myxomatosis. I would kill them as they staggered blindly about with swollen eyes and dying of starvation. Adults told me that there were a lot of pests around that had to be destroyed. I was not allowed to have any pets, save once a white rabbit which I had to keep in a very small hutch with a wire window. It died in winter. I was accused by my parent and step-parent of starving it to death. This as a child hurt me deeply. My mother was very house-proud and I suppose she could not tolerate animal hairs around the house on the carpet. (I got the feeling sometimes that she didn't want me around on her carpet either.)



REFERENCES

1. Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999), a Polish theatre practitioner, best known for his intense actor training processes in the 1960s and 70s experimenting with the physical, spiritual and ritualistic aspects of theatre, the nature of role, and the relationship between actor and spectator. Grotowski was a key figure of avant-garde theatre. Grotowski coined the term 'poor theatre', defining a performance style that rid itself of the excesses of theatre, such as lavish costumes and detailed sets (hence 'poor'). *Poor Theatre* places emphasises the physical skill of the performer and uses props for transformation into other objects. <https://thedramateacher.com/poor-theatre-conventions/>
2. Peter Brook (1925-), an English theatre and film director, influenced, among others, by the work of Antonin Artaud and his ideas for his Theatre of Cruelty. He undertook The Theatre of Cruelty Season (1964) at the Royal Shakespeare Company, aiming to explore ways in which Artaud's ideas could be used to find new forms of expression and retrain the performer. The result was a showing of 'works in progress' made up of improvisations and sketches, one of which was the premier of Artaud's *The Spurt of Blood*. <http://www.newspeterbrook.com/>
3. Patricia Lee Smith (1946-), an American singer-songwriter who became an influential component of the New York City punk rock movement.
4. Edmund Kemper (1948-) is an American serial killer and necrophile who murdered ten people, including his paternal grandparents and mother. He is noted for his large size (2.06 m) and for his high IQ (145). Kemper was

nicknamed the “Co-ed Killer” as most of his victims were students at co-educational institutions.

5. Ted Bundy (1946–1989), an American serial murderer, rapist and necrophiliac, one of the most notorious criminals of the late 20th century, known to have killed at least 36 women in the 1970s. On January 24, 1989, he was executed at the Florida State Prison in an electric chair known as «Old Sparky.» Outside the prison, crowds cheered and even set off fireworks after Bundy's execution. <https://www.biography.com/crime-figure/ted-bundy>

6. Charles Manson (1934 – 2017) was an American criminal and cult leader. In mid-1967, he formed what became known as the “Manson Family”, a quasi-commune based in California. Manson's followers committed a series of nine murders at various locations in July and August 1969. According to the Los Angeles County district attorney, Manson plotted to start a race war, though he and others involved long disputed this motive. In 1971, he was convicted of first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder for the deaths of seven people. Although the prosecution conceded that Manson never literally ordered the murders, they contended that his ideology constituted an overt act of conspiracy. He served his life sentence at California State Prison in Corcoran and died at age 83 in late 2017.

7. Henry Darger Jr. (1892 – 1973) was an American writer and artist who worked as a hospital custodian in Chicago, Illinois. He has become famous for his posthumously discovered a 145-page single-spaced fantasy manuscript called *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*, along with several hundred drawings and watercolour paintings illustrating the story. Much of his artwork is mixed media with collage elements. Darger's artwork has become one of the most celebrated examples of outsider art.

8. David Nebreda (1952 -) is a Spanish artist. When he was 19, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia, which made

him decide to seclude himself in a two-room apartment, without any contact with the world outside (just him and his camera). Nebreda decided not to treat his condition, to become vegetarian, deprive himself from sex, and sometimes submit himself to harsh fasts that have left him in a particularly emaciated state. By doing so, he can meet with an uncanny familiarity and the nightmarish visions that come in the worst moments of schizophrenia. He has stated that his reality is worse than the one depicted in his photography. By capturing the torment of those moments through the use of chiaroscuro's and his own body – including his own blood–, he embraces those spectres and pours them out of himself in the eternity of each photograph. His images are sombre, extremely visceral, and earthly. Moreover, they also depict the world of the unconscious as an accessible realm made of flesh and bone, tears and blood, and light and darkness, terrifying yet possessing an unknown form of beauty. Fame doesn't really matter to Nebreda. He doesn't take his photographs for an audience, but for himself. Each photograph is an example of a cathartic moment, an intimate descent into the hell of his mind. But as intimate as his works are, they keep touching audiences from all over the world for the way they depict pain: as personal as this emotion can be for him, we have all experienced it. <https://culturacolectiva.com/photography/david-nebreda-photography-mental-illness>

9. Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (abbreviated as E. T. A. Hoffmann; 1776 – 1822) was a German Romantic author of fantasy and Gothic horror. Hoffmann's stories highly influenced 19th-century literature, and he is one of the major authors of the Romantic movement. *The Sand-Man (Der Sandmann)* is carefully crafted short fiction, that combines in an articulate narrative a pattern of childish fantasies including foreboding, terror, longing, frustration, and self-destruction.

10. Peter Sotos (1960 -) is an American writer and

musician. In his books, Sotos examines sadistic sexual criminals and sexually violent pornography, particularly involving children. His writings are interpreted by some as commenting on media hypocrisy around these issues. His books are often first person narratives, taking on the point of view of the sexual predator in order to explore sadistic and paedophilic sexual impulses. From 1983 to 2003 Sotos was a member of the British power electronics group Whitehouse.

11. Paul McCarthy (1945 -) is a contemporary American artist, whose works include performance, installation, film and "painting as action". His points of reference are rooted, on the one hand, in things typically American, such as Disneyland, B-Movies, Soap Operas and Comics – he is a critical analyst of the mass media and consumer-driven American society and its hypocrisy, double standards and repression. On the other hand, it is European avant-garde art that has had the most influence on his artistic form language. Such influences include the Lost Art Movement, Joseph Beuys, Sigmund Freud, Samuel Beckett, and the Viennese Actionism.

12. Christopher Lee Burden (1946 – 2015) was an American artist working in performance, sculpture and installation art.

13. Marina Abramović (1946 -) is a Serbian performance artist, writer, and art filmmaker. Her work explores body art, endurance art and feminist art, the relationship between performer and audience, the limits of the body, and the possibilities of the mind. Being active for over four decades, Abramović refers to herself as the "grandmother of performance art". She pioneered a new notion of identity by bringing in the participation of observers, focusing on "confronting pain, blood, and physical limits of the body".

14. Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859), English essayist and critic, best known for his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821-1822). <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-De-Quincey>

15. Mishima Yukio, pseudonym of Hiraoka Kimitake (1925-1970), a prolific writer who is regarded by many critics as the most important Japanese novelist of the 20th century. His most noteworthy novels *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956) and *Patriotism* (1966), partly autobiographical, revealed Mishima's political views and proved prophetic. Mishima committed suicide by seppuku after Coup attempt on November 25, 1970. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yukio-Mishima>
16. Georg Trakl (1887-1914), Expressionist poet whose personal and wartime torments made him Austria's foremost elegist of decay and death. Trakl committed suicide on November 3, 1914, after a cocaine overdose. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Georg-Trakl>
17. Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828), Austrian composer who bridged the worlds of Classical and Romantic music, noted for the melody and harmony. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Franz-Schubert>
18. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), one of the greatest painters and printmakers in European art and the most important in Dutch history. His works came to dominate what has since been named the Dutch Golden Age. In 1636 Rembrandt painted the most violent and Baroque composition of his entire career: *The Blinding of Samson*. The painting represents the bloody climax of the Biblical story. <http://www.rembrandtpainting.net/>
19. *Un Chien Andalou* is a 1929 Franco-Spanish silent surrealist short film by Spanish director Luis Buñuel and artist Salvador Dalí. It's one of the most eminent movies in the history of cinema. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79h05vgezJ0>
20. Ernst Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007), a Swedish film and theatre director, writer, theatre manager, dramatist, and author. Among his best-known works are the films *The Seventh Seal*, *Wild Strawberries* and *Persona*, as well as his autobiography *The Magic Lantern*. <https://www.>

ingmarbergman.se/en

21. Günter Brus (1938-) is an Austrian artist known for his controversial films, performances, and paintings. He was notably a member of the Viennese Actionist Group. In 1960, the artist's interest in the paintings of Jackson Pollock led his transition into making performance-based paintings regarding his own body. Brus currently lives and works in Graz, Austria. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/g%C3%BCnter-brus/>

22. Hermann Nitsch (1938-) is an Austrian artist known for his visceral performance art practice, often based on the ritualistic practice of sacrifice. Nitsch's outrageous works are referred to as *Orgien Mysterien Theater* and involve blood, animal entrails, and nudity. *"I want my work to stir up the audience, the participants of my performances. I want to arouse them by the means of sensual intensity and to bring them an understanding of their existence."* <http://www.artnet.com/artists/hermann-nitsch/>

23. Rudolf Schwarzkogler (1940-1969), an Austrian performance artist closely associated with the Viennese Actionism group. The enduring themes of Schwarzkogler's works involved experience of pain and mutilation, often in an incongruous clinical context, such as *3rd Aktion* (1965) to reflect a message of despair at the disappointments and hurtfulness of the world. Accidentally died in 1969 (fell from his apartment's window). <http://www.artnet.com/artists/rudolf-schwarzkogler/>

24. Brook, Timothy, Jerome Bourgon and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2008. pp. 1-34.

25. Georges Bataille (1897-1962), a French intellectual and literary figure working in literature, philosophy, anthropology, economics, sociology, and history of art. His writing, which included essays, novels, and poetry, explored such subjects as eroticism, mysticism, surrealism, and transgression. His work would prove influential on subsequent schools of philosophy and social theory,

including poststructuralism. His key concepts: base materialism, the accursed share. Major works: *The Solar Anus* (1927), *L'Expérience Intérieure* (1943), *On Nietzsche* (1945), *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (1962).

26. <https://www.boston25news.com/news/all-the-text-messages-between-michelle-carter-and-conrad-roy-they-day-he-died/532942907>

27. <https://hubpages.com/politics/Do-people-enjoy-watching-other-people-die>

28. Taken from *Les nouvelles revelations de l'etre* (prophetic writings), Denoel, 1937, selections published as *The New Revelations of Being in Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, edited and with an introduction by Susan Sontag, Farrar, Straus (New York, NY), 1976.

29. In fact a suggestive idea about lobotomy can be ascribed to Robert Burton who recommended "boring the skull" as a cure for depression in *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1652) : "I saw" (saith he) "a melancholy man at Rome, that by no remedies could be healed, but when by chance he was wounded in the head, and the skull broken, he was excellently cured; breaking his head with a fall from on high, was instantly recovered of his dotage; the head to be shaved and bored to let out fumes... I saw a melancholy man wounded in the head with a sword, his brainpan broken; so long as the wound was open he was well." Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1868, Facsimile reproduction. Digitizing sponsor: Open Knowledge Commons and Harvard Medical School. <https://archive.org/details/anatomyofmelanch1868burt/page/408> The procedure known as trepanation, in which a hole is scraped or drilled in the skull, is an ancient form of neurosurgery that has been performed since the late Stone Age, prehistoric Inca.

30. Maurice Bernard Sendak (1928-2012), an American illustrator and writer of children's books.

31. Karolina Urbaniak's *The Island of Death* film consists of 6 parts, used as time-laps video backdrop for performance

Island of Death by Martin Bladh. <https://karolinaurbaniak.com/the-island-of-death>

32. A reference to lustmord (sexual killing) practice spread in 1920s postwar Germany, the Weimar Republic. Friedrich "Fritz" Haarmann (1879-1925), a German serial killer, known as the Butcher, or Vampire of Hanover, who committed the sexual assault, murder, mutilation and dismemberment of 24 boys and young men (by biting through their throats in a kind of sexual frenzy) between 1918 and 1924 in Hanover, Germany. Fritz Haarmann is a figure from a popular children's doggerel: "Wait a bit and you'll go pop! / Haarmann's coming just for you. / With his axe blade, chop and chop. Then he'll cook you into stew."

33. Nicholas Drake (1948-1974), a hugely-influential folk singer died in 1974 from what many suspected was a deliberate overdose. He struggled with depression and schizophrenia; the "black eyed dog" (death) was always behind his trails.

34. Scott Walker (1943-2019), an American-born singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and composer. *The War is Over* is a song about the inhabitants of a tenement during a war, presumably World War II. The chorus lyrics: "*Outside they sing 'The war is over!' / 'Raise your blinds, the war is over!' / Tell your deepest dark / Goodbye*".

35. Dennis Nilsen (1945-2018), Britain's second-worst serial killer and necrophile who admitted slaughtering 15 young men during a killing spree in the 1970s and 1980s, was jailed for life in 1983. The former civil servant, executed and dismembered many of his victims at his home in Muswell Hill, north London before having sex with their corpses. After luring his victims to their death, Nilsen would often sit with their corpses for days before dismembering them. His warped crimes were only detected by chance - when a drain outside his home on Cranley Gardens, became blocked by the human remains he had tried to flush away. Nilsen was a former police officer who previously worked as a butcher and is second only to Harold Shipman in terms

of the number of murders committed and was described as the “British Jeffrey Dahmer”. He died in prison on 12 May 2018.

36. Shane Levene is an English writer found only on various squalid and disreputable internet sites. His words have been compared to the best illiterati of our times. Levene is an Outsider writer who gained a cult online, following with his writings on *Memoires of a Heroinhead* during a decade-long exile in Lyon, France. <http://memoiresofaheroinhead.blogspot.co.uk/> In 2016 he returned home to write in London. His entire body of work can be found on ‘The Dirty Works of Shane Levene’ site.

37. Graham Allen was killed in September 1982: strangled with a ligature. His body was identified from dental records and healed fractures to his jawbone. Dissected portions of flesh and small bones from the body of Allen subsequently blocked the drains at Nilsen’s compartment at Cranley Gardens, London.

38. Incels are members of an online subculture who define themselves as unable to find a romantic or sexual partner despite desiring one, a state they describe as incelldom. Self-identified incels are largely white and are almost exclusively male heterosexuals. They are characterised by resentment, misanthropy, self-pity, self-loathing, misogyny, racism, a sense of entitlement to sex, and the endorsement of violence against sexually active people or themselves. This subculture as “part of the online male supremacist ecosystem” has been since of recently responsible for horrific acts of mass murders and suicides. Many incels justify their prejudices using interpretations taken from concepts such as biological determinism and evolutionary psychology, manosphere. Incel communities have been widely criticised in the media and by researchers as violent, misogynist, and extremist. Sources: Reddit, 4chan, and the Dark Web.

39. <https://openpsychometrics.org/tests/MACH-IV/>
Christie, R. & Geis, F. (1970) *Studies in Machiavellianism*. NY:

Academic Press.

40. Phineas Barnum (1810-1891), an American showman, politician, and businessman credited with coining the adage "There's a sucker born every minute".

41. <https://openpsychometrics.org/tests/NPI/> Raskin, R.; Terry, H. (1988). *A principal-components analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and further evidence of its construct validity*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 54(5), 890-902.

42. <https://openpsychometrics.org/tests/LSRP.php> Levenson, M.; Kiehl, K.; Fitzpatrick, C. (1995). *Assessing psychopathic attributes in a noninstitutionalised population*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 151-158.

43. Egon Schiele (1890-1918), an Austrian painter, a major figurative painter of the early 20th century. His work is noted for its intensity and its raw sexuality. The twisted body shapes and the expressive line that characterise Schiele's paintings mark the artist as an early exponent of Expressionism. <https://www.wikiart.org/en/egon-schiele>

44. Pierre Molinier (1900-1976), a French Surrealist painter and photographer best known for his erotic sadomasochistic imagery. He committed suicide on March 3, 1976. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/pierre-molinier/>

45. John Laurence, *A History of Capital Punishment* (New York: Citadel Press, 1960).

46. Richard J. Hand & Michael Wilson, *The Grand-Guignol: Aspects of Theory and Practice*. Theatre Research International, Autumn, 2000 (Vol. 25, No. 3 pp. 266-275).

47. Bo Cavefors (1935-2018), a Swedish writer, director and a legendary radical book publisher. From 1959 until 1979 he ran the book publishing house Bo Cavefors in Lund, by several people regarded as the most important publishing house in Sweden during the 20th century. During this period the company published no less than 850 titles. The publishing house made a priceless contribution by showing a wide range, openness and intellectual vigor with no counterpart in Swedish publishing history. They

also introduced, presented and translated several writers, philosophers and phenomena from a great number of cultural fields (Ezra Pound, William S. Burroughs, Friedrich Nietzsche, Salvador Dalí). The publishing was characterised by a unique boldness and a determinedness that stimulated a lot of people. RIP. <https://fargfabriken.se/en/archive/item/321-bo-i-cavefors>

48. Francis Bacon (1909-1992), an Irish-born British figurative painter known for his emotionally charged raw imagery and fixation on personal motifs. Best known for his depictions of popes, crucifixions and portraits of close friends, his abstracted figures are typically isolated in geometrical cages which give them vague 3D depth, set against flat, nondescript backgrounds. <https://www.francis-bacon.com/>

49. Ernst Jünger (1895-1998), a German novelist and essayist, an ardent militarist, one of the most complex and contradictory figures in 20th-century German literature, famous for such novels as *In Stahlgewittern* (1920; *The Storm of Steel*) and *Auf den Marmorklippen* (1939; *On the Marble Cliffs*). <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ernst-Junger>

50. <https://archive.org/details/anatomyofmelanch1868burt/page/470>

51. James Stanley Brakhage (1933-2003), an American non-narrative filmmaker, considered to be one of the most important figures in 20th-century experimental film. *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (1971) is based on the literal translation of the term autopsy. The film documents the highly graphic autopsy procedures used by forensic pathologists, such as the removal of organs and the embalming process.

52. C. G. Jung *Mysterium Coniunctionis* An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy" (1957). Princeton University Press, 1970.

53. Gilles de Rais (1405-1440), a leader in the French army, companion-in-arms of Joan of Arc, and secretly a

prolific, pedophilic, hebephilic, and necrophilic serial killer, rapist, and proxy killer. He is considered to be one of the first identified serial killers in world history. Rais is believed to be the inspiration for the 1697 fairy tale *Bluebeard* ("Barbe bleue") by Charles Perrault.

54. Anna Gekoski, *Murder by Numbers: British Serial Sex Killers Since 1950*. Carlton Publishing Group, 2009.

55. https://criminalminds.fandom.com/wiki/Fred_and_Rosemary_West

56. Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

57. <http://www.theinkblot.com/>

58. Carolee Schneemann (1939-2019), a multidisciplinary artist who transformed the definition of art, especially discourse on the body, sexuality, and gender. <http://www.caroleeschneemann.com/index.html>

59. Yves Klein (1928-1962), a French Conceptual artist best remembered for his creation of a vivid shade of blue, his own signature hue known as IKB, or International Klein Blue. For his *Anthropométries* series, the artist employed nude models to act as "living brushes" and paint canvases with their bodies covered in Klein Blue. <http://www.yvesklein.com/en>

60. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968) trans. Paul Patton (1994: Colombia University Press, New York). Gilles Deleuze, (1925-1995), a French writer and anti-rationalist philosopher. His most popular works were the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). His metaphysical treatise *Difference and Repetition* (1968) is considered by many scholars to be his magnum opus. In 1995 Deleuze committed suicide.

61. Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939* trans. Allan Stoekl; *The Practice of Joy in the Face of Death* (1985: University of Minnesota Press).

62. Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), a French nobleman whose perverse sexual preferences and erotic writings

gave rise to the term sadism. De Sade's is categorised as the first of the modern *écrivains maudits* ("damned writers").

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marquis-de-Sade>

63. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-895), an Austrian nobleman, writer, and journalist. The term masochism is derived from his name after publication a novel *Venus in Furs* (1869), coined in 1886 by the Austrian psychiatrist Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*. <https://forgottengalicia.com/leopold-von-sacher-masoch-much-more-than-masochism/>

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65. <http://www.francisbaconcollection.com/en/francis-bacon/>

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71. <http://www.bedeutung.co.uk/magazine/issues/2-human-divine/stavrakas-interview-nitsch/>

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ПРОЕКТ ОЛЕГА КОЛЯДИ

СУЧАСНА

АНГЛІЙСЬКА ДРАМА

#2

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