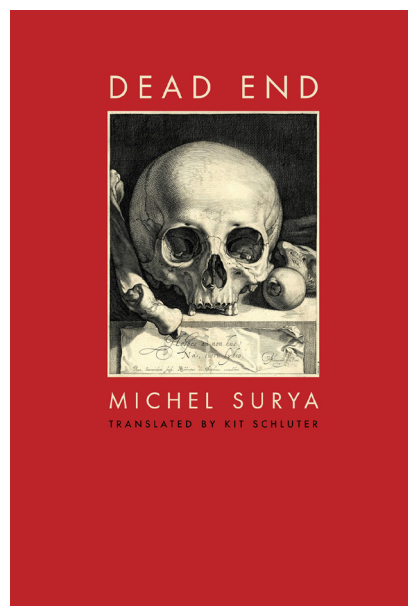


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DEAD END

Michel Surya

The debut of Surya's fiction
in the English language

Translated from the French with
afterword by Kit Schluter

Foreword by Amandine André

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DEAD END by Michel Surya
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Dead End is a sinuous pornographic work that forms a part of Michel Surya's series of erotic books released in France over the past four decades. Drafted around 1985, rediscovered among the author's papers in 2004, and revised in 2006, *Dead End* speaks with the cerebral starkness of a vanitas painting. Here, the limits of excess themselves are stifling, erotic immoderation no longer satisfies, and worldly anguish reveals itself as ever crueler, more evident. Developing a genre unto itself which might be termed "neurotica," this flood of language—rawer with every unpunctuated breath—affirms and reaffirms the fear that we are beyond salvation. As full of vertiginous bravado and self-loathing as it is of sensual generosity and the genuine search for mutual pleasure, *Dead End's* address of the beloved unspools with the devastating, nearly religious force of total confession. This translation by Kit Schluter, featuring a foreword by French poet Amandine André, marks the debut of Surya's fiction in the English language.

"In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno writes that the measurement of how 'intimately sex and language are intertwined can be seen by reading pornography in a foreign language.' Or in any language. As soon as authors set out to write, they dissolve into their text: they become body-less, thing-less, person-less; they become what they compose and, as Blanchot claims, die into the work, ceasing to exist while the text lives on. In Michel Surya's *Dead End*, the author pursues what can never be truly attained: the elusive Other, and, through the Other, the death of himself—in both the erotic sense of dissolving into the other and in the literal sense of viewing his own body decay. In *Dead End*, though, nothing dies: the reader becomes author and character; self becomes other; you becomes we, and vice versa. In this way, the urgency of Surya's novella becomes revelatory in the word's original sense of laying bare, unveiling. In Kit Schluter's translation, the words come alive and speak to us as if there were no intermediary, and there is none. This is the wonder of reading: the words enter us as we enter the Other, and 'we' are never the same."

—Charlotte Mandell, translator of *Coming* by Jean-Luc Nancy



Photo by Catherine Hélie (Gallimard)

MICHEL SURYA is a French author, philosopher, and editor whose work has been translated into more than a dozen languages. His vast body of publications include novels, erotic novellas, literary and political essays, philosophical histories, and the definitive biography of Georges Bataille, which received the Prix Goncourt and was published in English as *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography* (Verso Books, 2022). For Éditions Gallimard, he selected and introduced Bataille's correspondence. In 1987, Surya founded the review *Lignes*, and between 2002 and 2019 he operated Éditions Lignes, a prolific publisher of philosophical, political, and literary works. He does not teach.



Photo by Claire Mullen

KIT SCHLUTER is the author of *Pierrot's Fingernails* (Canarium Books, 2020) and the forthcoming *Cartoons* (City Lights, 2024). His recent and forthcoming translations from the French and Spanish include books by bruno darío, Copi, Anne Kawala, Mario Levrero, Marie de Quatrebarbes, Marcel Schwob, and Olivia Tapiero. He lives in Mexico City.