

Christophstraße 18
50670 Köln

Antonin Artaud
Balthus

Dossier

Mardi
 23 Mars 1932
 M. André Gide

Cher Monsieur
 J'ai depuis longtemps l'intention
 de vous demander votre
 nom, l'appui de votre
 nom, c'est à dire
 votre consentement et
 votre adhésion morale
 à une tentative théâtrale
 de grande envergure
 dont je m'occupe en
 ce moment activement.
 Il s'agit en somme de fonder
 un nouveau théâtre,

Artaud, Antonin
 Autograph letter, signed, to André Gide
 [Paris], March 23, 1932
 22 pp., in ink.

Wednesday
 March 23, 1932
 M. André Gide

Dear Sir,

I have long intended to ask for your name – for the weight of your name – that is, for your consent and your moral support for a far-reaching theatrical endeavor on which I am now actively working.

In essence, it consists of founding a new theater — but a regular, permanent one — based on the principles I outlined in February in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. As you might imagine, this attempt will break with all existing ideas established within the theatrical traditions. I intend to proceed resolutely in the opposite direction — that is, away from a theater that mirrors and restages the existing world and its morals. Instead, I aim to create a theater that will seek to introduce a certain number of new concepts and bring them to life on stage.

Or rather: concepts that seem new to an era that has forgotten them, for they are essentially religious in nature. It is these religious concepts that originally granted theater its right to exist and around which the very idea of theater was formed. They cannot fail to appeal to you, as they seem to me to lie firmly within the tradition of your personal moral inquiry. But however excessive my ambitions might appear to you, remember that I have no intention of throwing myself into a kind of gratuitous, vague symbolism disconnected from both ideas and a mature sensibility.

If theater is destined, as I believe it is, to abandon the domain of psychology — which has until now sustained it and supplied its subject matter — and if it is destined to create a new language for itself, as its own form of spoken literature or verbal poetry, then this can only happen gradually, through concrete illustrations of its new acquisitions, which must be immediately and directly experienced by everybody. I cannot, in a mere letter, fully explain my perspective to you. But in short, I want to reintroduce a lost spirit of gravity, of religious and poetic meaning, into the theater — and surely this is something you could not disapprove of. Besides, this endeavor is hardly a personal undertaking in the usual sense — I take little credit for it, having received specific revelations on all these points. Rather, I see the theater I seek to create as a means of gaining or regaining awareness of an immense domain that has been closed off to us all. I consider this awakening as a real, almost maternal reclaiming of an infinity of buried or subtle elements. Such a task can only be achieved through daily experience and through extensive concrete research into gestures, movements, and postures — and also into the infinite possibilities of the Word, which must be liberated from its servitude.

I am not going to implore you much longer, and besides, the endeavor that I wish to start touches on more points than are possible to explain in a single letter.

If you have any essential moral or spiritual objections to the ideas that I am presenting to you a bit hastily here, tell me quite frankly and allow me to come speak to you about them.

I would infinitely value your support.

In expectation of your response, please believe, dear M. André Gide, in my grateful and attentive sentiments.

Antonin Artaud
4 rue de Commerce

P.S. I know that you are far from indifferent to the theater. The other day at the Vieux Colombier, we were interrupted just as you were about to speak to me about *The Sickness of Youth*, and I was extremely curious to hear the reasons behind your admiration. The well-known actors in this production are, in fact, proud — and rightly so — of the praise you bestowed upon them. As for me, I fail to see anything particularly noteworthy in this staging of Bruckner's play.* It's true that there are three women in the cast with first-rate sensibility — something quite rare in a troupe of novices [illegible] in the same production — but it seemed to me that the experience was marred by glaring clumsiness and inconsistency. I wouldn't dream of criticizing a young, inexperienced director for such flaws, if I felt they arose from the spirit of the staging itself — from its novelty, or from the challenges of embodying entirely new and unprecedented concepts. Even though the director had found a means of expression that was merely adequate, I would have applauded the ideas, setting aside the unevenness and uncertainty of execution

If I thought I had felt the [illegible] restlessness in this play [illegible]. And I certainly wasn't struck by the depth, the relief, or the originality of the features through which the amorous and philosophical despair of furious youth was conveyed. Everything felt strained, false, artificial, and excessive to me — in its mode of expression, the kind of psychological realism underlying this play seemed no different to me than the kind of realism typically expected from this genre. And all the characters gave me a strong sense of déjà vu! Beyond the attempt at modernity, where the characters cling to the unbridled freedom of their opinions — very modern freedom, laden with cynicism and excess [illegible] — aren't these simply characters lifted straight out of naturalist theater? From forty or fifty years ago, by Strindberg and others?

As for the idea — which could have been one of the richest elements of the play — of despair slipping into crime through the successive steps of love, boredom, weakness, and cowardice; the idea of a kind of erosion of the soul brought on by a lack of inner cohesion and the instability of feeling — an idea that might cast a desperate and bloody light on the seething and senseless turmoil of most modern sensibilities, which God knows what [illegible] has completely obscured [illegible]. One could only applaud it, if it were truly present in the play. But it is not, and it cannot be deduced from any of the situations the play presents. It was not in the play any more than a novel exists within a brilliant crime story. It still remains to be done — precisely.

In light of all this, one can only regret the director's mistake in portraying the character of Freder as a stylized and diabolical puppet — diabolical perhaps [illegible], but still, a puppet nonetheless. This sort of crafty, self-aware criminal — even lacking the excuse, à la Raskolnikov, of committing a kind of heroic and obligatory act from which he would feel cowardly to shrink, however monstrous it might be — is still human, after all. What I mean to say is that it's far too easy to reduce him to a mere animated mannequin, a kind of puppet, automaton, or simple killing machine. That he embodies a certain spirit of natural and irrational vengeance, that he commits crimes out of curiosity — this is all puppet-like, yes, but it is not the whole story. Psychologically, there is something else. Something [illegible]! Freder's despair is molded by the forces that move it, drive it, and which he can only dread. His state of mind can only be explained and justified by one thing: despair. In my view, the idea of continual crime can arise only in a consciousness that is profoundly — and I would say, metaphysically — despairing. And by *metaphysically* I mean a consciousness thrown into despair by its own confrontation with metaphysical principles. These are not for us to examine here, but what matters is that this despair unsettles and deranges this consciousness, drives it beyond its limits, forces it into a boundless, unbearable, and unprincipled excess — pushing it into a kind of abstract state!!!!

In a word, if Bruckner's hero has reached the point where he no longer suffers, he has nonetheless suffered in the past — and carries that suffering within himself. By contrast, Rouleau's character is a puppet without thought, nearly inert, in whom everything unfolds almost mechanically. If this [illegible] a realistic play [illegible] something stylized and conventional — with almost purely aesthetic intentions — that merely plays with the spirit of the work. Certainly, it would be easier to play this

character in a spirit of dry stiffness than to play it with a depth still tormented by the reflections of all kinds of problems of which his actions are, so to speak, the [illegible]!

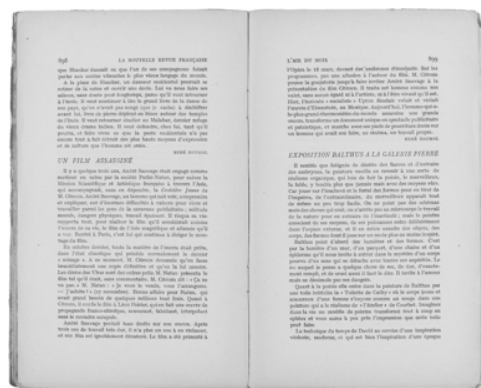
To have Rouleau play this character immediately brings to mind the image of Patrice in Roger Vitrac's *The Mysteries of Love* that this same Raymond Rouleau played in June 1927 in the 2 first performances of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry. And the explanation for this choice is as follows: Rouleau reproduced expression by expression, scream by scream, gesture by gesture, intonation by intonation, the methods of acting he learned in order to play Patrice. He must have found these methods conclusive and excellent since he insists on deploying them everywhere. Everyone who saw the production I am speaking of came to this same conclusion. And so there you have the real reasons why the spirit of this production of *The Sickness of Youth* is unauthentic. It is not [illegible]. And I believe that this inauthenticity is palpable.

I beg your pardon for having lingered so long on all of this but I attempted to [illegible] my way of thinking so that you can give your [illegible] with full knowledge of the facts

Believe, Monsieur André Gide, in my feelings of highest consideration

Antonin Artaud
4 rue de Commerce
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*Artaud refers here to a production of the Austrian playwright Ferdinand Bruckner's play *Le Mal de la jeunesse* at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in January 1932. Thank you to Joseph Bourgois for his assistance in transcribing this letter.



Artaud, Antonin
“Balthus Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre.”
In: *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 248 (May 1934), pp. 899–900.

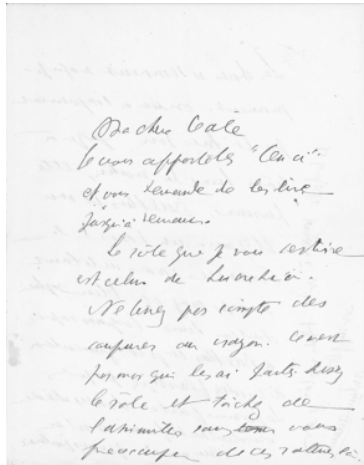
It seems that painting has grown weary — of being wild on the one hand, and of extracting embryos on the other. There is now a desire to return to a kind of organic realism that does not reject the poetic, the marvelous, or the fabulous, but clings to them more tightly than ever. For it is all too easy, in the end, to provoke startling, extraordinary, and marvelous effects by playing with unfinished, embryonic forms. One should not paint schemas, but things as they are. One should not trap nature’s work under a microscope in order to distill the ineffable from it. Fully aware of his methods and power, the painter steps deliberately into the surrounding world — returning with objects, bodies, and forms to be used with greater or lesser inspiration.

Balthus paints, above all, light and form. By means of the light that strikes a wall, a floor, a chair, or a patch of skin, he invites us into the mystery of a body, marked by a sex that stands out in all its irregularity. The nude that comes to mind here is dry, hard, precisely full, and — it must be said — cruel. It is an invitation to love, but one that does not hide the dangers involved.

Poetry enters Balthus’s painting through a canvas entitled *Cathy Dressing*, in which the body of a young woman in love appears dreamlike upon a canvas rendered with the realism of Courbet’s *Studio*. Imagine a model suddenly transformed into a sphinx, and you have a sense of what this painting can do.

A technique from the time of Jacques-Louis David placed in the service of a violent and modern inspiration — the inspiration of a sick era in which the conspiring artist uses reality only in order to crucify it more effectively.

Within this detached conception of painting — which is, in the end, anti-realist — no canvas can be judged in isolation, and none has value except through the meaning conferred upon it. The notion of *trompe l’oeil* is seen not as something servile, but splendid. The artist employs a kind of *trompe l’oeil* that extends beyond the painting itself to include the setting in which the canvas is placed. It is a form of painting that reclaims—from the artificial light of the hall, the gallery, and the passing street — the secret meaning and precious use of the real. It is the reality of the mind that takes the place of our uncoordinated gestures.



Artaud, Antonin
Autograph letter, signed, to Cécile Denoël
[Paris], [early February 1935]
2 pp., in ink

My dear Cécile

I bring you *The Cenci* and ask you to read it by tomorrow.

The role I have in mind for you is that of Lucretia.

Don't pay attention to the pencil marks. I didn't make them. Read the role and try to absorb it without worrying about those corrections.

Things are shaping up magnificently. We talked at length last night until three in the morning — this person, Balthus, and I.* There will be a set design in the style of Piranesi, but gleaming, blood red and sapphire blue, for which I gave a quick sketch to Balthus, who will embellish it with his own artistic ideas. The person in question is going to London to look for two hundred thousand francs. We are in the midst of a miracle. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow at noon. But not a word, I beg you.

Antonin Artaud

*Artaud refers here to Lady Iya Abdy, who played the role of Beatrice Cenci in *The Cenci*.



Artaud, Antonin

"The Cenci."

In: *La Bête Noire* 2 (May 1, 1935), p. 1.

The Cenci, which will be performed at the Folies-Wagram starting May 6, is not yet the Theatre of Cruelty — but it is preparing for it.

I drew my play from Shelley and Stendhal, which doesn't mean I adapted Shelley or imitated Stendhal. From both, I took the subject, which is historical anyway — and far more beautiful in nature than on stage or in manuscripts.

To nature, Shelley adds his style — a language like a summer night bombarded by meteors. But I prefer nature in its naked state.

In writing *The Cenci*, a tragedy, I did not try to imitate Shelley, nor to copy nature, but I imposed on the tragedy the movement of nature — a kind of gravitation that drives plants and beings like plants, and that expresses itself in the volcanic upheavals of the earth.

The entire staging of *The Cenci* is based on this gravitational movement. Gestures and movements are as important as the text itself, and the text was designed to act as a reactive element to the rest. And I believe this will be the first time — at least in France — that we will see a dramatic text written in relation to a mise-en-scène whose elements emerged concretely and vividly from the author's imagination.

There will be, between the Theatre of Cruelty and *The Cenci*, the difference that exists between the crash of a waterfall or the outbreak of a natural storm and what remains of their violence once captured as image.

Thus, it was impossible for *The Cenci* to use direct sound. To match the vibrational volume of a cathedral bell, I had to record the bell of Amiens Cathedral with a microphone.

As in the Theatre of Cruelty, the spectators of *The Cenci* will find themselves in the center of a network of sonic vibrations. But instead of coming from four bells ten meters high placed at the four cardinal points of the theater, they will be diffused by loudspeakers arranged in the same orientation.

Mannequins will intervene in *The Cenci*. And in this way, I return to the Theatre of Cruelty in a symbolic and indirect way. In *The Cenci*, there will first be what the characters say — and they say nearly everything they think. But in addition, there will be what no one can say, no matter how sincere or deeply self-aware they are. The mannequins in *The Cenci* will be there to express what the characters are hindered by, what human speech is incapable of expressing.

Everything that is reproach, resentment, remorse, anguish, or demand — the mannequins will be there to express it. From beginning to end, the play will unfold through a language of gestures and signs where the anxieties of the era gather in a kind of violent demonstration.

The Cenci is a tragedy in the sense that, for the first time in a long while, I tried to make not men, but beings speak — beings that are each like great forces incarnated, to whom remains just enough humanity to make them psychologically plausible.

And these beings — one seems to hear them roar, spin, brandish their instincts or their vices, sweep through like great storms in which a kind of majestic fatality vibrates.

We are not yet among the gods, but we are almost among the heroes, as understood by the Ancients. And in any case, in the characters of *The Cenci*, there is that exalted, legendary side — that atmosphere of a head lost and radiating in the clouds, which one finds in the heroes of great tales and marvelous epics.

With *The Cenci*, it seems to me that theater is restored to its rightful place and regains that almost human dignity without which it is not worth disturbing the spectator.



Balatier, Pierre

"About the *Cenci*: M. Antonin Artaud tells us why he wants to write a 'theater of cruelty.'"

In: *Comoedia* 29:8.122 (May 6, 1935), p. 1.

Starting tonight, the Théâtre des Folies-Wagram will host an entirely new type of endeavor, staged with entirely unexpected means.

Coming after a light operetta, *The Cenci* attempts to rediscover the vein of grand tragedy – and, beyond history, to return to ancient myth.

The work of Antonin Artaud, these *Cenci* are not at all – as announced – an adaptation, but in fact an original tragedy.

Like Artaud, Shelley took his subject from history and Artaud's play does not resemble Shelley's *Cenci* any more than Racine's *Andromache*, for example, resembles Euripides's *Hecuba*, even though both clearly originated from the same source.

With *The Cenci*, M. Antonin Artaud brings the public a first work that illustrates his conception of the "theater of cruelty" and this work will be followed by several others, including a *Macbeth* and a *Torture of Tantalus*.

"My heroes," M. Antonin Artaud tells us, "are located in the domain of cruelty and should be judged beyond good and evil. They are incestuous, adulterous, rebellious, insurgent, sacrilegious, blasphemous. And this cruelty that permeates the entire work is not entirely the result of the bloody history of the Cenci family. It is not a purely physical cruelty, but also a moral one: it goes to the limit of the instincts and forces the actor to dive into the roots of his being to such an extent that he leaves the stage exhausted. A cruelty that also acts on the spectator and should not allow him to leave the theater intact but also himself exhausted, engaged, perhaps even transformed!"

"Also, I have tried, by all means necessary, to place the audience in the middle of the action."

"During the performance not only will I broadcast the sound of a cathedral bell and the noise of a storm, not only has M. Désormière succeeded in bringing unexpectedly high and low tones to the Ondes Martenot, but I also wanted to play with light, using it not only for decorative effects but also for direct action on the nerves of the spectators."

"Finally, the play contains an entire essay of symbolic gestures, for gestures can symbolize in a way that is beyond words and contain a hieroglyphic meaning."

"And the young painter Balthus, one of the strongest personalities of his generation, who possesses an admirable understanding of the symbolism of forms and colors (green being the color of death and yellow the color of bad death), has made use of this symbolism in his choice of costumes and to design magnificent set-pieces, constructed by an artist among artisans, M. Guillaudin – set-pieces that are ultra-real, ultra-constructed, but, like ruins, convey the impression of an extraordinary dream."

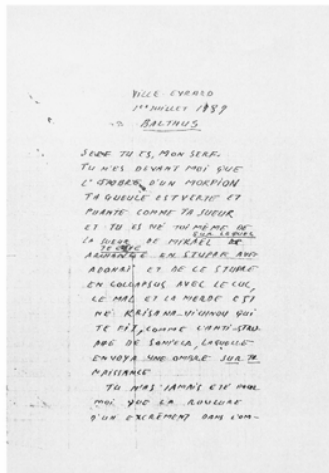
And M. Antonin Artaud continues:

"I still need to tell you about my actors. First of all, Iya Abdy, since I wrote this tragedy above all because I met a tragic actor, a real one: Iya Abdy will be Beatrice Cenci. Of Russian origin, from a family of writers and artists, Iya Abdy possesses a sort of truly heroic soul, an extraordinary power of

expression, a sense of grandeur, and a magnificent mask reminiscent of the Gorgon of Corfu. She is the most perfect of mediums.

“Alongside her, Julien Bertheau has admirably entered into the hypnotic atmosphere: he acts with intense poetry. He is also a remarkable medium.

“And there is also Mme Cécile Bressant, who will be Lucretia, the stepmother of Beatrice; Pierre Asso, Yves Forget, Salima, and myself for whom I reserved the role of Cenci the father.”



Artaud, Antonin
Autograph letter, signed, to Balthus
Ville-Évrard, July 1, 1939
2 pp., in pencil.

VILLE-ÉVRARD
JULY 1, 1939

BALTHUS,
SERF YOU ARE, MY SERF. YOU ARE NOTHING BEFORE ME BUT THE SHADOW OF A PUBIC LOUSE, YOUR MOUTH IS GREEN AND STINKS LIKE YOUR SWEAT AND YOU YOURSELF WERE BORN FROM THE SWEAT OF MIKAEL THE ARCHANGEL ON WHOM I ASSAULT WITH SHIT ALONGSIDE ADONAI AND FROM THIS ASSAULT THAT COLLAPSES ASS, EVIL, AND SHIT IS BORN KRISHNAVISHNU
WHO MADE YOU, LIKE THE ANTI-STROPHE OF SONIELA, WHICH CAST A SHADOW OVER YOUR BIRTH.
YOU WERE NEVER ANYTHING TO ME BUT AN EXCREMENTAL WHORE IN THE SINISTER SHADOW OF THIS WOMAN
BEGONE
THIS MATTER DOES NOT CONCERN YOU. WHAT DO YOU CARE YOU PIECE OF SHIT.
SINCE I BLEW UP PARIS THE OTHER WEEK I BLEW UP AGARTHA THIS AFTERNOON, AND I WILL CARBONIZE YOU IN SHIT YOU AND YOUR AGARTHIANS TONIGHT. IF YOU HAVE THE MISFORTUNE OF RETURNING HERE YOU WILL ONLY EVER
RECEIVE BLOWS FROM ME BECAUSE I DO NOT LIKE DIRTY THINGS. AND I WILL NEVER HAVE ANYTHING MORE TO DO WITH YOU BESIDES THE BLOWS THAT I WILL RAIN DOWN ON YOU.

Antonin Artaud god
The Void



Artaud, Antonin

“facts going back to 1934 misery of the painter” (1947).

In: *art press* 74 (October 1983), pp. 5–6.

Balthus began with filthy misery — utter and grim misery, not the kind that clings to clothing, but the kind, shall I say, of feeling.

You feel poor on the outside and on the inside.

It was the time when a painter was about to be *discovered* — they were going to discover, once again, a great new painter, a painter unlike any from behind or in front, unlike any that had *ever* been seen, they said.

At least, that was the atmosphere — that atmosphere which no longer exists and in which I no longer believe — that emanated from around an empty cradle waiting for *its* newborn. That, indeed, was the aura around poor Balthus, not yet born.

Balthus was waging, endlessly, a discreet and secret battle — a convulsive, *concrete* battle against misery and hunger.

This was a battle bristling with armor and warriors.

Full of cracked, frosted shells.

Either it was you or it was me who would have the final word in the end — in that battle between hunger and misery and the misery of the end.

He lived on rue de Furstemberg in a studio perched on top of a sort of shed, a scaffolding that looked as if it had been *timbered* for eternity, where it seemed that he would never stop walking up and down, or rather staying aloft in this kind of carpentered space where something of the eternal — or the everlasting — was being built,

because on the rue de Furstemberg, there is a brothel, and at the same time, a chapel where strange, filthy Freemasons come to pray from a hefty breviary adorned with coats of arms, it seems that among them are descendants, apparently, of a sect of old Rosicrucians, old initiates, *robed* and disrobed, but who only robe and disrobe when entering and leaving the old house on rue de Furstemberg. As for the rest — inside — they are purely and properly, that is to say, extremely

co

cho
 WOE TO ANYONE who would see even a hint of pornography in any of this, woe and curse upon them.

No, within that house is the belly of a cannon. A cannon with an armed belly.

You enter. And to the right as you enter, there's a coat rack with 14 hooks — or rather 13 minus one: that is to say, plus one;

and there's a clock whose pendulum never quite decides to deliver the final strike that would form a trinity and a quadrature.

That's where those who believed they had no soul would come to scream in a corner that

TRULY

they didn't have one, would never have one, that nothing which might be soul, might touch the soul, or even come close to the soul would ever consort with them, approach them, chatter or flirt with them. And all of this took place around that aforementioned coat rack with 14 hooks or rather 13 hooks plus one or rather 14 hooks minus one or *rather* no.

dalouvar
piel
pultar
esultra
a esultra
oelsult
ultran
arigan
elirgan
vatura
atelura
ai ptura
uptran

Balthus said he descended from a lineage of Baltic barons from the shores of the Baltic Sea from which they claimed to have

sta
r
ted
THE SEA.

In any case, the proximity of that little circle of initiates (as they called themselves) to the studio of Balthus the painter had something rather peculiar about it.

Because *on the one side* there was the life that Balthus had to live — to manage his sleep, his meals, his workroom, that is, the place to work — and then the work itself, its value, its effectiveness.

I must say that this article is being written at this very moment as if under a magnifying glass, under a microscope, from afar — not from above, but from the depths, from the rear-most depths and finest depths of the high depths of the body of the entire mass of a high-powered cannon that can just as well *see*,

I say *see*,

and therefore *see* as *bombard*.

We all know what backwash is:

that recoil the sea gives itself on its own *flanks*.

well, this article is like a recoil I'm giving myself —

to look at myself from the depths of my own past.

and to watch myself watching.

Balthus
BALTHUS
the same Balthus
Balthus

Balthus who dreams in the depths of his own past.

The same Balthus who, alone one evening, wanted to take his own life, and whom I found alone in bed with, to his left, on a chair, a small vial of 15 grams of Sydenham's laudanum, and beside it, a photograph.

I looked at the vial, the photo, and at Balthus, barely breathing, and it seemed to me the *allusion* was too strong, too crudely strong for me to accept.

It was *too much*, much too much, the idea of a suicide by something as banal as laudanum, a suicide because of a woman, a suicide from heartbreak, to feel legitimate or admissible.

I had entered the room to see Balthus as I always did around 6 or 6:30. The door was no more closed than usual. Balthus lay on his bed as he sometimes did, but it was like he had *sunk* into his own sleep, more than sunk: let's say it plainly:

submerged,
truly
SUBMERGED,

he was no longer breathing, *he was dead*, not dead like someone who was already buried in his coffin, but dead like someone.

Now I must finally say what has been burning my lips and my tongue for more than twenty years, because what everyone else will say will be exactly the opposite of what I'm about to say — and everyone (and that everyone will be no one, because no one, or almost no one, will speak) will take the opposite view.

It is this: Balthus was a forerunner — the forerunner in our time
of Holbein,
of Ingres,
of Corot,
of Courbet,
and of Poussin.

To judge Balthus, one must think of that backwash of the sea at the equinox, when all of nature strikes its own flanks and, from within itself, gazes upon its forward and backward motion;

it gathers all matter and probes it;

and I have the sense that I've known and met Balthus,

the same Balthus as now,

at an hour that preceded, from high above and far away, the hour of the Last Judgment, that famous Last Judgment of which Charles Baudelaire speaks in his poem "A Carcass," and he showed me, in the shadow of his right wrist — I say it clearly, do you hear me: the shadow — yes, I say the shadow, and I say: the *wrist*,

and I say: the shadow of the wrist,

I say: the shadow of the right wrist;

he showed me, I say,

in the *hard* shadow of his right wrist,

particular landscapes that paraded by, one after another, in an exactly *specified* light, very exactly specified, a forest floor seen through a spectroscope and the tip of a stellar lens,

where every tiniest detail emerged, not in a painter's light, but in the light of a glazier, a plumber, a tinsmith — in short, all the conceivable lights of the small trades one used to marvel at as a little boy, and not as a grown man who imagines he is doing high mysticism by subtracting 1 from 14 to make 13, imagining that he attains the highest spiritual levels

of Epidaurus

of Hermes

or of Satan Trismegistus,

none of whom, when all is said and done, were any more than

HIGH ASSHOLES

a skali

a skali

skalipta

o zelipta

a schera

schiri

No, Balthus isolated the small light, he knew how to isolate the precise small light of early mornings, those exact moments when life awakens, and that unique light, he knew how to apply it to a forest floor in the afternoon, or the top of a table.

As for Poussin, who thought of Poussin before Balthus?

I say, before that terrible and uniform alignment of white houses, lifeless in appearance, with pale roofs bleached by lime.

It is Balthus who made Poussin, and not Poussin who made Balthus.

And it is there that I see appear this terrible black death, black and poisoned, which I confuse with a young man lying dead, intoxicated, on a certain bed on rue de Furstemberg, in a house near a brothel, and who, in the depths of the First Judgment, was fulminating and, one after another, expelled what should never have been done, what was done by the first sin: to paint, in the anchored astral plane, all

those encrusted paintings that appear as though already made, when in fact it takes a hundred billion eternities and superimposed applications to finally bring forth what Balthus, more than Poussin, Corot, or Courbet, did manage to bring forth: a calloused hand of life, from an illuminated exterior, and which is not filmed but painted.