Let us attempt to summon the Exquisite Corpse. Let us all join hands, and look steadily into the centre of the page. We will each speak for a brief period, allowing the Phantom Voices to emerge through us, and enable a collision of intersected thought-lines to unravel before our very eyes. In this process of personation, we will body forth as a linguistic choreography.

Focus on the fold, the crease of the Exquisite Corpse, the suture between one voice and another, one writing hand and the next. It is here that the subtleties of meaningful collision can be found, in the scar tissue of metamorphosis from one presence to another. Each participant in this game is the phantom of the subsequent participant, the spectral presence hovering nearby, the voice coming out of nowhere, transforming absence into presence. Together, each participant forms part of the anatomy of the Exquisite Corpse, yet no-one quite knows which limb or organ they will become. This polymorphic body opens out like splayed origami. Anatomy is remapped into lost and newly found territories, cartographically disoriented into new diagrammatic equivalents. The outline of a face is left gaping, its linear trace turns into a leg, a shoulder turns into a finger, circumventing the torso only to return to it later, where it is least expected.

Close your eyes, dim the lights, rest your hands on the table. Let us reconsider our bodies as a verbal puzzle, full of silent spelling, vanishing letters, inaudible vowels, imperceptible consonants, linguistic phantoms. Lingua as in tongue. Say it with me: 'Tongue,' and you feel the tip of that movable fleshy organ attached to the bottom of the inside of your mouth press upon the hard underside of your upper teeth, and then descend to conjoin the glottis with the glossa, a false swallowing sensation which merges the thick part of your tongue with the tubular upper part of your throat. The phantom ending after that unswallowing remains unpronounced. 'Tongue'… The tongue is in itself phantom organ, there without actually being there, invisible for the most part but essential for the production of articulation, the emission of articulated speech, it throws itself about within the bony cage of teeth and palate, colliding with sounds and gasps and resonances, blindly telescopic like a phantom limb that knows itself without seeing itself, it hides within the oral cavity and peeps out with a hiss, it re-assembles itself anew for the production of meaning. Think of your tongue as the first step towards your anagrammatic body…

It is through your tongue that you can ingest, plagiarise, cite, ventriloquise, authorise all the other hidden voices that lie within the cavernous repository of your mouth, all the other bodies that haunt your own. Your teeth enable you to digest the words of others – indentations are dentiform like bite marks, quotation marks are the canines of an open jaw, revealing the voice inside the voice. In this scriptural Exquisite Corpse, we open our mouths wide and swallow whilst being swallowed. We follow the logic of interruption and contiguity (write, fold, pass), generating collaborative authorship. One picks up where another tails off, one interjects where another has not yet spoken.

In the scrawling outpours of the Medium, language is made to issue forth as though it were always out there waiting to be embodied, dis-membered and re-membered. Ether is dense with dormant communications awaiting a fine-tuned tongue, and we become mere recording instruments. The Ouija Board points towards the complicated mechanisms inherent in wording. Spiritualist communications are often misspelled, grammatically incoherent, and for the most part, remarkably un-significant (though not insignificant), lacking the solemnity we would expect of the supernatural. They point to the problem of communication, to the collaborative effort of bringing into speech and to the ways in which language itself bodies forth, becomes incarnate, in the presence of two people or more. The Anagrammatic Body is most literally materialised at the séance, where it is spelled out through the infinite anagrams of the 26 letters of the alphabet. The phantom presence makes itself known through 'telegraphic' rappings which translate into letters, letters which translate into words, initials, or numbers, which in turn translate into meaning – if, that is, there is a recipient able to interpret these as meaningful. The Anagrammatic Body often materialises in unexpected anatomical arrangements. There is, for instance, a peculiar tendency towards condensation and magnetism between the hand and the mouth. Clenching teeth echo nails digging into a tight fist – the phantom fingers of a missing hand reappear 'digested' in the jaw, remapped across the cheek. Hands recur frequently, as if to illustrate the nimble potential of language travelling silently down from the tip of the tongue to the tip of the finger. Floating disembodied hands often shift things, make noise, or touch someone. They also appear anagrammatically re-embodied.

The year is 1925, and the Medium Margery, otherwise known as Mina Stinson, mysteriously materialised a hand-shaped ectoplasm of her dead brother Walter, which issued forth from her umbelicus. "The hand rests across my hand, it's 'fingers' towards my thumb and its forefinger just at the edge of the towel." The hand seems to have grown from her navel, attached to it by an 'arm' of sorts. This body has been born again, an umbilical parturition which gives birth to her brother's phantom limb.

But silence… The Spirits are among us. Listen to the raps. Y.A.R. N.A.M.? He asks 'your name.' No, wait. The spirit says he has spelled out his name palindromatically through a mirror, we must invert the text: M.A.N. R.A.Y. Does the name Man Ray sound familiar? He has the following message for H.B. He must mean Hans Bellmer. He has read your poetic anagrams and sends you the following telegram. Let us resort to the Ouija Board. Hold the planchette and let the spirits be your guide:

"I. M. A. G. E. M. A. G. I. E."

Bellmer too is here among us. The message indicator seems to move alone, but perhaps it is simply ideomotor response. He says: "A sentence is like a body, apparently inviting us to break it down into components, so its true content reconstitutes itself over and over again in an endless row of anagrams."

Keep silent. There is another spirit present. I fall into a deep trance, my eyes closed and my lips slightly parted. I take a pen and paper and scribble in a manic outpour of automatic writing which flows unstoppably from my fingertips. And I recall nothing further…

And I recall nothing further… The medium sat with her arms folded, looking steadily at the center of the table. For a few moments there was silence. Then a series of irregular knocks began. "Are you present?" said the medium. The affirmative raps were twice given. "I should think," said the doctor, "that there were two spirits present." His words sent a thrill through my heart. "Are there two?" he questioned. A double rap. "Yes, two," said the medium. "Will it please the spirits to make us conscious of their names in this world?" A single knock. "No." "Will it please them to say how they are called in the world of spirits?" Again came the irregular raps – 3, 4, 8, 6; then a pause, and 3, 4, 8, 7. "I think," said the authoress, "they must be numbers. Will the spirits," she said, "be good enough to aid us? Shall we use the alphabet?" "Yes," was rapped very quickly. "Are these numbers?" "Yes," again. "I will write them," she added, and, doing so, took up the card and tapped the letters. The spelling was pretty rapid, and ran thus as she tapped, in turn, first the letters, and last the numbers she had already set down: "UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL MUSEUM, Nos. 3486, 3487." The medium looked up with a puzzled expression. "Good gracious!" said I, "they are MY LEGS – MY LEGS!" What followed, I ask no one to believe except those who, like myself, have communed with the things of another sphere. Suddenly I felt a strange return of my self-consciousness. I was reindividualized, so to speak. A strange wonder filled me, and, to the amazement of every one, I arose, and, staggering a little, walked across the room on limbs invisible to them or me. It was no wonder I staggered, for, as I briefly reflected, my legs had been nine months in the strongest alcohol. At this instant all my new friends crowded around me in astonishment. Presently, however, I felt myself sinking slowly. My legs were going, and in a moment I was resting feebly on my two stumps upon the floor. It was too much. All that was left of me fainted and rolled over senseless.

All that was left of me fainted and rolled over senseless.

And, even when up-ended and full of sense, what is this me that acts on the world? "Our sense of volition is thin and evasive," says the philosopher and the neuroscientist knows why. As I reach for a wine glass I am not aware of the complex trajectory followed by my arm as it avoids all the obstacles. I do not feel my fingers opening and closing around the glass. My brain senses and computes these fine movements, but I don't need to know about them. I am simply aware of my urge to pick up the glass and of my ultimate success.

My sensations are not sufficient for my perception of the world. What I perceive also depends upon my prior expectations: upon my brain's predictions. When I make a movement I am not aware of all the sensations that are created. My brain knows what these sensations are going to be and so I ignore them. That is why I feel so little when I try to tickle myself. And this lack of feeling is reflected in a lack of activity in my brain. But if my brain's prediction is wrong, if the tip of the feather with which I stroke myself reverses before I expect, then the feeling returns.

And my brain's predictions can create experiences where there are no sensations. When I have no limb my brain creates a phantom that moves at my command. When my limb is paralyzed my brain creates a healthy, working double.

When my brain becomes over-active these doubles can proliferate. I float out of my body and look down at myself. I become a puppet of an omniscient force that knows what I want to do and pulls my strings accordingly. Voices echo my thoughts and comment on my actions. They play with my emotions.

I think, "This is my body, but who is controlling it?" And then I think "Am I still sure that this is my body?" And finally I think, "Are these my thoughts?"

And finally I think, "Are these my thoughts?"

In late 1849 the German physiologist and physicist Hermann Helmholtz determined that there was a lag between a pinprick and the pain of a pinprick, *eine messbare Zeit*, a measurable time, between the impinging world and human perceptions of it — an interrupt of ~.0015 second between contact and cognizance or (in a phrase that appeared in the French version of Helmholtz's 1850 paper) a *temps perdu*, a "lost time" that, decades later, would intrigue a certain asthmatic Parisian who pursued his own *Recherches* in Paris in a soundproof, cork-lined room. Since "we just cannot perceive any faster than our nervous system works," as Helmholtz explained to his father, we are ordinarily unaware of that delay, but delay there is/was.

In 1865, F. C. Donders in Holland began attaching electrodes to the feet of subjects and timing how long it took a person to indicate by a brief hand signal whether the left or right foot had been (gently) shocked. The signal-time difference between those subjects who had been told beforehand which foot would be shocked and those who had not been told was, Donders reasoned, the minimum duration required by the brain to make a simple decision. It took the brain one-fifteenth of a second to decide, right or left? One-fifteenth of a second was much longer than the thousandth-and-a-half second it took the nerves to make pain real, but together the work of Helmholtz and of Donders put an irreducible existential hiatus between brain and body, body and other bodies.

We like to think that modernity sped things up and made almost-global communication almost-immediate almost immediately, but in more ways than not it injected gaps and lapses into the known world, as with the stop-action photography of Eadweard Muybridge in San Francisco and Etienne-Jules Marey in Lyon, who (as it were) found us out by slowing us down to an almost-infinitely-divisible series of motions. The finer the slices into which the world was cut – by photography, by microscopy, by spectrography, by the second-hands of accurate watches – the larger the gap between who we are and who we were, and the greater the apparent discontinuity between event, perception, thought, and action.

And the greater the capacity for (indeed the readiness for) distrust. Every moment, or so it could seem, people deceived themselves, whether awake and alert, or in reveries, or asleep and dreaming; that is, humans were physically, neurophysiologically, complicit in a stutter-step round of existence where nothing was truly instantaneous or simultaneous because these were the miracles that modernity had foresworn even as it embraced the industrial technologies that made them appear absolutely feasible and the therapeutic techniques that made them appear relatively humdrum.

The slowness that came of precision and speed cut four ways: it gave pause (self-reflexivity / existential doubt / ideals of objectivity); it put into suspense (serial cliff-hangers / prose-poetry / brokering of futures); it delayed the inevitable (anaesthesia / more schooling / longer business reports / longer lives); it substituted a psychological for a logical connection between ethics and lying. In the long run, and cumulatively, the slowness of the modern established m a n i p u l a b i l i t y as its operating assumption, in microbiology as in politics, in vaudeville as in public relations, in warfare as in advertising, in education as in social policy. We were manipulable because there was, always and everywhere, at some scale known to some experts, time and a way momentarily to freeze time. If flow and streamlining were keywords, they were *merely* keywords, slogans of a too-quick understanding. What made modernity modern was at once the leaping to conclusions and the imbedded understanding that all conclusions were in abeyance, not so much a millennial disappointment as a perpetual anticipation of millennial disappointment.

M a n i p u l a b i l i t y makes the unthinkable perfectly thinkable. Time can be reversed, the unborn can be fully vested as rightful creatures, a man can be a woman can be neither. Transposition can be transduction. Such fluxes may appear to take place in a split second, but that is exactly the issue. Call it Onez's paradox: since each split second can be split again, the fission threatens always an implosion, but since we enjoy a calculus that allows for a perhaps-infinite set of infinite series, the problem is not how to make it to the finish line but how to know the finish line once we make it past. Or to be assured that in crossing the finish line we have not lost all that furnished the memory of what crossing the line could mean.

Some, call them counter-moderns, or posed-moderns, have embraced speed as a panacea for slowness. In a whirlwind integrity no longer matters, as matter no longer has any integrity.

Others have pile-driven their caissons into the slowness, geologically patient though not necessarily any the wiser for being in arrears.

And some still sing.

And some still sing.

Bending up and without taking her eyes off him,

she slowly brings her knickers to her nose,

sniffs them gently,

then pulls them over his head.

Pausing a second,

she spins them another half revolution.

"There! I've put the warm side to the front."

"There! I've put the warm side to the front."

And no sooner do we turn around than the front has changed places with the back, as it will do, of course, as in that tale D'Anglemont told of godly monkeys and devilish humans – and as for warmth. . . just think of D'Anglemont, that "insouciant creole," in his sunny room within La Maison de Santé Dubois, in a bed befitting a bourgeois. The famous noctambule, he who had so loved the nighttime, through which he forever wandered in search of the new, the strange, the impossible, now desperately wanted to leave this world while the sun was up. He would insist that there be no religious observance at his funeral, but he did not want to die alone in the night.

Almost a century later, through the surrealist *dérive* memorialized in works such as Breton's *Nadja* and Soupault's *Last Nights of Paris* (which in its turn would become a ghostly communicant with Guy Debord and the Situationist Internationale), D'Anglemont would speak from beyond the grave. Something of him, anyway, of he who was always *disponible*, alert to the moment and the passing chance, and yet not heedless of all practicalities – it would not be true to say so, despite the fact that his seeming disregard for any sort of self-interest led him to that sunny room of death. So great was his generosity of spirit that even thieves would spare him as soon as he told them his name, or so the legend goes; so careless was he about looking after his own future that in the end, or so the story goes, his adored Paris, to which he had given everything he had, voluntarily exiling himself from his native land, and where absolutely everyone knew him, this Paris, it was said, was growing, perhaps. . . a little tired of him.

He was so perfect in his recklessness – acting always, Victor Constant said, "without interest, without calculation, and especially without profit" – and yet he had all the admiration in the world for the practical spirit of others: for the retired military man who made an ever-growing family for himself out of the stray dogs that had the good fortune to pass his way; for the rag-and-bone dealers who saw treasure, literally, in garbage; for the wizard who watched husks of bread being thrown to bums and in them saw revealed the terrific pet-food company he'd go on to create; even for those who stained water with unmentionable poisons and kindly sold it, as coffee or cognac, to the bums and the rag-pickers and all the other unknowns in the "Unknown Paris" that D'Anglemont made his own. For all the vagabond bohemians: the wandering musicians, street singers, sword-swallowers, dancers, tightrope artists, teeth-pullers, fire-eaters. . .

Like the surrealists' city and unlike, say, Baudelaire's, D'Anglemont's Paris was a place of enchantment even at its most dark and disturbing. So it is unbearable, really, to read Alfred Delvau's suggestion that the Parisians of his day had come to feel that they'd seen too much of this most famous bohemian, even as the Athenians, Delvau says, must have grown awfully weary of hearing Aristides called "the Just."

Parisians knew D'Anglement too well; they did not know him at all, not at all.

And this experience, too, would be communicated to the surrealists, as one after another was made an exile or an outcast, hideously betraying the spirit of "sharing" they'd followed in those early days. . . those days that belonged to the past before they even took place.

One might say that D'Anglemont foresaw it all. Not long before his stay in that maison de santé, when he seemed about to die in Lariboisière – a weeping intern actually spread the news that he had died, anticipating or, perhaps, foretelling the event – D'Anglemont surprised his old friend Delvau, who was visiting him in his hospital room, by saying that he wished to return to Sainte-Rose. But when he left Lariboisière, he remained in Paris. Because. . . ?

"In the beginning, the monkey was master, but man came with his demonic arms and hunted it. Seeing this, God took away the monkey's speech so that its conquerer could not subjugate it and make it work in his place."

He marvelled at the scraps that left the back doors of restaurants and yet were served, miraculously resurrected as freshly butchered cutlets, to patrons entering from the front. . . "slept at the inn of Providence and supped at the table of Chance". . . despite all that Buffon said, knew that man is "more cruel, more faithless, uglier, and infinitely less clever than the monkey." He knew all the artists of everyday life: those creative spirits who rented out meat to be displayed in tavern windows, who transformed rags into luxurious pillows, who exhibited monkeys and men alike, who served as "guardian angels" to drunks, who sold their names to decorate the birth certificates of illegitimate children, who raised goats in fifth-floor Paris apartments, who hired themselves out as alarm clocks to those whose labors began deep in the night. . .

It was the devil that created the human race, and he made its members miserable so they'd be forever forced to revolt against God – God, who created the monkey, and who oppressed the devil with his omnipotence. The devil showed the humans where to wash, and those who were greedy hurried to be first; then came the indifferent, when much of the water had been carried away and what remained was muddy; and then came those among the human race who had turned against the devil, wishing to confide their lot to God. By that point, there was only enough water left to wet the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet.

"And that's why we have white people who are evil," the Senegalese priest told D'Anglemont, "and yellow people who are indolent, and black people who are good." The insouciant creole enjoyed the story, as he also enjoyed the priest's information that human flesh is very good in a fricassee, but that "the flesh of a young girl especially is exquisitely delicate when roasted."

This exquisite corpse, it need hardly be said, being one that never stops turning, getting very warm indeed, on the spit of this story, which was told by D'Anglemont, who did in fact once return to the Antilles, not long after he first came to Paris, to deal with some legal business there. The voyage took more than a month. The business took a day. Then he turned around and came right back.

Then he turned around and came right back.

The amazing thing was: the limp had gone! What the hell was going on here? Why was his phantom double limping when leaving the room, but not when coming back, approaching him?

By listing a few basic facts he tried to calm himself down:

- It was the year of 1932; he was now 38 years old, a *bon vivant* and a successful architect
- he had lost his right leg, just above the knee, in World War I
- they had fitted him a prosthesis snugly onto the stump, yet he has been limping ever since
- these very seconds he was just having one of his epileptic fits he developed after the same grenade explosion that had taken his leg
- during these attacks he would typically see himself walking in front of himself, would observe the limp he felt on his right projected to the figure ahead.
- there we are: as an architect with a fairly developed sense for spatial relations he knew quite well that projecting oneself into the picture of a human figure would not require any mental "turning around." "Left" would stay left and "right" would remain in the right place.
- that's why he used to empathize so strongly with his second self once he observed it from behind: their perspective was the same, physically and psychologically. Feeling the own limp "out there" was much harder when his left and right were the other's right and left…
- his thoughts got faster, everything became at once so lifeless, empty, and meaningless, so unreal and so far away…

At this point, case B of Dr. Lukianowicz would lose consciousness. The abnormal brain electrical activity that accompanied the regular experience of himself as a phantom (one of the rare instances of a phantom double with a phantom leg!) would spread beyond some focal spots, his seizure was about to generalize.

Published in 1958, Lukianowicz's case series of autoscopic experiences, i.e. illusory reduplications of one's own body and self is still worth studying carefully and in the original. His case B suggests that phantom limbs and phantom bodies (*doppelgänger*) are made of the same stuff. It also shows that an autoscopic hallucination is more than a "mirror hallucination," at least when one's phantom double is not only seen, but also *felt* in a circumscribed place in extracorporeal space. Mirrors in the mind obey laws that transcend simple optics. They do exactly what Jean Cocteau had in mind when he asked that:

"Mirrors should reflect a little, before throwing back images…"

"Mirrors should reflect a little, before throwing back images…"

But mirrors twist and subvert those cultures that happen to invent them. With the arrival of mirrors, epistemologies buckle, new technologies spring into being, forms of entertainment are transformed (not least magical entertainments), the empire of illusion acquires a powerful, new weapon, a transformative metaphorics enters language with a life of its own, and the temptation to believe that the mind can mirror the real takes hold. Such drives do not work to a single end, in part because mirrors make more illusion and magic in the world at the same time as they take magic and illusion away from it (for instance as they help the category of mimesis replace that of divine inspiration). Then too: the mirror is both a real thing forming the basis for the production of other real things but also an idea, a model. No real mirror actually truly mirrors. And so mirrors lie at the epicentre of a cultural problematic: they make waves. Let's look at one especially intense moment in this history of the waves that mirrors make: the British eighteenth-century's 'mature enlightenment.' Here's Lord Shaftesbury, the godfather of modern aesthetics and taste-cultures on magic mirrors: "And what was of singular note in these magical glasses, it would happen that, by constant and long inspection, the parties accustomed to the practice would acquire a peculiar speculative habit, so as virtually to carry about with them a sort of pocket-mirror, always ready and in use. In this, there were two faces which would naturally present themselves to our view: one of them, like the commanding genius, the leader and chief; the other like that rude, undisciplined, and headstrong creature whom we ourselves in our natural capacity most exactly resembled. Whatever we were employed in, whatever we set about, if once we had acquired the habit of this mirror we should, by virtue of the double reflection, distinguish ourselves into two different parties. And in this dramatic method, the work of self-inspection would proceed with admirable success." Here mirrors split the soul. About forty years later the French scientist Buffon thought of using mirrors with rather less subtlety: he deployed 168 mirrors to form one giant 'burning mirror' to fire up a pile of wood across the other side of the Thames. It was a notion imitated (mirrored) early in the career of Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, about to become the phantasmagoria's greatest entrepreneur. Robertson presented his burning mirror to the Academy of Sciences in Paris hoping to produce a killer weapon in the service of the Revolution's war against Britain. His main improvement was to increase its size and set it on wheels. But the idea went nowhere and Robertson's mirror ended up in the collection of the powerful French state scientist Jacques-Alexander Charles. Indeed across the eighteenth-century, and leaving the magic lantern aside, mirror technologies were most widely disseminated through the *vues d'optique* that became extremely popular across Europe. English print publishers like John Bowles and Robert Sayer made fortunes from them: they were both a technical revolution and a fashion craze. *Vues d'optique* created the illusion of perspective when viewed with a zograscope, deploying a series of reflecting mirrors to enhance the illusion of three-dimensional depth in the print. Most contained heavily coloured, horizontal images of cities and landscapes which, disseminated by itinerant showmen, were seen by almost the whole European population. In an inverted sense they belong to the history of mass tourism: one historian has gone so far to claim that the *vue d'optique* was the first medium to bring the visible appearance of distant places to a large European public, in what was in effect a new stage in the mirroring of the world. But they could have more aestheticised applications too. Around 1770 Merlin's Museum in London advertised a domestic art gallery using the technology: "A Cabinet in which several coloured Prints, by the most celebrated Artists, may be caused to pass in succession before a large concave mirror, at the pleasure of the person who views them." As the actual manufacture of mirrors became more sophisticated, and mirror surfaces truer, more high-powered magical technologies were developed. The famous London optician John Cuff was deeply involved in the invention of one such, the solar microscope, whose invention is more usually associated with the names of the European natural philosophers Lieberkuhn and Gabriel Fahrenheit who wanted to use it for anatomical research and pedagogy. Cuff made breakthroughs in microscope development because of the way he deployed mirrors to increase the brightness of the viewed image, including the famous Lieberkuhn reflector whose curvature was optimized to focus the maximum amount of ambient light onto a specimen's surface. But, as was often the way, solar microscopes reached their biggest audiences in Britain not through science but through stage magic, and specifically in the shows of the comic magician, marketing genius and nostrum salesman, Katterfelto, whose shows and ads were a sensation in the 1780s. In these shows, using the solar microscope he projected images of bacteria ('maggots') fomenting in meat and cheese. He also performed conjuring tricks, including the gun-trick, in which he would catch with his teeth a bullet shot at him by a member of the audience. And he demonstrated electrical and magnetic phenomena. Towards the end of his career his daughter (wearing a huge steel helmet) was lifted to the ceiling by means of a magnet. He also exhibited 'air pumps,' and a 'perpetual motion' machine. Flirting with demonism, he conjured up an occult world – microscopic, electrical, magnetic, and illusory – controlled by devils led by his famous black cat, and declared himself master of this dark universe. On the back of this mock diabolism and natural magic, he proffered advice on how to avoid being duped by gamesters and confidence tricksters, whose wiles he demonstrated with further conjuring tricks. Collaborators masquerading as boorish members of the audience would interrupt his performances and try to vandalise his apparatus. These mock-disturbances enabled him to erupt in mock Germanic rage; putting on his 'terrific Death's Head Hussar's Cap' and drawing an immense rusty sword (both of which supposedly had belonged to his grandfather) he would break out into a comedy routine. He also sold phosphorous matches, nostrums against influenza, and alarms. From Katterfelto it's not such a huge leap to Monk Lewis's fictional sensation of 1795, *The Monk*. Here's that bestseller's key mirror scene: "She [Matilda] put the Mirror into his hand. Curiosity induced him to take it, and Love, to wish that Antonia might appear. Matilda pronounced the magic words. Immediately, a thick smoke rose from the characters traced upon the borders, and spread itself over the surface. It dispersed again gradually; A confused mixture of colours and images presented themselves to the Friar's eyes, which at length arranging themselves in their proper places, He beheld in miniature Antonia's lovely form. The scene was a small closet belonging to her apartment. She was undressing to bathe herself. The long tresses of her hair were already bound up. The amorous Monk had full opportunity to observe the voluptuous contours and admirable symmetry of her person. She threw off her last garment, and advancing to the Bath prepared for her, She put her foot into the water. It struck cold, and She drew it back again. Though unconscious of being observed, an in-bred sense of modesty induced her to veil her charms; and She stood hesitating upon the brink, in the attitude of the Venus de Medicis. At this moment a tame Linnet flew towards her, nestled its head between her breasts, and nibbled them in wanton play. The smiling Antonia strove in vain to shake off the Bird, and at length raised her hands to drive it from its delightful harbour. Ambrosio could bear no more: His desires were worked up to phrenzy. 'I yield!' He cried, dashing the mirror to the ground: 'Matilda, I follow you! Do with me what you will!'" The Monk's big mistake here is to dash the mirror to the ground, it's all downhill for him from there. Antonia only exists as sex goddess in the magic mirror, in the real world she's a demonic illusion. Amongst much else, in taking the mirror image as real, the Monk forgoes his chance to become an artist, since, according to Richard Hurd, a leading theorist of the day, the artist is a kind of mirror who creates a "shadowy ideal world, though unsubstantial as the American vision of souls, yet glows with such apparent life, that it becomes, thenceforth the object of other mirrors, and is itself original to future reflexions." The American vision of souls?

The American vision of souls? According to Google: **Weight:** about one dime or more famously 21 grams (Hollywood); **Specific gravity**: no answer; **Refractive index**: ditto; **Colour**: variously purple (Virgil) green (Islam), silver (Thelemic); black (www.cupidreviews.com) etc. **Location**: almost invariably inside the 1) brain (Pythagorean), 2) heart (Aristotelian), 3) solar plexus (frequently expressed), rarely 4) enveloping the body, 5) very rarely co-existent with body (Kantian), 6) quite rarely in a parallel realm (Cartesian); **Time of entry** (selection): as a guideline, www.school-for-champions.com notes that Catholics think the soul enters the body at conception, whereas Evangelists think it happens at birth. However, www.libertygospeltracts.com, for instance, quotes Genesis 2: 7 and goes for conception, and so do many Protestant "Pro-Life sites." In fact, the idea that the first breath marks the entry of the soul enjoys great popularity in all camps. More differentiated is Sri Chinmoy (not indigenous but quoted on US sites), who gives abortionists a chance (as did St Augustine 1600 years earlier) by setting the time as six to eight months before birth, at latest on conception. Finally, Hermes Trismegistus (also perhaps not a genuine US citizen – or person – but represented at www.wisdomsdoor.com) states that despite initial contact between soul and future body at conception, followed by repeated visits during gestation, it often takes up to two years after birth before the soul is fully bonded with the body, by which point it has acquired language and completely forgotten its divine origins.

Hermes' version brings us closer to these shores and their more secular climes through his intriguing similarity to Jacques Lacan, whose famous Mirror Phase occurs during much the same period, and likewise terminates with the onset of language.

Readers of Hans Bellmer's *The Doll* will find much of interest in Lacan's Mirror Phase, for in keeping with the mechanisms described by Bellmer the Mirror Phases revolves around a mix of real (body) and unreal (mirror reflection) that together produce a third reality, the "marvellous" – in this case the "precipitated I in primordial form." This ur-spasm between inside (*innenwelt*) and outside (*umwelt),* this initial opening of the hall of mirrored 'I's and 'me's and 'you's, of eversions and exteriorisations and interiorisations that Lacan and Bellmer describe from their various perspectives, is brought about in Lacan's view by the baby staring at itself in a mirror, which even adults can scarcely manage for more than a few minutes without feeling strange. Stare into your own pupils and the mirror sucks you in as quick as you can say "Legendary Psychasthenia."

But what is the nature of this interiority, this *innenwelt* – where most people on US Google posit the mind, the soul, regardless of location? In his book *Rationalized Epistemology* from 1991, Albert A. Johnstone describes our "inner" and largely overlooked tactile-kinaesthetic body, a proprioceptive field that differs "markedly from the visual field in that it has no perspective. No point in... or out of it plays the role of a point of view such that items perceived are smaller the further away they are from the point." Put crudely, your toe remains the same size, regardless of whether your hold it under your nose or stretch it far away. So perhaps it has *no* size as such, for where is the relative yardstick in a landscape without perspective and viewpoints? For as Johnstone adds, "The lack of perspective... has the consequence that no literal sense can be made of talk of tactually perceiving the world from a certain point... Indeed, if one could perceive the whole world through feeling, as one does one's body, one would perceive the world without a point of view of any sort."

This description of our non-visual inner world suggests a similarity to what Bellmer terms the "physical unconsciousness," because a non-Euclidian body seems the perfect playground for all the uncanny doublings and multiplications, the eversions and exteriorisations Bellmer describes in his book (..."Gradually her outward appearance seemed to be transposed on to his. He recognised the sound of her voice in his own, her face was repeated in his own face, her entire image entered into his; she inhabited his body." – Joë Bousquet, quoted in Bellmer; other examples include sodomising the self in the other, having hundreds of hands and thousands of fingers, etc.). Moreover, a field without perspective, without sizes, would allow identities to be suspended, so that objects may divide and merge and even coexist on the same spot in a way that is impossible in three-dimensional worlds, similar to what French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard has suggested characterises the mental subconscious.

Yet it all seems a little bloodless and solipsistic as it stands. Too righteous, even, with "interiority" writ large. And one wonders whether the interiority ascribed to it is simply another maze of illusions: is it in me, or am I in it, just like the old question of is the universe in me or vice versa. The eye of desire is missing. So perhaps the real physical unconsciousness also involves the visual self – in an uncanny mix with the "felt" to produce one of those marvellous realities, with the kind of singularly ambivalent space and motion that Bellmer summons in *The Doll* through its avatars in the everyday world, which all involve a seemingly contradictory and uncanny motion between two or more parts. Bellmer's examples are typically outrageous, delighting as he does in the outré and pseudoscientific – as if the more outré and pseudoscientific it is the more it proves his point. They include a rifle whose chamber remains still while the rest of the gun revolves impossibly around it; a candle whose reflection grows in the wax at its base as the candle itself melts away; a spinning top whose centripetal force keeps it centrifugally balanced; the wondrously contradictory ("scandalous" - Bellmer) motion produced by Duchamp's "Rotoreliefs"; and above all the Cardan joint – that system of nested pivoting rings used for the gimbal of ship's compasses. The last item assumes particular importance in Bellmer's scheme, because in his bold opinion, instead of "the object being suspended at the centre of a system of rings connected to the outside world by its periphery, the outside world can be transposed to the centre of this system in place of the object, and thus the object to the periphery." In this inverted vision, the rings incarnate both eccentric and concentric motion at the one and the same time. Obviously in order to achieve this, the entire universe would have to be wrenched inside out through one or more hyperdimensions, extending the object (point) to universal proportions. But this does not deter Bellmer, who goes on to suggest that same can actually happen to the self or ego and even illustrates his case.

Nor need it deter us. The possibility we are investigating here already has something of this bizarre rupture of three-dimensionality in pocket form, for while I see my toe, for instance, before me in the world *outside*, I can simultaneously feel it from *inside*. So I am both inside and outside myself, right way round and inside out (like that famous glove used to illustrate the 4^{th} dimension) at the same time. Perhaps also neither. And all the more astonishingly, I am simultaneously inscribed into both a Euclidian and a non-Euclidian space. While topology may be able to cope with the coexistence of simple in and out, the second point would seem to demand dimensions based on qualitative change not quantitative addition to describe it.

So maybe the soul or I is not an inhabitant of an interior, but rather is drawn to or even born of a suspension or transcendence of inside and out. Just as Bellmer's mind was drawn to the instances of ambiguous space and motion mentioned earlier, or Einstein's mind was famously captivated by the motion of a descending lift that seemed to push upwards as it slowed down, and babies get entranced by mirrors. So placing now this kind of ego or soul at the centre of the Cardan joint described above and setting it into eccentric rather than concentric motion, as Bellmer proposed, we see that the universe seems to follow suit: given that the universe is infinite or "very large but edgeless," as astrophysicist Janna Levin suggests, it makes little sense to talk of being "in" the universe, because by definition there is no outside. Likewise, if the universe doesn't have an edge it surely cannot have a centre, and moreover, without an inside or outside or an edge it seems strangely incomplete, and with that compellingly real, for as Bellmer puts it, "An object that is simply identical to itself is void of reality."

So if the universe does not distinguish between inside and out, and has no edge or centre, why should a soul or an I? Inside and outside are as arbitrary as the constellations in the night sky, each of us is as edgeless as the world reflected in a mirror, and as centreless as the silence that fills it.

'Inside and out-side are as arbitrary as the constellations in the night sky, each of us is as edgeless as the world reflected in a mirror, and as centreless as the silence that fills it.'

'I'm not convinced,' said Bridget, coming in and flinging herself down on the sofa and spilling a pile of books from her rucksack. She had tried being a nun, then a sannyasin, now she was working for one of the aid agencies here in the war zone; she was weird, that was the consensus in our group. For myself, I was intrigued, though I shared the general discomfort.

Our friend repeated the claim Bridget had caught as she came back from her post, speaking the words again in a dreamy languor, watching the smoke curl up from the waterpipe on the mother of pearl inlaid tabouret.

'Retro Satanas! I say to you, my friend,' laughed Bridget, 'in spite of my deep and total respect for you, for your mind and – your hospitality. I have a core, just as you have a core, I know it. I'm still looking for mine but I know it's there.'

'It's her heart,' put in one of us, a little mockingly – we found her mawkish in her overt compassion (most of us were cultivating hard-boiled cynicism, to ward off the horror).

'No, it's in her DNA,' said the young man from Hull, in a serious tone.

'Or in your liver,' sang out another of our ad hoc band in a Nina Simone voice.

'She means the soul,' someone muttered. 'You know, once a Catholic.'

It was the autumn of 2006 in Damascus, and we were there to help though help wasn't what anyone could do at all adequately. We were volunteers, students, activists, teenagers to grannies, from all over the world. While the shells roared and whined around us, we talked, we smoked, we brought in food, we talked some more. We were each of us flying from the world which held us into a new one – mocking one out of existence, dreaming another into life.

'Give it up, Bridget,' I exclaimed. 'Don't get stuck in that sad old humanistic religious bounded self. Join us as we flow into one another, communicating vases, with no boundaries and no antipathies, oceanic in our being – infinitely malleable and with infinite capacity for elective affinities. The new person isn't a single atom in the vast universe but is each and every one a universe!'

'Why yes and no,' said Bridget, shaking her head and closing her eyes.

She'd been at the children's holding centre at the hospital where the ones who've become separated from their families are kept until… until they're found. Or so it's hoped. After a certain time, if nobody comes to claim them, they'll be moved to a different place, a more permanent institution. An orphanage. Like some of us, Bridget's been working with the team painting the walls of the room which is going to be used to make music and paintings with the children. In times of war they forget such things and when you forget to play, life begins to lose the struggle with death. But with music and dancing you can keep the tiny light lit inside them and breathe on it.

Bridget was saying. 'Food, warmth, someone to hold you… but a child needs something else as well… we all need somebody to... hold each and every one of us in mind.

'Oh don't bring in God, for fuck's sake. He's either a complete fuck-up or he's forgotten about us.' This was the rationalist from Hull, again.

'I don't mean God, I mean that I don't exist to myself unless someone else holds me in mind.' She paused, 'You're not objecting to that much?'

There were stirrings, but no protest aloud. After taking a long breath on the pipe, Bridget went on, 'You'll think I'm cracked, and maybe I am. It's a mad world, my masters. But I've had a vision…'

The atmosphere in our digs tensed, palpably. One or two of us caught each other's eye.

'I was at the hospital very early this morning or very late last night, whichever way you want to look at it, and we had to evacuate to the basement, as usual.'

There were nods at this – others had been on duty too.

'At first there was a lull in the bombing from the ridge, and everything was very quiet except for the small noises of movements children make in their dreams when they're missing things – their mouths eat the air, their eyes search, under closed lids, for a face they know. Then the drone of a missile began homing towards a target; it seemed close, very close, and it was drawing closer. I ran to the window. A nurse and a doctor came and joined me. We wondered about waking the children, taking them down to the basement. We watched the first missile hit – somewhere to the north of us, in the business district, we thought.'

'Actually, they hit wide and destroyed a street where absolutely nothing happens except people's homes,' someone else said, under her breath.

'Then, in the huge mass of dirty smoke filled with rubble and timbers and debris that boiled up from the impact into the first light of day, I saw a figure, swathed in dark clothing, only her face showing, streaked in blood and grime and sweat and tears. It was a woman with her mouth howling, a black hole. I pointed to her, asked my companions watching with me if they could see her too – but they said no. "Look, there," I said. "Why, yes, perhaps," one of them replied. Then another said, "It's all in your imagination." And seemed annoyed. I turned back to walk through the children's ward, and the second missile hit closer. Then the turmoil began – you know – the staff began waking the ones who could walk and bundling the ones who couldn't into wheelchairs. I was trying to be of some use. Then I saw her again, this time in the ward, that veiled figure of smoke and ash and blood and tears, stooping over every face of every child and scanning it closely as we were waking them and began hurrying them down to the basement. I tried to talk to her, ask her what she wanted. She didn't seem to hear me as she moved on, from one child to another, impelled to search. She reached one little girl, who in her weariness and hurt was struggling against being moved, and the woman gave a sudden piercing cry, and began pulling back the covers to scoop up the little girl lying there into her arms, whispering her name, "Zeinab, Zeinab, it's you. You, you see, the very one, you and none other, the uniquely precious one." The daughter she was searching for, whom she had been holding in mind. And as she said her name over and over, I swear I saw them rising up together, she holding her Zeinab by the hand, and the little girl floating wide as if weightless like a cosmonaut. They were transfigured as I watched: the filthy woman now a pillar of shining cloud, the listless child rosy and laughing as the updraught caught her, like gossamer spun into the air.'

There was a silence, fraught with our common discomfort, and Bridget, sensing it, said, 'You all think it's all in my imagination, too, don't you?'

I wanted to do something to ease the rift that had grown between us around the table, so I said to her, quietly, 'It's what you believe – and belief makes all kinds of things happen. As we know all too well sitting here in the middle of this war.'

‘As we know all too well sitting here in the middle of this war.’

My grandmother Eva always had very bad circulation in her legs. She had terrible trouble with her feet. She said it was because she wore tight shoes when she was young in the 1920s, but she complained a lot about her toes being squashed. I have lots of strange memories from childhood. Some which are so vivid but utterly impossible. They are phantom memories. I remember clearly jumping off the bed with my sister and flying around the room. I am sure I have a memory of counting six toes on my grandmas left foot. She had an operation on her foot in the seventies, and she never really healed properly. I don’t know exactly what the operation was for, but perhaps it was to remove her secret sixth toe. Eventually she went back for another operation in the 80s and the doctors decided to amputate her left foot and leg to just under the knee. She never really recovered from the shock. She came to live with us and I would help her with her prosthetic leg, which she called Oscar. She would get phantom pains and try to scratch her missing toes. When she died my father told me that the Rabbi asked if we had kept her amputated leg, that the body should be buried whole, but we hadn’t. Even if we had had it preserved for her burial she still would probably have been missing what I thought I saw when I was a very little girl, her secret long lost sixth toe.

Even if we had had it preserved for her burial she still would probably have been missing what I thought I saw when I was a very little girl, her secret long lost sixth toe. But she was buried, good and buried, and it was useless now to second-guess the decisions of all those involved. Some time passed while I cast about for a new subject. People and things passed through my consciousness like sand through an hourglass, I had a growing sense of urgency but I was unable to concentrate, could not focus or anchor myself in specificities beyond the occasional vision of a disembodied toe darting among a thick layer of stratocumulus clouds.

In desperation I decided to visit a psychic in the San Fernando Valley that some of my friends in the art world had been raving about. Although I had lived in Los Angeles for five years I had not often travelled over the Hollywood Hills to dip into the Valley. It wasn't out of the disdain that some expressed toward the uncool (literally and figuratively) neighborhoods on the other side of those hills. It was simply that I hated spending so much time in the car. I already commuted 15 to 18 hours a week to various community colleges where I was an adjunct biology teacher. I had listened to the earnest intonations of the various NPR correspondents so much that I was becoming a Social Darwinist and if I heard just one more insipid Counting Crows song I was going to run my car off the road and run amok a la Michael Douglas in 'Falling Down.'

But as I said, I was desperate. So I hopped into my ten year old Tercel and took the 110 to the 101 to the Ventura Freeway, went north on Van Nuys Boulevard and then a few blocks west on Victory Boulevard. I was looking for what my friends called the 'psychic strip mall' – a non-descript shopping center that featured three adjacent but separately-owned psychic storefronts bracketed by a manicure/tattoo parlor on the west side and a coffeehouse/laundromat on the east. It wasn't hard to find and there was plenty of parking in front. Again that pang inadequacy made me squirm as I eyed all the shiny BMWs, Audis and Four Runners that everyone but me seemed to have the capacity to own.

I had been told of the uncanny powers of a woman named Melody. I was unsure which of the doors to enter, some had remembered Melody through the middle door, others had confidently stated it was one of the other two. I began to sweat nervously, I remembered feeling exactly this way as a catholic schoolboy just before I entered the confessional the first Friday of each month. I knew vaguely I had been less than angelic, I just never knew exactly what to confess – so generally I made up a laundry list of venial sins – "I lied to my parents three times, I used bad language four times, I disrespected my teacher eight times" – I guess I saved my real sinning for my later years but by that time I had no trusted confessor except whomever was sitting next to me at the bar that night.

"Melody, Melody, where on earth did you go?" I sang to myself to the tune of the song 'Timothy' an oldie from the early 70's that I think was about cannibalism. Just to get out of the sun and stem the sweating I pushed open the middle door and was greeted by a bouffant-haired, large-chested, cashmere-wearing, rose-water smelling woman of indeterminate age, with a big gold necklace that said 'Melody' springing from her cleavage. "You found me" she laughed "Door #2 as Monty Hall would say, I am your prize." Like psychic white noise, I could hear murmurings of other consultations behind the handful of cubicles arrayed across the expanse of candyland blue carpet.

"Palms, Cards, Leaves or the Zodiac?" she asked as we sat down at an oval table I had seen on sale at Ikea a few weeks before. There was special price for the full service reading; but despite my uncertain future and the fact that I needed all the help I could get, I had to be economical. "Palms" I said calculating what I would do without over the next few days to justify the $30. "Very Well" replied Melody arching her eyebrows and pushing a box of anti-bacterial tissues in my direction. While I wiped my hands Melody asked if I was on a spiritual journey. "I have no direction," I mumbled "Not sure if there is anything spiritual about that." "Well you are here and that is a start." Melody assured me smiling and pulling my right hand toward the heat of her breast.

Without warning the tone and pitch of her voice shifted, it unsettled me and I flinched a bit, unconsciously pulling my hand away but her grip was commanding. "The most casual observer of his hand will notice at the base of each finger in the palm of the hand is a mound or rising, or a depression. Each of these corresponds to a planet, and the heavenly body may be fortunate or unfortunate according to the corresponding influences of the lines and marks or signs. The thumb is the most important: round its mount runs the line of life: the thumb in Chiromancy is the life, and its influence may be benefited or counteracted by the other little hills which the hand is heir to. The mount of the thumb is sacred to Venus."

My discomfort ebbing, I slipped into a kind of light trance as she continued, "It may be accepted that when the various hills are properly placed in the positions indicated, they argue the possession of the qualities belonging to each planet. For instance, Jupiter indicates pride, Saturn fatality, Apollo art or riches, Mercury science or wit, Mars self-restraint or perhaps cruelty, the Moon folly or imagination, Venus, love, even to excess and ill-regulated passion. The Mount of Venus is at the root of the thumb. The line of Life encircles it as a river flows beneath a mountain."

Melody's voice jumped an octave and many decibels, it was positively operatic; "Life is dependent on Love." Then just as suddenly dropping to a whisper; "Let us commence with the thumb, the seat of affection."

Let us commence with the thumb, the seat of affection. Even the most rudimentary of dialectical responses to this characterisation would conclude that if the thumb is the seat of affection it must also necessarily have an unloved equal and opposite number. The counter-weight of the thumb's privilege, as it turns out, is born with an ignoble stoicism by the big toe, its dirty unglamorous twin. The big toe, as Georges Bataille observed, is "the most human part of the body." But because of the fact, he believed, that the big toe permits the human race to stand erect (and not despite it), it is always hidden away or disguised: a shameful fleshy secret that constantly threatens the human preoccupation with sentience, consciousness and metaphysics. Even the most high-minded philosophers, Bataille suggests, "have corns on their feet."

What is often referred to as 'base materialism' is derived from precisely this dialectical structural formulation. Our faces, like those of flowers, receive the sun's rays, just as our feet, like the roots of plants, are mired in the mud: beauty and abjection are two ends of the same stick (or stem). This bizarre philosophical position, derived in part at least from a reading of the human body (a deliberate travesty of empirical positivism), is characterised, as Bataille put it, "by a movement from high to low." This radically subversive gesture is reflected, albeit in the most peculiar and abstract way, by the surrealist game 'exquisite corpse.' Based on the children's game of consequences and popular in the 1920s with artists and writers in the French surrealist group (who, it should be noted, were diametrically and categorically opposed to Bataille) it consists of a collective creative process moving from top to toe which unmakes the body even as it is being assembled. The game begins with a player drawing a head, then folding the paper, but leaving tell-tale lines poking out (which should be shoulders) before passing it on. The next player draws the torso and arms, folds and passes it to the final artist to complete the legs. The result rarely conforms to any anatomical model whatsoever, let alone one that corresponds to the kind of sophisticated binary polarisation suggested by Bataille. But then, it could be argued, that is very much the point. What occurs is a disruption of the integrity of the concept of anatomy every bit as effective as Bataille's radical re-interpretation of humanity through a wilful mis-reading of the human form.

For Bataille, every example of what he referred to as 'deviations of nature' (occasional anatomical aversions to conformity) were inherently and intrinsically proof of the rules that they seemed to flout. Nature could no more produce an unnatural form than that form could pass unnoticed. At the heart of this theory is an attitude to form and resemblance also uncannily and inadvertently produced in the exquisite corpse, where the various sections of the 'body' are only held in place by their relative positions: the 'head' is only a head because it occupies the highest point of the page. But representational equivalents to 'deviations of nature' can be found throughout surrealist imagery, expressed in perverse and polymorphous grammars of anatomical structure. In stark contrast to the logic of the exquisite corpse, where the notion of the 'head' is held in place, body parts and references to bodily functions float free from their moorings and start to unpick the very idea of resemblance. In place of a composed 'body' drawn-up from non-corporeal components, suddenly everything is anatomical and anatomy is everywhere: "human limbs, human heads, human landscapes, human animals and human objects…"

In place of a 'body' composed, drawn-up from non-corporeal components, suddenly everything is anatomical and anatomy is everywhere: 'human limbs, human heads, human landscapes, human animals and human objects…' A landscape so humanised it appears to be made of flesh. A corpo-surrealism that folds in on itself so intensely that it is impossible to distinguish between human flesh and the space beyond. A phantom limbo.

'The German's Hand' is a short passage first committed to paper in 941 AD by Widukint, a Saxon chronicler and Benedictine monk. "A certain man's left hand, which had been amputated by an iron instrument [sword], was restored to him after almost an entire year as he slept; and he was marked, as a sign [proof] of the miracle, with a bloody line at the place of the joining."

Six hundred years later, in 1551, Ambrose Paré, a distinguished French surgeon, wrote in a treatise on gunshot wounds: "Verily it is a thing wondrous strange and prodigious, which will scarce be credited, unless by such as have seen with their eyes and heard with their ears, the patients who have, many months after the cutting away of the leg, complain that they yet felt great pain of that leg so cut off." This is the first modern description of what we now recognise as the phantom limb phenomenon.

Another five hundred years on, Oliver Sacks devoted an entire book to the subject, *A Leg to Stand On* (1984) though in fact he didn't lose a limb, but had a walking accident which resulted in a dislocated knee-joint and complete rupture of his quadriceps tendon. He wrote: "I was now an amputee… for the leg, objectively, externally, was still there; it had disappeared subjectively, internally. I was therefore, so to speak, an 'internal' amputee… I had lost the inner image, or representation, of the leg… Part of the 'inner photograph' of me was missing." For him, his leg was a "featureless cylinder of chalk which served as my leg – that chalky-white abstraction of a leg. Now the cylinder was a thousand feet long, now a matter of two millimetres; now it was fat, now it was thin; now it was tilted this way, now tilted that. It was constantly changing in size and shape, in position and angle, the changes occurring four or five times a second. The extent of transformation and change was immense – there could be a thousandfold switch between successive 'frames'…"

Leg as photograph, chalk cylinder, telescope, film.

It seems that the phantom limb has inscribed itself so firmly, yet mysteriously, into the pages of culture that even the most sceptical and matter of fact surgeons who dared to doubt the authenticity of phantom limbs are now largely discredited. They thought that discussing it with future amputees would produce a phantom that otherwise would not appear (so you could amputate the idea of the phantom at its root, by not mentioning it at all.) Within such a paradigm, only neurotics and introverts had phantoms. L Pöllmann believed he had evidence for this, when he found that fourteen out of 6,600 young men experienced a phantom following removal of a tooth, and that all fourteen registered as 'introvert' in the Eysenck Personality Inventory test. The good news, they say, is that phantom limbs have been found to be less prevalent in people who are deemed dim and more emotionally balanced.

Rather than trying to create a zone of exclusion around other people's phantoms, why not accept, as modern thinking in neurology is doing, that we all live in this micro-gap that exists between our perceptions and our intentions to act within the world. Our brains learn through corporeal feedback loops and consequently it seems better to say that we inhabit an intended world - a place that 'ought to be' rather than one that 'is'.

Our brains learn through corporeal feedback loops and consequently it seems better to say that we inhabit an intended world - a place that 'ought to be' rather than one that 'is.'

A portrait of the Doge of Venice Leonardo Loredan by Giovanni Bellini is on view at the National Gallery in London. He wears a hat, or two. Imagine the head minus the hat or hats, placed on its sideways on, from portrait to landscape, putting him nose sideways out and up towards you. That is how his head lies in my head, the blues and skin colours go to brown greys going to white. It lies in a pale grey space. When sleep comes, a face, sometimes attached to a body on its back, a grey face, eye closed, appears. Could be Ivan or an approximation, sometimes someone else, or a younger version of the same one. I don't see a body although there is a presence, something there. It doesn't breathe, doesn't move; a lump of a body thing. There is no deterioration. He is the same, wisps of grey hair, creases, furrows on the forehead, a large aquiline nose, thin lips. Ivan had a pinched look, with ungenerous thin lips small eyes and bad teeth… This question of thick or thin lips suggests that the perception of generosity allied to the physical appearance as in full and generous lips is a relic from the time when identifying streaks of character from physical appearance was regarded as an objective science. Apparently that was not so long ago.

This is not an exact replica of the Doge. He is not looking at me with his eye, the one eye, the other hidden by his nose, both gazing skyward, the parchment skin, balding head, wisps of hair lying light, feathery across the scalp. I see him in the afterglow of a flash of a camera or distant explosion, a flashback, film cut, in the aftermath. Fading into a dark space in my head.

According to Michael Ivan he died, gasping for air leaving the world unreconciled "Turned his face away and petered out is what he did." Did he really go like that? Who does? If it can be thought and said, it might happen. Willing oneself to death as a form of suicide is, I suppose, a method. "Oh he or she just turned and faced the wall like those 'Musselmen' did in the camps." It can happen!

Living out his youth and early manhood, Ivan was scrunched by the war. You could see that. Michael said that towards the end he went a grey yellowish colour and his eyes shone like coals burning, glowing out from the dark sunken auras shaped by his eye sockets. The force of his life was, in the end, contained by the look in his eyes, beyond all that we can know. We are not like him – different – though we are of his blood. There is no urgency in us, for now. We are all bunged up, not burning out as Michael said Ivan was.

We didn't see much of him. He loved his work, which took him away for weeks on end. When he would eventually appear suddenly, he was like the jack in the box he brought for us one day. His affection was overwhelming but somehow we knew that excess engenders distaste. Later on, we still deferred to him and Rose. We consented. The power structure of family stayed with them on the top, their home, their responsibility, they said. Michael was the first to become a paying guest while still required to carry out domestic tasks tailored to his abilities as a child. I used to dream of Rose supplanting the amalgam of the Doge and Ivan, her top half sitting in a chair, sun flooding in through the window early in the morning, partially obscured by flowers in pots, watching the birds. Looking down at her sitting in her chair, she isn't all there either, although there is more of her than Ivan, head and upper body, brown hair streaked with grey going on white, wearing a black dress. She doesn't speak. She, like him, is unaware of me. They are never together. In this, their solitary worlds, had they been intending to die in synch? Were their exits so close to one another coincidental?

I didn't go back for the funerals. It was easy to find reasons not to go. I had come over by boat, which gave a sense of finality to the separation by travelling relatively slowly. I could feel the immensity of the distance between here and there. I am here now. The pull was too weak, I was already separated, the gulf widening, emotional ties stretched thinner and thinner year by year. At the time of their deaths the time scale of the journey had shrunk to a few hours half a day or so. I was perceiving a vast distance between us.

I was perceiving a vast distance between us. A distance not measurable in miles, or time, or space, but in experience. How could I begin to understand what it might be like to be without an arm?

There, in front of me, was my arm. Could I imagine it not being there? I could imagine *seeing* my shoulder, armless, but it was more difficult to imagine *feeling* no arm. What would that be; an absence, a nothingness, a numbness, a what? Wittgenstein had asked if the absence of a feeling was a feeling, but not found an answer, if there was a single answer and if language - which he did so much to question - was up to the task.

I asked people who live without sensation or movement, people we see all around us but don't usually question, or approach, those with spinal cord injury at the neck. They can neither feel below the break or move. One said to me that,

'Early on [after the injury] there was this sensation of feeling nothing and one felt disembodied, even though you knew you weren't because you could see. That was an odd sensation.'

However, it seems that even nothing is perceived as something, as a positive rather than a negation. Another person, longer after their injury which left him without movement or sensation from the neck down, said,

'It is a sensation of nothing. I immediately compared with before. To me it was a sensation. You're saying that if you can't feel you can't have a sensation. But it wasn't numbness. It was nothingness. It was a sensation because you can sense nothing. It was a definite sensation.'

I returned to those without an arm or leg. Their nothing, too turned out to be something. Phantom limb sensation was first described in the 16th century. Nelson had used his as evidence for the immutability of the human soul. True that Weir Mitchell was sufficiently cautious to publish his classic description of phantom limbs, after the US Civil War under a pseudonym, but since then medicine has accepted phantom limb sensation. This may be a background awareness but can also be more clear sensation, whether of warmth, or touch. Worse though, there is also, frequently, itch or pain. Sometimes the phantom limb appears to move, say during gesture or walking, unbidden. Sometimes people are so convinced by the sensation that they try to walk on their phantom.

So the experience was clear; despite the absence of a limb, its presence remains. But this was in adults who had lost a limb, what of children born without a limb; would they still feel it? It turns out that a percentage do. So, somewhere in the brain, there is wiring for a limb to be felt. Normally it is connected to the real limb, awakened and moulded by feedback from its moving, feeling limb. But this perceptual circuit does not appear give up even without its end organ. Is this sensation illusory, mirrored and smoked to reach perception? But it is felt no less real than sensation from a real limb; are all our sensations smoked and mirrored?

After amputation many lives are ruined not by the absence of the limb but by the presence of pain, severe phantom limb pain. This pain can affect sleep, work and social lives. If the brain is hard wired to feel and move a limb then one might understand why there is still sensation when the limb is lost. But why should there be pain when the part is lost?

There are many theories, so no one knows for sure. Recently came an intriguing experiment, with a mirror though no smoke. Vilanur Ramachandran asked people with phantom limb pain to place their existing arm in a mirror box so it was seen as the absent one. Then he asked them to try to move both arms, the real and the phantom one together. For some, after a short while, they found they could. They felt they were moving the arm they saw in the mirror, beyond the looking glass. Not only did they feel they were moving, when they touched the mirror with their existing arm they felt touch in both this and in their phantom hand. Apparently miraculously too, in some their pain went away, even though they had lived with such pain for years. As they moved say, their phantom fingers, so the cramping pain in them disappeared, though usually only as long as they were moving. Maybe the pain was alerting the brain to a damaged part of the body and asking for help, asking for something to be done, asking for action. With sensation from the missing part but no ability to move it nothing could be done and so it continued shouting for attention in the only language it had left, pain.

So, giving the perception of movement and intention to the missing limb, and seeing it move, gives the perception of the limb being there, being controlled and being felt, and the missing limb stops shouting for attention. Though the limb is not there, the perception of intention to move it seems real, just as the sensation of its movement and it touching objects are real, when assisted by vision.

The brain can construct intention, movement and sensation without the arm being there. So how great is the distance between me and an armless person? In trying to understand their experience I ended up questioning my own.

In trying to understand their experience I ended up questioning my own.

The questioning gaze turned both inwards and outwards is like a cross between Janus, the two-headed god that looks both forwards and back, and the Klein Bottle, a topological figure that has no rim, no distinction between its inside and outside and which, like the Möbius strip, is made up of a single, non-orientable surface.

The artefact that is aware of its own status as artefact or the text that is aware of its own status as text may be examples of such a phenomenon transposed to the sphere of cultural production. A writer may undermine her authorship of a text within that text, or an artist may make apparent that their use of medium is self-reflexive, for instance. This ontological precariousness is a distinct blow aimed in the direction of the enlightenment and notions of truth, authority and scientific categorisation.

Rather than inscribing equivalences between spiritualism's alternative to the enlightenment's increasingly godless universe and art's derailment of logic, I will instead ask you to spuriously transpose them directly, which is rather like looking into a mirror printed with the face of some celebrity, so that two sets of features match and diverge and you switch between prioritising one and then the other, never resting on either.

So, take a nineteenth-century photograph of ectoplasm issuing from the mouth or ear of a medium. The image may be grainy or quite distinct; the ectoplasm may be phantasmagoric or ludicrous, perhaps readable as sheep's wool dipped in goose fat or a piece of chiffon barely disguised. Now, if you can, think of the medium as the artist and the ectoplasm as representing their artwork. The ectoplasm, then, as the manifestation of the will to convince a viewer of the truth of something that is known to be a construction becomes an artwork that is neither doctrine nor evidence nor autobiography, but simply a technological proposition. No non-circular argument can validate it.

No non-circular argument can validate it. Or, more strictly, 'it.' This is because 'it' – that specific thing that is being referred to in this particular pronoun - must always be presupposed in anything said of it. 'It,' like other pronouns - 'he,' 'they,' 'I' - and deictics - 'here,' 'there,' 'then' – must always constitute an event of language rather than a simple pointing or reference. 'It' means that thing which must already have been named, implied, or otherwise delimited, in order to be intelligible. But, exactly because its reference is supposed to be understood, or determined in advance, 'it' is always itself in advance of its referent, which is yet to come, in the offing. 'It' is a stitch in time, that knits together the ravelled sleeve of speech. Thus it – that is, 'it' - is proleptic, parasitic, never entire or self-sustaining. It is always embedded in a world, an understanding, a situation, a given, a predicament (a 'having-been-said') even as it is also always minimally out of this world, precisely since it does not simply give up the reference that is given in it.

So embedded in the already given is 'it' that it tends to dwindle, as though trying to melt back into the background it indicates. *It* in English is already a truncation of the Old English *hit*, the nominative and accusative of the stem *hi-*, of which the masculine form gives us *he*. But then, in certain dialects, and in literary usages, *it* was thinned down even further to the barely audible dental tap at the beginning of *'twas*, *'twere*, or at the end of *'to't' 'on't*, *'in't*. The same concealment occurs in the French 'qu'est-ce que c'est que ça ?' (What is it that it is, that thing?) And of course, in our contemporary form of the it, IT, 'it' is able to lie undetectably low, concealed by its very ubiquity. Google it and weep. Most databases will give you a message like the following: 'You searched for: it. Terms ignored: it. Number of results: 0'

But, however embedded, however definitionally *en situation* it must be, 'it' has also sometimes been able to expand into a curious kind of autonomy. In fact, the separation of *it* from *hit* is part of the coming into being of the neuter, or the emergence of the realm of the specifically human from a background newly, slowly, constituted as inanimate, impersonal and inhuman. Animals are held to occupy the realm of the neutral, and until quite recently, a child might also be nameable as 'it.' Indeed, the passage into the human condition is signified using the word: 'it's a girl!.' Children were also nameable as 'it' in the nineteenth century, though this usage is now very rare. E. Nesbit used the term to refer to children in the wriggling mass, in the opening page of her *Five Children And It* (1902): 'Everyone got its legs kicked or its feet trodden on in the scramble to get out of the carriage,' and the title of her book (in which the 'it' turns out to be a psammead, or sand-fairy) may refer obliquely to the emergence of children from the condition of the it. In fact, we should distinguish between the uninflected and the neutral. One of the reasons that 'its' was never likely to catch on as an ungendered form, leaving open the question of whether 'his,' or 'her' is meant ('The artist and its responsibilities'), is that the domain of the it has become the domain of the nonhuman, not just the unmarked or sexually indifferent.

What is raining when 'it is raining'? What is twelve o clock, when 'it' is? What *is*, when 'it is'? Nietzsche thought that the idea of the 'I' was merely a 'grammatical habit': 'Thinking is an action; for every action, there is the one who performs the action – and so…' Furthermore, the 'it' of general causation was also a grammatical artefact, like the supposition of the ancient atomists that, given the existence of force, 'there must be a little clod of matter in which force resides, out of which it worked – the atom.' Nietzsche looks forward to the day when perhaps we 'may learn to forgo that little 'it' (to which the honourable old 'I' has dwindled)' (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 1.17).

Modernity is characterised by two contrary impulses: one to put aside the realm of the 'it,' carefully distinguishing its operations and effects from the realm of the 'I.' The other is to predict, substantiate and autonomise the 'it,' nearly always in order to rescue or protect the 'I' from its numbing, petrifying: 'wo es war, soll ich werden.' Three defining texts on the question of itness appeared in 1923. One was Martin Buber's *Ich und Du*, which argued for a world of direct 'I-thou' relations, to replace the I-it relations of a world of objects set against the frigidly sequestered I. Another was *The Book of It*, by George Groddeck, a physician who espoused a wild form of psychosomatic theory, loosely based on psychoanalysis. The central belief of his book is that 'man is animated by the Unknown, that there is within him an "Es," an "It," some wondrous force which directs both what he himself does, and what happens to him. The affirmation "I live" is only conditionally correct, it expresses only a small and superficial part of the fundamental principle, "Man is lived by the It."' Groddeck saw the operations of the 'It' in the tendency of the old to revert to the childish postures and the capacity of children suddenly to display the features of their parents, or the parents they will become – 'For the It, age does not exist, and in the It is our own real life.' Most of his essay is taken up with accounts of the perverse asexuality or bisexuality of the 'It,' which is far from indifferent to sex, and impels men to want become women and women to want to become men. 'Yes, so wonderful is the It that it cares nothing at all for scientific anatomy or physiology, but in lordly fashion repeats the legend of Athene's birth from the head of Zeus.'

Freud, who corresponded with Groddeck, thought enough of the term to adopt it in his *The Ego and the Id*, also from 1923. Here 'the id' represents an expansion of the realm of the unconscious, to include, not just repressed contents, as in Freud's earlier, simpler scheme of ego and unconscious, but the whole of instinctive life, of which the ego itself is now said to be a modification. Freud has a bizarre thing to say about this field of mental life. Henceforth, he says, he will follow Groddeck 'in calling the other part of the mind [i.e., that part that is not the ego], into which this entity extends and which behaves as though it were *Ucs.* the "id"' (*Ego and the Id*). Not, as I first assumed he must have written, 'behaves as though it were conscious,' but behaves as though it were *un*conscious. I can make little of this, but there seems to be a lot in it. What can it mean? That the id pretends to be unconscious? That it looks and acts as though it were unconscious, but really is not? That it resembles 'the unconscious' as previously formulated (by Freud), but is not identical with it?

As so often, it is not the outcome that Freud thinks he is achieving that is interesting, but the perplexity, the flutters of this thinking in getting to it. This awkwardness is compounded by the fact the English readers encounter Freud's 'It' ('das Es') in the form of 'the id,' the extraordinary translation which Strachey decided upon for his 1926 version of the text, presumably in order to complement 'the ego,' which he had already routinely used to translate 'das Ich.' Sceptical interrogators of the possessed used sometimes to trip up their unlettered subjects when they claimed to be possessed by the devil, but mangled their Latin tenses and cases in their replies (Satan can naturally be assumed to have a strong grasp of the language of the Catholic church). It seems that English readers are to assume a similar classical pedigree for the impersonal *it*. But Latin 'id,' the stem of words like 'idiom' and 'identity' does not signify 'it-ness,' but 'sameness.' The It which is never quite itself is here given the gift of identity with itself.

Naming the 'it' the 'id' assists the process of reifying it. In 1926, the racy society novelist Elinor Glyn published a story called 'It' in *Hearst's International*, about the pursuit of a wealthy playboy by a sassy shopgirl. The following year, the story was made into a film of the same title, directed by Clarence Badger and starring Clara Bow, in 1927. Now 'it,' as in 'the it girl,' the phrase that bred from the film, had come to mean the magnetic power of sexual attraction. As Nicholas Daly has suggested, Glyn's 'It' – marks the domestication of the Freudian 'id' (*Literature, Technology and Modernity*, pp. 90-1). The it of sexual fascination is sutured to (only-just) earlier notions of animal magnetism, mesmeric power and the 'soul-subtlety' that were associated with the power of fascination (meaning, both the power to fascinate, and the power to be fascinated, the will to the power of being overpowered). This passional passivity brings together the supernaturalism of the late nineteenth century with the seductions of mass entertainment, especially in its technological forms (cinema, recorded music). Here the two modes of the 'it,' the merely mechanical and the more-than-human (the spiritual, the spectral, the supernatural), cohere and commingle. Machine and ghost ramify and reiterate.

Machine and ghost ramify and reiterate. In January of 1972, I visited Paris to see the exhibition of Bellmer's work at the Centre National de l'Art Contemporain. Previously I had only seen his work in Alain Jouffroy's Copley Foundation book. The Paris show overwhelmed me. It was a beautifully arranged survey of work over four decades. A powerful level of sustained eroticism characterised the whole exhibition, which included over one hundred drawings, about twenty paintings, ten sets of engravings, and six sculptures and constructions. The centre of attraction was a completely black room hung with enlarged Doll photographs. In the middle were two sculptures inspired by the Doll, and at the far end, dramatically lit by two spotlights, was a bed covered with black velvet on which lay what remains of the seminal Doll.

At this time I was a university lecturer and had become known – or maybe notorious is a better word – for my lectures on Erotic Art, a subject still then viewed with deep suspicion in England. I wanted to find out as much as possible about Bellmer, and so I wrote to him requesting an interview. His dealer, Andre Francois Petit, told me that Bellmer was very unwell and was very unlikely to agree to see me. This did not deter me, as I have learnt that perseverance gains its own reward. I did not receive a reply to my request, so I sent Bellmer a telegram announcing my arrival in Paris for the purpose of meeting him. On January 15th I rang the doorbell of his apartment at number 4, rue de la Plaine. A nurse came to the door and told me that Monsieur Bellmer was unable to receive visitors. I explained that I had come all the way from London, and she asked me to wait. A few minutes later she reappeared and told me that Monsieur Bellmer had received a telegram from a Mister Webb. If I was Mister Webb, and if I had come all the way from London, then Monsieur Bellmer would see me.

Bellmer's apartment was a modest one on the top floor of a modern building. There were no art works to be seen, presumably because anything he still possessed was in his exhibition. I especially noticed the profusion of books as I was ushered into his bedroom. And there propped up in bed lay Bellmer, next to the french windows through which his companion the poet and artist Unica Zurn had passed on her way to jump from the terrace to her death just over a year previously. On his bedside table was my telegram.

Bellmer looked more than his seventy years, with a pale and deeply lined face, and no teeth. His left arm was paralysed and he kept it under the bedclothes. Yet his handshake was firm and his bright, piercing eyes contradicted the impression of infirmity which I had gained from my first sight of him. Physically he may have been in poor condition but mentally he was very sharp.

Our conversation was wide-ranging and animated, with occasional interruptions from the nurse checking that I was not exhausting him. I began my interview by asking him if he had been able to visit the exhibition. "Yes, they kindly took me there to have a look. I thought it was beautifully arranged, especially the Doll room. It was a deep experience for me. I have kept parts of the Doll all this time – the rest I had to leave behind when I fled from Germany in the thirties." He spoke about his friendships with George Grosz and Rudolph Schlichter in Berlin, and his admiration for the drawings of Beardsley, Klimt and Schiele. He became very emotional as he recalled the tragic years of Nazi persecution, the death of his first wife Margarete and his escape to join the Surrealists in Paris. He spoke with bitterness about the years of poverty in France before his work was accepted as art instead of being rejected as pornography, and he saw the involvement of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in his retrospective exhibition as a welcome attempt to make amends.

I asked Bellmer his feelings about being known exclusively as an erotic artist. "All my work is erotic – it always has been. The idea of eroticism is an essential part of life, so it's right that artists like me should devote themselves to exploring that idea. Eroticism has always been of the greatest importance to me." I suggested that some people might find his idea of eroticism very far from their own. What was his concept of the erotic? "I agree with George Bataille that eroticism relates to a knowledge of evil and the inevitability of death, it is not simply an expression of joyful passion." I asked him if the writings of de Sade had meant as much to him as those of Bataille. "I admire de Sade very much, especially his idea that violence towards the loved one can tell us more about the anatomy of desire than the simple act of love, but I find I can't read very much of his work. I prefer the poems of Baudelaire, the stories of Lewis Carroll, and *La-Bas* by Huysmans. But the most important book for me has been Lautreamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* – that made a very deep impression on me."

Our conversation turned to the Doll and especially the Doll photographs: "There was a convulsive flavour to them because they reflected my anxiety and unhappiness. To an extent they represented an attempt to reject the horrors of adult life as it was in favour of a return to the wonder of childhood, but the eroticism was all-important. They became an erotic liberation for me." I suggested to Bellmer that the photographs had not only served a cathartic purpose, but had also represented a conscious attempt at communication. "To a certain extent you are right. I wanted to help people lose their complexes, to come to terms with their instincts as I was trying to do. I suppose I wanted people to really experience their bodies – I think this is only possible through sex. The photographs blended the real and the imaginary, but they had to be provocative to be effective." I went on to presume that they provoked a hostile reaction because of the mutilation and reorganisation to which he subjected the dolls. "Yes," he replied, "and this was deliberate, because I was aware of what I called the physical unconscious, the body's underlying awareness of itself. I tried to rearrange the sexual elements of a girl's body like a sort of plastic anagram. I remember describing it thus: the body is like a sentence that invites us to rearrange it, so that it's real meaning becomes clear through a series of endless anagrams. I wanted to reveal what is usually kept hidden – it was no game – I tried to open people's eyes to new realities. This is as true of the Doll photographs as it is of my engravings of *Petit Traite de la Morale*. The anagram is the key to all my work. This allies me to the Surrealists and I am glad to be considered to be part of that movement, although I have less concern than some Surrealists with the subconscious, because my works are always carefully though out and controlled. If my work is found to scandalise, that is because for me the world is scandalous."

After an hour or so of conversation, Bellmer was finding difficulty in breathing, and his nurse made it clear that the interview was over. Bellmer insisted on writing a message for me in a book of his engravings, although it was a long and painful process with me holding the book steady on his knees. He smiled very warmly as I shook his hand and said goodbye. He died three years later, after much suffering. As far as I know, my interview was the last he gave. Before I left, he had expressed pleasure that an Englishmen should have wanted to visit him as England had so far shown little interest in his work. "Your country is still in the nineteenth century. My work is too erotic – too *openly* erotic – for Puritan England. I hope you will help to change that."