PIERRES ANGÉLIQUES AND INCANDESCENCES UN PEU CHATTES: BATAILLE, LEIRIS, AND THE NAME OF LAURE

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Colette Peignot never published anything under the name of Laure. This signature only appeared as of the posthumous publications of her writings: first, in 1939, when Georges Bataille, her lover from 1934 until her untimely death in 1938, and Michel Leiris, perhaps her best friend, edited a selection of her writings under the title of *Le Sacré*; again, in 1943, when the same editors published her *Histoire d'une petite fille*; and since 1971, when Jérôme Peignot, the author's nephew and her greatest champion, brought forth the first of his five editions of the *Ecrits de Laure*. What are we to make of the fact that none of these writings, all of which appear under the name of Laure, were published in the author's lifetime under that name?

One might recall here, first of all, the conditions under which Bataille and Leiris brought forth their editions of *Le Sacré* and *Histoire d'une petite fille*. Colette Peignot designated no executor for her manuscripts, thereby leaving the various interested parties to dispute the fate of her papers. French law has it that in such cases the legal rights go to the closest family member, and, as a series of letters exchanged in early 1939 between Charles Peignot, Colette's brother, and Bataille and Leiris makes clear, the Peignot family prohibited the publication of any of Colette's writings in any form (cf. Laure, *Rupture*). The pseudonym may be, first and foremost, a concession on the part of the two editors, for lack of which these writings may not have appeared at all. If the conditions under which the texts are published explain the recourse to a pseudonym, they do not explain, however, the choice of *this* name, and the question remains: why "Laure"? It is this question that I wish

to address here.

Michel Surya, Bataille's biographer, and Elisabeth Barillé, Laure's biographer, both affirm that Laure is the name in which Colette Peignot signed her writings in the last few years of her life, during which she wrote both her *Histoire d'une petite fille* and the majority of the texts that comprise *Le Sacré* (Surya 310; Barillé 205), but neither of these critics say how they obtained their information, and I have found nothing in the Laure archives (either those housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale-Richelieu or those at the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet) to justify their claims. A possible interpretation of Surya's and Barillé's affirmations would entail several remarks made by Bataille and Leiris that ascribe the choice of the name to the author: "Il y a peu de mois est morte celle qui s'est désignée sous le nom de Laure," proclaims the opening sentence of the introductory note to *Le Sacré*; Leiris speaks, in a text published some 25 years later, of the woman who "avait choisi pour se dépeindre le prénom émouvant de 'Laure.'" But for each of these ascriptions of the name to the author, there is one to the editors themselves. Whereas the introductory note to the 1939 edition of *Le Sacré* speaks of "celle qui s'est désignée sous le nom de Laure" (Laure, *Ecrits* 129), the Introduction to the 1943 edition of *Histoire d'une petite fille* refers to "cette 'Laure' dont des raisons, vaines sans doute mais assez désarmantes, de convenance sociale obligèrent ses deux éditeurs à masquer l'identité réelle au moyen d'un tel prénom" (Yvert 81); whereas Leiris's 1955 *Fourbis* speaks of the woman who "avait choisi pour se dépeindre le prénom émouvant de 'Laure'" (*Règle* 2: 214), his 1958 dedication of *Miroir de la tauromachie* to Jérôme Peignot refers to "celle que (ne pouvant la nommer) il fallut bien baptiser 'Laure'" (Laure, *Rupture* 177). One could say, in French, *elle s'appelle Laure*, but would the reflexive verb impute an active or a passive role to the one named? Would one translate this phrase as *she names herself Laure* or *she is named Laure*?

In this paper I focus primarily on what the name of Laure may have meant to the two men responsible for having Colette Peignot's writings appear under that name, leaving for another occasion the question of what the name might have meant for the woman who bears

it. Laure, I would argue, represents something of a cipher in writings by her editors, providing the cryptographer access to an essential aspect of their own work: in the case of Bataille, the preoccupation with erotic female figures; in Leiris's case, the relation to the poetic muse. The movement is double in the pages that follow: I have recourse to the editors' obsessions in order to explain their fascination with Laure, and I refer to their fascination with Laure in order to understand their obsessions. On both sides of this critical paradigm appear the two traditions associated with the most famous Laure in literary history: The legendary Laura (Laure in French), immortalized in Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*, is the same figure the Sade family claims as an ancestor. "L'abbé de Sade," Maurice Lever, the Marquis de Sade's latest biographer, recounts, "qui effectua au XVIIIe siècle de patientes recherches dans les archives de sa famille, est formel: Laure, fille d'Audibert de Noves et de Dame Ermessende, était l'épouse de Hughes de Sade, deuxième du nom" (17). I argue in the pages that follow that, whereas Leiris inscribes Laure in the tradition of the poet laureate Petrarch, Bataille inscribes his beloved in the tradition of the "divine Marquis."

I wish to begin by analyzing *another* name that Leiris gives to his deceased friend. Leiris famously calls Laure "la sainte de l'abîme" in the final volume of *La Règle du jeu*, *Frêle Bruit*. This expression has since provided Surya with the title of one of the two chapters he dedicates to Laure in his *Georges Bataille, la mort à l'œuvre*, and it has provided Barillé with the title of her *Laure, la sainte de l'abîme*. Both of the biographers cite Leiris's expression, but neither notes that this expression is, prior to his or her own citation of it, already a citation: the phrase comes from Gérard de Nerval. The two biographers use the expression "la sainte de l'abîme" to describe the life of the woman so called; they do not analyze the expression itself. Because the phrase to which they have recourse in order to describe this woman's *bio* is itself, in the context from which they cite it, already a citation, I give precedence here to the *graphè*. Leiris's preoccupation with literary language is at the heart of his designation of Laure as "la sainte de l'abîme." When the phrase appears in Leiris's text, as a reference to

Laure (who remains anonymous throughout the book) as "une image très exacte de *la sainte de l'abîme*," it is clearly in the mode of citation (*Règle* 4: 345). He offers the woman of whom he writes as an image of a figure that preexists his recourse to the figure. The italics indicate the citational mode, not emphasis.

Nerval's phrase, "la sainte de l'abîme," appears in the poem "Artémis," which Henri Lemaître, editor of the Garnier Frères edition of Nerval's *Œuvres*, states, in a footnote to the poem, must be understood in relation with *Aurélia*, "car, dans le projet d'*Œuvres complètes* de janvier 1855, on trouve, sous la rubrique: *Ouvrages commencés ou inédits*, le titre: *Artémis ou le Rêve et la Vie*" (702, n.1). *Aurélia ou le Rêve et la Vie* was originally to be entitled *Artémis ou le Rêve et la Vie*. The convergence of these two titles quickly leads, in the reader's imagination, to the convergence of the two title characters, the eponymous figure of one text being an image of the eponymous figure of the other. If Artémis is "la sainte de l'abîme," she is also an image of Aurélia. We have, then, the equation: Aurélia = Artémis = *la sainte de l'abîme*, to which one could add at least one additional figure: the legendary Laura. As Nerval himself writes of Aurélia, "je me suis fait une Laure ou une Béatrix d'une personne ordinaire de notre siècle" (755). Nerval's poetic muse is his version of Petrarch's (or Dante's): if Artémis, "la sainte de l'abîme," is an image of Aurélia and Aurélia is an image of Laure, then "la sainte de l'abîme" is, by extension, a figure of Laure. Leiris's acts of nomination, therefore, would not simply belong to the tradition that Martine Broda traces in her *L'Amour du nom*: he would not simply repeat the *gesture* of his forebears (including, for Broda, the likes of Petrarch, Dante, and Nerval); he repeats the *language* of them. From Nerval's Laure to Leiris's (I will return to Petrarch's below), not only is the name the same; so is the description of this figure (in Nerval's case, by way of synecdochal chain elaborated above) as "la sainte de l'abîme." The author of *Aurora* repeats not only the gesture of the author of *Aurélia* but actually repeats both a name and a descriptive phrase in the process.

The two poets also share an obsession with alchemy which, as Broda and Mitsou Ronat suggest, insinuates its way into their poetic

language and the very name of their respective muses. Broda comments on this obsession of Nerval ("Nerval alchimiste," she calls him) in the following terms: "Que ce soit dans la thématique ou dans les phonèmes, l'or est un signifiant majeur, particulièrement insistant dans le texte nervalien" – an insistence that leads the critic to decompose "Aurélia" into "or + Aelia" (Broda 112-13). In a similar vein, Ronat offers a superb interpretation of Leiris's "invention" of Laure by tracing the phonic block /lor/ from Leiris's early obsession with the alchemical operation of turning base metals into gold (*l'or*, homonym of Laure) to *Aurora* and *La Règle du jeu*. This shared obsession with turning base metals – or, in this case, women – into gold inscribes the two writers squarely in the Petrarchian tradition. Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*, the express purpose of which is to immortalize the poet's beloved Laura, plays tirelessly on the relation of *Laura* to *l'auro* (gold). Laura is transformed, in Petrarch's verses, into gold, just as Aurélia is, some five centuries later, by Nerval, and Laure is, nearly a century after that, by Leiris. Whether, as Jérôme Peignot speculates (personal interview), or not Leiris was in love with Laure, his place in the nomophilie tradition analyzed by Broda – with Petrarch, "le premier à composer un livre en forme de *canzoniere*, c'est-à-dire de couronne tressée autour d'un nom" (67), at the head – is assured.

As Ronat demonstrates, it is around the period of Leiris's early obsession with the creation of *l'or* – his "surrealist period," marked equally by an interest in what Ronat calls "the esoteric languages of secret societies" – that he meets Bataille, with whom he creates, several years later, when the two men are involved in a secret society of their own, Laure. The two editors invent Laure, she argues, on the basis of their own obsessions: Leiris's fascination with a certain alchemy of the word – be this the word *l'or* itself – and Bataille's fascination with his beloved's submission to what Ronat calls the "obverse or reverse" of Christian ideology. She rebelled "*contre* l'hypocrasie bourgeoise, et *dans* la perversion, *dans* la transgression, etc. Mais cette aventure, visiblement, était faite pour fasciner Bataille" (Faye and Roubaud, eds. 279-80). This fascination is, according to Ronat, reciprocal: Laure "creates" Bataille just as he creates her. But Bataille and Leiris create

Laure doubly because they *name* her or, as Leiris's term would have it, "baptize" her. This is an act of baptism, and one that, Ronat speculates, may be fatal: "On dit que [sa mort] est la suite d'une maladie d'enfance – mais l'on sait combien les maladies sont liées au rapport qu'on a à la vie" (Faye and Roubaud 280). Bataille and Leiris transform a living woman into a dead woman. Ronat suggests, and a dead body into a "corps glorieux," which she defines as "la résurrection immatérielle d'un corps, ici *dans* le *langage*" (Faye and Roubaud 280). Laure lives – or lives on – at the expense of Colette Peignot.

Implicit in Ronat's argument is the particularity of the editors' respective obsessions: whereas her reading of Bataille focuses on a relationship to a woman, the reading that she proposes of Leiris focuses on a relationship to language. Appearances of the name of Laure in Bataille's and Leiris's other writings would seem to justify this distinction: Bataille, in contrast to Leiris, refers to Colette Peignot as Laure whenever she appears in his writings; Leiris, in contrast to Bataille, puts the name in quotation marks every time it appears in his (which Bataille never once does). This distinction between Laure and "Laure" is not unrelated to another difference between the editors' respective mentions of the name of Laure: Leiris, in contrast to Bataille, *comments on* the name. The one and only time that it appears in his published work, Leiris provides a *reading* of the name: "'Laure,' émeraude médiévale alliant à son incandescence un peu chatte une suavité vaguement paroissiale de bâton d'angélique" (*Règle* 2: 214). Ronat offers a succinct, acute reading of this *émeraude médiévale*: "il y a le R, le AU, le L, qui reviennent, jusqu'à la définition phonique complète de Laure" (Faye and Roubaud 281). The name is created, she suggests, according to Leiris's idiosyncratic method of phonetic definitions (the most obvious example of which might be the title of a collection of such definitions: *Glossaire, j'y serre mes gloses*). Nothing of the sort exists in Bataille's references to Laure. The name appears countless times in his journal and his biographical essay "Vie de Laure," but never once does he gloss it (whence a partial explanation for the absence of commentary, in Ronat's analyses, on the relevance of the name for Bataille). Could we do this in his place? What might the

name mean for Bataille? If, as Ronat argues, Bataille participates in "la résurrection immatérielle d'un corps, ici *dans* le *langage*" (and I believe he does), what form might this resurrection take for him?

Let us take Leiris's gloss of the name of Laure as a point of departure: "'Laure,' a medieval emerald coupling her somewhat feline incandescence [*incandescence un peu chatte*] with a vaguely parochial sweetness like a stick of angelica [*bâton d'angélique*]" (*Scraps* 215). Animal, vegetable, and mineral: "Laure" embodies, according to Lydia Davis's translation of Leiris's gloss, all three. It is a precious stone (an emerald) that combines a feline radiance with a plant (angelica: from *herba angelica*, "root of the Holy Ghost"). The fifth poem of the *Rime Sparse*, which puns on each syllable of Laura's name (here in the form of Laurette) and comments upon each of the three syllables, provides a model for the emerald – the *medieval* emerald – that Leiris creates some six centuries later. Leiris's medieval emerald can also be interpreted as a reading of poem 228 of the *Rime Sparse*, wherein Love plants in the poet's heart a laurel (*lauro*) that "would surpass and weary any emerald" (384). In Petrarch's verse, the precious stone pales next to the angelical Laura, here represented by the *lauro*; for Leiris, the emerald couples an *incandescence un peu chatte* and a *bâton d'angélique*. In their translation of Ronat's article, Paul Buck and Glenda George translate the latter expression as "ANGELIC wand," effectively deleting the *d'* of *bâton d'angélique* ("Glorious Body" 35, emphasis in original). One understands their confusion. The French word *angélique* translates as either the adjective angelic(al) or the noun angelica. A somewhat analogous translation problem exists in the other element of the couple in Leiris's gloss, the *incandescence un peu chatte*. Both Davis and Buck and George render *chatte* as feline, but the term is not unequivocal. The French word *chatte* exists, as does its masculine form, *chat*, as both an adjective and a noun. As a noun it means cat, and the adjectival form is a derivation thereof (hence: feline). But this derivation does not simply mean cat-like; the entire entry for the adjective in the *Petit Robert* dictionary reads: "Adj. *Elle est chatte*, câline." *Câliner* means to fondle, to cuddle, and, euphemistically, to have sex. To have an *incandescence un peu chatte*

is, among other connotations, to radiate sensuality, the source of which the vulgar slang term *chatte*, like its English equivalent, pussy, locates between a woman's legs. Whereas *angélique* leads up toward the heavens, *chatte* leads down to the nether regions of the body.

According to this interpretation of Leiris's gloss — which would explain, after a fashion, why Laure is, for him, a *sainte de l'abîme* — the woman would embody both sides of the Madonna/whore dichotomy. As such, she would constitute something of a composite of the two female figures that preoccupy Leiris in his *L'Age d'homme*: "Lucrèce la chaste et Judith la catin patriote." The author writes, in guise of an explanation of these feminine archetypes, "une femme, pour moi, c'est toujours plus ou moins la Méduse ou le Radeau de la Méduse" (*Age* 149). One recalls the effect that seeing the Medusa produces on him who sees her; and one recalls, in particular, what, according to Freud, produces such an effect: the sight of the female genitalia (to which the title of Freud's "Medusa's Head" essay refers) turns a man to stone. It is, then, not only Laure who, through an alchemical operation in poetic language, is mineralized. This *émeraude médiévale* coupling an *incandescence un peu chatte* with a *bâton d'angélique* risks, in turn, one could infer, transmuting into stone the one who sees her.

A similar dynamic is at work in writings by Bataille, who is quite explicit about his own preoccupation with *incandescences un peu chattes*. Perhaps the most famous example of such an incandescence is the prostitute Madame Edwarda's exhibition of her genitals in the book that bears her name as its title. When the narrator asks why she exposes herself, Edwarda explains: "– Tu vois, dit-elle, je suis DIEU" (3: 20-21). The name in which Bataille signs *Madame Edwarda*, Pierre Angélique, could be read to suggest the effect that such a sight produces. One of Bataille's many pseudonyms, Pierre Angélique couples a stone (this is the meaning of the word *pierre*) with the same word, *angélique*, that Leiris couples with an *incandescence un peu chatte*. Bataille's pseudonym reads as if it described the condition of his narrator after having seen Edwarda's *chatte*, as though the sight of her "divines guenilles" (Bataille's term) both turned him to stone and rendered him

angelical. Like the speaker in Bataille's "Alleluiah," the author of *Madame Edwarda* would seem to proclaim: "Le temps est venu d'être dur, il me faut devenir de pierre" (5: 401). A hallelujah, from the Hebrew for "praise (ye) Jah (= Jehovah)," is a song in praise of God; Bataille's is an "*alleluiah* de la nudité," sung by a *pierre angélique* of sorts to his partner in debauchery on the subject of her nudity (more specifically, of her *jewels*, as a literary tradition including the likes of Diderot and Baudelaire would have it).

The narrator explains his conviction that Edwarda is telling the truth – that She (Bataille's capitalization) is indeed God – by way of her stone-like presence: "Sa présence avait la simplicité inintelligible d'une pierre" (3: 24). Both the title character of *Madame Edwarda* and its author-narrator are, in their own ways, angelical (or divine) rocks. The identity between rocks and the divine, implicit in the name of Pierre Angélique, Edwarda's stone-like presence, and the relation between the two, is explicit in the final name to appear in the cast of characters for Bataille's play "L'Oratorio": DIEU, *sorte de pavé*. The opening line of this character, presented in the dialogue as simply *le pavé*, repeats the explicative exclamation that accompanies Edwarda's exhibition of her genitals: "Je suis Dieu." The relation between these two characters becomes all the more intimate in God-the-paving-stone's last line, which ends the play: "je suis un con" (4: 158). Both the paving stone in "L'Oratorio" and Madame Edwarda, each of whom proclaims to be God, each of whom is a *pierre angélique*, have an *incandescence un peu chatte*.

"L'Oratorio" is included in a collection of Bataille's writings published posthumously in his *Œuvres complètes* under the title *La Tombe de Louis XXX*. The "de Louis XXX" here is ambiguous: it could specify either the person entombed (i.e. *The Tomb of Louis XXX*, which would translate the title as it appears in the *Œuvres complètes*) or the author of a text on a tomb (*The Tomb* by Louis XXX). The collection did not appear in Bataille's lifetime, hence we do not know whether the name of Louis XXX refers to a fictional character or a fictive author. The existence of *Le Petit*, signed Louis Trente (an alternate spelling of Louis XXX), would suggest the latter. As Surya

suggests, this text constitutes a hallelujah to one opening between a woman's legs, just as *Madame Edwarda* is a song in praise of another (371-75). Whereas Edwarda's exhibition of her genitals proves to the narrator that She is God, in *Le Petit* the backside is divine. The locus of divine revelation is displaced, from text to text, from the front to the back of the pelvic region.

Bataille's worship of a woman's backside is perhaps nowhere more explicit than in a poem deleted from *L'Archangélique* in which one reads: "ton derrière est ma déesse" (4: 14). Something of the ambiguity of the relation between Pierre Angélique and the divine Edwarda, alluded to above, is inscribed in the title of the collection from which this poem is excised: *L'Archangélique* could refer to either the poet, the beloved to whom the poems are addressed, or, as the case may be, the two of them. The title of Bataille's collection also inscribes the opening word of a poem by Laure: "Archange ou putain/ je veux bien/ Tous les rôles/ me sont prêtés" (*Ecrits* 94). Laure accepts here a status akin to that of the archangelic whore Edwarda, but this acceptance represents an act of submission on the part of the poet. *Je veux bien* here means something like, "sure, if you say so," implying a renunciation on the part of a speaker who is unconvinced as to the veracity of a statement but does not wish to argue about it. Laure does not designate herself as archangel or whore but, rather, accepts, albeit reluctantly, these designations. The third and fourth lines clarify that these designations come from without: the roles are *lent* to her.

The roles of archangel and whore are themselves embodied in the legendary figure of Laura: Petrarch's angelic muse is the guardian angel of the house of Sade. Whether or not Laura de Noves really is Petrarch's beloved Laura is not the issue. (It is open to debate whether Petrarch's Laura had a material existence at all beyond the verses that celebrate her.) No more does it matter whether the Laure in the Sade family tree really is Petrarch's beloved. The point here is that the Sade family, including the (in)famous Marquis himself, claims that she is.

A note written on the flyleaf of Petrarch's copy of Virgil affirms that the figure whose praises he sings had an empirical existence. In this note the poet specifies the date, time, and place of his initial

encounter with Laura: "in the year of our Lord 1327, on the sixth day of April, in the church of St. Clare in Avignon, at matins" (5). It is as though the nature of the woman were inscribed in the time and place of the encounter – as though she embodied the purity and holiness of the moment, her angelical status emanating, as it were, from St. Clare at matins. Philippe Bonnefis notes that Laure's text "Laure" recalls the place of this encounter, and he proposes that the episode that takes place therein can be read as a reinscription and a displacement of the encounter that took place, according to Petrarch, on the morning of 6 April 1327 at the church of St. Clare (personal interview). In this piece the eponymous Laure, having been beaten and made to roll in excrement by the male protagonist, Verax, enters with him into a church where they go "très tranquillement chier dans les bénitiers et pisser dans le ciboire." The text culminates with a priest inserting a host between the title character's buttocks. "Laure, le cul nanté d'un sacré suppositoire, libéra son ventre et sa vie avec des cris sauvages et des convulsions ébranlant jusque dans ses fondements le maître-autel qui s'effondra sous elle" (*Ecrits* 109). Could one read this scene as a response to the episode that founds, according to the note in Petrarch's copy of Virgil, the Petrarchian tradition? In contrast to Petrarch's vision of the angelical Laura in the church of St. Clare, Laure's "Laure" presents a figure of the same name covering a place of the same nature with excrement. It is as if the writer were responding to the sanctification of her namesake. Her response is clear: *ça fait chier*, here understood both in the idiomatic sense of "that makes me sick" and literally: it makes her shit. In the poem "Archange ou putain..." the poet does not mind. All the roles are lent to her: she does not give a shit. In "Laure" she "gives a shit," and the act by which she frees her bowels of their movements and her life (of religion?) can be read as an attempt to free her namesake from the angelical role that, following an encounter on 6 April 1327 in the church of St. Clare, is associated with her name.

The closing scene of the "Laure" text can also be read as a rewriting of a scene from Sade's *Justine* in which the libertine priest Severino inserts a host between the title character's buttocks. Severino places Justine on the sacrificial altar, puts a communion wafer "au local

obscène de ses sodomites jouissances [...], la presse avec ignomie sous les coups redoublés de son dard monstrueux, et lance, en blasphémant, sur le corps même de son Sauveur, les flots impurs du torrent de sa lubricité" (181). Both this scene and the one that closes the "Laure" text involve an encounter between a lascivious priest and a woman in a church, but, whereas, in one scene, it is the priest who ejaculates his *flots impurs* into the *local obscène de ses sodomites jouissances* of the eponymous female character, in the other, it is the eponymous Laure who blows her own *flots impurs* out of this *local* and onto the priest.

Under the entry for the adjective *angélique*, the *Petit Robert* dictionary offers the example of *salutation angélique*, itself exemplified by *ave Maria*. The entry for *ave Maria* describes this expression as a *salutation angélique*. An unpublished note in the Laure archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale presents such a salutation in reference to Laure herself: "Laure Sainte-Marie-Mère-de-Dieu." Laure's *Histoire d'une petite fille* reinscribes this salutation in the form: "Je vous salue! Marie, merde, Dieu" (*Ecrits* 26). The conjunction of these two salutations, which would produce something like *Laure merde-Dieu*, may remind the reader of the pseudonym in which Bataille signs his first book: *Histoire de l'œil*, signed Lord Auch. According to Bataille's commentary in his postface to *Le Petit*, this name is to be understood as an abbreviated form of *Lord aux chiottes*. *Lord*, Bataille explains, is the English word used for God in the Scriptures; *Auch* is a shortened form of *aux chiottes*, referring to the vulgar slang term for the bathroom, *chiottes*, derived from *chier* (to shit). Lord Auch is God in the shithouse, God to the shithouse, or both: an expulsion of God, in both senses of the genitive. In Bataille's words, "Lord Auch est Dieu se soulageant": his throne is in the bathroom; and "que Dieu y sombre rajeunit le ciel" (3: 59). *Lord Auch* conjures both what God does and what one does with God; the angelic salutation *Laure-merde-Dieu* would both raise Laure to the status of the mother of God and abase the latter to the level of excrement. Both of these expressions would assimilate the Other, God, to what Bataille calls, in "La valeur d'usage de D.A.F. de Sade," *das ganz Anderes* (the totally other): excrement (2: 58-59).

As Bonnefis remarks, the name of Lord Auch slips between languages: *Lord* is an English word; *Auch*, an abbreviated form of a French expression. In fact, the reader in 1928 would not know that the last name abbreviates *aux chiottes*. It is only in 1943, when *Le Petit* – in which Bataille glosses the pseudonym – appears, that the reader learns what *Lord Auch* means and how to pronounce it. Prior to Bataille's commentary, one would tend to pronounce and interpret the last name as the German word *auch*, meaning also: the author would be Lord Also. Bonnefis cannily comments that, in addition to the undecideability that governs (or, at the very least, governed for some fifteen years) the pronunciation of *Auch*, the French speaker risks mispronouncing *Lord* as /lor/ (personal interview). *Lord*: "HOM. Laure," the *Petit Robert* specifies. Among the resonances of *Lord Auch* is Laure Also.

L'or also: I have André Benhaïm to thank for calling to my attention the etymological connection between the French words *l'or* (from the Latin *aurum*) and *l'urine* (from the vulgar Latin *aurina*, itself from *aurum* (personal interview)). These two derivations of *aurum* are directly relevant to the two pseudonyms in question: *Lord Auch* and as one would say in German – *Laure auch*. The two pseudonyms refer, by way of the phoneme /lor/, to *l'or* and, by way of elaborations thereupon in texts by the authors, to the sacred fluid expelled *aux chiottes*.

The etymological connection between *l'or* and *l'urine* brings to mind the theoretical connection in psychoanalytic discourse between gold and fæces. In Freud's words: "the contrast between the most precious substance known to men and the most worthless [...] has led to this specific identification of gold with fæces" (174). Whereas Freud studies the retention thereof, Bataille is interested in the expenditure thereof. Bataille is anything but anal retentive. Laure also.

Precious metals and precious stones: in "La notion de dépense" Bataille interprets Freud's identification of gold and fæces in terms of a relation between jewels and excrement. He comments on what he calls "la valeur symbolique des bijoux, générale en psychanalyse" as follows:

> Lorsqu'un diamant a dans un rêve une signification excrémentielle, il ne s'agit pas seulement d'association par contraste: dans l'inconscient, les bijoux comme les excréments sont des matières maudites qui coulent d'une blessure, des parties de soi-même destinées à un sacrifice ostensible (ils servent en fait à des cadeaux somptueux chargés d'amour sexuel). (1: 305-06)

Could one read this sentence (written in the early stages of the relationship with the woman who is to become – dare I say? – Bataille's precious gem) as a reading of Leiris's gloss of the name of Laure in terms of a precious stone and – by way of an identification of the two substances identified with excrement (a precious stone and a precious metal) – of Leiris's obsession with *l'or*? For Bataille, these substances would represent accursed (or, which amounts to the same thing, sacred) body products charged with sexual love. The "blessure" from which they flow in the sentence cited above is the anus. It is the same term that Bataille uses, time and again, to refer to the female genitalia. It is also virtually synonymous to the term "plaie," which Bataille uses in his introductory note to *Le Sacré* to describe Laure: "aussi inconcevable à la mesure des êtres réels qu'un être de légende [the being that comes to mind here is the legendary Laura], elle se déchirait aux ronces dont elle s'entourait jusqu'à n'être qu'une plaie" (Laure, *Ecrits* 130). Bernd Mattheus, Bataille's first biographer and translator of the *Ecrits de Laure* into German, poses the following question in relation to this passage: "Laure herself as something sacred, untouchable and incomprehensible?" (428, my translation) "Untouchable" in Mattheus's question refers to the class of people whose abject condition diametrically opposes them to and, as such, identifies them with the most elevated class of people (both the highest and the lowest members of society being, for opposite reasons, "untouchable"): "incomprehensible," which evokes Edwarda's "simplicité inintelligible d'une pierre," is the term that Bataille repeatedly uses to describe his relationship to God. Laure herself as something sacred? My response to Mattheus's question would be, yes, she an embodiment, for Bataille,

of the Other: the *ganz Anderes*. She is that philosopher's stone: Laure is Bataille's *l'or*.

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