

Du Dandysme¹

I take up the word *dandy* for Baudelaire; a singular trait of the *dandy* interests me.

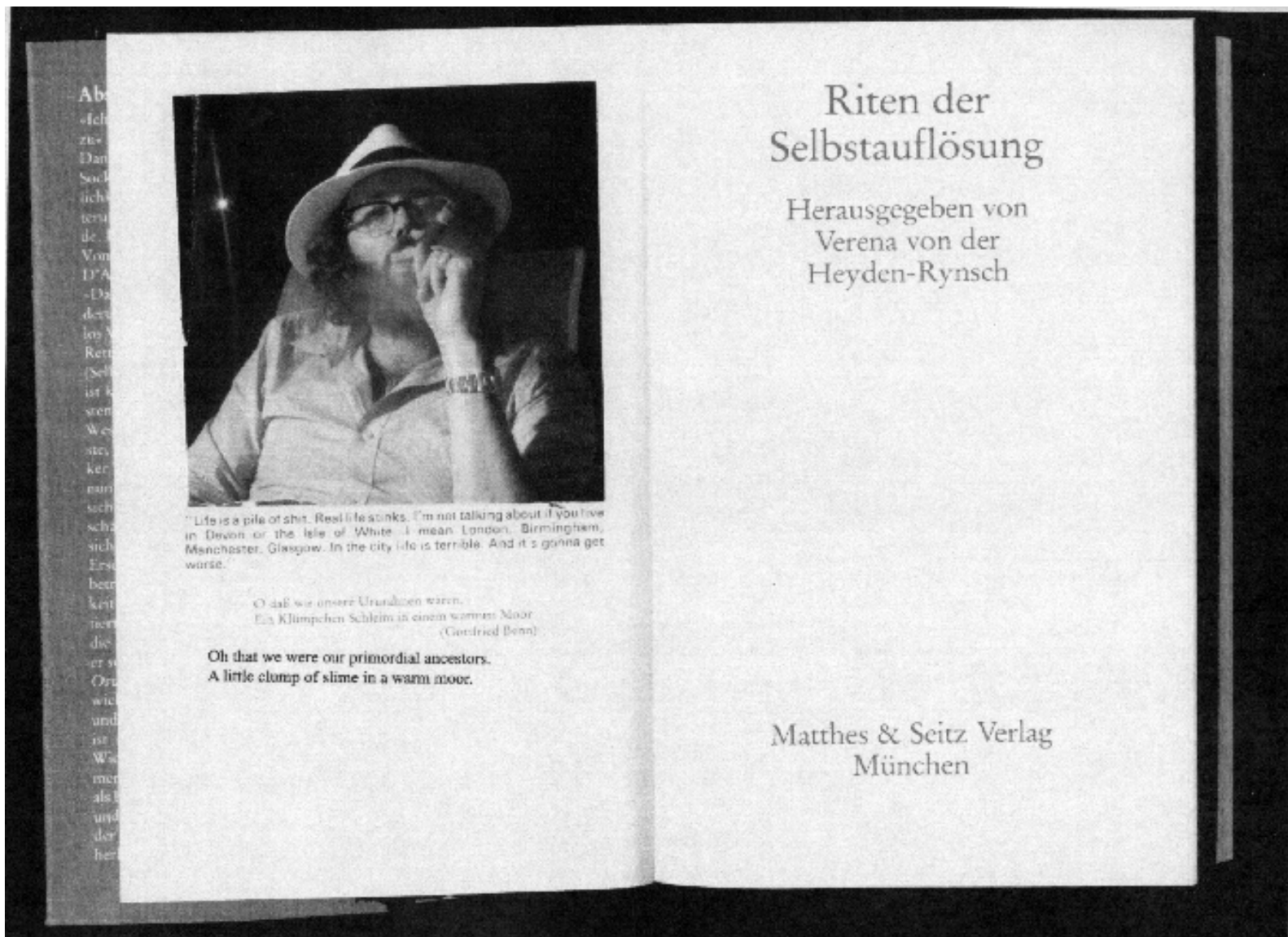
dandies are still metaphysicians. dandyism is an entirely distinctive form of defense of the thought: the human being, up to and including the ultimate features of the life of the soul, can be explained through mechanical principles (*identity*, the younger, presupposes a certain explicability that has various titles, such as education). in the *dandy*, defense assumes the form of a singular struggle, which only entertains occasional alliances. argumentative consensus, of

one's own concrete [*inhaltlich*] experiences can only mean: holding mechanical (in the broader sense) models of one's own consciousness as possible, as unavoidable, as the only satisfying ones: *nihilism*. or one aligns oneself with the standpoint of the observer, meaning that one becomes partisan toward that part of one's own personality that furnishes the respective *contents* [*inhalt*] of inner and outer intuition while itself not being analyzed in experience; that is what I will here name, according to distinctions, the attitude of the *dandy*.

from the standpoint of one who experiences, the nihilist falls prey to convention because he prescribes himself schematic, consensus-building explanations. of course the rejection of subjective

meaning. *The dandy must strive to be great without interruption; he must live and sleep in front of a mirror;*³ "in front of the mirror" means here: to observe what cannot be perceived differently, to know which impression the strange outside will make on the strange eye, to study in oneself the automatism of the strange eye, and to cultivate what withdraws from all of this. also, the emptying of the world is neither paranoid nor schizophrenic; it follows from the study of societal forms. the dandy analyzes present bonds and recognizes his kind; he acts in accordance with an interpretation of reality that cannot be falsified within the parameters of his societal conditions.

-Translated by Ludwig Fischer and Jeffrey D. Gower



philosophizing, is out of the question: at any rate, formal agreement must be fulfilled subjectively with meaning; outside of meaning it is mechanical, contradicts the intention that it calls forth.

the dandy is an exact, sensitive, in the forms of his companionship idiosyncratic observer of his inner and outer surroundings, a theoretician but only *ad hoc* (*maxims, propositions, aphorisms*). he has understood that his emotions follow internal regularities and accordingly are forced upon him in advance. mechanics discovers ever larger parts of that which he had taken for his freedom, right up to an apparatus of desperation. *where is the I?* all the values that convulse him yield a construction, the lever of which points toward the distantiation of these values – the dandy is in an inward spiral; he strips meaning away from all who have become conscious and pulls it into himself: *you are not that*.

After a long line of disputable philosophers of the machine, who are nevertheless to be taken seriously, a psychology is emerging, which threatens to become scientific; the modeling of the spiritual [*des Geistigen*] on the automaton finally begins. naturally, self observation suffices, so long as it is sufficiently harsh. two developments are possible: one overcomes oneself or arrives at the point of no longer holding one's own consciousness as a value *sui generis*. seeking verifiable explanations for the being and effects of

meaning is precisely what constitutes the nihilist, but this is not the place for that discussion. the attitude of the dandy is much more ambivalent. he sees no motive to find, in a second attempt, ensouling reasons for what is once understood – one is not systematic. just do not lose the souls of things – that would be to linger in the natural understanding, emotions as contents, like the child, the naïve one,² the religious one, the personalist. the dandy knows full well that he, too, he himself, and also precisely in his sensing, functions for the most part automatically. as much as possible he will want to understand in an idiosyncratic and original manner, that is, to *construct* contents, to become singularly conscious. yet he gives up everything that he understands about himself, none of which he can love as a component of his own personality; he yields that which has been understood about himself over to that which has been understood about the other. the other indemnifies him through his exposure of the mechanical meaninglessness of his life's course; he is the bearer of all the hopelessness that has been perceived in his own life.

This character is no narcissist. he *experiments* and for this needs society, which he divides into machines and those who have ensouled them [*mitbeseelte*]. it is not important that he love himself – not many dandies do – but that he protects something that would give love

¹From the essay by Oswald Wiener, "Eine Art Einzige" [A Singular Manner] in *Riten der Selbstaflösung*, ed. Verena von der Heyden-Rynsch (München: Matthes & Seitz Verlag, 1982), 36-38.

²Wilde: god and nature bid the same [in English in the original]; in Milton, this author of superhero comics, one already finds the identification *consciousness-Satan*; *Satan* the constructor of machines for the fight against nature; *Adam's* physics questions to *Raphael* already prowl about with sin. – *Satan* ... one day let my soul sit near you under the tree of science [*Wissenschaft*] ... (*Prière, Fleurs du mal*). – only among the wild ones would there still be hope, that is a tenor of Chateaubriand, to be supplemented with the following: hope in immediate, naïve experience, revocation of consciousness, a feeling of worth, just as in Milton's paradise. one might compare the current boon in ethnography: the heirs of a sin, which they no longer like, unconsciously long for a museum of consciousness in the jungle.

The child: Women is the opposite of the Dandy.
Therefore she is horrifying
Woman is hungry and wants to eat. Thirsty,
she wants to drink.
She is in heat and wants to be fucked.
Deserves it!
Women is natural, which is to say
abominable.
Also she is always vulgar, which is to say
the opposite of the Dandy.

--Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu, III*. [Charles Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare*, trans. Ariana Reines (Mal-O-Mar Editions, October, 2009)].

³*Mon cœur mis à nu, III*.