Note: During the course of this interview Guyotat makes reference to an important episode in his life and work which occured some four years prior in 1981, an event which represented in certain respects both a limit and a rupture in his life and his writing, driven by the extremes to which his practice was taking him. This experience would later become the progenitor of Coma, published some 15 years later. At the time of the interview Guyotat was still working on the manuscript of Samora Machel in preparation for its publication, which was scheduled for the following year. Now 41 years later Samora Machel is finally available to the reader.

MM

CABINET

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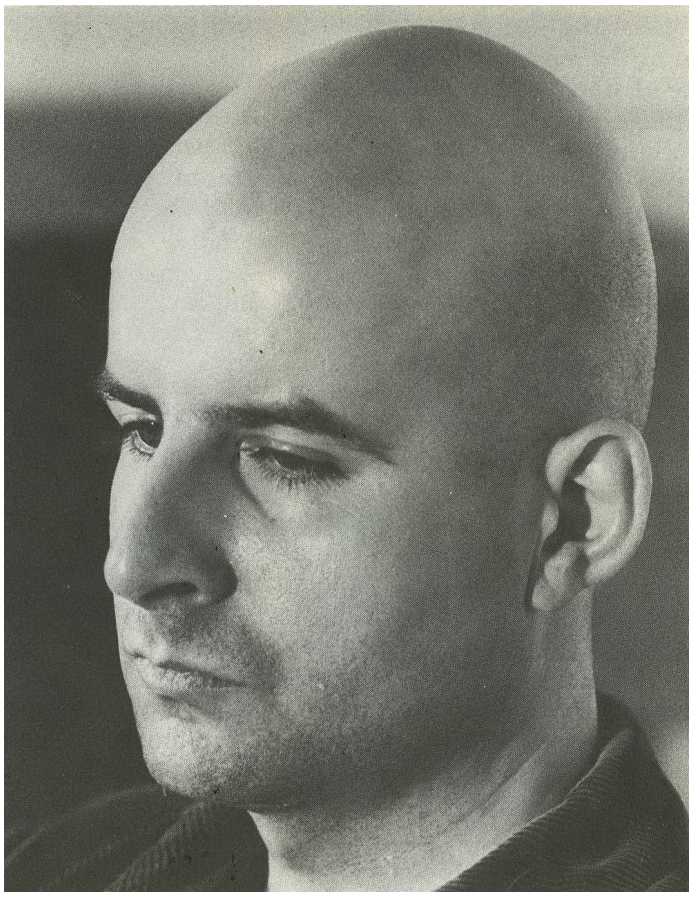
Guyotat

Interview 1985

Pierre Guyotat
Interview by Alexandra Tuttle
& J.G. Strand
Paris Exiles No. 2 1985 pp. 18-23

Watching Pierre Guyotat read his work before an audience is an experience one does not soon forget. In a resonant bass, he chants out the verbal rhythms of what he calls his matiere ecrite — a concise system of words truncated and stripped to their roots, a musical score of powerful imagery in violent and sexual language, vernacular and slang terms, pieces of foreign languages... The high, suspended tones and the rhythmic metrical flow recall something both Homeric and liturgical, something radically new and ancient. With a performer's rigid concentration, he recites for more than an hour, a remarkable oral and aural performance, until he and then his audience sit back abruptly, as though a trance were broken.



Pierre Guyotat (photograph Jacques Robert)

Opinion on Guyotat is divided between those who attack him as a subversive and those who laud him as a genius. For the last twenty years he has been a figure of scandal in French letters, beginning with *Tombeau pour 500,000 soldats* (*Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*, 19671 his "visionary epic in seven songs," a vicious criticism of the French-Algerian War; *Eden, Eden, Eden* (1970), judged "pornographic" and censored for eleven years by the French government; and his most recent texts — *Prostitution* (1975), *Le Livre* (1984) and *L'Histoire de Samora Machel* (unpublished) — where he continues the development of his matiere ecrite and the radical deconstruction — or as he puts it, the purification — of the written word.

Writing for me has something decidedly metaphysical to it. When I sit down to write, I feel it as mission that I have to fulfill.

Guyotat was born in a small town in south- central France in 1940. He came to Paris at the age of 18 after the death of his mother. In 1962, while serving as a soldier during the Algerian War, he was arrested by French military police as an accomplice to desertion and held in solitary confinement in a dirt-floored basement cell for three months. At the war's end he travelled in Algeria before returning to Paris where he completed *Tombeau*, his third novel.

His next novel, *Eden, Eden, Eden* was the object of government censorship. *Litterature Interdite /Banned Literature*, 1972) includes an account of Eden's censorship and the book's defense by an international group of artists, intellectuals and politicians. In 1973, his text Bond en avant/ Leap Forward/ was adapted for the theater and staged in La Rochelle, then Paris. This text appears in his next book Prostitution (1975) which contains the first examples of his radical transformation of the word.

During this time Guyotat became actively and publicly involved in the defense of a young Algerian immigrant, Mohammed Laid Moussa, charged with first-degree murder after a fight and stabbing in Marseille. The Moussa case received wide attention in France. Guyotat, at the center of the ensuing debate over racism and the treatment of immigrants here, was himself the victim of threats and personal attacks in the media. After twenty months of prison, Moussa was found guilty of manslaughter but given a suspended sentence and released. Within a week after his trial, he was shot to death in Marseille. The murderer has never been found.

This and later incidents are described in Guyotat's collection of texts and essays, *Vivre* (1984). In 1977 he began working on a more systematic attack on language and the traditional forms of writing. This was Le Livre, essentially completed in 1979 and published in 1984.

Taking the system further, Guyotat began *l'Histoire de Samora* Machel in late 1979. Then in 1981, just as his book *Tombeau* was being staged by Antoine Vitez at the Theatre National de Chaillot in Paris, Guyotat suffered a sudden collapse and severe illness that brought him close to death. Now fully recovered, he is presently preparing the 1,500 hand-written pages of *Samora Machel* for publication in early 1986.

A direct descendant in a line of French writers — Sade, Artaud, Genet, Bataille — also considered "subversive" in their time, esthetically close to Joyce in his linguistic radicalism, Guyotat — part prophet, part rebel — today stands nearly alone among contemporary European writers as a politically and socially committed artist devoted to innovation in his art and obsessed with creating a new way of writing.

* * *

A few years ago, you declared that you no longer 'write' in the usual sense of the term, that your work now concerns what you call *matiere ecrite* (written matter). Can you explain this *matiere ecrite*?

It's difficult to explain because *matiere ecrite* is subtle and ephemeral in practice. Perhaps one way it can be explained is in terms of development from literature to writing and from writing to *matiere ecrite.* This is the path my own work has taken. My first books were literature, which is what most people write and what they seem to be writing more and more often now than ten years ago. Literature is concerned with plot and character. Its intention is to be "well-written" and "comprehensible". It's a very commonplace activity. Then there is the progression towards writing, something I understood very naturally when I was younger without having to read anything about it.

In the 50s, Barthes defined writing as something different from literature. The structuralists as well, spoke of writing and of the author's work, by which they meant that the writer was aware of his writing as writing. "Writing" is the kind of work that Barthes and the *Tél Quel* were group referring to and to which my books *Tombeau* and *Eden* probably belong, although they are so brutal they don't really fit the category. In any case, by "writing" I mean simple, textual writing. It can be explained by a structural analysis of the work. If a literary critic reads *Eden* through to the end, which very few critics do, he can explain it structurally. After this stage, I then found it necessary to move on further, to *matiere ecrite.*

When I was a child, I started by writing "literature," that is, poetry, a certain use of the imagination, etc. Then, in adolescence, I moved onto "writing." I finally abandoned the poetic system of verses when I began to work on the *matiere ecrite.* Rimbaud was my great model, but I wanted to do something new.

It is that desire to do something new which compels one to move from literature to writing and from writing to *matiere ecrite.*

My last things in poetry were substantive — brutal matter. There must have been some syntactic and rhetorical links but all that remained were substantives and active verbs. This is what happens to some extent in *Eden* where there are no wasted words or wasted time.

I also colored in the paper on which I wrote my poems, as Tristan Tzara did in the years 1910—1920. I painted a lot at the time and I listened to music and I realized that the art of writing had to encounter the other arts.

Another way I can try to define *matiere ecrite* is that when I work in this manner, I don't feel as though I'm "writing," I don't feel that I'm a "writer." Instead, I have a pictorial or visual sense of what I'm doing. For me, the manuscript itself is a piece of visual art. When I gave the manuscript of *Eden, Eden, Eden* to my publisher, for instance, I did a special painting for the cover.

Matiere ecrite is, above all, writing, of course. It is intended to be read. But it can also be recited, chanted. There is an oral aspect to it, as well as a visual and musical and architectural aspect. Perhaps in ten, twenty or thirty years, with the aid of the music and the rhythm of the text, people will manage to read this work in a relatively normal way. It's not impossible.

At present, the French eye is unused to looking at words, largely substantives, that are transformed, cut off, truncated.

If this is a radical transformation of writing as it is traditionally accepted, then *matiere ecrite* is also a transformation of the process of reading.

I conceive of reading as involving not only an ocular reading, but a spoken reading as well, an interior pronouncement of the words. I'm trying to bring out the spoken text, by the rhythm and the music of the words, by presenting what can be considered as indications for a musical score. Although this is seen now as an obstacle to understanding the text, perhaps in the future people will see it as an aid, which is what I intend it to be. This no less a semantic aid, too.

It is possible to come to the point of true understanding of your art, of your means of expression, when you know what the result of your art will be. Then you arrive at a point of knowledge where you have the feeling you are working directly with the matter itself, molding it, kneading it. And this is no longer "writing," it's the process of working with a material that is common to all art, and by doing this, you no longer feel like a "writer," you are no longer concerned with the whole system of books.

An artist who reaches this point — like Beethoven in music or Cezanne in painting — no longer knows, in the final count, how he does what he does. I am convinced of this. I call this a state of wisdom. You are in a certain sense in orbit, so to speak, you leave the terrestrial space, the social environment that should logically be your own and you begin to mold and to work a kind of matter which is that of all great art.

Writing for me has something decidedly metaphysical to it. When I sit down to write, I feel it as mission that I have to fulfill. And this isolates me from the literary world, which is a world I detest and fear, a world that is uselessly cruel. I can never mix this mission of writing with what is

essentially a career or business endeavor on the part of most others.

My work is not writing, then. It's a secretion. It becomes its own matter, but which is, at the same time, matter common to all art. It's as though one were working directly upon the matter of the mind itself.

Your earlier work created a scandal largely because of the content, which was considered by many to be excessively violent and even pornographic. But with *Le Livre* (1984), the scandal seemed to concern the radical transformation of style, the "attack on the word," as you put it: suppression of the silent "e", phonetic spelling, use of slang, of vernacular and foreign language, radicalized punctuation, etc.

When you read *Le Livre* you can see that it's nearly the same construction, the same subject matter as *Tombeau pour 500,000 soldats.* The upheaval, though, is in the attack on the word, that's true. The very origin of the whole system of literature has to be attacked. I was obsessed with creating a discourse made up only of roots in *Le Livre.* And I went further in this direction than I had intended, beyond the normal limits of inspiration. This isn't done in France. You're told you don't have the right. I was treated like a madman, to the point where I was insulted and scorned.

Le Livre is an extremely rigorous book, a book of extraordinary memory — the recollection of the infinitely small, even the movements of snakes and insects at the end of the work. It's extremely complicated, but I discovered myself within it, through memory and through the force of vision that remained intact. A powerful visionary sense is essential to such a work. But who will ever really be aware of it? When there is no more form, when there is nothing left, we come at last to this great knowledge...

Once you take a single vowel away from people — and it's the French silent e which is not even pronounced — they're lost. You can conclude a number of things from that. The problem is that most people cannot accept that *Le Livre* is, at the same time, something to be spoken and something to be read with the eyes. This, too, is what produces the scandal over my work. I want to create another way of communicating, which is precisely what any real artist of any importance is concerned with. But it is difficult for people to understand. Something escapes them, and they react with anger, they attack.

A new way of writing, though, requires a new way of reading, and your books present an extraordinary challenge to the reader.

I am aware that what I do in *Le Livre* and *Samora Machel* can not readily be understood without my speaking the text, pronouncing it publicly. How much time then must I wait until this work is really read and appreciated as an object to be read with the eyes? This material I produce is strange even to me, actually, because there are really no criteria to measure it with, especially since it can not be categorized as literature.

When I do a public reading of *Le Livre* and emphasize the sense of the words, series of words then stand out, often like a series of puns. This is one way that *Le Livre* proves to be an extremely funny, humorous book.

By the sound, or by the sense of the words?

By both, just as I conceived it and created the rhythm for it when I wrote it. Although I was literally agonized when I wrote them, when read aloud the words can sound very funny. When I read *Le Livre* publicly, I sometimes find myself emphasizing the sense, sometimes the architecture, sometimes the sound and the music of the words. The most complex and "unreadable" parts of this book are easily felt when I do a reading and emphasize the sense.

Some of your critics contend that your work is simply pornographic, a conscious effort to be as scandalous and provocative as possible.

I am aware that what I do in Le Livre and Samora Machel can not readily be understood without my speaking the text, pronouncing it publicly.

If a work of art provokes at all, it is said to be intentionally provocative, and this is one way of dismissing it. The works that are considered great works of the avant-garde, those that have created movements, etc., are always those where the artist, consciously or not, in order to convince, has put so much into the work that he has gone beyond reason or logic. That's what they call "provocation." But I say no: that's what I call "responsibility."

Why would someone produce and continue to produce work that is considered by most people to be scandalous or almost contrary to nature — and, in fact, these texts are contrary to my own nature in some ways — why would someone do this? It's because there's a sense of duty involved here. It must be done. It must.

When you write, you don't write for other people, or for a country, or even for yourself. You write for the world. That's what a work of art is. I never think of the public I will have. That means nothing to me. I do think of the effect — qualitatively — that my work will produce: exasperation, outrage, etc.

I admit my work is scandalous, but I mean "scandal" in the almost evangelical sense of the word. The violence, the sexual scenes, the extremism of *Eden* or *Samora Machel,* break with the tradition of reason; it is in this sense that people find my work subversive. They aren't necessarily shocked by the sexual scenes but they sense that there is an upheaval of nature. Sex, and the use of the bodies, is such that the world, even human nature itself, is disrupted. It is in that sense that my books scandalize the public, especially in the use of the body — the body which is a gift from God, but a poisoned gift. In manipulating and prostituting the body, we prostitute human nature, that is, divine creation.

Is *Eden, Eden, Eden* a pornographic book?

I wouldn't know. That's not for me to judge. That's a problem that doesn't concern me, anyway. *Eden* is certainly more pornographic than erotic.

Pornography is certainly more beautiful than eroticism. Eroticism is ugly. Eroti-

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cism is an ideology, which is not true of pornography. There is nothing more boring than eroticism, it's worse than poetry, even. I say three cheers for pornography.

What do you mean "worse than poetry, even"?

"Poetry" is a word that is old, tired and unusable. Like poetry itself. It has no *raison d'etre* anymore, no interest. Since Joyce, prose has been much more rhythmic. Today, prose is where the real art of the verb is made.

You seem to be moving in a direction in art that none of your contemporaries share with you, and which few critics or readers are willing or able to follow. Are you afraid of isolating yourself artistically?

I am isolated. But that's perfectly normal. To get my work published and read, I had two choices: I could either pull back, take out the "new"; or I could go even further, add even more of what is new. And this is what I have done. I have gone further into the new. This is and has always been natural for me. In *Le Livre* I went much further than I had planned at the beginning — not purposely, but there is something inside me that makes it necessary for me to go further, always further into aberration and the destruction of the accepted rhetorical apparatus.

In a sense, writing begins where words stop. Each time you write, you have to make it new. You have to go beyond the language of the tribe, the old and traditional language. You have to begin where the people before you left off.

Revolution in art always begins with the rebel who wants to rescue art from its fatal and presumed place of origin in everyday life.

You have said that your work is inseparable from your life. To what extent do you deal with the autobiographical in your work?

To a certain degree, but not in the usual manner. There is talk now of the return to the "I" in literature. And why? It's because of all these autobiographies, the subject of one's personal past, one's childhood, all this bullshit. That's something one does when one first begins to write, a game for the 25-year old writer. I don't understand why someone would want to treat this subject forty years later; it's stupid and boring.

The real "I" in literature should be an avowal. The artist's function is to reveal himself, to confess his guilt. He has to betray himself, to reveal things in his work that he would never reveal in his private life. This can never be done enough. To speak of things that have no connection to his art — mother, grandfather, all this infantile foolishness — has no interest . whatsoever, neither for the understanding of the work itself, nor for any other person. A work of strength requires an "I" of strength.

Do you see self-revelation as the function of the artist, then?

The function, the duty, the great virtue of the artist is understanding. Not logical understanding in opposition to emotion, but this rigorous necessity to suppress all preferences, which are exclusive, and to include everything, as an effort to understand. The artist owes it to himself to consider all things. He must make tabula rasa of all moral criteria in order to produce a real work of art, one that is truly worthwhile.

If we wish to really accomplish something in our lives, we have to establish this as a veritable law: to really live this understanding. Not to simply accept the world as it is, but to embrace it in all its complex universality and to exclude nothing. The decline of an artist begins the moment he starts to give artistic preference to a single category. Only the artist who obeys this fundamental law, this religion of all-inclusiveness, can be a great artist. And to do this, he must have strength of heart: it is the heart that we consider the organ of sentiment, but without it there can be no brain nor spirit.

It is the heart that launches all inspirational movement. This is where you feel when you work. The heart will not allow any kind of exclusion or condemnation. This is why a real artist has no right to give preferences or make exclusions.

Your experience as a French soldier in Algeria during the war there has been a major influence on your subsequent work. You were arrested and imprisoned by your own army. How did that come about?

I was arrested as an accomplice to desertion, for corrupting the morale of the army — which is a serious charge — and for possession and fabrication of prohibited texts. I had taken notes. They confiscated my notes which have never been returned.

I was charged with undermining morale because I gave talks to the other soldiers. I was considered a corrupting influence. I was charged-as an accomplice to desertion because I helped several Algerian soldiers desert the French army and join the local, more or less armed militia, not the ALN, (Armee de la Liberation Nationale). Many of them weren't even soldiers. Unfortunately, one of them left with some guns he'd stolen. I knew nothing about it. I suppose guns must have been the price he had to pay to be integrated into the militia or accepted by the Algerian fighters.

I had done everything possible, really, to be charged and arrested. I was placed in a small, dark cellar that had one tiny

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barred window at the top. And sometimes the soldiers would pass by and toss excrement and garbage at me through the window while I scurried from one corner to the other to keep from being hit. It seems almost comic to me now. But in a position like that, you're completely defenseless. A guy could come by with a machine gun one night, and that would be the end of you — no investigation, nothing.

I was held there for two months. I wrote. I had to hide my paper and pencil behind a brick in the wall. I still remember that cell vividly. Eventually I was brought before a group of 30 or 40 people and forced to explain my actions. I had always kept notes on everything I saw while I was in Algeria. They had confiscated these notes and had brought in the people I had written about and read the notes to them. And some of these people were pretty dangerous types, too — commandos, professional soldiers.

My experience in Algeria has taught me to question everything. I can be very aggressive in defending someone and yet question not the issue but my right as an individual to that kind of involvement. There are often two "I's" in all this: the involved I, and the doubting I. I've learned that we must know and know intimately profound humiliation and doubt; otherwise we live without having experienced or felt anything. I've endured great humiliation in my life. Doubt is transformed into shame and shame into humiliation. About my political involvements, I've often thought the cause was good but that I had no business being involved in it. I was tortured by this doubt — even in prison.

For me, nothing is a given, there are no set rules. It doesn't keep me from living my life but when I become involved, I do begin to doubt myself. But the more I doubt, the more forceful my involvement.

I wanted to go to Algeria. I left immediately when they asked for volunteers. I wanted to see it and I wanted to prove myself. Also, a lot of people avoided the war and class had something to do with whether you went to war or not. I thought it unfair that I should be able to escape what the sons of peasants, factory workers and shop-keepers could not. I wanted to see what was happening and I wanted to get away from home. I wanted to break with my adolescence, with my name, almost. I wanted to break with my family, my class, all of which I had already begun to do. And I wanted to prove myself; it was my means of achieving independance.

Pierre Guyotat with two Berber friends in Algeria, 1968

When the day of independance finally came for Algeria, I felt like it was my own independance that had been won. We were given orders that night to barricade the doors and the gates to the camp and not to open them under any circumstances. The officers told us it was for our own security. But they knew perfectly welln what would happen, and it did: crowds of people came to the camp begging for protection, people who had supported the army and the French presence in Algeria, even the harkis (North Africans who had fought alongside the French. -Ed.) who were trapped outside the camp at the time. Some of us opened a small side entrance and took in some people. We weren't punished for it, but the officers reproached us for saving the lives of men who had actually fought alongside us for months. To the officers, it was unthinkable to do that.

There's an enormous hypocrisy in the army. One thinks of military people as being frank and direct but I have never known so thorough a hypocrisy. In the army, you have no rights except the right to die. We could have been imprisoned or killed for no reason at all and no one would have investigated the incident. The army has the right to life and death and what is that but a form of slavery? The army is a system based on slavery. Thus I wrote Tombeau. Thus the emphasis on the theme of slavery set in a war where it is not limited only to the rebellious characters in the book. War is a situation in which one is totally insecure — sexually insecure as well as afraid for one's life.

My time in Algeria was especially important for the language in my later work. For more than two years I spoke a language unique to soldiers — not to the officers but to the enlisted men. After two months I was using perhaps ten words and ten expressions. That builds character, as they say, and it determines one's way of talking. For two years I had no contact with French culture, with Godard or New Wave cinema, with things that were going on in France. That contact is very important and there came a time when I could no longer find the words, when there was a linguistic vacuum in me. The war had a great effect upon my language but in some ways it protected me. It was a necessary emptiness. I spent a lot of time on guard.

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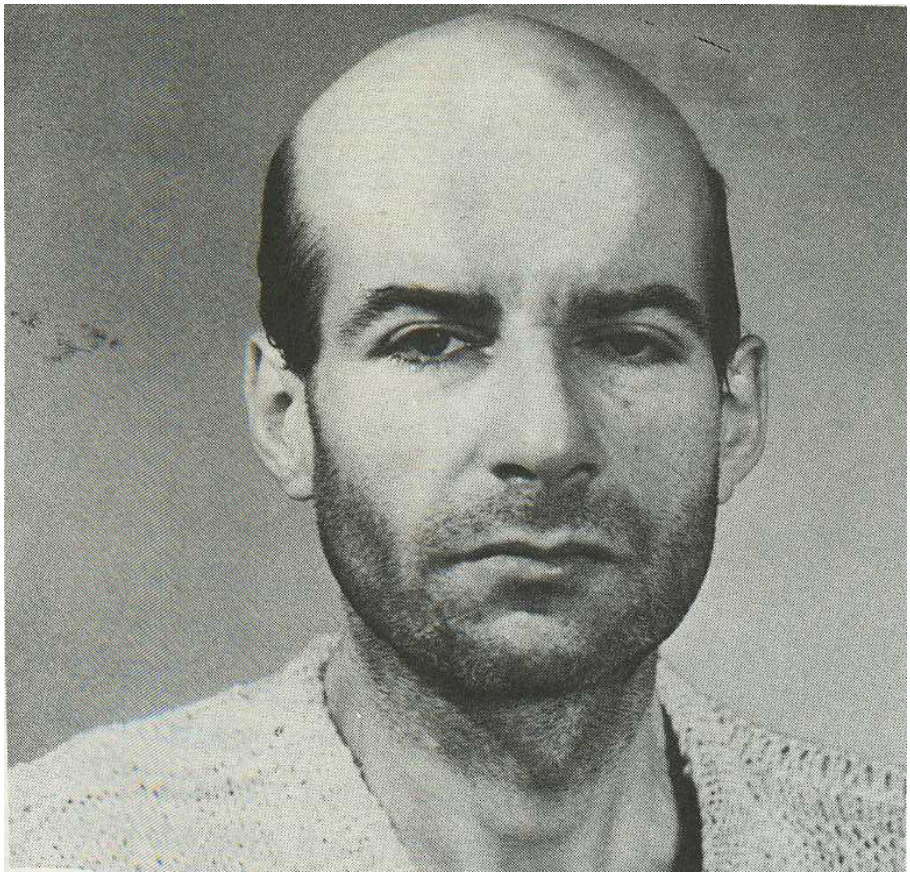

Pierre Guyotat after completing *Samora Machel*, shortly before hia illness in late 1981. (Photo Patrcick Safati)

That was my specialty, being on guard — not guarding so much as looking at everything around me. If the officers who declared the region "secure" had ever seen what we saw at night, if they had known what we knew...

I travelled throughout Algeria for a few years after the war. I was well thought of in Algeria. I had done things for that country and I travelled through it at a time when those who had contributed to the birth of the country were well thought of. Which is less true now.

In the fall of 1981, you suffered a major illness. You were hospitalized and nearly died. What happened to you, exactly?

There's nothing much to say except that my work, the texts, simply exhausted me. I was overwhelmed by what I was writing. Some of my friends who didn't understand what was happening to me understand now that they have read my work. With Samora I went to the limits of aberration. I lost myself, uprooted myself, disinherited myself. By 1981, I was completely dispossessed. I felt myself being taken over by an evil sickness. I had violated a limit I shouldn't have violated.

Curiously, the closer I came to death in these texts, the closer I got to the place where I was born — to St. Etienne, the mountains, the lost hamlets. There are expressions unique to the region which come up in my book. Some weeks before I fell ill, I had decided to do a recording of *Le Livre* in a studio. I did a 3-1/2 hour recording of my book, which took me 150 hours of studio time. Late at night, I worked on *Samora Machel*. I was in the recording studio until 9 p.m. having the day's work read back to me. I was exhausted. I had begun to suffer from small comas, but comas with a little something extra — delirious comas. I'd lost almost half my weight. My friends said I looked like someone who'd come back from a concentration camp. I was becoming weaker and weaker. There were days where I wouldn't eat at all, simply because I thought I had eaten, I imagined that I had prepared a meal, although it had only taken place in my mind.

I worked more than two years on *Le Livre*, and then I wrote more than 1,000 pages of *Samora Machel* by hand in nine months. At the end I was beyond the point of no return. I spent all my time living my text. It was hard to resist not the desire to commit suicide but the vision of suicide.

By 1981 I needed to confront what lay on the other side of death.

One night I got up from my bed, threw open the window to the courtyard of my apartment building, and let out a great scream — which was very unlike me since I am a very discreet, private person. Some friends from across the way came to my room. I was very close to death. They called an ambulance and I was rushed to the Intensive Care ward of the hospital where they had to use resuscitation equipment on me. I was minutes away from dying.

That night I had felt death enter my room. I felt its physical presence next to me. But I wasn't ready to die. That's why I cried out.

Does the fact that you were "not ready to die" refer to what you call your mission ?

Perhaps. I do have a mission to fulfill, that's certain. I feel as though a mission has been assigned me.

By whom?

That I don't know. It's not particularly important. My mission could have been other than writing. I could easily have become a monk or a priest, which I felt a very strong urge to be when I was a child.

As a person I am very moral. I have written these things, but it wasn't I who wrote them. I am the instrument of that writing. I am a kind of innocent. I am a body through whom the words pass.

PIERRE GUYOTAT
Le Livre

In 1979 Pierre Guyotat decided to make a recording of his recently completed but still unpublished text *Le Livre*. 150 hours of studio time was taken up during the course of that summer to arrive at this final recording. It would be another five years before Gallimard published *Le Livre*.

Guyotat has stated: "I am aware that what I do in *Le Livre* cannot be readily understood without my speaking the text, pronouncing it publicly. How much time then must I wait until this work is really read and understood as an object to be read with the eyes? This material I produce is strange even to me,
actually, because there are really no criteria to measure it with, especially as it cannot be categorised as literature."

This is the first time these recordings have been commercially released. This edition is limited to 200. A further 25 with silk screened covers and containing a facsimile of a manuscript page from *Le Livre,* signed and numbered by the author, has also been published.

Pierre Guyotat
Le Livre
Box set containing three 12" vinyl recordings accompanied by a booklet of texts and photographic illustrations
Edition of 200
£75.00 GBP
To place an order please click here

Pierre Guyotat
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Box set of three 12" vinyl recordings. Silk screened cover. Includes a signed and numbered lithographic facsimile of one page from the manuscript of Le Livre. Accompanied by a booklet of texts, translations, and photographic illustrations.
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Pierre Guyotat
Eden, Eden, Eden

Translated by Graham Fox
Published by Vauxhall&Company, 2017
Softback, 276pp, 206 x 142 mm
ISBN 978-0-9928355-3-8
£25.00

First published in France in 1970, immediately greeted by both furore and acclaim, today *Eden, Eden, Eden* is recognised as one of the major works of the last century. This edition is a much-revised translation of the out of print English version originally published in 1995. It also includes new translations of the original prefaces by Michel Leiris, Roland Barthes and Philippe Sollers, plus a postface by Paul Buck.

"Brought forth in an egalitarian way, or almost, beings and things are offered here for nothing more than what they are in the strict reality of their physical presence, animated or not: humans, animals, clothes and other utensils thrown in a mêlée in a way close to panic, that evokes the myth of eden because it obviously has for stage a world without morals or hierarchy, where desire is the rule and nothing can be declared precious or repugnant.
An implicit poetry that is sometimes replaced by an explicit poetry: those moments when, above the magma only disturbed by the quest for fulfilment led by each protagonist, human words appear, all the more moving for they seem to emerge – as if by miracle – from a layer of existence in which all words have been abolished."

from the preface by Michel Leiris

Stephen Barber
Pierre Guyotat: Revolutions & Aberrations

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ISBN 978-0-9928355-2-1
£15.00

From his first books of the 1960s – such as Tomb for Five Hundred Thousand Soldiers and *Eden, Eden, Eden* – to his recent books such as Coma, 2006, Pierre Guyotat's seminal work has deeply marked and transformed that of innumerable artists and writers in many countries beyond France itself. With its focus extending from his novels to his work in film, art and performance, this illuminating collection of seven texts – drawn from encounters and conversations with Pierre Guyotat over a period of close to thirty years – explores his driving preoccupations and experimentations, with corporeality and vision, conflict and warfare, sex and the entity of language, activism and revolution, hallucination and aberration.

"Guyotat's resistant politics of the body extend far beyond the theoretical parameters which ally his work with the corporeal preoccupations of, among others, Foucault and Deleuze. Although Guyotat collabourated with the Tel Quel theoretical journal in France at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, publishing several texts of work-in-progress during an era of political tension, following the unravelling of the aspirations of the May 1968 events, he remained resolutely apart from all organisations or entities, literary or theoretical or otherwise.
That socially distanced, inassimilable politics of the body is nowhere more tangible and exposed than at the moment when the 'I' that writes it irreparably splits apart, as he narrates in his book Coma - from that point onwards, the 'I' becomes impossible to speak or write, without the most exhaustive questioning and interrogation of the body and language."

Stephen Barber

Antonin Artaud
Van Gogh the man suicided by society

Translated by Paul Buck &
Catherine Petit
Published by Vauxhall&Company, 2019
Softback, 80pp, 185 x 131 mm
ISBN 978-0-9928355-5-2
£12.00

Apropos of Van Gogh, magic and spells: all the people who, for two months now, went to see the exhibition of his works at the Musée de l'Orangerie, are they really sure they remember everything they did and all that happened to them every evening of the months of February, March, April and May 1946? Was there not a certain evening when the atmosphere of the air and the streets became liquid, gelatinous, unstable, and when the light from the stars and the heavenly vault disappeared?

And Van Gogh who painted the café in Arles was not there. But I was in Rodez, which means, still on earth, while all the residents of Paris must have felt, for one night, very close to leaving it.

Antonin Artaud

Pierre Klossowski
The Immortal Adolescent

Translated by Paul Buck and Catherine Petit
Published by Vauxhall&Company
68pp. 245 x 310 mm
Numbered edition of 150
ISBN: 978-0-9928355-0-7
£60.00

This book, his last, broke more than twenty years of silence from Pierre Klossowski the writer. Its origin: a commission in 1992 for a play by a Viennese theatre. Fascinated since childhood by this mode of expression, Klossowski immediately saw the character Ogier from The Baphomet on stage and set to work once again at his writing desk. However, time had enriched his imagination, and aided by the excitement of a dramaturgical finality, he reworked his novel intently. The commission running aground, he transformed the scenario into a récit. From the succession of metamorphoses The Immortal Adolescent was born. Today it presents itself as undauntedly identical to its first model as totally different from it. Such is the game of the cycle of time.

"The whole thing was composed very quickly, as though all I had to do was transcribe a dictation, or better still, as though I was describing it as a play I was watching, leaving out none of the words which the poses of the actors suggested to me, so that I actually felt as though I was right there listening to them speak."

Pierre Klossowski

René (Colette Thomas)
The Testament of the dead Daughter

Translated by Paul Buck and Catherine Petit
Published by Vauxhall&Company 2014
174pp. 190 x 125 mm
Numbered edition of 250
ISBN: 978-0-9928355-1-4
£20.00

Colette Thomas, one of Antonin Artaud's "daughters of the heart" flashed briefly before an unsuspecting Parisian literary world after the war… then vanished. The book she published in 1954, under the pseudonym René, comprised letters to Antonin Artaud, accounts of her own early incarceration and suffering, along with tales wrenched from her tortured being. Despite some attention and knowledge of her book there has been no new French edition of Le Testament de la Fille morte. This translation is the first chance for the English-language reader to access the work.

"And there is also Colette Thomas to blow the gendarmes of hatred from Paris to Nagasaki.
She will explain to you her own tragedy."

Antonin Artaud