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Literature & the Other Arts

PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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PERSPECTIVES ON
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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LITERATURE AND THE OTHER ARTS

Le statut de l'image dans l'écriture et la peinture surréaliste MARTINE ANTLE	3
George Perec's <i>Un Cabinet d'amateur</i> : Portrait of the Artist as Iconoclast PAUL J. SCHWARTZ	11
Myths in Butor's <i>Passage de Milan</i> : Works of Mondrian and Duchamp as Generators of the Text CLAUDE-MARIE BALDWIN	18
Duchamp's Early Readymades: The Erasure of Boundaries between Literature and the Other Arts CAROL P. JAMES	24
The <i>Caméra-stylo</i> of Marguerite Duras: The Translation of a Literary Aesthetic into Film JANICE MORGAN	33
Contrastive Characterization in Verga's <i>I Malavoglia</i> and Visconti's <i>La Terra trema</i> EMMANUEL HATZANTONIS	41
Political Satire through Popular Music and a Popular Vision of Reality: <i>La Linares</i> , a New Novel from Ecuador C. MICHAEL WAAG	50
A Portrait of the Writer as Artist: Silvina Ocampo PATRICIA N. KLINGENBERG	58
To Have a Voice: The Politics of the Diva SUSAN J. LEONARDI	65
Simulation, Gender, and Postmodernism: Sam Shepard and <i>Paris, Texas</i> STEPHEN WATT	73
The Architecture of Umberto Eco's <i>The Name of the Rose</i> D. B. JEWISON	83
Collage Theory, Reception, and the Cutups of William Burroughs LASZLO K. GÉFIN	91
Eine Kleine Wortmusik: The Marriage of Poetry and Music in the <i>Pisan Cantos</i> MARGARET M. DUNN	101

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University of Louisville

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Le statut de l'image dans l'écriture et la peinture surréaliste

Martine Antle

Avec ses développements divers dans tous les domaines artistiques, le surréalisme n'a jamais été exclusivement un phénomène littéraire. La mise en scène de *Parade* (1911) de Cocteau, en collaboration avec Picasso, Eric Satie, Darius Milhaud et les Ballets Russes, en témoigne. Avec comme point de départ un mouvement visuel, le surréalisme et ses différents modes d'expression a répondu à certains impératifs communs: un appel à la spontanéité de l'expression artistique, à l'automatisme graphique aussi bien que verbal et au dévoilement de ce que Breton appelle "les paysages intérieurs". Les travaux collectifs issus des expériences des "sommeils"¹ présentent le dessin et l'écriture comme moyen ou "medium" commun d'expression poétique et font souvent appel à la peinture de Giorgio de Chirico. Les surréalistes resteront fascinés par ce peintre, et c'est avant tout parce que les objets présentés dans ses toiles acquièrent une fonction révélatrice; ils n'ont pas de sens en tant que tels, mais prennent leur sens dans le caractère contingent de leur disposition dans l'espace de la toile et/ou du texte. Les textes collectifs surréalistes créés pendant les premières années du mouvement sont d'une importance capitale: d'une part ils mettent fin à la suprématie de l'auteur puisqu'ils sont écrits collectivement; d'autre part, les surréalistes présentent le dessin et l'écriture comme moyens communs d'expression artistique; c'est-à-dire que le langage cesse d'être un objet littéraire pour devenir objet artistique. Les techniques d'écriture et les techniques picturales s'unissent dans une même démarche, en ce sens qu'elles amènent le procès de la représentation dans la peinture et l'écriture. L'exemple ultime de l'association du graphisme et de la poésie aboutira à la création des "poèmes objets" Le premier poème-objet², ou ce que Brauner appelle "picto-poésie", créé par Breton en 1919, utilise la poésie et les arts plastiques et graphiques comme moyen commun d'expression artistique. Dans ces collages, la page et/ou la toile deviennent également porteuse de signes et présentent un espace métaphorique en mouvement où le lecteur et/ou le spectateur devient un participant du tableau. Selon Breton, l'oeuvre d'art (écriture/peinture) ne doit plus représenter mais créer un "véritable

frisson". Elle doit être une présentation ou "re-présentation continue" s'adressant directement "à l'oeil et aux sens"³.

Par ailleurs, l'écriture surréaliste se situe au croisement de tous les genres: la poésie, le théâtre, et le roman. Cette fusion des genres amène une mobilité référentielle du mot écrit qui est mis en espace, et ainsi que Breton l'exprime dans les *Manifestes du surréalisme* en 1924: "Je m'étais mis à choyer immédiatement les mots pour l'espace qu'ils admettent autour d'eux, pour leur tangences avec d'autres mots innombrables que je ne prononçais pas"⁴.

Le mot écrit, l'agencement du poème, se substituent alors à la signification. Les éléments visuels, la typographie des poèmes, questionnent la signification du mot qui atteint le statut d'image; les mots deviennent voix, bruit ou bruissement qui sollicite le corps. Par exemple, *Connaissance de la mort*⁵ (Roger Vitrac, 1929), poème en prose, de même que "Les tables d'Émeraude" de Chirico (sur lesquelles Vitrac s'attarde à plusieurs reprises), va offrir un certain nombre de signes qui mèneront à des significations multiples. *Connaissance de la mort* est un texte à structure ouverte qui s'articule selon une suite de micro-récits, ou fragments, et croise dans son architecture en dédale, le texte *Nadja*⁶ de Breton. Dans ces deux récits poétiques, le personnage féminin est le pré-texte de la narration. *Nadja* peut se lire comme l'histoire des pratiques proches de la magie, histoire au centre de laquelle Nadja serait une créatrice mythique à l'origine du monde et de l'espace poétique. *Connaissance de la mort* introduit un personnage féminin qui joue un rôle central dans le texte et qui ouvre le chemin d'une connaissance non conceptualisée du monde, signifiée par le lieu de la caverne:

C'est dans la profondeur des yeux de Léa que se propagent de sommets en sommets les ondes tranquilles de la mort jusqu'au petit volcan de ma naissance et au-delà. Au milieu de la nuit, Léa m'emporte dans une caverne précieuse où je m'honore de ne plus vivre. ("Insomnie", p. 9; c'est moi qui souligne)

Dans ce texte poétique la "caverne précieuse" est une métaphore du lieu féminin, ainsi que l'indiquent les rapports métonymiques entre "la profondeur des yeux" et "la caverne précieuse". Cette caverne précieuse présente une forte similarité avec *L'Allégorie de la caverne*⁷ de Platon. En effet, *Connaissance de la mort* nous dépeint de la même manière une demeure obscure et souterraine, qui figure un espace poétique innommable, où le bruit traverse le sens et devient langage:

Voici l'hôtel particulier de la comtesse, luxueux et vide, tout entouré de lames verticales. Nul arbre, nul oiseau. Des fleurs, peut-être, en tout cas, fleurs souterraines, des coquillages secrets et des murmures. ("Danger de mort", p. 169; c'est moi qui souligne)

“L’hôtel particulier” présente une référentialité multiple: hôtel-mort, hôtel-caverne, hôtel-connaissance; en effet, l’hôtel particulier n’est pas représentable en tant que tel. Les “fleurs souterraines” et les “murmures” réfèrent à un hôtel-caverne. De plus, l’usage de l’oxymore luxueux/vide, à travers le double emploi de la négation “nul”, et à travers le “peut-être”, indique que l’hôtel est un lieu indéfini ou absence d’hôtel. L’axe métonymique croise ici l’axe métaphorique (fleurs souterraines/hôtel particulier) à un point 0 origine du langage⁸ qui est ici le lieu de murmure. A ce propos, Vitrac précise l’impossibilité de nommer l’espace poétique: “J’ai dû limiter à une caverne émouvante, à la grêle cérébrale, au squelette du silence [. . .]. Les mots peuvent en marquer le pointillé, mais le tracé est dans le cœur” (“Commentaire”, pp. 84-85).

Dans “Danger de mort” la mère, qui joue un rôle central, n’est jamais présentée en tant que mère. Si elle est nommée en tant que mère, c’est pour disparaître immédiatement du texte. Par ailleurs, le texte présente un réseau complexe de substitutions et de transformations qui évoluent autour de ce personnage. Les questions, quant à l’identité de la mère et/ou de la nourrice, restent sans réponses et constituent un déplacement des signifiants qui se diffusent dans le texte et qui ne renvoient à aucun signifié. Tous les sujets de l’énonciation disparaissent tour à tour et la mère, qui apparaît au travers de plusieurs énoncés, est évincée chaque fois qu’elle apparaît. Ce procédé d’écriture maintient l’image maternelle dans le flou. Dans ce texte poétique, le personnage féminin constitue le pré-texte de la narration. Dans cet univers en mouvement perpétuel, les personnages se dédoublent, fusionnent et disparaissent, comme ceux des photographies d’Uzac⁹. Dans un article consacré à l’alchimie du rêve, Vitrac dit lui-même que ses personnages apparaissent et disparaissent pour “s’évanouir comme des fumées sanglantes dans les parois du songe”¹⁰.

C’est finalement dans *Arcane 17*¹¹ que Breton, suivant le programme tracé par Vitrac, place la magie au centre de toute création artistique. *Arcane 17* demeure l’oeuvre la plus complexe de Breton. De même que dans *Connaissance de la mort* (qui a été écrit une vingtaine d’années auparavant), le personnage féminin apparaît au travers d’un réseau métaphorique infini. Dans ses “Entretiens”, nous dit Breton, le titre d’*Arcane* “se réfère à la signification traditionnelle de la lame du tarot qui s’intitule l’étoile”. Cette carte dans le texte représente l’opus alchimique, le mystère et le renversement des lois de la matière. L’art devient ici une pratique magique. Mais malgré l’emblème de cette carte, le mystère d’*Arcane 17* n’est jamais entièrement dévoilé. A la fin de la description de l’arcane (p. 119), Breton nous dit que cette carte comprend la lettre hébraïque Thé, qui selon lui ressemble à la langue dans la bouche, c’est-à-dire au sens le plus fort: le point d’implication corporel de la parole, parole d’origine, ou lieu du poème. Les nombreuses transformations de la jeune verseuse en Mélusine, femme-enfant, jeune

sorcière, en font une médiatrice de la nature et des forces spirituelles, et ouvrent la voie à l'espace poétique: "Ces régions, dans leur étendue, il n'y a que la poésie qui les explore" (p. 92). La figure de Mélusine, à qui il ne reste que le cri, est une figure informe. Le miroitement de ses écailles, ses torsades éblouissantes et le lustre (le mot poétique) de givre bleu renvoient à un jeu de lumière et de transparence qui figure le lieu du murmure. Le texte devient une véritable matière poétique pour le sujet qui se plonge dans cette pratique.

La beauté artistique chez les surréalistes va naître d'une expérience: elle naît là où le sujet (le lecteur ou le spectateur) et l'objet (écrit ou pictural) se rencontrent; c'est-à-dire là où le participant travaille le message et le code de l'oeuvre artistique. L'art, comme le théâtre, cessent d'être l'imitation d'un lieu du monde et deviennent jeu (re-création/récréation). Les expériences menées dans le domaine de la magie par les surréalistes vont s'orienter vers une recherche de la "matière" poétique, c'est-à-dire vers une ouverture sur un espace poétique animé par des images aussi bien verbales que graphiques. L'écriture automatique se double de toutes les techniques groupées sous le dénominateur commun de "peinture automatique car elles visent toutes à un remaniement du rapport perception-représentation"¹².

Dans "Expériences", l'un des chapitres de *Connaissance de la morte* les expériences menées se veulent animées par le principe du hasard. L'inventeur transforme par exemple un salon en une immense chambre noire, dans laquelle l'un des murs, recouvert de gélatine, constitue une plaque sensible. Le patient (ici le lecteur), est relié à des piles Volta, grâce auxquelles on peut obtenir une projection de ses sensations. La fonction du lecteur dépasse ici celle du décodeur ou du chercheur de sens; il participe directement au texte. Ce texte que nous pourrions appeler texte-expérience exige du lecteur à la fois passivité et réceptivité. Le lecteur, de même que le spectateur de théâtre, participe à la re-création du texte ou du spectacle. Nous noterons que Man Ray dans son film "L'étoile de mer" (1928), adapté à partir d'un poème de Desnos, a aussi recours à la gélatine. En jetant sa caméra en l'air, pendant le tournage et en utilisant des "tranches de gélatines" collées à la lentille de la caméra, les images présentées se font et se défont à l'infini dans un espace en perpétuel mouvement. Ce film se présente comme une suite de tableaux visuels, animés par des objets: un pied posé sur un livre ouvert et placé auprès d'une étoile de mer par exemple. Pour Man Ray, l'image cinématographique ne doit pas créer "d'effets artistiques", ni de "flou" mais plutôt faire appel à "un effet de verre brouillé"¹³. Les techniques de Man Ray ne contredisent pas le principe d'écriture automatique et de hasard objectif selon Vitrac. Dans un article consacré au cinéma surréaliste, Vitrac décrit comment l'image dans son "frénétisme", dévoile un mystère qu'il qualifie d' "automatique":

L'image se met dans le mouvement. Elle piaffe, s'impatiente. Elle part en des courses éperdues à travers le monde. Tout devient *galop*, poursuite échevelée, *frénétisme*. La machine s'emballe.

*Le mystère est automatique. C'est un jeu*¹⁴.

L'image cinématographique surréaliste offre donc un nouveau mode de perception de l'espace. Le point essentiel de cet espace, ainsi que Bablet le définit est constitué par "la mobilité [. . .] et la multiplicité de ses angles de vue"¹⁵.

En 1922, dans un article consacré à Giorgio de Chirico, Vitrac souligne comment les peintures de Chirico, de par les mouvements ou "galops" qui les animent, annulent toute notion de représentation: "Galops suspendus, décalages infimes des attitudes, rotation des boules de verre [. . .] excluent] toute idée de représentation habituelle. [. . .] L'inquiétude suscite de nouveaux sens"¹⁶. Nous soulignerons que Vitrac a recours au même type de vocabulaire, lorsqu'il décrit l'image cinématographique ou picturale qui, selon lui est animée par des "galops". Dans sa description des toiles de Chirico, l'espace imaginaire est suggéré par l'expansion d'une spatialité gestuelle. Cet espace animé par le mouvement continu d'apparition et de disparition des objets, s'apparente là encore au dispositif scénique tel que le définit Bablet¹⁷. Selon Vitrac, la peinture de Chirico, tout comme le dispositif scénique, ne peuvent se décrire que par la poésie, c'est-à-dire "le langage gris"¹⁸ de Foucault, que seul le langage poétique "re-traduit" par ses silences et ses pointillés. Plus loin dans son article, Vitrac reconnaît dans les toiles de Chirico un "tragique inquiétant" car elles jettent le spectateur à la fois hors et dans le cadre du tableau. Le spectateur est en même temps objet regardant et objet regardé, c'est-à-dire le texte de la toile:

[. . .] les mannequins d'acajou prennent des attitudes selon les doigts des peintres, les membres artificiels répètent nos gestes, les têtes de carton tournent pour les modistes. Une vie accidentelle et intermittente, nous donne la crainte d'imaginaires plus près de nous que le dragon, le sphinx ou l'hippocampe. (p. 20).

Vitrac, qui retient justement "le double inquiétant" qui hante les toiles de Chirico, propose une nouvelle conception de la lecture d'un tableau: comme scène théâtrale, virtuelle et magique, espace en mouvement dans lequel se joue un drame d'objets singulièrement animés. Cette lecture d'un tableau place le spectateur dans les marges du tableau et annonce ainsi les métamorphoses de l'espace théâtral dans la pratique théâtrale contemporaine, par le recul du texte écrit et des décors, au profit d'une mise en espace du langage.

Alain Robbe-Grillet a mis à jour cette véritable "mise en scène" opérant dans les toiles surréalistes. A partir de la peinture de Magritte il écrit en

1975, *La Belle Captive*¹⁹, roman dans lequel il reproduit les tableaux du peintre surréaliste. Les images verbales qui apparaissent de page en page, avec à chaque fois une nouvelle peinture, font appel à une scène théâtrale imaginaire ou "abstraite" en mouvement perpétuel, semblable à un espace théâtral. Cette scène figure l'avant ou l'après du tableau ou du langage. Par exemple, le tableau intitulé "Le Monde Visible" ne représente qu'une table avec une nappe blanche sur laquelle est posée un roc, apparaissant sur un fond crépusculaire. Nous reproduirons ici une partie du texte accompagnant le tableau "Le Monde Visible":

Tout au début, il y a une sorte de tumulte, un mouvement confus de corps entremêlés, des hommes en tenue sobre qui s'avancent se bousculant.

Le piétinement, les gestes brouillées des bras ou des jambes mélangés en une *masse informe et mouvante*, à la progression rapide quoique désordonnée [. . .] *tout disparaît ainsi d'un coup et il ne reste ensuite, de nouveau, que le couloir vide, comme abstrait, prêt à s'effacer lui aussi dirait-on.* (p. 4; c'est moi qui souligne)

Le texte de la peinture "s'écrit" par l'intermédiaire des corps et/ou de leur voix (ou "tumulte des corps") et des mouvements qu'ils produisent. Le corps est situé encore une fois dans et hors du cadre du tableau; il figure ce couloir ni plein ni vide, lieu du signe artistique, toujours opaque.

Dans *La Belle Captive*, Robbe-Grillet présente une étude intéressante des rapports métonymiques existant entre les images visuelles et verbales qui, selon lui, sont la source d' "une impulsion génératrice". Ainsi, nous dit Robbe-Grillet, "le lecteur-spectateur est-il convié à prendre part (créateur à son tour d'un itinéraire) à cette circulation de sens parmi les organisations mouvantes de la phrase qui donne à voir et du tableau qui raconte". Les signes visuels et auditifs (bruits de voix et de mouvement) contenus dans le corps du tableau, présentent un texte infini, puisque le spectateur, placé en position d'objet hors et dans le cadre, l'écrit par un processus de circulation du (ou des) sens. L'auteur s'efface ainsi du texte devant le lecteur ou le spectateur. Et là encore, la scène de l'écriture rencontre la scène théâtrale, comme Antonin Artaud l'avait exprimé. "Les filles de Loth", nous dit Artaud, "mettent en scène les impuissances de la parole". La mobilité des images et des formes qui s' "organisent ou se désorganisent" dans ce tableau appellent un espace poétique magique, en mouvement constant, et présentent "ce que le théâtre devrait être, s'il savait parler le langage qui lui appartient"²⁰, à savoir le langage hiéroglyphique poétique et/ou le langage théâtral.

C'est l'humour sous toutes ses formes qui investit l'art surréaliste. L'humour que nous entendons au sens de "formant textuel"²¹ nous fait perdre la notion de sens et de direction. Il nous "désoriente" selon les

termes de Winston²². Cette esthétique de l'humour renvoie sans arrêt le lecteur (ou le spectateur) à un stade antérieur au langage, lieu de la signifiante où se produit la re-création de "l'oeuvre d'art". Dans son analyse sémiotique de *La structure du texte artistique*²³, Iouri Lotman rapproche le texte écrit d'une matière artistique à partir de laquelle l'oeuvre d'art serait à construire: "L'art peut être décrit comme un langage secondaire, l'oeuvre d'art, comme un texte dans ce langage" (p. 37).

Le texte artistique est pour Iouri Lotman un texte pluri-dimensionnel dont la structure est semblable à celle de l'univers en mouvement et dont la syntagmatique est celle de "la modélisation spatiale" (p. 310). Il précise en effet, citant Alexandrov, qu'en "considérant un ensemble donné d'objets comme espace, on fait abstraction de toutes les propriétés de ces objets, sauf de celles qui sont définies par ces relations d'apparence spatiales prises en considération" (p. 310). Ainsi le texte artistique ne renvoie à rien d'autre qu'à sa propre forme, c'est-à-dire au jeu de l'art (écriture/peinture) et c'est précisément dans la dictée de la pensée que Breton voyait "l'intérêt du jeu surréaliste" (*Manifestes*, p. 43). Blanchot par la suite confirme ce point de vue en définissant l'art surréaliste à partir du jeu: "jeu désintéressé de la pensée, ne représentant rien, présence fortuite qui joue et qui permet de jouer"²⁴.

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NOTES

1. Et plus particulièrement l'article d'André Breton, "Entrée des mediums", *Littérature*, n°6, 1^{er} novembre 1922.

2. André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, "The Poem-Object", (première édition publiée en France en 1965 sous le titre *Le surréalisme et la peinture*), Translated from the French by Simon Watson Taylor, Icon Editions (New-York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), p. 19.

3. Pierre Reverdy, *Nord-Sud*, "L'image" (Mars 1918), (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), p. 73.

4. André Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme* (1924), Collection Idée (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 50.

5. Roger Vitrac, *Connaissance de la mort*, édition originale au filigrane N)R)F sur papier vergé Lafuma Navarre, (Paris: Edition de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1926), 278 pp.

6. André Breton, *Nadja* (1928), (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

7. En effet, comme nous pouvons le lire dans *L'allégorie de la caverne* de Platon, la caverne est la métaphore de la matrice:

"Figure-toi des hommes dans une demeure souterraine en forme de caverne, dont l'entrée, ouverte à la lumière, s'étend sur toute la longueur de la façade; ils sont là depuis leur enfance, les jambes et le cou pris dans les chaînes, en sorte qu'ils ne peuvent bouger de place, ni voir ailleurs devant eux; car les liens les empêchent de tourner la tête".

De plus, dans *La République*, les termes grecs employés pour nommer la caverne, tel

que le souligne Luce Irigaray dans *Speculum de l'autre femme* signifient prototype de matrice et utérus.

Platon, *Oeuvres Complètes, La République*, Livre IV-VII, Tome VII, Texte établi et traduit par Emile Chambry, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1949), p. 144.

Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*, Collection Critique, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974), p. 302.

8. Barbara Johnson, *La Défiguration du langage poétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), pp. 60-70.

9. "La nébuleuse" (1939), "Le combat des Penthésiliées" (1939) et "Corpus Delicti" (1939), reproduit dans: *L'Amour Fou, Photography & Surrealism*. Exhibition organized by The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Abbeville Press: New York, 1985), pp. 71-73.

10. Roger Vitrac, "Les mystères du rêve", *Comoedia*, Janvier 1925.

11. André Breton, *Arcane 17*, orné de quatre lames de Tarot de Matta (New York: Brentano's, 1943).

12. Paule Plouvier, *Poétique de l'amour chez André Breton* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1983), pp. 18-19.

13. Man Ray, "Autoportrait" (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1964), p. 245.

14. Roger Vitrac, "De toutes les couleurs", *L'Ecran Français*, Juin 1946.

15. Denis Bablet et Jean Jacquot, avec la collaboration de Marcel Oddon, "Le lieu théâtral dans la société moderne", *Edition du Centre National de la Recherche Française*, 1963, p. 17.

16. Roger Vitrac, "Giorgio de Chirico", *Littérature*, n^o1, 1^{er} mars 1922, p. 19.

17. "Un dispositif scénique s'est donc greffé sur la scène se détachant sur un fond neutre ou signifiant, une structure spatiale autonome qui présente une plusieurs aires de jeux reliés entre elles et que les meubles, accessoires, éléments secondaires et l'action même suffisent à qualifier temporairement". Denis Bablet, *Les Révolutions scéniques du XX^{ème} siècle* (Paris: Société Internationale d'art du XX^e siècle, 1975), p. 300.

18. "Rapport infini [. . .]. Mais si l'on veut maintenir le rapport du langage et du visible, si on veut parler non pas à l'encontre mais à partir de leur incompatibilité, de manière à rester au plus proche de l'un et de l'autre, alors il faut effacer les noms propres et se maintenir dans l'infini de la tâche. C'est-à-dire par l'intermédiaire de ce langage gris, anonyme [donc poétique] toujours méticuleux et répétitif parce que trop large, que la peinture, petit à petit, allumera ses clartés". (c'est moi qui souligne).

Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses, une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 25.

19. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Belle Captive, roman*, La Bibliothèque des Arts, (Paris: Lausanne: Cosmos Textes, 1975).

20. Antonin Artaud, *Le théâtre et son double*, (1938), Collection Idées, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 52.

21. Terme emprunté à Michael Riffaterre, "L'Humour comme catachrèse continue", dans *Sémiotique de la poésie*, Collection Poétique, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), pp. 158-175.

22. Mathew Winston, "Humour noir and black humor", dans *Veins of Humor*, Harvard English Studies, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 275.

23. Iouri Lotman, *La Structure du texte artistique*, Bibliothèque des sciences humaines, (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

24. Maurice Blanchot, "Le demain joueur", *André Breton et le surréalisme*, (Paris: La Nouvelle Revue Française, 1967), p. 873.

George Perec's *Un Cabinet d'amateur*:
Portrait of the Artist as Iconoclast

Paul J. Schwartz

George Perec's last novel, *Un Cabinet d'amateur*,¹ published in 1979, represents an effort to climb out from under the shadow of his 1978 masterwork, *La Vie mode d'emploi*. In a June, 1981, interview, Perec refers to the obsessive weight of *La Vie*: "J'ai du mal à m'en sortir. C'est d'ailleurs la raison pour laquelle je n'ai pratiquement rien écrit depuis deux ans." Addressing directly the relationship between his last two novels, he adds, "J'ai écrit *Un Cabinet d'amateur*, récit que j'ai publié après *La Vie mode d'emploi*. C'est un tableau qui représente une collection de tableaux et chaque tableau est une allusion à un chapitre du livre."²

The painting is Heinrich Kürz's "Un Cabinet d'amateur," which in the tradition of the German *Kunstkammer* portrays an art collector, Hermann Raffke, surrounded by his masterpieces. Each of the individual paintings portrayed has its unique subject, anecdote and history, its own story. "Un Cabinet d'amateur" also has its story. In Perec's novel, all of these stories interact and through a complex system of references and reflections create a dazzling fiction and an original vision of the birth and death of art. Kürz included two of his own paintings among the dozens copied in "Un Cabinet d'amateur," one whose title is borrowed from Raymond Roussel:³

La deuxième oeuvre n'existe pas, ou plutôt elle n'existe que sous la forme d'un petit rectangle de deux centimètres de long sur un centimètre de large, dans lequel, en s'aidant d'une forte loupe, on parvient à distinguer une trentaine d'hommes et de femmes se précipitant du haut d'un ponton dans les eaux noires d'un lac cependant que sur les berges des foules armées de torches courent en tous sens. Si Heinrich Kürz, qui, confia-t-il un jour à Nowak, n'avait appris à peindre que pour faire un jour ce tableau, n'avait pas décidé de renoncer à la peinture, l'oeuvre se serait appelée *Les ensorcelés du lac Ontario* et se serait inspirée d'un fait-divers survenu à Rochester en 1891 (Gustave Reid en tira en 1907 un roman qui connut un certain succès): dans la nuit du 13 au 14 novembre, une secte de fanatiques iconoclastes fondée six mois plus tôt par un employé de la Western

Union, un tueur de boeufs et un agent d'assurances maritimes, entreprit de saccager systématiquement les usines, dépôts et magasins d'Eastman-Kodak. Près de quatre mille boîtiers, cinq mille plaques, et quatre-vingt-cinq kilomètres de pellicule de nitrocellulose furent détruits avant que les autorités puissent intervenir. Pourchassés par la moitié de la ville, les sectaires se jetèrent à l'eau plutôt que de se rendre. Parmi les soixante-dix-huit victimes figurait le père d'Heinrich Kürz. (pp. 75-76)

Because Kurz abandoned painting, "Les ensorcelés du lac Ontario" exists only as a tiny, 2 cm by 1 cm, copy of a never realized painting. Its details are visible only under a powerful magnifying glass. The novel offers many examples of Kürz's skill at miniature reproduction and thereby prepares us to accept 30 men and women (presumably distinguishable), a torch-bearing crowd, a pontoon, and the black waters of a lake, all inscribed in two square centimeters.

The anecdote includes a wealth of credible details: the precision of the date, its chronological relationship to the history of the Eastman-Kodak Company (George Eastman invented photographic film in 1889), the geographical accuracy (Rochester is indeed on Lake Ontario), the precise quantities of cameras, film and plates destroyed, the professions of the sect's founders, the approximate date of its founding, the date and author of the novel based on the incident, and the precise number of victims.

Two details, presented off-handedly in the middle and at the end of the story of the painting, confer upon it an importance which distinguishes this painting from the other 150 described in the novel: Heinrich Kürz became an artist in order to paint "Les Ensorcelés du lac Ontario;" his father was one of the seventy-eight victims of the incident it portrays. (Kürz would have been 7 at the time.)

The martyred sectarians, referred to as victims, were iconoclasts in the original sense of the term, image breakers. Although the description ignores their motivation, one can imagine that they chose to ransack "systematically" the Kodak offices and warehouses as a symbolic manifestation of their moral opposition to the newly created photographic industry; their destruction of cameras, plates and film is in the tradition of the original eighth century Byzantine iconoclasts.

The citizens of Rochester, outraged by the attack upon their new industry, respond with unexpected zeal: half the citizens of the town chase the sectarians doggedly. Preferring death to capture, the iconoclasts jump into the waters of Lake Ontario; seventy-eight drown. The son of one of the fanatic iconoclasts becomes an artist in order to paint an image of their act.

Let us ignore momentarily the apparent incongruity of young Kürz's decision and consider some personal but public facts which relate Georges Perec to Heinrich Kürz:⁴ (1) Perec's Jewish parents were victims of the Nazi

occupation and left him an orphan at age seven. (2) Perec began to write in order to commemorate the deaths of his parents.⁵ (3) Perec achieves his greatest effects of imagination and virtuosity through constraint. It is not unreasonable to compare the creation of a painting on a surface 2 cm by 1 cm to the writing of a 300-page novel without using the letter E—which Perec did in his 1969 novel, *La Disparition*. (4) In all of his published novels, and most extensively in his masterpiece, *La Vie mode d'emploi*, of which *Un Cabinet d'amateur* is an offshoot, Perec grafts into his text quotations from dozens of authors. This process is analogous to Kürz's copying of paintings within "Un Cabinet d'amateur."

As we have seen, "Les Ensorcelés du lac Ontario" exists only as a miniature copy of an unrealized painting. The miniature itself enjoys only a very brief temporal existence. "Un Cabinet d'amateur," completed at the end of 1912, and first exhibited in April, 1913, was at least partially destroyed on October 24, 1913, as the result of an incident which Perec qualifies as "inévitabile:" "Un visiteur exaspéré qui avait attendu toute la journée sans pouvoir entrer dans la salle, y fit soudain irruption et projeta contre le tableau le contenu d'une grosse bouteille d'encre de Chine, réussissant à prendre la fuite avant de se faire lyncher." (p. 24) Unconsciously, but "inevitably" imitating the gesture of the sectarian sackers of the Eastman-Kodak Factory, the lone terrorist, like his iconoclastic predecessors, flees the fury of a lynch mob. The outraged lovers of images, on one hand the Rochester mob seeking to avenge the destruction of cameras, on the other the thousands of admirers of Kürz's painting who crowd the exhibit daily, pursue the iconoclasts with a deadly fury.

The novel never reveals the extent of the damage caused by the "grosse bouteille" of ink. The painting is removed from the exhibit. Six months later, its owner, Hermann Raffke, dies, and the remains of the painting are entombed with the remains of the collector. All that survives are hundreds of Kürz's preliminary drawings and "une photographie médiocre, prise clandestinement par un des gardiens de la salle où le tableau avait été exposé." (p. 62) The text does not tell us if the mediocre image was printed on Kodak paper.

The discussion of the iconoclastic attacks surrounding the creation and destruction of "Les Ensorcelés du lac Ontario" and "Un Cabinet d'amateur" suggest a certain circularity. Let us leave for a moment the notion of iconoclasm to pursue the notion of circularity, which will of course lead us directly back.

The painting within Kürz's "Un Cabinet d'amateur" which fascinated the public and which brought to the exhibit thousands of visitors armed with magnifying glasses was not "Les Ensorcelés du lac Ontario," but rather "Un Cabinet d'amateur" itself. For among the dozens of pictures which appear upon the walls of the gallery painted by Kürz, occupying a central location, is "Un Cabinet d'amateur," the painting within the painting, which again

contains itself on an increasingly reduced scale "almost" infinitely. The original canvas measures two meters by three meters; each successive copy is approximately one-third the size of the preceding one; the eighth reproduction is a line, half a millimeter long.⁶

One further step in the "construction en abîme" is the arrangement of the exhibit hall, a life-size model of the painting, in which the Raffke Collection, including "Un Cabinet d'amateur," is displayed as in the painting. The interior of Hermann Raffke's tomb will later reproduce, on a much smaller scale, the arrangement of the exhibit hall.

The ever-increasing crowd of spectators, armed with their magnifying glasses, quickly discovered that the artist had not been satisfied to copy slavishly, over and over and smaller and smaller, the masterpieces of the Raffke Collection. On the contrary, he had cleverly brought modifications to each successive level, modifications which the visitors never tired of discovering: characters and details disappeared, changed place, were replaced by others. Some modifications were major: whole paintings disappeared. Others were barely noticeable: "La plume un peu délabrée d'un chapeau, deux rangs de perles au lieu de trois, la couleur d'un ruban, la forme d'une écuelle, la poignée d'une épée, le dessin d'un lustre" (p. 23). In addition, Kürz discreetly introduced all of the members of the Raffke family into the painting at various levels of the copied portraits.

The "anonymous" entry in the catalog of the exhibit describing "Un Cabinet d'amateur" dwells on the effect of the painting's circularity:

Un Cabinet d'amateur n'est pas seulement la représentation anecdotique d'un musée particulier; par le jeu de ces reflets successifs, par le charme quasi magique qu'opèrent ces répétitions de plus en plus minuscules, c'est une oeuvre qui bascule dans un univers proprement onirique où son pouvoir de séduction s'amplifie jusqu'à l'infini, et où la précision exacerbée de la matière picturale, loin d'être sa propre fin, débouche tout à coup sur la Spiritualité de l'Eternel Retour. (p. 20)

Art critic Lester Nowak, in an article published just after the close of the exhibit, interprets negatively the circularity of "Un Cabinet d'amateur." In the painting's repetitions and reflections of itself, Nowak finds rather than the infinite expansion of an eternal cycle, "une image de la mort de l'art, un réflexion spéculaire sur ce monde condamné à la répétition infinie de ces propres modèles. (p. 28) He dismisses the playful variations introduced throughout the repetitions as "l'expression ultime de la mélancolie de l'artiste." (p. 29) They represent a false freedom, a failed attempt to trouble the established order of art and to escape the narrow boundaries dictated by the forced return.

One other painting exhibited as part of the Raffke Collection and occupying a privileged position in both the exhibit and "Un Cabinet d'amateur" attracts Nowak's attention. Mounted on an easel in the right hand corner of the exhibit and just opposite the seated collector is the "Portrait de Bronco McGinnis" who exhibited himself at the Chicago World's Fair as "l'homme le plus tatoué du monde." The portrait is the work of German-American artist Adolphus Kleidröst who began his career in Cologne before moving to Cleveland. Nowak finds in the portrait a powerful symbol in support of his contention that "Un Cabinet d'amateur" is an image of the death of art:

Et peut-être n'y avait-il rien de plus poignant et de plus risible dans cette oeuvre que cet homme monstrueusement tatoué, ce corps peint qui semblait monter la garde devant chaque ressassement du tableau: homme devenu peinture sous le regard du collectionneur, symbole nostalgique et dérisoire, ironique et désabusé de ce "créateur" dépossédé du droit de peindre, désormais voué à regarder et à offrir en spectacle la seule prouesse d'une surface intégralement peinte. (p. 29)

This "Portrait of the Artist as Painting" depicts, in Nowak's view, the ultimate misery of the artist, doubly condemned to observe and to be observed, but stripped of his right to create. Circumstances will later deprive this degraded image of the artist of its prominent position. Another portrait replaces it on the easel in the right hand corner of Hermann Raffke's tomb, a portrait of Raffke himself as a young man. (McGinnis himself, according to the text, had died in 1902. At that time it was discovered that he was really a Breton named Le Marech' and that only the tattoos on his chest were authentic.)

Nowak revises his interpretation of "Un Cabinet d'amateur" in a thesis on the works of Kürz published ten years after his article. In his thesis, Nowak finds in the reproduction and modification of works from the past, "un processus d'incorporation . . . un accaparement: en même temps projection vers l'autre, et Vol, au sens prométhéen du terme." (p. 64) Nonetheless, between vision and representation are inscribed the fragile boundaries which constitute the limits of creativity, "et dont le développement ultime ne peut être que le Silence, ce silence volontaire et auto-destructeur que Kürz s'est imposé après avoir achevé cette oeuvre." (p. 65)

The painting's circular returns upon itself, no longer seen as a futile exercise in self-reanimation, but rather as a conscious assumption of the history and substance of art, symbolize the artist's decision to carry with him on his search for new territory the heavy heritage of the past. This heritage establishes the limits of art, tracing the narrow boundaries of creativity, whose ultimate development, in an increasingly rarefied realm of possibilities, is silence. The artist's silence is distinguished from the passive

death of art evoked in the earlier article; it is a voluntary and significant act of self-destruction. The creator of images becomes iconoclastic.

Un Cabinet d'amateur is George Perec's last published novel. But this is more an accident of fate than evidence of the silence and self-destruction evoked in the novel. The text carries within itself, however, a violent, willful form of iconoclasm through which the plot destroys itself and leaves nothing in its wake. In the last two pages of the novel, we learn with vertiginous rapidity that (1) most of the paintings in the Raffke Collection were fakes, painted by Raffke's nephew Humbert; (2) the exhibition and sale of the paintings were part of an elaborate plot involving forged paintings, faked papers and manufactured evidence of authenticity; (3) Heinrich Kürz never existed; "Un Cabinet d'amateur" and the other paintings attributed to him were also the work of Humbert Raffke; (4) Art critic Lester Nowak was part of the conspiracy and therefore presumably based his article and thesis on material he knew to be fraudulent. Perec concludes his novel, "Des vérifications entreprises avec diligence ne tardèrent pas à démontrer qu'en effet la plupart des tableaux de la collection Raffke étaient faux, comme sont la plupart des détails de ce récit fictif, conçu pour le seul plaisir, et le seul frisson, du faire-semblant" (p. 90).

The novel's last sentence quite literally breaks the charm. The reader's willing suspension of disbelief, our all too eager readiness to give the fiction the benefit of all of our accumulated doubts is ungraciously mocked. The corner of our minds which we had consciously silenced in which, despite all of the credible details which Perec accumulates, we had timidly wondered whether or not Renoir had really painted a "Marchande de cigarettes," Cézanne a "Jeu de dominos," Rubens a "Midas et Apollon" and Vermeer a "Billet dérobé"—this skeptical corner of our minds is dramatically given the upper hand. And our more trusting, generous, literary imagination is disappointed.

In the first half of the last sentence it is merely the fictional strand which falls apart: all of the paintings are fakes; Raffke, Kürz and Nowak are charlatans. But something more dramatic happens in the last words of the novel: fiction itself falls apart; the author tells us not to believe what he tells us; he was just having fun. Not only are the paintings fakes and the characters frauds, but the fakes and frauds are fake fakes and fraudulent frauds.

The seemingly incongruous decision of young Heinrich Kürz to memorialize his martyred father by painting a picture commemorating his iconoclastic attack upon the Kodak Factory is tempered by the following considerations: (1) he never actually painted the picture; (2) the tiny copy of the unrealized painting was destroyed; (3) the painting in which the copy appears was interpreted as an image of the death of art; (4) Heinrich Kürz abandoned painting; (5) Georges Perec, who assumes the identity of

Heinrich Kürz, successively destroys the painting, Kürz, and ultimately the novel in which Kürz and the painting appear.

Perec has subtly achieved a dazzling "Portrait of the Artist as Iconoclast."

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

NOTES

1. Georges Perec, *Un Cabinet d'amateur* (Paris: Balland, 1979). All references are to this edition.

2. Georges Perec and Gabriel Simony, "Entretien avec Georges Perec," *Jungle* 6 (15 January 1983): 86. Bernard Magné in "Quelques Problèmes de l'énonciation en régime fictionnel: l'exemple de la *Vie mode d'emploi* de Georges Perec," *Actes du Colloque d'Albi* (Albi: École Normale d'Alibi, 1982), 245, explains that the paintings which are given a catalog number are generated, often by an obscure detail, by the chapter of *La Vie* which has the same number as the catalog number.

3. Lanie Goodman in "*Un Cabinet d'amateur*: an Optical Disillusion," *Sub-Stance* 29 (1981): 110, identifies "les ensorcelés du lac Ontario" as one of the "tableaux vivants" in *Impressions d'Afrique*.

4. Anne Roche in "L'Auto(bio)graphie," *Cahier Georges Perec*, I (Paris: POL, 1985) 76-78 includes *Un Cabinet d'amateur* among Perec's autobiographical works because of the parallels between the lives of Perec and Heinrich Kürz.

5. See Perec's *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (Paris: Denoël, 1975). 59.

6. For a thorough discussion of the technique of "mise en abîme," see Lucien Dällenbach, *Le Récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abîme* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), or the chapter entitled "Interior Duplication," in Bruce Morrisette, *Novel and Film: Essays in Two Genres* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 141-156.

Myths in Butor's *Passage de Milan*: Works of Mondrian and Duchamp as Generators of the Text

Claude-Marie Baldwin

Passage de Milan, Michel Butor's first novel, contains an unfolding of Christian and Egyptian myths within the context of the *rite de passage* in which plastic arts, letters, hieroglyphs, squares, crosses, serve as intermediaries to these myths; naturalistic and abstract paintings function as passages leading to a Butorian awareness of a complex reality.

In this essay I shall deal with two contrasting myths. The first addresses the grid of the ordered world of *Passage de Milan* in relationship to Piet Mondrian's work. The second myth will concentrate on Marcel Duchamp's *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride* and *The Large Glass: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*: both paintings are expressions of Duchamp's universe which generate a microcosm in the form of a painting within the text and a macocosm which is the Butorian text itself. Neither in Mondrian's nor in Duchamp's case is the art gratuitous, for these plastic representations engender images, like cells expanding richly into complex myths.

On the surface, *Passage de Milan* is the representation of Parisian life in an apartment building passage de Milan, 15, during a twelve-hour period: a spatial and social cross-section of life within a chronological segment. On the six floors of the building the routine of a sample household evolves within the several rooms of each flat. Vertically, the building is traversed by an elevator which stops at the fifth floor, and by two staircases, the grand stairs and the servants' stairs. Horizontally and beneath the ground, the *métro* crosses the building, marking it into spatial and temporal segments.

Mondrian's plastic work and his essay on *Natural Reality and Abstract Reality* show us the importance of his art in the Butorian text. He says: "I regard the position of the right angle as the basis of everything."¹ And, in speaking of Mondrian, Butor says: "La liaison de son œuvre abstraite avec l'architecture a été mainte fois soulignée: insuffisamment précisée; la confrontation de cette série de toiles avec un passage de *Réalité naturelle et réalité abstraite* nous montre qu'il faut comprendre ces carrés comme des modèles, des propositions, des chambres rendues 'habitables' par la division de leurs murs."²

Mondrian's art is not gratuitous: he tries to create a present harmonious

reality while seeking to attain ultimate reality: ". . . the straight line is a fulfillment of the curve, which is much more in conformity with nature. . . . For in this way, the natural appearance is destroyed, and the greatest inner force can be plastically expressed. In art, as well as in contemplation, the curve must be corrected by the straight line."³ The grid expresses a desire on the part of the artist to go beyond the present situation made up of curves and contortions. His task is to expose on the canvas the disorder of the present world while seeking to create a harmonious reality. How does Mondrian succeed? Butor writes: "La solution est celle-ci: ce carré intérieur c'est le tableau lui-même, blanc, vide, une pure ouverture, et les couleurs, les rectangles qui l'entourent, c'est l'encadrement dont il a besoin pour tenir dans un milieu naturel."⁴ In applying this point of view to the building at passage de Milan, 15, one sees that all the floors are like squares of different colors: they represent the households and their activities. The white square, the desire for a pure reality and for an opening, is represented by the young virgin Angela Vertigues who is celebrating her twentieth birthday. Appropriately, while her flat has no plastic representation, she herself on the other hand becomes a figure in a painting.

The Parisian apartment building is a grid, a surface seeking order. As the novel evolves, we discover the two aspects of this grouping of squares which are the separateness of each square and then the annihilation of the white square by the passage of a particular bird, a kite (*le milan*). In the beginning of the novel, there is total separation between the different households. The only contact is carried out by servants who chat in their hallway. In each flat, represented by a square, there are delineated subdivisions. For instance, Virginia Ralon cannot penetrate into the universe of her Egyptologue son, nor into that of her high-school teacher son. Even her kitchen is impenetrable because it is the domain of her German cook. Likewise, in the Mogne family solitude reigns. Members only come out of their individual cubicles for the family meal.

On this grid of solitary beings, which plastic representations alone liberate, birds of prey and of ill-omen are engendered which echo one another. We will limit our discussion to the textual representation of a kite which is a bird of prey. This bird is in the shape of a cross, the black shadow of which glides over Angela, an angel whose wings form a white cross. Here, again, Mondrian's evocative power generates the text. Speaking of a windmill, Mondrian says: "To return to this mill, the cross formed by the wings attract me especially. But since I regard the position of the right angle as the basis of everything, these wings do not seem to me more beautiful than other things. It is for this reason that Neo-Plasticism always breaks up the traditional form of the cross."⁵ In tracing Mondrian's plastic work, one observes a leitmotiv of crosses of the most diverse proportions, such as in *Composition carrée* (1926), *Fox Trot A* (1927), and *Composition* (1936). Butor analyzes the evolution of Mondrian's leitmotiv: "Nous voyons que Mondrian est pleine-

ment conscient du caractère tragique que peut présenter une croix à l'intérieur de ses compositions, . . . à partir de 1935, cette croix (envahit) littéralement ses tableaux. . . . Cette croix qui nous intrigue, de quelque façon que nous essayions de l'analyser, elle s'affirmera toujours comme tragique."⁶

On the grid of the Parisian building hovers a tragic cross. Virginia Ralon speaks of what she saw: ". . . une grande troupe d'oiseaux, rarement j'en avais vu d'aussi serrée, qui poussaient de grands cris comme s'ils voulaient avertir au cours d'un passage," ⁷ The theme of the cross, multiplied, criss-crossed and tightened, takes the form of the flock of birds, flying above the apartment building, passage de Milan, 15, and parallels the title, *Passage de Milan*, since a bird of prey passes over the house. Symbolically this bird will pass over the young virgin and will annihilate her, until she becomes like the letter x on a white page, and like a cross on a white square. Butor, who does not usually like to kill his characters, explains why he killed Angela without regret, "elle incarnait en quelque sorte toute la festivité possible dans cet immeuble-là et que pour moi, pour arriver à une festivité véritable, il fallait sortir de cet immeuble-là, aussi la mort de cette jeune fille est une espèce de grande rature, voyez c'est un grand X, une grande barre, blanche ou noire comme vous voudrez, c'est la croix, la croix de l'ombre du milan, cet x qui vient et qui barre tout."⁸ It is indeed an evocation of Mondrian's tragic cross representing death. But for Mondrian, the liberation from the traditional form of the cross is also the salvation of the artist. For Butor, the cross, the x on the building, and particularly the central point of the novel, the rite of passage of Angela's twentieth birthday, is also a liberation from the ascendancy of ritual, of the routine lifestyles, of the emptiness of the surface, and of the gloomy Christianity of the two abbots living in the building.

Butor goes on to another myth which uncovers the depths. To accomplish this, Butor has imagined a fête which gathers all the inhabitants of the building together. As night falls, bringing with it a certain porosity in the building, the irrational side of the characters is revealed. "Au fur et à mesure que la nuit s'accroît, les murs extérieurs s'épaississent" (p. 47). "Au fur et à mesure que la nuit se continue les cloisons deviennent plus poreuses aux sons qui circulent en même temps que l'eau dans les conduits, et naissent dans les poutres qui travaillent" (p. 118).

To each chapter corresponds an hour of the night period. As the night progresses, there is a movement from the exterior of the surface to the interior of the square. In this descent toward the interior lies an oneiric domain in antithesis to the exterior character of the bourgeois life of the first part of the novel. Stylistically, Butor switches more and more from the third person singular of the *passé simple* to a floating perspective: the text passes from the fictitious reality (verisimilitude) to the oneiric, from the dream of

one to that of another. The squares are thus melted into a vast square which engenders a spatial but fluid unity under the aegis of another myth.

The dominant influence Duchamp's work plays in the second part of the novel has multiple aspects. There is a microcosm, a painting done by the character Martin de Vere which resembles *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, and a macrocosm which resembles *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride*. Martin de Vere, a painter, tries to bring order to his canvas, but says: "Ces carrés de terrains que j'avais si bien préparés dans leurs cadres ne produisaient que des brindilles et des poussières" (p. 111). Just like Marcel Duchamp, he decides to move to a different kind of painting: "J'eus l'idée d'introduire un ensemble de signes, une dimension toute nouvelle se découvrirait . . ." (p. 114).

An analysis of de Vere's picture deserves our full attention but we can only speak of it briefly. De Vere starts with letters, then goes on to hieroglyphs and then to the representation of objects. He notes: "Ma peinture, la plus raisonnable de toutes, devenait hantée" (p. 114). De Vere then lets irrational forces take over. It is interesting to note that the critic Schwarz writes that his conversations with Duchamp have elicited the information that Duchamp was led by the desire to transfer the significance of language from words into signs, into a visual expression of the word, similar to the ideogram of the Chinese language. For Schwarz, the message of the *Large Glass* results from Duchamp's quest: "This peculiar mixture of belief and unbelief, of affirming the necessity of art the better to deny its utility, of relying on one's ability to express oneself, while realizing that what is important remains inexpressed is, of course, fully consistent with Duchamp's inconsistency. In the same way, the *Large Glass*, an irrational myth, is the result of his extraordinary project thought out and premeditated, down to the last detail."⁹ The character de Vere goes through the same steps as Duchamp, uniting the irrational to the rational. He thinks through every detail: where should he place the central figure, the queen? What will happen when other figures come to live in this house? Will it be like a melodic invention superimposed onto the naked rhythm? The blending of rational premeditation and of haunted chance, the work of de Vere is generated by the *Large Glass*. We also find that chance and mechanical aspects function as they do in cards or chess: thus the queen and the knaves recall the virgin and the bachelors. De Vere's picture becomes the microcosm of the text which is the macrocosm.

The microcosm is a *mise en abyme* of what will happen later in the passage rite. For instance: the bothersome lady of de Vere's painting which is placed horizontally parallels Angela lying dead on the wooden floor. De Vere will arbitrarily dispose of the queen in his plastic game just as Duchamp had learned from the chess master Capablanca that the rules of the game can be broken. The center of the painting is burned by flames drawn by a draught

which create a "tableau abîmé," a spoiled painting, while in the novel which is the macrocosm, the chandelier flies by chance toward the middle of the fête and kills Angela who is the center of her grand party.

Let us now look at the relationship between the fête of the *Passage de Milan* and *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride* by Duchamp. In his discussion of this plastic work, Schwarz says: ". . . the theme of the painting, is a description of a young woman's passage from the virginal state to the bridal one. . . . More importantly, this passage is also a metaphor for the esoteric ritual of the *passage* of sexual identity that implies the attainment of a state in which one is no longer subject to the male-female contradiction. Thus, at the end of her long journey, the Young Girl, who is about to become the Bride, becomes immortal—androgeny being a prerequisite for perpetual life."¹⁰ In the same manner, Vertigues will go from being an angel to being struck by vertigo. She evolves as through the medium of de Vere (Ver/tigues) from purity to immortality.

We have seen that the center of the text and the *central square* of de Vere's painting represent the queen/Angela. The character de Vere speaks of one of the central squares in his picture, "L'un sur fond presque blanc - on voit mal, à la lumière électrique, mais en réalité c'est un jaune clair" (p. 119). The young virgin is never quite white. Butor mentions several times that Angela's dress is slightly yellow. The first guest comments: "Toute blanche, comme une robe de première communion, ou de mariage. . . . D'ailleurs elle n'est pas tout à fait blanche" (p. 80). There is ambivalent symbolism: the white is mixed with yellow, the white is not quite white, the white is really pale yellow. Duchamp also speaks of a world in yellow in the *Large Glass*. This yellow world in the esoteric tradition is the symbol of gold, of the sun and of revelation: "And in general when revelation is involved gold and yellow become the symbol of the state of the initiate. And since it is in the nature of the archetypes, yellow as a symbol is of course, ambivalent. Sulphur is associated with both guilt and the devil."¹¹ This color befits Angela who is a young virgin sacrificed to the power of fate, but who also has in her some impure elements as do all the other inhabitants of the building. A guest says during the fête that there is a virginal aspect to Angela but that "on sent sous sa blancheur un autre corps plus sombre et obstiné qui aime les danses sauvages" (p. 170). Duchamp's virgin and Butor's Angela are wholly in transition. Angela will have virginal immortality, but tainted with yellow. Lying on the ground, her body carries the weight of the building's demons. She now lies in "L'autre pièce sombre comme une immense grotte, où brillent les verres et les flacons . . ." (p. 256).

Likewise, in *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, the virgin never is in a relationship with the bachelors: she remains in the *nues*, a cloud with three white squares. The bachelor machine of the *Large Glass* recalls the mechanical movement of the young men who dance with Angela during the

evening. The correspondences between Duchamp's art, the character de Vere's art and Butor's fête for Angela are evident.

The ordered bourgeois universe of the building has dissipated itself into the porosity of the night. The abbots' rigid Christianity has proved to be no deeper than their cassocks and no less dark. What then triumphs in the Butorian world of this building? The kite, symbol of the god Horus of Ancient Egypt, incarnates the only viable myth.

Thus *Passage de Milan* is the graphic emanation of this kite, representing the sun god Horus who obscures passage de Milan, 15. Under the kite's shadow, the X on the page, and the cross' shadow, the grey building has become black and white, the two colors of death. Butor's first novel alerts us to the themes and techniques of his subsequent works as we scrutinize the plastic representations in the text. We could also most profitably deal with two facets of his work I have not mentioned: the relationship of the text with the kinds of music played at the party, and Mondrian's perspective on dance.

CALVIN COLLEGE

NOTES

1. Piet Mondrian, "Réalité naturelle et réalité abstraite," in Michel Seuphor, *Piet Mondrian: Life and Work* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1957?), 323.
2. Michel Butor, "Le Carré et son habitant," *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 97 (Janvier 1961), 120.
3. Mondrian, 314.
4. Butor, "Le Carré et son habitant," 121.
5. Mondrian, 323.
6. Butor, "Le Carré et son habitant," 321.
7. Michel Butor, *Passage de Milan* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1954), 56. Toutes les citations de *Passage de Milan* proviennent de cette édition.
8. Georges Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Michel Butor* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 86-87.
9. Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1969), 197.
10. Schwarz, 117.
11. Schwarz, 25.

Duchamp's Early Readymades: The Erasure of Boundaries between Literature and the Other Arts

Carol P. James

Beginning in 1913 Marcel Duchamp created what he came to call "readymades," objects that are associated with a text which may be a title or an inscription on the object itself. A reading of such works must proceed through both their visual and textual elements, and all the readymades may be read as a category within the artist's *oeuvre* or as a new 'genre' of art/literature artifact. Duchamp himself named the receiver of such items, and of all (his) art the "regardeur,"¹ one who both reads and looks. To ask whether the readymade is a work of visual art or a piece of literature is quite marginal, but crucially so, the readymade itself giving rise to this undecidable question. If tradition holds an image to be more immediately accessible than a text—to have "presence"—and a text to have a certain discursive or symbolic edge over a picture, the readymade disrupts such notions and insists on a breakdown of genres or disciplines. In his process of naming and producing the readymades, Duchamp invented a new notion of art and seriously questioned the nomenclature and economy of the hierarchy implied in the discussion of "literature and the *other arts*." It is his process of inventing and naming the readymade, and its engagement of the entire question of creating new meaning, that I want to explore here, at least in some fragmentary way, by examining some of the readymades Duchamp produced before 1925.

In his *Anthologie de l'humour noir* André Breton described the readymade as "un certain nombre d'objets tout faits (ready made) dignifiés *a priori* par la seule vertu de son choix" (356). But before there were "readymades," there were certain works only later attached to that category. The very first of them was *Roue de Bicyclette* (1913). Already a combination of two bought objects, its conception seems to have been primarily aesthetic: a stool serves as a pedestal for a bicycle wheel Duchamp enjoyed watching spin in the corner of his studio.² At the time it had neither title nor inscription. Breton's definition would have to be reversed *a fortiori* to fit the earliest readymades, and it is indeed significant that these works preceded their name.

The second readymade was *Pharmacie* (1914), a commercial print of a

wintry woods, to which Duchamp added dots of red and yellow-green color on the horizon. It is notable that he produced three originals, apparently having some sort of distribution scheme in mind, making of this a less aleatory creation than was the bicycle wheel. One of the puns the title makes is on “phares,” lamps or headlights; the picture then becomes an allusion to both the bottles of colored water seen in pharmacy windows and a text of the same year whose subject is an “enfant-phare,” child headlight or fanfare (41-42). This already convoluted one-word text affirms a disparity between the subject of the commercial print and the hand-rendered additions. The work is unreadable without the text which, nevertheless, does not reduce the enigma of the mysteriously located lights.

The galvanized bottle rack or *Séchoir* (1914), picked up in a hardware store, seems to be the only unmodified, untitled readymade. Duchamp set it in his Paris studio, deliberately ignoring its functional aspect. Like the *Bicycle Wheel*, the bottle dryer was symmetrical, an object of intersecting circles, but not something ordinarily subjected to aesthetic gaze. In spite of any grace these objects may demonstrate, their origin in the realm of the ordinary, the useful, places them in a new context for the role of choice in art.

The readymade might have been just another form of avant-garde sculpture if it were not for the quirky texts Duchamp began to add when he went to New York in 1915. The text became an integral part of the work, such that later he even proposed to inscribe the “already finished” *Séchoir*.³ Soon after his arrival in the city where his *Nu descendant un escalier* had caused a sensation, he bought a snow shovel and inscribed in white paint on the lower edge, “In advance of the broken arm,” an evident gallicism perhaps left from his school-boy English. Hanging in his studio, the shovel left the broken limb forever in abeyance, eliminating the temporal factors—season and endurance—of practical objects. Another hardware item purchased soon after, a metal dog comb, *Peigne* (1916), was inscribed along its narrow edge, “2 ou 3 gouttes de hauteur n’ont rien à faire avec la sauvagerie”, an obvious attempt at nonsense such as that of the readymade “Rendez-vous du dimanche 6 février 1916” whose only readymade parts are the penny postcards on which its text is typed. The “non-meeting” of its fractured semantics reveals the care Duchamp took in the choice of words. The question of choice was deflected, as Breton implied, from traditional aesthetic criteria (such as taste, artistic skill, coherence, beauty) toward an avoidance of such categories.⁴

Although it was about this time that Duchamp began using the term ‘readymade’⁵ and wrote several notes that were subsequently part of the Green Box published in 1934, the “Rendez-vous” text already signaled the subsequent departure from the manufactured object as the prime part of the readymade display. Describing the readymade as “a kind of rendez-vous,” one note emphasizes the time or process element of the readymade and the

importance of it as a text, albeit a text of no circumstantial import: "En projetant pour un moment à venir (tel jour, telle date, telle minute), 'd'inscrire un readymade'.—Le readymade pourra ensuite être cherché (avec tous délais). L'important est donc cet horlogisme, cet instantané, comme un discours prononcé à l'occasion de n'importe quoi mais à telle heure. C'est une sorte de rendez-vous" (49). Although his timing may have been according to the *La Pendule de profil*, a late readymade (1964), the delay or *décalage* figures importantly in his work, especially in the concept of the "regardeur" as the eventual or virtual appreciation or interpretation of a work.

Duchamp's visible production during his first stay in New York consisted of almost nothing but readymades, works very unlike the *Nu*. A hat rack and a coat rack offered no inscriptions but others were quite word centered. *A bruit secret* (1916) consisted of a ball of packing string from the hardware store (again) screwed between two brass plates. The secret noise comes from an unknown rattling object placed inside the ball of string by a friend. Three lines of text engraved on each plate are equally enigmatic. Each line has some missing letters and is a combination of French and English words that read as phrases with varying degrees of sense. The *Pliant de voyage* (1916) is a typewriter cover under which the instrument of writing is missing. Resembling a skirt, it is the first readymade related to the American meaning of "ready made," that is, manufactured clothing. *Apolinère Enameled* (1916-17) began as a hardware store paint company advertisement, a picture about painting. Letters of the text were blocked out or altered and some pictorial changes combined to renarrate the scene of a little girl painting, while the displaced artist Duchamp signs himself at the bottom as on postcards, "from Marcel." *Apolinère* was the most complicated readymade, its text the densest, to date. The scene of the little girl who wields a paint brush as she would her comb (her hair, sketched in by Duchamp, is reflected in a mirror), as a practical gesture, is a sort of allegory of the readymade where artists who paint ("peignent") give up their brushes to choose everyday objects like the comb ("peigne").

The most famous readymade of that period is surely *Fountain* (1917), the outrageous piece of plumbing, signed R. Mutt, rejected by the New York Independents' exhibition. Purchased as it was specifically for the exhibition and in no way indifferent to aesthetic tastes, the urinal is, in that, not a readymade in Duchamp's own terms of indifference. Turned on its back to rest on the pedestal, its in-flow opening turns it into a strangely bi-sexual object openly facing a viewer who reads the 'signature' and thinks of animal-level humor.

Duchamp's last canvas, the huge anamorphic *Tu m'* (1919), contains a collection of images of readymades projected into two dimensions, or in the case of safety pins, a bottle brush protruding from the surface, and a commissioned hand-painted hand, new readymades inserted into and pointing out this *summa*, if you will, of an era in the career of the artist who

was trying to rid art of painting and the painterly touch. The only text in the picture is the noise of "Klang," the commercial artist who signed (by hand) his pointing hand. The big Bronx cheer of the title, "You *Blank* Me," is known only to those who read the title plaque, the traditional slash or separator between text and image.

Duchamp had brought from Paris the plans and preliminary studies for his *Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, but during the more or less eight years he spent before abandoning the *Large Glass*, his public life was that of the creator of readymades, a perpetrator of dada gestures of antiestablishmentarianism. The first readymades, including those discussed above, inaugurated a new state of art—a true ontological shift—where the art object was no longer defined according to choices made in accordance with the rules of art form, subject, or genre, but was determined by arbitrarily fixed moments of meeting or confrontation, not rapport, with non-art objects. When the readymade is named as such and text becomes part of it, a new relationship of writing and the visual is created. The text takes the readymade out of its ordinary writing framework as something immediately recognizable by its place or function, and the object forces the reader to temporarily abandon reading as a discursive activity that relates to a non-present. The object distorts, or anamorphizes, the frame of reading and the text displaces the (up until now) recognizable object into a non-place where art and everyday life mix and one can no longer be told from the other.

When Duchamp returned to Paris after the war ended, he briefly took up with the Tzara and other Dadaists, and the readymade soon took a turn away from the "readymade." *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919) was the inscription he added, along with whiskers, to be read both letterally and as one word, to a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*. She was, he said, "a combination readymade and iconoclastic dadaism."⁶ Eroticizing and bi-sexualizing the world's most famous portrait was not only a realized Dada fantasy of displacing the masterpiece, but also a debunking of the legendary status of the painting, its enigma of having elicited the greatest interest in the blankest of subjects. On the readymade side it allows the modernism of cheap reproduction and easy access to "art" to be understood as a basic alteration in the definition and making of art as such. A reference to a fantasy readymade, a "Reciprocal Readymade: Use a Rembrandt as an ironing board" (49), will clarify the difference between art and reproduction. A *Mona Lisa* reproduction can be a readymade because it is a manufactured object, but a destroyed Rembrandt would only reinforce the traditional monetary economy of art and its absence would reconfirm its aura and value as a cultural artifact. The dadaist already does not believe in the icon, so his iconoclasm remains in the outrageous thought. Punning is a way to insert into the objecthood of art two unaccustomed, unacceptable elements, laughter and language. The pun of *L.H.O.O.Q.* displaces the importance of the work into the text,

becoming a masterpiece of textual and visual force, requiring as it does both acronymic reading and bi-lingual comprehension.

Reproduction takes a different turn in *Tzanck Check* (1919), a check "made out" in English to a Paris dentist. The word play here lies in the realm of the tongue twister, appropriate for a mouth doctor. All text and no image, the check, which looks exactly like a bank check except for its enlarged size, is notable for having been entirely hand-made by Duchamp in imitation of a printed check; what is readymade is only its recognizability. The text includes specially printed paper on which is repeated "The Teeth's Loan and Trust Company Consolidated" in an all-over pattern of tiny letters. A pseudo-stamp, "Original," of course reappears on every reproduction of this hand-made original readymade, such a triple oxymoron belying our notions of originals or readymades in art or in finance where a check never has a duplicate.

The check is an enlargement, but a French door Duchamp had built by a carpenter is a miniature of the typical French window not found in New York. The pale green/*vert* paint and the black leather covered glass/*verre* panes combine with the text inscribed in black paper tape letters, "Fresh Widow Copyright Rose Sélavy 1920," on perhaps the most symmetrical or classic of readymades where each textual element has a response in the visual. The verbal-visual play makes possible a window that is blocked by a widow's black while being happily captioned as life in the pink. The French widow (the guillotine is also called "La Veuve") gets fresh, inappropriately blushing with desire. The object is thus bi-national, bi-lingual, and marks the first appearance of Rose Sélavy, often called Duchamp's alter ego, but whom I would prefer to call his alter id or pun name. Taking on another identity, one that doubles him in the opposite-sex, *Fresh Widow* made a readymade of Duchamp himself and by extension of the artist as object. The name is a souvenir of France in New York, a play on the optimist cliché "la vie en rose." Rose was photographed by Man Ray so that she becomes a kind of reverse *Giaconda*, available, as are photographs, only in reproduction, never as an original. Putting on readymade women's clothing for the picture transformed Duchamp, as would any act of transvestism, into another self, and puts into question the integrity or originality of the artist and his or her key to a niche in art history. While gently mocking the Surrealist ideal of woman, Rose puts the artist in a new place devoid of idealism, one where the viewer is forced to take cognizance of ambivalence and engage his or her own reading of a work.

Another remembrance of Paris was *Air de Paris* (1919) where air replaced liquid in a fifty cubic centimeter glass ampoule labeled "Physiological Serum" and emptied of its liquid contents. He gave it to a friend when he returned to New York to work on that glass item, the *Mariée*. The song of Paris is without words or notes, a sealed void with only the echo of an aria, or, read francophonically, "air" or "R". The bottle of pure air is related to the

equally empty relabeled perfume bottle affixed with Rose's picture and called *Belle Haleine, Eau de Voilette* (1921). The punned text puts a twist on Offenbach's comic opera *La Belle Hélène*, so that the bottle parodies a parody and sings on the beautiful airs or "RS" of classical opera. A gloss back to *Fountain* and its eau de toilette is inevitable and the widow's veil covers the face of Rose-by-Man Ray. The notation "New York Paris" at the bottom of the label parallels the split image of the man/woman artist, French/American, the name of Rose appearing here only initially, with the R turned leftwards.

A remarkably complicated readymade, semantically and physically overloaded, is *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (1921). Duchamp took a small metal bird cage, painted it white, not rose, and filled it with sugar-lump-sized marble blocks, a fever thermometer, and a cuttlebone. Pun possibilities are extensive, beginning with the die or "dé" shaped cubes. The contents go beyond the visual to contrast light and heavy, air and water, cold and warm, health and allergy. The title in black letters on the bottom poses a fevered question which invites one to literalize the cliché, "it's nothing to sneeze at!" Applied as art criticism, however, it would in effect be a positive expression of appreciation for the seriousness of a work. All the little D's figure the artist's signature, missing from the text, and Rose here takes the role of the "regardeur", the "regardeur" always already being in the work, unlike the critic who must take distance from it.

A year after *Fresh Widow* Duchamp had another window built. *La Bagarre d'Austerlitz* (1921) has two faces, one signed Marcel Duchamp and the other signed Rose Sélavy/Paris 1921. The re(a)d-brick outer side responds to some notes for the Large Glass about "lubrique" (59) and looks toward the red-brick door frame of the later *Etant donnés*.⁷ The Rose of *Fresh Widow* had only one R, but the double R from a double pun, "la vie en Eros," first appeared on the double-sided inside/outside window of the Bagarre where the R of "gare" is also doubled. The glass panes remain clouded, marked with glazier's figure-eight signatures, but the text brings a new dimension to Rose.

Brief mention of *Wanted/\$2000 Reward* (1923), a joke wanted poster on which Duchamp pasted his picture, split front and profile, must be included. There Duchamp carried the pseudonym to its extremes, adopting those already given in the text and adding his own to the last line, "Known also under the name RROSE SELAVY." Joining "Mr. Welch" or "Mr. Bull" as fake and con artist, Duchamp in the same year finally signed *La mariée*, adding "inachevé, 1915-1923." Likewise over was the second era, so to speak, of the readymade, that of Mona and Rose.

Where a text is displayed as unreadable, it is still visible and becomes an image or picture. But when a text is both readable and visible the terminology for description breaks down into the indeterminable, and the usual categories of perception or conception no longer apply. A more apt category for such objects as the readymade—if indeed they are not the only examples

of such a category—is that which Duchamp called “Pictorial nominalism.” In a note written in 1914 but not included in the *Green Box*, he suggested “Une sorte de *Nominalisme pictural* (Contrôler)” (111).⁸ Duchamp willingly called himself a nominalist,⁹ and even given the pataphysical thrust of his proclamations, the assertion fits his program of tearing down the parameters of art that historically had come to constrict the genres and techniques of painting and sculpture. In language, a word such as “readymade” can take on the status of a concept as it acquires definition through use or application. A “nominalist” definition is not binding on the future as usage may change: Duchamp did not want to invent new definitions and categories but open up the possibilities and question or deconstruct the very notion of a definition. Besides speaking of the arbitrary or “rendez-vous” quality of the readymades, their waiting to be made or “defined” as readymades, Duchamp added “Aussi le côté exemplaire du readymade” (49), suggesting ambiguously both the copy, the “exemplaire,” and the exemplary, like a proper name, an example or one of a kind. But once the name was found the readymade could develop in any direction; in other words, the name itself permitted the concept to escape the confines of its own definition and change with each new item or “exemplaire.”

The importance of *pictorial* nominalism lies in the transfer of a quality of written language to the visual plane. Where a picture or object is recognizable immediately (either positively or negatively in mimetic terms—“I see that is a shovel” or “I can’t tell what that Cubist picture is supposed to represent”), a word or concept needs definition through other words or meta-systems. Pictorial nominalism would therefore remove the art object from the realm of the mimetic and make it textual, forcing it to be read through other meaning systems. The first readymades were easily recognizable objects, but they were unreadable in an art context. Putting an inscription on them, creating visual language, denied their common use as household objects and also the usual role of descriptive text—a sort of reverse hermeneutic—and doubled or multiplied the potential meanings of the work and the concomitant task of reading it. The first readymades thus served as a critique of art genres and their definition and set up a category which straddles the textual and the visual. The readymade defies the heretofore compelling urge to separate art from non-art and plays freely with all the taxonomies such a separation entails. Duchamp’s nominalism was a slippery nominalism, one that refused to let categories stick, one that refused to let the readymade become a definable genre.

From *Mona* to *widow* to *window*, those readymades associated with *Rose* further remove the readymade from its associations with the *tout fait per se*. Done at a time when he was working closely on *The Bride Stripped Bare*, these readymades are related to its construction, its narrative, its erotics, and its wide-scale enterprise of naming. The objects here tend to be less recognizable than the bottle rack or the snow shovel and the text is

inevitably punny and more anasemically related to and all other duchampian production, visual and textual. This second wave or heroic period of the readymade uses the already altered sense of readymade as part of a de-autobiographizing process where an object is related to the artist as a particular person or master, be it Duchamp or Leonardo. Renaming himself, Duchamp created a *sujet d'art* that had a different relation to the artist and the public or *regardeurs*, as he called them, than does the *objet d'art*. The nominalism of [the] Rose carries the readymade along although it has since become as much handcrafted as randomly chosen, as much outer narrative of the Bride as lapidary captions on an object.

Having created a new way to combine the textual with the visual, Duchamp quickly moved away from his own definitions of the readymade, subjecting even the name to continual revisions and rereadings. The readymade, finally, serves to force one to read pictures and to look at texts as objects: one might say that in the wake of the readymade no artifact of verbal or visual art can be interpreted or judged in the traditional contexts of excluding one from the other.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON

NOTES

1. Duchamp's definition of the "regardeur," "Ce sont les REGARDEURS qui font les tableaux" (247), places the other, the nonartist, in the creator's role.

2. The corner, or "coin" of the eye, punning with the link or "clin de l'oeil," became an important cross-lingual/visual element in Duchamp's subsequent explorations of anamorphic projection and anasemic language. He noted on a drawing of the "Neuf tirés" (part of *La Mariée*) eventually published in *A l'infinitif* (New York: Cordier and Eckstrom, 1967): ". . . étant trajectoire des surveillances du coin de l'oeil . . ." (119).

Among the many statements Duchamp made later in life about the readymades, the following insists on its casual invention: ". . . there was no idea of a 'readymade,' or anything else. It was just a distraction. I didn't have any special reason to do it, or any intention of showing it, or describing anything" (qtd. in Cabanne 47). In the early sixties he gave a slide presentation at various locations around the country and began his talk, "A propos des 'Ready-mades,'" "En 1913 j'eus l'heureuse idée de fixer une roue de bicyclette sur un tabouret de cuisine et de la regarder tourner" (191).

3. From New York Duchamp wrote his sister, telling her he would send an inscription for the *Bottle Rack*. The proposed wording, if it was ever sent, has been lost, and Suzanne Duchamp-Crotti apparently cleaned out his studio, getting rid of the rack. (Naumann, 5).

4. Duchamp affirmed this new kind of choice on several occasions. "There is one point that I would like to establish very clearly, that is that the choice of these readymades was never dictated by any esthetic delight. This choice was founded on a reaction of *visual* indifference and at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste . . . in fact complete unawareness" (191). He remarked in an interview that choosing a

readymade allowed him to "reduce the idea of aesthetic consideration to the choice of the mind, not to the ability or cleverness of the hand which I objected to in many paintings of my generation. . . ." He added that their "functionalism was already obliterated by the fact that I took it out of the earth and onto the planet of aesthetics" (unpublished interview with Harriet, Sidney and Carroll Janis in 1953 [qtd. in D'Harnoncourt 275]).

5. Although Duchamp spelled "readymade" in several ways, capitalized and not, hyphenated and not, I prefer to retain the simplest spelling, that which he used in the earliest notes mentioning the readymade (49-50).

6. "Apropos of Myself," a slide lecture delivered at the City Art Museum of St. Louis, 1964 (qtd. in D'Harnoncourt 289).

7. See also the note, "La brique ordinaire rassasie le noeud" (47), given as one of the "*Lois, Principes, Phénomènes*" apparently governing the *Large Glass*.

8. Published in *A l'infinif* and included in *Duchamp du signe*.

9. He wrote in an unpublished letter to Jean Mayoux dated "8 mars 1956," "Je ne crois pas au langage, qui au lieu d'expliquer les pensées subconscientes, crée en réalité la pensée par et après le mot. (Je me déclare moi-même volontiers un 'nominaliste', au moins sous cette forme simplifiée.) . . . Comme un bon nominaliste, je propose le mot patatautologique qui, après une répétition fréquente, créera le concept de ce que j'essaie d'expliquer dans cette lettre avec ces exécrables moyens: sujet, verbe, objet, etc." (qtd. by Clair 155).

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The *caméra-stylo* of Marguerite Duras: The Translation of a Literary Aesthetic into Film

Janice Morgan

The cinema . . . is gradually becoming a language. By language, I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel.¹

Ever since Alexandre Astruc's 1948 announcement concerning the birth of a new avant-garde in cinema—a phenomenon he christened as the age of *la caméra-stylo*—certain iconoclastic filmmakers have been expanding the dimensions of the cinematic medium to include domains formerly believed to belong exclusively to written literature. In the same landmark essay, Astruc proposes that filmmakers stop making “supposed (but fallacious) concessions to the requirements of the cinema”² and begin exploring the unique capacities of film to serve as a vehicle for the expression of thoughts and moods. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the work of Marguerite Duras—not only because she happens to be a writer who makes films—but because it is difficult to imagine anyone who has made fewer concessions (fallacious or otherwise) to the supposed requirements of cinema than this French author.

In studying the transfer to the film medium of an essentially literary aesthetic, I would like to center my discussion around two of her works in particular: *L'Après-midi de Monsieur Andesmas*, a short novel published in 1962, and one of Duras' early films, *Nathalie Granger*, which appeared ten years later in 1972. These two works serve as an excellent pair for comparison and contrast since they share a remarkably similar structure, one highly typical of Duras' fiction up to 1970. First, both are conceived in terms of a relatively static foreground situation which is off-set by a disturbing background event. Secondly, both depend, as do all Duras' works, on a richly suggestive atmosphere to convey the psychological dimension experienced by the characters. Thirdly, both works are conceived in a distinctive tempo—one which stresses an unusual sense of duration: as in nearly all Durassian narratives, the usual rapid flow of linear, causal sequence is

greatly slowed down in order to reveal another dimension hidden beneath it, one that is more emotively and thematically oriented.

L'Après-midi de Monsieur Andesmas gives telling evidence of Duras' intense fascination with time. Though this short novel has a relatively compressed time-frame (that is, the story opens late in the afternoon and closes in the early evening), it is not the compression but the elongation of time—measured in the substance and textures of its passing—that is significant. The slow tempo parallels the situation of the central character, Monsieur Andesmas, who is waiting—more or less patiently—for a planned business consultation with a local architect, Michel Arc. This temporal duration is complemented by an acute sense of spatial confinement as well, for Andesmas—a corpulent, well-to-do, elderly gentleman—remains outside his house “enclosed in his armchair” (p. 100)³ during the entire afternoon. In contrast to the few other characters who move up and down the hillside path leading to the house, the position of Andesmas himself is fixed. A physical, spatial, and temporal stasis provides the keynote for the apparent calm which reigns during the early part of the work.

Though the narration is firmly grounded in the present tense, a more complex kind of transtemporal zone is soon established by means of a masterful interweaving of verb tenses and modes. These verbal modes serve to structure very precisely the nature of the old man's consciousness on this particular afternoon: for example, Andesmas hears, from time to time, snatches of a musical refrain being played in the town square down below. The song speaks of a happiness that will be brought about in the future: “When the lilac blossoms, my love, When the lilac blossoms forever” but in Andesmas' haunted memory, it serves to recall moments in the past when his young daughter Valérie would sing this same refrain (p. 15). At other moments, fragments of an imagined, desired future (conveyed through the use of the conditional mode) drift into the old father's mind: he visualizes Valérie on the soon-to-be-built terrace of this house, from where she would look at the same path and would hear the same sounds that he hears now.

The elongated temporal dimension further provides for an evocative atmosphere to be established, as recurring associative motifs are brought into play: the creakings of the reed chair where the heavy-set Andesmas keeps his vigil, the fragments of the song that drift up the hillside from the town, the coin that the old man wishes to give the young girl but which she keeps losing, the repeated mention of advancing shadows or of a rising wind in the pine forest where Andesmas waits. These obliquely-related motifs, which at first seem to have almost a random, suggestive value, gradually come into a tighter inter-relationship so that they become signatures for an implicit psychological content. Because there is a complete interpenetration of exterior sensation and interior thought, the technique of

L'Après-midi becomes a supple means of conveying not event but theme and mood.

In fact, as the narrative progresses to its conclusion and still Michel Arc does not arrive, we discover in reading the final sentence that we have been given only the time between key events, rather than those events themselves. By suspending the narrative in this way, Duras focusses the energy of the text on the resonances and implications those events hold for the characters. Most remarkable in this regard is the change in tonality during the second half of the novel—a shift from a predominant feeling of expectancy and well-being to one of anxious tension and foreboding. This change is particularly centered around the motif of the musical refrain (“When the lilac blossoms, my love”) which, as we have seen, when it first appears is associated with Valérie and embodies the innocence and beauty of an undisclosed, youthful love. In later recurrences, the refrain retains this central value, yet one encounters, in its written evocation, certain surprising juxtapositions of vocabulary, for example: “Every twenty minutes, approximately, the melody returns with a force that is greater and greater, ravaging, augmented by its regular repetition. And so the entire square dances, dances, dances” (p. 24). In this passage the word “ravaging” [*ravageuse*] occurs, giving an unanticipated anxiety to the innocent, sentimental motif—an effect compounded by the repetition of the word “dances.” In a still later passage, the same song is referred to as having “a butchered sweetness” [*une douceur égorgée*], in which a clear note of physical pain is sounded (p. 101). In this way, the original calm of the afternoon is punctured to reveal an underlying dual, conflictual nature; it is characterized as a tension-in-stillness, a kind of violent calm.

This emotively charged tonality is further developed through the unexpected encounter between Andesmas and Michel Arc’s wife. In her conversation, it is revealed that the singular duration of this particular summer afternoon is, for her, the fateful counterpart of another afternoon that took place one year ago. A seemingly innocent background event is alluded to—the arrival in the town at that time of Valérie (then still more child than woman) and of her carefree stroll across the town square under the admiring gaze of all present. One year ago Valérie walked across the same town square where now the love song is being played and where Valérie is now dancing with Michel Arc. The impassioned monologues of Mme Arc, in conjunction with the accumulating motifs of loss, separation, and growing shadows, make it clear that she fears a far more painful event than the casual appointment Andesmas has been vainly waiting for. The apprehensive wife is already aware—unlike the doting father—that an obscure process of abandonment is taking place for both of them; for as she will soon lose her husband to the younger woman, so Andesmas will soon lose his daughter to the absent Michel Arc.

At the very close of the novel, these two very different characters (father and wife) are drawn together—momentarily only and against any conscious desire on their part—in a kind of mutual solitude, a shared vision of aloneness. In one of the most extraordinary passages in the book, Andemas and the woman do not speak at all but rather listen in silence together, with a growing sense of shared destiny, to the sounds of the forest around them. At the moment of reading the final sentence, immediately before the presumed arrival of the two absent characters, Valérie and Michel Arc, the text builds to a peak of silent tension, giving the reader the impression of accelerating into a void where the imagination must take over. Thus, the Durassian text functions in such a way so that what is actually presented to the reader serves ultimately to evoke that which is absent; we are brought to a sensuous, tacit awareness of a content that is not spoken.

In the film *Nathalie Granger* (1972) one finds a remarkably similar aesthetic at work. Again we find Duras structuring a narrative in terms of a dual situation, a suggestive atmosphere, and a slow tempo. Here too, Duras' vision is born out of a strong conviction that many of the most powerful emotional issues cannot be fully understood or dealt with in a discursive, analytical manner but only by means of another logic—one based on an empathetic, intuitive process. But whereas this process is established semantically in the written text at the level of language, in *Nathalie Granger* this awareness is conveyed largely through the visual, spatial, and auditory rhythms peculiar to the cinema.

The essential narrative elements and themes are all set forth very early in the film. From the beginning, we see the principal of the day-school tell Isabelle and her friend (apparently in flash-back) that the young Nathalie is creating problems with her classmates, that she is not able to concentrate on her lessons, and that she will be expelled from school; furthermore, a phrase is spoken which will recur in a haunting manner in later moments of the film, "this violence . . . in just a little girl . . ." As the titles to the film appear, we are shown various exterior shots of the patio, lawn areas, and interior of an old country house—the house, evidently, where Mme Granger (Lucia Bose) and her friend (Jeanne Moreau) will spend the day. Meanwhile we hear a simple piano exercise being played; thereafter, piano music will be associated with children and, in particular, with Nathalie, for her mother believes that music is the one best means the child could use to express herself. In immediate juxtaposition, we hear a man's briskly cadenced voice coming from a radio to announce the escape of two adolescent killers in a nearby forest. As the voice describes the brutal and seemingly random crime committed by the two boys—emphasizing the extreme youth of the suspects—two or three shots of toys are shown. Later, several of these key initial shots, fragments of dialogue, and musical motifs will be repeated in different sequences of the film. The possibility of violence which could at

any moment erupt in the calm, undramatic foreground becomes the keynote for the work.

As in the case of *L'Après-midi de Monsieur Andesmas*, Duras effectively suspends narrative structure in favor of a more poetic, associative one, and in so doing, denies certain obvious connections in order to bring to the surface latent, unexpected ones. Early in the film, for example, we see a close-up of Isabelle Granger's face while a certain piano arpeggio begins—five different, quick notes followed by two sustained, repeated notes. As the arpeggio is played again, the camera leaves Bose's face to turn in a slow pan from right to left across a set of windows—then back to her face. This motion of the camera along with the arpeggio works in such a way that the viewer is no longer looking *at* the character but *with* her. Gradually we discover that this arpeggio is the signature for Isabelle's emotional preoccupation with her child. Thus, each simple motif—the arpeggio or the radio newsreport, for example—becomes the carrier of a certain theme or tonality; each time one of these enigmatic motifs recurs, it enters into a new relationship with other elements in the film and so comes to acquire a richer, denser meaning.

Many of the film's shots are taken from inside the house and from either behind or beside one of the two women who, with the camera, is looking out of a window. On other occasions, the camera is positioned outside the house, gazing at the women through a set of windows. This evident attention to framing by windows suggests, as is so often the case in Duras' fiction, a sense of spatial confinement or enclosure that is the correlative of a psychological one—one, however, that will provide the necessarily passive intensity within which a concealed process of revelation may take place.⁴ As if to further intensify this hidden nature of the process, the camera is frequently motionless; much of the visual interest in the film centers on an intent, highly-focussed tracking of some kind of movement within the still frame—a movement (whether of an object, an animal, or a human figure) either from foreground to background or from left to right. In conjunction with this tracking motion, the frequent use of mirror-images produces startling symmetries within the frame, often disorienting our sense of spatial unity. These kinds of subtle motions and dislocations give the film a penetrating, probing quality—one that rejects surface, conventional meanings and searches for connection and meaning on another level.

Unlike the case in classical narrative films, the soundtrack in *Nathalie Granger* is *not* secondary to the images, nor is it purely synchronous with them and therefore perceived as realistic. Instead, Duras strictly maintains the autonomy of the auditory component of the film, thereby freeing it to enter into more oblique and complex relationships with the film's visuals. In this way Duras seeks to create the same conflictual, dual tonality that is so characteristic of her written fiction. Furthermore, the musical and auditory motifs present would not carry the thematic value they do were it not for the

fact that Duras has carefully restricted the verbal content of the film. Dialogue throughout is minimal; when speech does occur, it is always against a dense backdrop of silence.

The most fundamental relationship between visuals and soundtrack is that of counterpoint. While we see images of the interior of the house conveying a moody serenity, stillness, and order, the sounds we hear indicate a disturbing disorder. The radio reporter's message frequently intrudes on the quiet space of the house, suddenly charging its calm atmosphere with a sense of danger—the same danger associated with Nathalie in the haunting voice-over “this violence . . . in just a little girl . . .”. This fragment, left suspended in uncertain resolution, occurs several times in an asynchronous manner—that is, not when actually spoken by the school principal but when remembered by Isabelle. In this way, though the afternoon slowly unfurls in a continuum of present duration, it also takes on a transtemporal quality as remembered or imagined moments are conveyed through the soundtrack. Gradually, a conception of psychological time is established—one composed of separate but related moments spiralling outward from a dominant mood or obsession.

The soundtrack contributes to the film's structural meaning in more subtle ways as well. Upon closer analysis, we realize that some of the normal diegetic sounds have been screened out—for example, the sound of the women's footsteps inside the house as they move about their tasks. Because of this muffled auditory quality, visual and spatial rhythms are especially highlighted: a sensuous aura builds around separate sequences as the women perform, with precisely choreographed gestures, a number of domestic activities—clearing the dishes from a dining table, mending the children's clothes, raking away weeds from a pond, building a fire. Also because of this domestic silence, the diegetic sounds that do occur seem to penetrate the images with a peculiar force and energy. They also greatly enhance the various spatial territories in the film. We hear the sharp crackling of the fire that Isabelle's friend builds outside to burn fallen branches; we also hear the soft lapping of the waves in the pond when the friend and Isabelle's other daughter Laurence row across it. These sounds from the garden behind the house serve to establish a primitive, elemental harmony and closeness between the women and the natural world. The sounds emanating from the street, however—the auto traffic, the footsteps on the sidewalk, or—on another level—the mechanical ring of the telephone—are almost always experienced as random, disorderly, disruptive. This contrast serves to widen the distinction between private and public worlds; it suggests a deep chasm between the domestic world inhabited by the women and children and the exterior culture inhabited by persons like the salesman.⁵

The salesman's visit is one of the most extraordinary scenes in the film. The sequence begins, as do so many during the afternoon, with a dense

stillness: we view the two women seated on a couch, each lost in her own thoughts. Suddenly, we hear from a distant part of the house a door apparently open and close, then hesitant footsteps. At this time, the camera cuts away from the women to the doorway, riveting our attention there for several seconds before the salesman (G rard Depardieu) actually appears, producing in us an uneasy expectancy. A droll humor soon results, however, from the apparent clash of two completely different worlds as the young man awkwardly attempts to sell the women the latest model of washing machine. Humor then gives way again to a more disquieting feeling, as we begin to realize the fragility behind the salesman's vaudeville performance: alone with the silent women, his vulnerability as a solitary individual is exposed. Here, as E. Ann Kaplan points out, the women's silence carries with it a value of negation; both Isabelle and her friend refuse to validate what they consider to be the young man's artificially imposed identity.⁶ This refusal is confirmed by Moreau's simple words "You are not a salesman" and by their refusal to accept what he calls his "licence given by the authorities." During this scene the piano arpeggio, formerly associated with Nathalie's enigmatic, anti-social behavior and also with the young killers hiding in Dreux forest, surfaces once again—now coming to announce the revelation of the salesman's inauthenticity: unlike the genuine work the women have performed in the home, we sense that his false "work" is an uncomfortable pose he has been forced to adopt in order to earn a living. In this way, the piano theme poignantly links a number of what Duras calls "violences  parses" [scattered violence]⁷ in the characters' lives—violence which is the eventual expression of repressed anger and conflict. It is out of Isabelle's recognition of this anger that she decides, toward the end of the film, not to send her daughter away to the special boarding school as expected but to keep her at home so that she will learn an authentic means of self-expression in music. Through the film's unusual tempo, in its asymmetrical patterns and disjunctions, and especially in its silences, *Nathalie Granger* reveals, as *L'Apr s-midi de Monsieur Andesmas* did so effectively before it, the emotional violence that is muffled and silenced in the deceptively quiet textures of the ordinary.

A comparison of this sort between a written text and a film brings into focus the respective capacities and limitations of each medium. In *L'Apr s-midi* we become sharply aware of the abstract potentiality of a written text—the shadowy virtuality of its images, on the one hand, along with the precision of its temporal modes and evaluative shadings on the other. In *Nathalie*, a different balance exists; as viewers we are offered the highly material, visual specificity of film—as well as its semantic ambiguities. Much of Duras' subsequent work in film, including the production of several hybrid film-texts, shows that she is keenly attuned to the tenuous territory between *cin ma* and * criture*, for it is one she has particularly chosen to explore. In so doing, Duras has ultimately shown a writer's bias by

placing less and less emphasis upon the purely material, sensory aspects of cinema and correspondingly more emphasis upon an autonomous spoken text. Yet this later development only makes the earlier *Nathalie Granger* all the more compelling. With no small admiration, we realize that a writer, using very little recourse to verbal language, has created a film that is clearly at its best when its own visual, spatial, and musical configurations convey an emotive and psychological content that extends beyond words. To readers of Marguerite Duras' fiction, this comes as no surprise, for this very mastery has always been at the center of her verbal art.

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

NOTES

1. Alexandre Astruc, "La Naissance d'une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo" in *Ecran français* (144), 1948. Translated into English and reprinted as "The Birth of a new avant-garde: La caméra stylo" in Peter Graham, *The New Wave*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 17-23.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

3. Marguerite Duras, *L'Après-midi de Monsieur Andesmas*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 78. Other citations from this novel will be indicated by page number only. The English translations from this text and from the film *Nathalie Granger* are my own.

4. Marguerite Duras, *Nathalie Granger suivie de La Femme du Gange*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 28, 76.

5. Here, my argument is indebted to the observations made by E. Ann Kaplan in the very interesting chapter "Silence as female resistance in Marguerite Duras' *Nathalie Granger* (1972)" included in her book *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, (New York and London: Methuen Press, 1983), pp. 91-103.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 99-100.

7. Marguerite Duras, "Note (Pour la Presse)" in *Nathalie Granger*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

Contrastive Characterization in Verga's *I Malavoglia* and Visconti's *La Terra trema*

Emmanuel Hatzantonis

Luchino Visconti was not the first director to be attracted by Verga's fiction. With the exception of his masterpieces, *I Malavoglia* and *Mastro-don Gesualdo*, conceded by their own author to be uncinematic "pel gusto . . . di questo pubblico," his short stories (for instance, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Caccia al lupo*) and novels (such as, *Tigre reale* and *Il marito di Elena*) were eagerly sought out from the beginning of the silent movie era.¹ Visconti was the first, however, to carry out the plans that a group of young cinematographers had conceived during and immediately after World War II in order to do for the cinema of Italy what Verga had done for its fiction. Believers in "arte . . . creatrice di verità," as Alicata and De Santis labeled it, and disenchanting with the prevailing Italian cinema which for them had its "parabola fra il dannunzianesimo retorico e archeologico di *Cabiria* e le evasioni negli inesistenti paradisi piccolo-borghesi dei tabarini di via Nazionale, dove si sfogano le casalinghe audacie delle nostre commedie sentimentali," they turned to the Sicilian writer thinking that his works indicated "le uniche esigenze storicamente valide: quelle di un'arte rivoluzionaria ispirata ad una umanità che soffre e spera" (quoted in Mida and Quaglietti, 204-05).²

Visconti's "twenty-year fascination" (*Armes* 107) with Verga's fiction dates from the very beginning of his cinematic career. While making preparations for *Ossessione*, the first film to be directed solely by him, he was already thinking creatively about Verga. As he stated: "la sola letteratura alla quale, nel quadro del romanzo italiano, sentivo di potermi riacosutare dopo le letture giovanili, nel momento in cui col mio primo film affrontavo, sia pure entro i limiti imposti dal fascismo, un tema contemporaneo alla vita italiana, era quello di *Mastro-don Gesualdo* e dei *Malavoglia*" (quoted in Sipala, 36-37). Before completing and releasing *Ossessione* in 1941, he felt the need to visit the sites in Sicily where Verga's short stories and novels are set. Upon his return to Rome he stated his impressions and his commitment:

A me, lettore lombardo, abituato per tradizionale consuetudine al limpido rigore della fantasia manzoniana, il mondo primitivo e gigan-

tesco dei pescatori di Acì Trezza e dei pastori di Marineo era sempre apparso sollevato in un tono immaginoso e violento di epopea . . . la Sicilia di Verga era apparsa davvero l'isola di Ulisse, un'isola di avventure e di fervide passioni, situata immobile e fiera contro i marosi del mare Ionio. Pensai così ad un film su *I Malavoglia*. (qtd. in Rondolino 90)

His first Verga project was *L'amante di Gramigna*. The Fascist censors³ rejected the script with the comment "basta con questi briganti" written on it (Rondolino 96). Visconti, disappointed, had to wait until the fall of Fascism and the end of the war before returning to Verga. Although there is no direct mention in *La terra trema* (1947)⁴ to the novel and no credit to its author, that Visconti's second film was inspired by and is modeled on Verga's *I Malavoglia* emerges not only from the statements of the director and of those who worked with him but also from a number of thematic and stylistic features (Baldelli 59-97, Nowell-Smith 40-54).

Many major and minor characters and episodes of *I Malavoglia* reappear in the film. There are, however, many and significant deletions, changes, or additions. Not all the omissions were dictated by the temporal constraints inherent in all filmic renditions of fiction, since Visconti made several additions, some short and some more sustained. The many changes, too, are at times minor, at other major ones. Among the most significant are those pertaining to the chronology (from the late Risorgimento to the immediate post-Fascism), the ideology (from apolitical determinism to dialectic Marxism), and the characterization of the protagonists. It is to the latter that I shall devote my analysis because in my judgment it is the change that had the greatest influence on the traditional assessment of the two protagonists of Verga's masterpiece.

Verga's novels, from the earliest to those of his maturity, are conceived and structured oppositionally. This contrast involves all episodic and character facets, and manifests itself most notably in the portrayal and actions of the protagonist and the antagonist. In *I Carbonari della montagna*, his first novel to be published, Corrado's personal traits and deeds are in constant contrast to those of Gaston in both the military and the amatory spheres, the two major thematic components of the novel. Similarly antithetical is the compositional module of the next novel, *Sulle lagune*, but there is an initial thrust away from the typological stereotypes of the previous novel: the hero is not always operating admirably or the antihero damnably. For example, the antagonist in *Sulle lagune* operates in ways that although motivated by self-interest yield at times positive results. He gives shelter to a young lady towards whom he harbors lascivious feelings. But he has her paralytic mother cared for under the same roof. He uses his influence in order to render less painful her father's imprisonment and he does not go after her

revolutionary brother with the fervor of the high Austrian official that he is. Here we have the first instance of the combining of positive and negative traits, of good and evil, that will become gradually more frequent and complex in all his subsequent novels. In *Tigre reale*, for example, the novel that appeared just before *I Malavoglia* and is structured according to the contrastive technique, we see on the one side the good, Erminia and Carlo, on the other Nata and Giorgio, "due prodotti malsani," in the narrator's definition (355).

Giorgio La Ferlita had led a superficial life before meeting the Russian countess Nata. Shortly after being introduced to her, he becomes involved in a duel. He renounces his diplomatic career in order to stay near her. He remains enticed by her even after he marries a beautiful brunette with a large dowry and conjugal qualities that ought to have made him happy and faithful. Instead, when Nata arrives in his hometown, Acireale, he abandons his wife and his son who is about to undergo a serious operation and runs to his mistress. These and many other misdeeds, however, do not make Giorgio's negativity absolute. He feels sharply the pangs of conscience, and a conflict that will be resolved in favor of his domestic duty, by his return to his convalescent son and to his physically and emotionally exhausted wife. We thus have for the first time in Verga's fiction a protagonist who does not seem to be a *vinto*, like most of his major characters. In fact, Giorgio, too, can be considered vanquished because he returns to the domestic love only when the romantic or passionate ceases. Nonetheless, Giorgio's ultimate fate contrasts with that of Pietro Brusio in *Una peccatrice* who at the death of his beloved becomes a living nonentity, of Enrico Lanti in *Eva* who, after killing his rival and losing his mistress, dies in his native Sicilian town where he had come seeking respite with his family, or that of marchese Alberti in *Eros* who, tormented by the guilt of having caused his wife's death with his conjugal infidelities, kills himself. The protagonist of *Tigre reale*, unlike all the above, does not cause his own destruction. He certainly is not a winner; but he is a survivor, much wiser than before because he is now fully aware of his errors and sins against his family and himself. His final and genuine contrition anticipates young 'Ntoni Malavoglia's whose last words—the very last words spoken in *I Malavoglia*—are: "Addio, perdonatemi tutti" (403).⁵

In *I Malavoglia*, too, the oppositional technique is basic to the novel's characterizations. All characters, major or minor, are conceived antithetically, and from their first appearance and actions they exhibit qualities that render them negative or positive within their milieu. In padron 'Ntoni, the protagonist, are embodied positive qualities: indefatigable industriousness, moral integrity, unwavering attachment to his family, and so on. In his grandson 'Ntoni, the antagonist, are embodied the negative traits: the initial shiftlessness that becomes laziness and refusal to work; the restlessness, continuous complaints, open rebellion, and abandonment of the family; his

return as a failure, his drunkenness, his being kept by Santuzza; his trial that depletes the family's meager savings, his smuggling, capture, stabbing of the law officer, and incarceration.

How then can one explain the lack of consensus concerning 'Ntoni's character and deeds among post World War II readers and critics? In part because of the evolution in Verga's characterization of the protagonist and antagonist. From the one dimensional stereotype through a gradual broadening and admixture Verga has arrived at a characterial complexity that makes the protagonist appear flawed and the antagonist not exclusively endowed with vilifying negativeness. Just as the "paterfamilias" is not immaculate, or infallible, his grandson is not always wicked, or totally degenerate. Padron 'Ntoni is the one who conceives the lupin deal from which many if not all the misfortunes to the family resulted. It is true that he could not have foreseen the storm that caused the loss of the lupins, his son's drowning, or the damage to the boat. But even without the storm, the deal would have been a bad one since he had failed to see that Crocifisso, the usurer, had sold him rotten lupins. In addition, padron 'Ntoni undertook this deal because of aims not dissimilar from those of the other villagers, from the desire to increase his income and his granddaughter's dowry. This is not as noble as it might appear, because, although he is aware of Mena's genuine affection for the poor and honest Alfio, the carter, the dowry is intended to bring about her marriage to Brasi, the retarded son of wealthy compare Cipolla.

Just as the grandfather's projects and actions flaw his natural good sense and probity, so the grandson is not entirely without feelings, thoughts and actions that are positive, even praiseworthy. Although he deprecates against the sea calling it repeatedly "amaro" he has it in his veins and as a fisherman and a seaman has few equals and no superiors. He is also courageous, as his behavior during the storm demonstrates, for without his daring the three male Malavoglia would have drowned. Although embittered by the breaking off of his engagement to Barbara and anxious to seek a better life elsewhere, he is not deaf to the pleas of his family that do not want him to leave. He adores his mother, and it is only after her death and with the consensus, pained as it may be, of the others that he goes away "a cercarsi la fortuna." He then seeks wealth outside Trezza not solely for himself but so that his entire family may become rich and go to the city "a non far nulla, e a mangiare pasta e carne tutti i giorni" (323- 24).

These and several other positive traits no doubt diminish 'Ntoni's negativeness. But they do not redeem it entirely. Readers and critics of our generation, if inclined in favor of the antiheroes, the protesters, the activists against authority, the rejecters of the status quo, have the personal, private right to admire young 'Ntoni. But to attribute to him heroic qualities and to suggest that he and not Padron 'Ntoni embodies the characterial and operative positiveness of the hero, is to violate the contrastive structure of *I*

Malavoglia, particularly of the protagonists from their original conception to the conclusion of the novel in its final form. In fact, in the brief outline prepared by Verga for the novel, padron 'Ntoni's character, defined with only two positive adjectives, "onesto e laborioso," is contrasted with that of his grandson, defined with five negative adjectives, "vano, leggiadro, pigro, debole, ghiotto" accompanied by the expression "in fondo buon cuore" (quoted in Ghidetti, 64).⁶ And with such highlighted contrastiveness Verga concludes *I Malavoglia*.

At the end of his "Laocoönlike struggle" (Sterling 77), Padron 'Ntoni disappears as *vinto*, but only *seemingly* so. He ends up in the poorhouse hospital, but his shelter there is the last act of his volitional nature. He had convinced Alfio to take him there, unbeknownst to his grandchildren, prompted not by poverty, but by his desire to speed up the repurchase of the ancestral house with the savings of Alessi, the grandson who, contrary to his brother 'Ntoni, was defined in the opening chapter "un moccioso tutto suo nonno," and who had adhered to his grandfather's principle all his life. Furthermore, on his deathbed, the soundness of his principles is validated from what seemed their failure, when his grandchildren arrive at the hospital, inform the old man that they have rebought the property and ask him to return to his beloved house by the medlar tree. And he answers, yes, yes, "con gli occhi che gli tornavano a luccicare, e quasi faceva la bocca a riso" (401).

A similar invitation is addressed by the same Alessi to his brother 'Ntoni, after the latter's release from prison and his return by night to Acì Trezza. Unlike the old man, however, the grandson refuses to stay and rejoin the family saying: "allora non sapevo nulla, e qui non volevo starci, ma ora che so ogni cosa devo andarmene." And "cogli occhi fissi a terra e il capo rannicchiato nelle spalle" he bids Alessi goodbye, adding: "vedi che avevo ragione d'andarmene! Qui non posso stare. Addio, perdonatemi tutti" (403). His stance and words are the intentional counterpoint of those of the dying grandfather and show him ultimately aware, even wise, but *vinto* nonetheless. Wise, because after having opposed and rejected his grandfather's principles, he now recognizes their validity: vanquished, because he now feels obliged to go far away where he is not known, "to wander", as Cecchetti has aptly phrased it, "in the vacuum he has created by pulling up his roots from the common humus and by negating the wisdom of generations" (91) in search of mere "pane," and not of the leisure and wealth he had craved with such harmful consequences to himself and his family. This ending tellingly affirms the oppositional structure of Verga's *I Malavoglia* and the contrasting characterization of its two homonymous protagonists.

Visconti's cinematization of the novel is also contrastively structured. The director, however, opted to minimize the characterial and operational conflict between grandfather and grandson and to replace it with a generational and ideological one. The figure of the grandfather is retained, but his

role is only a marginal one. The protagonist in *La terra trema* is Antonio, the grandson, and his character and deeds are always in opposition to those of an entire class, of the wholesale dealers of fish, particularly to young Lorenzo, and the older Raimondo. These are portrayed negatively from the opening to the closing scene. At the beginning they are shown waiting like birds of prey for the fishermen to arrive in order to buy their catch for a pittance, in contrast to the villagers who are on their way to church. At the end of the film, they are shown abusing those who have come to seek employment on the new boats built by the middlemen. Lorenzo ridicules Antonio, calling him "the stray lamb" who has returned "to the fold," and reminding him sarcastically of his pledge not to come back to work for him and his partners even if he and his whole family were dying of hunger (98-99). Raimondo mocks Carmelo not only with words but also with a gesture, by pulling a piece of bread from his pocket and holding it up to the fisherman's mouth (100-01).

Antonio's characterization is more complex. Like Verga's 'Ntoni, he has both good and bad traits. He is committed to his family's wellbeing, works hard and unselfishly for it: instead of pocketing his share of the daily pay divided by his grandfather, he tells him to give it to his mother. He is intelligent and courageous: hence, he is the first to realize that he and the other fishermen are being exploited and to take action by confronting the exploiters, by refusing to sell to them and, through the mortgage of the ancestral house, by starting his own small business of salting the fish caught in order to bypass the middlemen. But Antonio has also some bad qualities. Although intelligent, he fails to perceive the fickleness of Nedda, whom he loves and intends to marry. Not heeding the advice of the other fishermen, he goes out to fish despite the oncoming storm and loses both his catch and his boat. Discouraged, he takes to drinking, like 'Ntoni in *I Malavoglia*, to the point of degradation. But unlike Verga, who shows 'Ntoni defeated and unwilling to return to the family hearth, Visconti redeems him, ennobles him, heroizes him in the scene with young Rosa (95-96) and in his decision to swallow his pride and go back to the fish dealers for a job as a hired hand (98-100). In fact, it is in these last scenes whose "tone of self-sacrificial martyrdom is closer to Christian than to Marxist precepts" (Bondanella, 71) that the redemption reaches its fullness. The humiliation inflicted upon him, instead of crushing him, strengthens his resolve to suffer in order to conquer. As a victor, or as a "vanquished victor" (Liehm, 82) he is portrayed in the last frames of *La terra trema*. Contrary to 'Ntoni in *I Malavoglia* who leaves before daybreak because he does not want the villagers to see his defeat and shame, Visconti ends his film by showing us Antonio, also at daybreak, rowing vigorously and with a countenance that suggests a strengthened volition to undertake once more in due time and with better results what he attempted and failed. His "pathema" has become "mathema" destined to become "poema".

This, for me, is Visconti's most important and fruitful change from Verga's novel. Important because it shows that from his earliest filming of a prestigious literary text he did not feel constrained by the then prevalent attitudes towards preserving the main features of the literary source. He was aware, of course, that many viewers and critics would make comparisons between the filmic and the literary texts, assessing the fidelity to the letter (the incidents, characters and their interrelation, the geographical, sociological ambiance, etc.) and the spirit (tone, point of view, repetitive words, gestures, symbolism and other formal equivalents, etc.). Instead, Visconti strove for—and achieved for the first time in the Italian cinema—another type of fidelity, one that was based on the dialectical interplay between the conceptual forms and needs of one epoch and one medium with those of another, between Verga's and his own. And it was a fertile change, because his filmic portrayal of the grandson gave a major thrust to the reassessment of his character and actions in Verga's novel.

Before World War II rarely, if ever, was young 'Ntoni thought of as the hero in *I Malavoglia*: he was the antagonist, the antihero. But since Visconti's filmic characterization of him in *Le terra trema*, such an appraisal has been losing more and more its prevalence among critics regardless of their ideological credos. For G. Trombatore, for instance, in 'Ntoni "si accende il primo fioco barlume di una nuova coscienza" (qtd. in Colicchi, 143). For I. Scaramucci:

La figura del giovane 'Ntoni sembra conquistare dolorosamente una nuova dimensione, ricalcando le stesse linee che definivano la statura morale del nonno, "adesso che sapeva ogni cosa".

E la vita di questo moderno ulisside inquadrate fra le due partenze, ora che il suo vagabondare non sarà più inquieta ricerca di evasione, ma sofferto cammino verso una antica innocenza, acquista tutto il suo dolente significato. La vicenda circolare si rompe, per riprendere in direzione nettamente verticale (266).

For E. Giachery, "il senso più riposto ed essenziale della vicenda è affidato a lui ['Ntoni], o comunque riferito a lui come a termine, cardine. A questo eroe umilissimo . . . è affidato l'unico, ancora embrionale movimento di storia che si insinui nella ferrea astoricità di Aci Trezza" (167-68). For V. Masiello, 'Ntoni "simboleggia le inquietudini e gli smarrimenti delle nuove generazioni . . . l'aspirazione, pericolosa per tutto il 'sistema' ad una vita diversa e migliore" (87-88). For G. Baldi, some of 'Ntoni's pronouncements are worthy of "un eroe della ragione e del progresso" and render him "predicatore . . . portatore di un messaggio sociale," in opposition to the "immobilismo" of the village and his grandfather. In addition, 'Ntoni "sa cogliere con chiarezza, anche se in forma elementare, le leggi dello sfruttamento e delle disuguaglianze di classe . . . riesce ad elevarsi ad un'embrio-

nale presa di coscienza . . . una forma elementare di protesta e di rivolta nei confronti di un sistema oppressivo" (124-25).

These and so many similar attestations to young 'Ntoni's reappraisal are no doubt due to the evolution of Verga's characterization which is no longer delimited by the clear demarcations of goodness and badness, as well as to the antiauthoritarian attitude, common in our times but atypical in Verga's; but also—and this has been the main thrust of my paper—to Visconti's creative and fertile freedom in the recasting of the persona of 'Ntoni Malavoglia.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

NOTES

1. Verga's assessment of his two major novels as uncinematic was made in a letter to Dina di Sordevolo, April 25, 1912, (Raya 382). For Verga's correspondence on matters pertaining to the cinematization of his fiction and his attitude toward the film industry and art, see Muscarà Zappulea 504-29.

2. On "la lezione di Verga" (Rondolino 89) to these two and other young antifascist intellectuals associated with the review *Cinema* of the early '40s, see Arms 107-109 and Rondolino 81-99.

3. On the attitude and policy of the Fascists towards the cinema and on their practice of censorship, see the succinct and lucid account of J.A. Gili.

4. Filmed in 1947, *La terra trema* was released the following year. To attain a maximum of authenticity or an "ortodossia neorealista rigorosa" (Canziani, 67), it was shot entirely in Aci Trezza with all parts played, as Visconti himself put it, "con personaggi veri," and with dialogues written by the director "a caldo con l'aiuto degli stessi interpreti, vale a dire chiedendo loro in quale maniera istintivamente esprimerebbero un determinato sentimento e quali parole userebbero" (qtd. in Rondolino 201). Hence all spoken parts were written in the dialect of that Sicilian town. The script of *La terra trema*, ed. by Montesanti, was published four years later while its complete transcription in the original, ed. by Ungari, appeared only in 1977. All references in the text are to Green's English translation.

5. With these spoken words ended the novel in Verga's manuscript, finally accessible to students of Verga through its recent placement in the Biblioteca Universitaria di Catania. After 'Ntoni's "Addio, perdonatemi tutti," there is the word "Fine" in Verga's own hand. It can, therefore, be assumed that the final three paragraphs, void of dialogue, were added when the novel was being printed or when the proofs were being read.

6. This important outline is omitted in Russo's edition of *I Malavoglia* and that of many others, but can be found in Simioni, 17- 20, and Ghidetti, 60-69.

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Political Satire through Popular Music
and a Popular Vision of Reality:
La Linares, a New Novel from Ecuador

C. Michael Waag

The Ecuadorian novel has come a long way since Juan León Mera published his Romantic *Cumandá* in 1879, but it has never matched the high degree of international visibility achieved in the 1930s through the Grupo de Guayaquil of the Ecuadorian coast or through Jorge Icaza and the *Indigenistas* of the Ecuadorian highlands. In fact, with the striking exceptions of Enrique Gil Gilbert's *Nuestro pan* (1941), Demetrio Aguilera-Malta's *La isla virgen* (1942), and Angel Felicimo Rojas' *El éxodo de Yangana* (1949), the production of long fiction generally fell off during the 1940s and, excluding a few works of historical fiction by Alfredo Pareja Diezcanseco and Aguilera-Malta, it is difficult to conjure up the title of an Ecuadorian novel from the two succeeding decades, the 1950s and 1960s. The decade of the 1970s, however, was a rich period in the history of Ecuadorian literature in which Ecuador's best-known writers returned to the field of the novel and published their final works, while at the same time a group of little-known, generally younger writers brought forth the first novels of their careers. By the end of the decade, Jorge Icaza, Demetrio Aguilera-Malta and Enrique Gil Gilbert, among others, had all died. The novelists who appeared in the 1970s, however, have continued to produce fiction in the 1980s at an unprecedented rate for Ecuador: more than twenty major novels published between 1980 and 1985. The high quality of the recent works promises that younger Ecuadorian writers will fill the void left by the passing of their venerable predecessors.

Among the most impressive young novelists is Iván Egúez (1944) who was known as a poet before he received the Premio Nacional de Literatura for his first novel, *La Linares* (1976). The work is an interesting synthesis of rich colloquial language, anecdote, refrains and lines from popular songs all carefully orchestrated to produce a sense of reality as conceived, told and retold by the nameless common people of Ecuador. *La Linares* is also a wry, political satire which utilizes a mixture of fiction and history knitted together with few seams to reveal where one mode leaves off and another begins. Working within the context of several bizarre moments in Ec-

cuadorian history from the 1920s to the 1950s, Egüez invests an experimental, circular structure with caricature, irony, hyperbole and frequent feasts of lexical *amontonamiento* in order to lampoon thinly disguised political figures and historical incidents. The fragments of popular Ecuadorian songs appear throughout the text. They enhance the colloquial point of view and reinforce the tone of various moments in the narrative. Most notable are the fragments from *pasillos*, a peculiarly Ecuadorian type of song, which often deals with love, desperation and death and is reminiscent of Ecuador's Modernist poetry.¹ Despite the jocose tone of most of the work, *La Linares* is brought to a sad close with a chapter which incorporates one of Ecuador's most popular *pasillos*.

The novel does not function on the basis of a plot; rather, it consists of the development of several separate character-centered episodes held in orbit about a protagonist, the irresistible *femme fatale*, María Linares. She is a woman of mysterious origin bound by destiny to carry out a special role in society; she precipitates exposure of vain pretension—the pretensions of institutions, powerful political figures and official history. She is followed by a curse which visits embarrassment, downfall and even death upon all but two men who become involved with her. According to don Alonso, a black shaman whom María's mother consults soon after the birth of the extraordinary child:

—Dos hombres sabrán su secreto. El primero será como padre para ella y el segundo será como su hijo. Ambos se enterarán sin la voluntad de ella. Fuera de ellos, todo aquel que se acerque tendrá muerte trágica o sufrirá padecimientos. La vida es un camino que hay que andar, no importa que sea por los aires. (46)

The first of the two men mentioned above is an old tailor who takes over the care of the orphaned María Linares after a wealthy merchant attempts to marry her at the age of twelve. The second man who is immune from the curse is eventually revealed to be the principal narrator. In the following passage, he engages the reader at the end of the first and the last of the seventeen unnumbered chapters with this second-person monologue spoken to an absent interlocutor, La Linares: "Nunca imaginé que al cabo de años de oír hablar de usted, de haber conocido la casa de museo donde vivió, de haber visto en la calle abriendo flancos como una reina, yo haya llegado a conocerla de la forma que la he conocido" (18). The way the narrator meets the protagonist is not revealed until the last few pages and functions as a narrative book.² The words "oír hablar" go a long way toward establishing the style of the work as a political history, popularly and collectively conceived and related through hearsay, but not necessarily any less true than history as officially reported. Through envious gossip and popular apotheosis, María Linares takes on a persona of legendary dimen-

sion: "La nombran a mitades, utilizan cierto código, fórmulas y sobreentendidos que de tanto esconderla más bien la familiarizan" (12).

The work is narrated in first, second and third person and contains letters, dreams, a radio play, dialogue between characters and anonymous voices of the public. After hearing about the protagonist for eleven chapters, María Linares narrates the twelfth chapter herself and reveals an awareness of her own mythical persona and its function in society as similar to that of a movie star, celebrity or avenging Greek goddess. Consistent with the pattern of linking fiction with Ecuadorian history, she records her birth as the year following a notorious massacre of striking workers in the streets of Guayaquil in November of 1922:

Yo soy La Linares, piedra de toque de la ciudad. Nací el año siguiente a la masacre. Uno de mis hombres dejó escrito que mis ojos almendrados son como arenas movedizas. Gracias a mí la gente tiene de qué hablar, de otro modo se pasarán rumiando sus tristuras y lloviznas interiores. Por mí las mujeres han aprendido a lavarse bien las partes y a cambiarse de vestido y de peinado. Por mí los hombres sueñan en mujeres bellas o van con ganas a la cama a hacer el amor con sus esposas. Por mí no están solos los solos, inclusive Dios, porque sus terremotos y procesiones han sido por mí, por mis caderas que todo remecen y merecen castigo, exorcismo y reparo. El aire se perfuma a mi paso y se hacen rojas las flores de todas las plantas. Mi fama ha traspuesto los mares . . .

Yo soy La Linares bella, soy La Linares, fatal. (106-107)

The story of María Linares is progressively revealed in a way which presents interest and a level of suspense as one mystery after another is presented, abandoned, then resolved unexpectedly sometime later. Still, her story is of secondary importance when compared to the satirical commentary on many events and figures from Ecuadorian history. As the national *femme fatale*, she is a pariah as well as the focus of envious attention. Her legendary attraction exerts a centripetal force on the powerful figures of her time. In the same way, at the structural level, her story and persona unify several satirical episodes based on historical persons and incidents. Her development as a character is always the occasion for digressions involving politicians, businessmen and even ecclesiastical authorities who are linked to her through amorous attraction. Most of the historical incidents which enter into the narrative actually took place during the 1940s and early 1950s, the prime years of the fictional María Linares' beauty. In 1949, for example, the Quito offices of the newspaper *El Comercio* were burned. In the novel there is a similar episode. A radio station owned by the newspaper *El Mercantil* broadcasts an Ecuadorian version of Orson Wells' "War of the Worlds" caper. The population of the city panics, and desperation prompts

embarrassing expiatory confessions by high-ranking politicians and military officers, which reveal long-hidden details connected with past political incidents. When the "invasion from outer space" is revealed to be a hoax, an enraged populace burns the offices of *El Mercantil*. The fiction is bizarre but no less so than history, for the offices of the *Comercio* were in fact burned by an angry mob after a similar re-enactment of the famous radio play.

Most of the fictional incidents take place in a period which corresponds to the historical presidency, 1948 to 1952, of Galo Plaza, a political favorite of North American government and business who eventually became the General Secretary of the Organization of American States. In the novel, he is "El Presi práctico," and he and his government are objects of intensive satire. Among the specific targets of Egúez's lampoon are Plaza's Americanized personal and political style, his generous concessions to United Fruit and other banana companies, an agreement inviting increased United States military influence—known in the narrative as the "Tratado Militar de Pestilencia Recíproca con los Aguilas del norte" (81)—and the corrupt handling of emergency funds and reconstruction in the wake of a massive earthquake in 1949. The Shell Oil Company carried out extensive exploration work in Ecuador in the 1930s and 40s, but during the Plaza regime the company declared that there was no oil to be found in Ecuador's eastern tropical forest, and the region was left to foreign missionaries and anthropologists. Galo Plaza unabashedly made the declaration public with his own pronouncement, "el oriente es un mito."³ Twenty-five years later, however—when exploitation of Ecuador's reserves was more profitable—Ecuador became the second largest petroleum exporter in Latin America. Here the fictional president announces to the nation, as did Galo Plaza in 1948, that there is no oil in the Oriente. The narrator then goes on to satirize through extravagant enumeration, the continued occupation of the eastern provinces by a plethora of United States based organizations:

Cuando el Presi dijo "nothing, nothing. Nada por aquí, nada por acá," lo dijo seguro de lo que decía, porque la Shell le pasó el informe diciéndole "take it easy boy, en esa selva a más de tzantzicos reductores de cabeza no existe nada, nosotros seguiremos ocupando esas provincias pero con fines evangélicos y antropológicos." Y vinieron los Institutos Lingüísticos, las Fundaciones, los Programas, los Hijos de Jehová, los Hijos de El Salvador, los Hijos del Señor, los Hijos de Cristo Rey, los Hijos de Dios General de los Ejércitos, los Hijos de las siete Plagas, los Hijos de las Siete Leches, los Hijos de la Gran Flauta y los Hijos de la Gran Puta. (82-83)

The inevitable target of almost every satire of contemporary Ecuadorian politics is Ecuador's populist caudillo, José María Velasco Ibarra. Ascetic of habit and skeletal of physiognomy, he is legendary for his mesmerizing

oratory, dramatically emphasized with the thrusts and vibrations of an outstretched index finger. "Give me a balcony and I will become president," he once said, and he came to power five times. In history, Galo Plaza was succeeded by Velasco Ibarra (1952), but in the novel, the two heads of state merge with one another in order to convey the idea that differences between the regimes, despite appearances, are not substantive. The wife of the presi, la Primera Dama, has a five-time recurring nightmare in which she sees her husband transformed into a figure of "esquelético," austere appearance traveling about the country, from balcony to balcony, giving fiery speeches. The reference to Velasco Ibarra is unmistakable and the rhetoric concerning development alludes to his third presidency (1952-1956):

[L]o vio aclamando en todos los rincones de la patria, después abucheado en esos mismos rincones, le oyó hablar en todos los balcones del paisito sin saltarse ninguno, poner la primera piedra en todos los sueños de todos los habitantes de todos los caseríos, aldeas, pueblos, cabeceras cantonales, cabeceras provinciales, bendecir todas las maquetas de escuelas y hospitales, todos los proyectos de puentes, y aeropuertos, cambiar el curso de las aguas para peor, ordenar con dedo inflexible y providencial que terminen las sequías. . . .

Esta pesadilla tuvo la Primera Dama cinco veces, pero jamás le contó al Presi, porque en realidad al Presi no le importaba nada del Paisito, peor los sueños de su agorera esposa. (132-133)

In addition to humorous satire and the unifying role of a single fascinating protagonist, *La Linares* is a striking work of fiction for its extraordinary language. The popular flavor of its idiom, which incorporates neologisms, song, refrains, malapropisms, and other linguistic corruptions, effectively augments the sense of a collectively produced, popular conception of reality. In the most stylistically innovative segment of the work, that question is answered which early in the narrative aroused the curiosity of the reader. Just what *was* the way in which the narrator met the mysterious lady? Driven by that enigmatic, universal desire to create pantheons, heroes and celebrities, the narrator has been compelled to follow the career of María Linares, and it is he who finds her, a suicide, in the bedroom of her imposing Quito mansion. The juxtaposition of longing, feminine beauty and death set against a refined description of sumptuous interior surroundings is reminiscent of Ecuadorian Modernism, but the three-paragraph description of the scene is unintelligible until the reader recognizes that the text is intercut with the lines of a popular *pasillo* entitled "Sombras":

Esa alcoba que habrá de hacerse tierra un día cuando tú te hayas ido me envolverán las sombras la historia de su dueña y sus amores cuando tú te hayas ido tiene para seguir entresticida con mi dolor a

solas sola abandonada y con clausura y evocaré este idilio esperando que vuelva la que un día en sus azules horas la cerró con candado de museo cuando tú te hayas ido y se marchó llorándola y queriéndola me envolverán las sombras porque al salir de ahí dejaba el camino por los aires de su vida de la pequeña alcoba se fue sin tocar nada dejando los recuerdos que ahí tenía me acariciaste toda dejando como tumba la cama de caoba cuando tú te hayas ido. (138-139)

When the lines of the song are extricated from the above passage, the meaning of the text and the song becomes clearer:

Text of *La Linares*

Esa alcoba que habrá de hacerse tierra un día . . . la historia de su dueña y sus amores . . . tiene para seguir entristecida . . . sola abandonada y con clausura . . . esperando que vuelva la que un día . . . la cerró con candado de museo . . . y se marchó llorándola y queriéndola . . . porque al salir de ahí dejaba el camino por los aires de su vida . . . se fue sin tocar nada dejando los recuerdos que ahí tenía . . . dejando como tumba la cama de caoba . . .

"Sombras"

Cuando tú de hayas ido
Me envolverán las sombras
Cuando tú te hayas ido
Con mi dolor a solas
Evocaré este idilio
En sus azules horas
Cuando tú te hayas ido
Me envolverán las sombras.

(Y en la penumbra vaga)
De la pequeña alcoba
(Donde una tibia tarde)
Me acariciaste toda
(Te buscarán mis brazos)
(Te buscará mi boca)
(Y aspiraré en el aire)
(Como un olor de rosas)
Cuando tú te hayas ido
(Me envolverán las sombras.)

The parentheses indicate lines of the song which are not included in the text. Fragments from other *pasillos*, including "Mis flores negras" are found in a subsequent paragraph in the same chapter.

The significance of the novel's circular structure is the unification of the two disparate poles of Ecuadorian literature, the refined Modernist poetry from around 1920 and the recent social satire which has grown out of the Social Realism begun in the 1930s. The two are brought together in the *pasillo* which includes songs that are Modernist poems set to music and perpetuated by popular artists. The history of Ecuadorian Modernism is a tragic one. Its principal poets all died or committed suicide while very young and are collectively known as the "generación decapitada." For them, poetry was a flight from the brutal realities of Ecuador and a

xenophilic refuge inspired in the refined estheticism of the French symbolists. For them, "la muchedumbre municipal y espesa era despreciable" (Rojas 133). Their life, their poetry and their death are interpreted in Ecuador as their reaction to intolerable, alienating social circumstances of the early decades of the century.

The penultimate chapter of *La Linares* is a satire of Ecuador in the 1970s when the flood of oil dollars brought an all pervasive commercialization of Quito and the nation. In the corresponding mercantile ambience of the novel, an aging but still beautiful María Linares is exploited by forces beyond her control in order to advertise clothing, cosmetics, and lottery tickets and in order to bolster the image and appeal of the Church. Hopelessly at variance with her jaded, commercialized milieu, her persona has lost its poetic power, and, like the Modernist poets who perceived themselves similarly alienated and diminished by their circumstances, she seeks refuge in suicide. Here María Linares laments her powerlessness in the face of changed circumstances:

Me obligan hacer gimnasia, me llevan a los baños turcos, me levantan los senos, me esconden los ijares, me diseñan la ropa, me peinan, me pintan, me llevan a paseo, me traen de paseo, conozco a las gentes a través de ceremonias, de presentaciones y representaciones envueltas siempre en el sudario de la petulancia o tras la máscara de la solemnidad, pero a nadie se le ocurrió prohibirme que me suicide y que les arruine sus negocios y sus religiones. (134)

By bringing his narrative full circle from the birth of María Linares in the 1920s, "el año siguiente a la masacre," to her death in the 1970s, Egúez links the plight of the Modernists (in their circumstances) with that of his character in circumstances which reflect the present reality of Ecuador. Quite intentionally, Egúez also brings to mind an irony in the history of Ecuadorian literature. The Modernists wrote a highly personal poetry for a refined, select few while the Social Realists wrote on behalf of the masses with the hope of one day being read by their common countrymen. Nevertheless, novels such as Jorge Icaza's *Huasipungo* or Aguilera-Malta's *Don Goyo* are relatively little known in Ecuador compared to Medardo Angel Silva's Modernist poem "El alma en los labios," which is heard frequently in every corner of the nation perpetuated in a *pasillo* of the same name. Through the *pasillo*, Egúez brings together the poles of Ecuadorian literature, Modernism and Social Realism, and invites a re-evaluation of their long supposed opposition.

In its experimental structure, popular language and mixture of genres, *La Linares* is representative of much of the new fiction produced in Ecuador during the last ten years by both younger and older writers. Ecuadorian novelists of the 1970s and 1980s maintain a link with their predecessors from

the 1930s and 1940s through a continued interest in the social and political problems which plague their nation. Unlike their predecessors, however, who cultivated stark realism in deadly earnest, Iván Egüez and his contemporaries seek to cast their denunciation in more interesting, often humorous, and always artistic forms.

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

NOTES

1. The assumption of a relationship between Modernist poetry and the *pasillo* is based on my own observation of numerous *pasillos* sung by Julio Jaramillo and on the fact that some *pasillos* take their lyrics from Modernist poems.

2. A narrative hook is a literary device used at the beginning of a work to arouse the interest of the reader and induce his involvement in the text.

3. The well-known historical incidents mentioned in the texts are verifiable in numerous political histories of Ecuador, such as Alfredo Pareja Diezcanseco, *Ecuador: La República de 1830 a nuestros días* (Quito: Ediciones Crítica, 1972).

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A Portrait of the Writer as Artist: Silvina Ocampo

Patricia N. Klingenberg

Writers often use other arts such as painting, sculpting or music as metaphors for their own creative task. Silvina Ocampo, herself an artist as well as a short story writer, follows this tradition by making frequent reference in her stories to various types of artistic endeavors. An examination of art and of artists which appear as characters in Ocampo's fiction may shed light on the aesthetics which govern her written work; it may also provide clues to the issues of gender in Ocampo's writing, "ese no sé qué femenino" mentioned by Eduardo González Lanuza in 1949.

To do this, however, first requires a (re)definition of the word "art." Feminist critics have sought to define women's artistic expression in terms of a woman's culture separate from men's. To this end, Josephine Donovan has suggested six basic points for such a woman's poetics, two of which will serve my purpose here: 1) the almost universal phenomenon of woman consigned to the domestic sphere, and hence her experience of work as repetitive, non-progressive and static; and 2) a woman's tradition of work which creates objects for use rather than for exchange (102-03). In her elaboration of these points Donovan relies on Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi's study of women's work and art entitled *The Sacred and the Feminine: Toward a Theology of Housework*, in which Rabuzzi makes a convincing argument for traditional women's path to transcendental experience via the routine work of the home. Rabuzzi joins other professional artists such as Judy Chicago who seek to expand our perceptions of "art" to include womanly activities traditionally designated as "crafts" or even "chores," specifically fine embroidery, sewing, quilting, gardening, cooking, and even cleaning. Ocampo's short stories implicitly recognize the creativity invested in these tasks and draw upon them as part of a uniquely female artistic aesthetic.

It seems clear that in spite of the "seriousness" of Ocampo's classical education, both artistic and literary, she incorporates into her work a validation of artistic creativity specific to a woman's culture. For instance, her obsession with the power of ordinary objects, to which, in the realm of the fantastic and the grotesque, she attributes magical properties, illustrates what Rabuzzi and others have noted as woman's special connection to the

material world. Since women buy and clean household objects they are more aware of them as such and of their larger significance as elements of self-expression for most women. In many of Ocampo's stories, for instance, decor, which is rarely mentioned as an art form in men's fiction, suggests the creative power and supplements the characterization of female protagonists. In "La propiedad" (*La furia*) the servant-narrator expresses the originality of her *señora* by detailing certain unusual touches in the decoration of her house and garden. Another story, "Esclavas de las criadas" (*Los días de la noche*), describes certain household adornments, such as a stuffed tiger, which again seem to evoke the character and originality of their owner. In "El diario de Porfiria Bernal" (*Las invitadas*), the description of a door-knocker, emblematic of the exotic and lethal Bernal family, foreshadows the strange events which will occur inside the house: "Recuerdo como si fuese hoy la calurosa mañana de diciembre, brillando sobre el llamador de bronce, en forma de mano. . . . La súbita aparición del llamador en la puerta de calle oscureció por un instante mi alegría. En los objetos leemos el porvenir de nuestras desdichas. La mano de bronce, con una víbora enroscada en su puño acanalado, era imperiosa y brillaba como una alhaja sobre la madera de la puerta" (*Las invitadas*, 155). In Ocampo's stories, where women are rarely seen as writers, intellectuals, painters, or musicians, Ocampo validates the activities which most women actually do as artistic in and of themselves. In this case, they carefully choose objects for their houses, which serve as expressions of themselves.

In a process which Rabuzzi calls "cosmization," the act of placing oneself in a world context, "the creation of world out of chaos" (105), women also use household objects or monotonous tasks as paths to a more transcendental state. Ocampo's story, "La escalera" (*Las invitadas*), serves as a perfect example of the contemplative, meditative mental realm which Rabuzzi suggests is possible by means of the disengagement of mind which a vulgar, routine task affords. The old char woman, Isaura, relives her life envisioned in each of the marble stairs she climbs on the last day of her life: "Veinticinco escalones. Cuando enseñaba a caminar a sus hijas, contándolos uno por uno, llevándolas de la mano, subía. Sola, vuelve, después de tantos años, a contarlos, por mera costumbre" (34). As she climbs the stairway, a life of violence, sex, birth, and finally death is evoked through each of the familiar, numbered stairs. An ordinary object of her life is transformed by this old woman into something sacred, the simple tasks of her days into a kind of meditation. Just as most of Ocampo's fantastic stories evoke what Rabuzzi calls the demonic realm of housework, this story illustrates what she means by the sacred realm, the creative act which connects object, self, and universe.

Another womanly activity, hairdressing, appears in various of Ocampo's stories. In "El vestido verde aceituna" (*Viaje olvidado*), Miss Hilton, an English governess, allows her fourteen-year-old pupil to fix her hair: "desde

ese día había adoptado ese peinado de trenzas que le hacía, vista de adelante y con sus propios ojos, una cabeza griega; pero, vista de espalda y con los ojos de los demás, un barullo de pelos sueltos que llovían sobre la nuca arrugada" (25). Because of this extraordinary hairdo the governess is asked to pose for a local artist. Though she poses for him in the olive green velvet dress of the story's title, he paints her hairstyle on one of his nudes. The governess subsequently loses her job when the child's mother hears of the nude painting. There is a feeling in the story that somehow the child and the painter had both captured the true essence of this woman's hidden sensuality. Here, then, female art and "fine" art have coincided. The presence in this story of a "real" artist serves to underscore the significance of the original creation. The recognized male artist, after all, merely copies what the girl had invented.

More often in Ocampo's works, women are occupied with various forms of sewing. The poor old woman of "Esperanza en Flores" (*Viaje olvidado*) punctuates her thoughts by counting the stitches of her knitting, and the young pregnant woman of "El cuaderno" (*La Furia*) sits mending in the first scene of that story. The repetitive, mechanical nature of these tasks, knitting and mending, are intimately associated with a specifically female culture. The female characters engaged in these activities represent Everywoman, archetypal figures. The more creative skills of the seamstress or hatmaker, which appear again and again in Ocampo's stories, represent, in contrast, the more individualized artist in female garb. The various female characters engaged in fine handwork all have a sense of vocation, absent from the characters busy with more routine tasks. In an analysis of the stories which utilize this sense of vocation, the reader may gain insight into Ocampo's struggle with her own self-image as an artist. After Gilbert and Gubar's brilliant assessment of nineteenth-century writers, it should come as no surprise that a woman of Ocampo's generation in patriarchal Argentina should have highly ambivalent notions about artistic endeavors and their place in a woman's life.

The young pregnant woman of "El cuaderno," seen mending at the window of her dark apartment, once was a hatmaker whose astounding artistic ability with her materials made her the best worker in her shop: "Las alas de los sombreros bajo sus manos se plegaban mágicamente; las cintas, las plumas, los moños y las flores eran dóciles a sus dedos. . ." The owner of the shop was so impressed by her abilities that she gave her a brass bed as a wedding present. In the first scene Ermelina muses that: "Esa cama era el testimonio de su felicidad." Since marrying, however, she has lost her abilities as a hatmaker, and reflects on a scene in which the same owner had recently complained of her work:

—Ya te dije Ermelina, ya te dije que no te casaras. Ahora estás triste. Has perdido hasta la habilidad que tenías para adornar sombreros—y

sacudiendo un sombrero adornado con cintas, añadía con una pequeñísima risa, que parecía una carraspera—: ¿Qué significa este moño: ¿Qué significa esta costura?

Ermelina sabía que el sombrero era un cachivache, pero quedaba en silencio (era su manera de contestar). No estaba triste. Hasta entonces había tratado los sombreros como a recién nacidos, frágiles e importantes. Ahora le inspiraban un gran cansancio, que se traducía en moños mal hechos y pegados con grandes puntadas, que martirizaban la frescura de las cintas. (*La furia* 48)

Like the beautiful actress of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* once life and love intervene, the woman's intense feeling for art has vanished. In the past she had dealt with the hats as if they were newborns (recién nacidos). The idea of the hats themselves as newborns is repeated in another phrase, in which Ermelina reflects that Paula, the owner, "no la quería a ella, sino a su habilidad, no la quería a ella, sino a los sombreros que salían de sus manos como pájaros recién nacidos." Now that she has enjoyed the happiness of the brass bed, and is about to have her own newborn, the interest she once took in her work has disappeared.

The beginning of the story, in which she meditates on her life, actually turns out to be a later moment in the story's chronology. As she sits awaiting the birth of her child, she is seen mending, an activity which evokes a contemplative state through which we as readers have learned about her past. Her more creative skill of hatmaking—done for exchange in a "male" economy—has been put to everyday household use. The story goes on to develop an interesting fantastic plot, in which Ermelina predicts the physical appearance of her child by means of a photograph in a friend's album. The story evokes the simple beauty of this woman's life and her eager yet matter-of-fact attitude toward the approaching birth. Regarding a woman's priorities, it clearly implies that happiness lies in the business of life, not in dedication to art. It further states that artistic impulses, at least for women, occur in lieu of sexual and maternal fulfillment. In all of Ocampo's works love and human relations supersede art, or if not, the devotion to artistic endeavor exacts a terrible price.

The price paid by the actively creative women of Ocampo's fiction can be seen most clearly in the bizarre story, "Las vestiduras pelgrosas" (*Los días de la noche*). Here Ocampo's recurring interest in costumes and disguises of all kinds coincides with her preoccupation with the female artist. Artemia, the wealthy and creative patroness, is an artist who also delights in designing clothing for herself. It is the job of Piluca, the seamstress, from whose point of view the story is told, to adapt Artemia's designs from drawing board to fabric. Piluca's language in telling her tale is replete with religious overtones. Her first sentence, for instance, states: "Lloro como una Magdalena cuando pienso en la Artemia . . ." (44). Though her stated interest in telling

the story is to praise her mistress, the language she chooses obviously undercuts her declared purpose. In referring to herself as "mujer seria," and elsewhere as "mujer honrada," by punctuating sentences with expressions such as "¡Dios mío! ¡Virgen Santísima!" and by having Artemia herself agree at one point, "Usted es una santulona, pero no hay derecho de imponerle sus ideas a los demás" (49), the narrator sets up a contrast between herself, the virtuous woman and Artemia, the evil artist. In characterizing her *señora*, Piluca says at another point, "La señorita Artemia era perezosa. No es mal que lo sea el que puede, pero dicen que la ociosidad es madre de todos los vicios y a mí me atemorizan los vicios" (47). She further explains, "[Artemia] Podía ser buenísima, pero hay bondades que matan . . . son como una pistola al pecho, para obligarle a uno a hacer lo que no quiere" (45,47).

In all of this the reader may intuit Piluca's desire to free herself of any guilt over what occurs in the story, though, again, her actions belie her words. Although it is Piluca who makes the "dangerous dresses" of the story's title, she does so only unwillingly. Her description, however, of staying up all night on occasion just to finish a dress seems to contradict this stated unwillingness. Although it is Piluca who gives the advice and makes the outfit which eventually kills Artemia, by her own account, Piluca is the good woman, cautious, religious and obedient; Artemia, by contrast, is associated with vice, danger, and creative power.

Piluca describes three indecent dresses that Artemia designs and that Piluca makes for her. One is a velvet jumper with a scandalously low neckline, "que con pezón y todo se veían [los pechos] como en una computadora, dentro del escote." The next is a net dress covered with designs of hands and feet, which seem to caress her body as she moves. The last also is a transparent dress through which Artemia's body may be seen, this time covered with flesh-colored male and female nudes: "Al moverse todos esos cuerpos, representaban una orgía. . ." Each time she wears one of these costumes into the street, she returns the next morning to read in the newspaper that in another part of the world (in Budapest, in Tokyo, and in Oklahoma), a woman had been raped and murdered the night before, in an outfit of exactly the description of Artemia's dress. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* explains that the goddess Artemis is "a daughter of Zeus, 'lady of wild things,' and a 'lion unto women,' because their sudden and painless deaths are ascribed to her" (127). The mythological reference implied by the protagonist's name reinforces the fantastic interpretation of this story, that Artemia is causing the other women's deaths. Our Goddess, however, appears disappointed in her powers, for Artemia's reaction to reading of other women's tragedies in dresses of her own design is always tears of rage, "Debió de sucederme a mí," she says at one point, and at another, "No puedo hacer nada en el mundo sin que otras mujeres me copien . . . Son unas copionas. Y las copionas son las que tienen éxito" (50).

In the conclusion, the cautious Piluca advises her mistress to wear a simple outfit of dark pants and a man's shirt. Since everyone wears such clothing, she could not complain that others were copying her. The next morning the police inform Piluca that her mistress was found raped and murdered in a dark street. This strange story, which appears to treat with irony a theme horrific to most women, also seems to offer a dismal interpretation of women's creativity. While Artemia remained true to her own creative instincts, her efforts proved destructive to other women; when she compromised her energies in accordance with custom and convention, her effort proved destructive to herself. The garb in which she is killed, significantly, is described as masculine or at least as sexually neutral: "Aconsejé a la Artemia que se vistiera con pantalón oscuro y camisa de hombre. Una vestimenta sobria, que nadie podía copiarle, porque todas la jóvenes la llevaban. . . Verla así, vestida de muchachito, me encantó, porque con esa figurita ¿a quién no le queda bien el pantalón?" (52). Hiding the female element of art proves at first glance more dangerous than flaunting it.

The story, however, supports another interpretation: that Artemia wanted to be raped and killed. In this case, the garb which Piluca suggests to her represents, not a compromise with convention, but an artistic creation most authentically true to herself. Instead of outrageously exotic creations, she has produced one that expresses the artist's most genuine self, the ordinary, everyday aspects of her life. If Artemia's idea of "success," however repugnant it may be for us, is rape and murder, the story also offers insight into Silvina Ocampo's ambivalent reaction to success in artistic endeavor. Corporal violence may be Ocampo's metaphor for what happens to any successful artist/writer. An author instinctively wants to be read, yet success for Ocampo, as for her creation, Artemia, is a double-edged sword, a trampling, an invasion, a destruction, just as success has been for most women.

Silvina Ocampo's stories empower both women and children in ways which male authors rarely do. Here we have seen how she uses women's traditional arts and crafts to evoke a female culture from which to venture into the strange world of the grotesque and the fantastic. Ocampo and her generation of Argentine writers have shown their weariness for dry intellectual literary pursuits in their revival of traditional detective and fantastic fiction. While Borges, Bioy Casares and Cortázar have been busy undercutting the world of science and rational discourse, Ocampo has based her subversion of realism on the mundane, practical world of women's culture. Feminist readers may wish for a healthier vision of women and their work, yet Ocampo's fiction is not in the business of health. Her very choice of woman's world as the subject of modern disease signals Silvina Ocampo's important contribution to the integration of woman's concerns into literary representation.

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To Have a Voice: The Politics of the Diva

Susan J. Leonardi

She often wonders what her life had been
Without that voice for channel to her soul.
She says, it must have leaped through all her limbs—
Made her a Maenad. . . .

.
“Poor wretch!” she says of any murderess—
“The world was cruel, and she could not sing” (Eliot, 75).

The subject of this passage, Armgart, is an opera singer and the eponymous heroine of a little read, long out-of-print verse drama by George Eliot.¹ Armgart’s story, short and sad, lays bare the central problem of the nineteenth-century woman—she has no voice.

Music theorist Eva Rieger explains that women were barred from “high” music from the middle ages until the seventeenth century “when women first stepped onto the opera and concert stage as singers” (133). Aside from this role, however, and, for less talented or retired singers, the role of music teacher, women even well into this century had, and still have, limited access to the musical world. It makes sense, then, that women writers such as George Eliot and George Sand in the nineteenth century and Willa Cather and Marcia Davenport in the twentieth, choose an opera singer as heroine: she is (as they are or aspire to be) a female success in a male world—and not a token, not, as Armgart boasts, a patronized exception:

“Men did not say, when I had sung last night,
‘Twas good, nay, wonderful, considering
She is a woman’—and then turn to add,
‘Tenor or baritone had sung her songs
Better of course . . . ’ ” (96).

Opera composers and lovers did not, that is, merely tolerate the soprano, they wanted her. A soprano, by the nineteenth century, was a legitimate role for a woman and, indeed, a role that *required* a woman.

As my opening quote and opening comment imply, however, the issues here are broader and more complex than the gradual acceptance of women into music. The singer, unlike her sisters, who, Armgart suggests, have only the choice between acquiescent silence and violent madness, *has a voice*. We use that phrase, "to have a voice," metaphorically² in our ordinary speech. Although to say that someone has a voice may mean that one can exercise one's vocal chords so as to produce more or less comprehensible and expressive sounds, more often the expression suggests, first, that someone is a powerful speaker or a good singer or, second, that one participates in or has control over something: "If we had more voice," say members of the Music Resource Center, "our children would not be subjected to voices of violence and corruption." A third figurative use of "voice" is as representative of the speaking or singing person ("voices of violence," for example). In many works about opera singers written by women, these three common figurative uses of "voice" converge with the literal use in the figure of the diva—who has a voice in all these senses. The female opera singer, then, is the woman who, for these women writers and for their characters, has preeminently and indisputably a voice. Illustrative are two twentieth-century texts which explore the uses of "voice" in the person of the diva, which, that is, use the diva's singing voice to explore the possibility of a woman's "having a voice"—having power in the sense of both control and creation—outside the domestic sphere.

First, the diva's singing voice serves as a metonym for the woman herself; it becomes for these diva characters inseparable from their identities and becomes, further, the instrument by which these identities can expand and change. "Who would I be," ask the lyrics of a contemporary woman singer and songwriter, if I didn't sing?" (Ferron). A famous prima donna writes in her recently published autobiography, "My career makes me who I am. . . . In recitals I am I, Renata Scotto, singer. I am completely exposed as an instrument, as a woman" (178). "I am Stagnani," said another diva, "because of my voice. I often wonder who I could have been otherwise" (Rasponi 37). These flesh-and-blood divas, at least in their personae as divas, echo the sentiments of their fictional sisters: "What is my soul to me," cries Armgart, "without the voice/ That gave it freedom" (126)?

According to the narrative voice in Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark*, Thea Kronborg, the diva as a young woman, has a self, an identity, that is "hidden" or "within." "How deep they lay, these second persons, and how little one knew about them, except to guard them fiercely" (217). Thea's acquisition of her own room "was one of the most important things that ever happened to her. Hitherto . . . the clamor about her drowned the voice within herself" (58). Here the use of "voice" suggests both the singing voice and the hidden, the real self, which emerges in Thea as her singing voice emerges. It is Mr. Harsanyi, Thea's first music teacher, who recognizes this: "Under her crudeness and brusque hardness, he felt there was a nature

quite different, of which he never got so much as a hint except when she was at the piano, or when she sang. It was toward this hidden creature that he was trying . . . to find his way" (190). He explains this to Thea later in the novel when he dismisses her as a piano student and sends her to a singing teacher: "I believe that the strongest need of your nature is to find yourself, to emerge *as* yourself. Until I heard you sing I wondered how you were to do this" (208-09). Thea herself accepts her new career without question because, though she has never given voice to it, she has recognized the coincidence of singing voice and self: "She never asked herself why she was studying voice. Her voice, more than any other part of her, had to do with that confidence, that sense of wholeness and inner well-being that she had felt . . . ever since she could remember" (216). The text several times distinguishes between the speaking voice and the singing voice. Thea envies "people who could use words in that confident way and who spoke them elegantly" (219). She, on the other hand, has great difficulty speaking and writing. Her singing voice seems to have, in fact, quite a different source from the speaking voice, which belongs preeminently in the novel to men and to the upper classes. Her singing voice is ". . . vitality, a lightness in the body and a driving power in the blood" (307).

Unlike Thea, Lena, in Marcia Davenport's 1936 novel *Of Lena Geyer*, has mastered speech as well as song. But it is a speech which has its root in her training as an opera singer and, furthermore, a speech quite different from, more extravagant and varied than, the speech of the other characters. Lena's companion, Elsie de Haven, describes it: "I never knew what language she might speak when she was excited. If she were angry it was apt to be Italian. If mischievous, French. If ecstatic, German. Once in a while she would explode into a hideous gibberish nobody could understand. That was Czech, her native tongue" (217). Thus Lena, in speech, appears to have almost no national identity. Her frequent change of language disconcerts the reader as well as other characters and implies that, since Czech is wholly incomprehensible even to her closest friends, her real mother tongue, in the sense of a communicative vehicle, is song. Neither Thea nor Lena, then, can communicate in the speaking voices their mothers gave them (voices necessarily limited by their having no voice outside the home), but both, as we shall see, have the power to pass on voice, in all its senses, to other women.

Though Lena has mastered speech, her singing voice, like Thea's, appears the source of her "identity." Her rejected lover, the duke of Chartres, claims to understand "how great was her psychological dependence upon the art in which she had made herself supreme. Without it, even with a remote diminution of her prowess, she lost confidence, stature, the vitality that set her apart . . ." (153). When Lena dismisses the duke—because she senses this "remote diminution of her prowess"—she identifies herself with her voice: "I am not the great love, dear Louis—for anybody. I cannot be. I am only"—she made a futile gesture—"a throat" (198). The self-conscious

melodrama of this proclamation undercuts its negativity; nowhere else in the novel does she deprecate her voice. Consummate actress and roleplayer, she here mimics the conventional stance of female inadequacy to protect her potency and independence.

Not only does the diva equate voice and self, she also expands and changes her identity, even her sexual identity, through the use of this instrument. Armgart's voice teacher, Leo, in a moment of both pride and anger, makes clear that she has not merely incorporated but usurped both the male's text and the traditionally masculine-identified musical tradition:

Armgart stood
As if she had been new-created there
And found her voice which found a melody.
The minx! Gluck had not written, nor I taught:
Orpheus was Armgart, Armgart Orpheus (82).

Armgart's twentieth-century counterparts, Thea and Lena, experience similar transformations. Thea, as she rediscovers the meaning of her voice in the silence of Panther Canyon, realizes that "she could become a mere receptacle for heat, or become a color, like the bright lizards that darted about . . . or she could become a continuous repetition of sound, like cicadas" (299). For Fred, her devoted friend and eventual spouse, Thea becomes the Wagnerian women that she sings—Elsa, Fricka, Sieglinde. Lena's lover, too, is fascinated with her power of transformation: "To me she seemed a Norn, a Fate, most awe-inspiring in her pride and dignity" (122). Lena's companion, Elsie, loves the cupboard full of "wigs, hats, crowns, helmets, and hair ornaments. Here were the visible personalities of all the women Lena Geyer could become" (353). Significantly, the headpieces more than the clothes stand for these personalities, because it is from above the shoulders, most specifically, from the throat, that Lena changes selves. When Lena falls ill, when she loses her voice, both singing and speaking, everyone's anxiety is "Even if we succeeded in making her well again, physically, what would the body of this woman be without her divine voice"? (404). Living divas and their audiences also record these transformations. In Yeatsian fashion, Renata Scotto comments on a headline—"Renata di Lammermoor"—after her appearances as Lucia di Lammermoor: "They were not far wrong: it was impossible for me to separate the tragedienne from the tragedy on that . . . opening night in 1967" (77-78). And, of course, prima donnas have roles which both they and their admirers think of as *theirs*.

This sort of temporary identification is doubtless an experience of male performers as well, but what makes it so suggestive and so significant in the divas which women writers create (and perhaps for real divas, too) is that though women's role in both the musical world and the larger world is so

frequently limited to the reproductive, the prima donna, as she reproduces a character (usually a woman created by a man), can improvise—and thus revise. I have discussed “voice” as metaphor and more than metaphor, for the whole person; this function of the diva as improviser and reviser leads to a second use of “voice”—that is, participation, control, power, creation. Divas in these texts have a voice in the production of an opera, in the interpretation of an aria, in the creation of a character. Unlike most women, they have power; they are in control. Their first power is the ability to step out of the reproductive sphere in the world of music. Eva Rieger claims that we tend to make too rigid a division between reproductive and productive, between “uncreative performance and creative composition” (136), and that “in reality this division is a blurred one” (136). Divas telling their own stories make this claim. They see themselves not as reproductive artists but as creative artists capable of new interpretation and of improvisation both of the music itself and of the characters they play. Scotto, for example, writes that she “changed the written cadenza [in a Meyerbeer opera], taking a high C, then an E natural after the cabaletta, all for vocal effect. The audience went crazy and I received some of the most beautiful applause of my career” (79). For Julianne Baird, one of the attractions of singing early opera is her freedom, not always approved of by critics, from uncritical and slavish devotion to the text. “ ‘A certain noble disdain,’ ” she quotes, “that’s what makes an artistic performance. Improvising and embellishing is like going out on a limb . . . you don’t know how far [you can go] . . . unless you test it” (Crutchfield, 38H, col. 6).

Similarly, fictional texts which use the diva blur this distinction between reproductive and creative. Armgart’s voice teacher reproaches her for her improvisation: “It was not part of him—that trill you made/ In spite of me and reason!” (78). In the person of the male composer and the male teacher, Armgart defies the male establishment. She replies, “O I trilled/ At nature’s prompting, like the nightingales./ Go scold them . . . ” (79).

In *The Song of the Lark* Thea so thoroughly rewrites, through her voice and body, the women she plays that they become to her audiences quite other. When she is Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Fred claims that after Lohengrin leaves her, she becomes an abbess. “Doesn’t she die, then, at the end?” Dr. Archie asks, puzzled by this strange departure from the opera text. Fred responds, “Some Elsas do; she didn’t. She left me with the distinct impression that she was just beginning” (421). Similarly, she transforms Fricka, defender of the domestic order in *Das Rheingold*, into a goddess of wisdom (447-8). The content of the revisions here is significant: in both cases Thea has taken a female character invested with the traits of traditional womanhood and transformed her into someone quite other, someone stronger, someone more dignified, someone capable of standing on her own.

The diva takes this power of revision to the second power when she moves from the stage to the wider world. The strength, authority, and

independence she claims on stage become the enabling experience for her similar, and uncommon, stance of authority and independence in the world. The main action of *Armgart* is the singer's refusal to marry Graf, who wishes her to ". . . find repose/ As feebler wings do, in a quiet nest" (88), the nest of his arms, his home, his protection. Armgart refuses again and again:

Oh I can live unmated, but not live
Without the bliss of singing to the world,
And feeling all my world respond to me (106).

It is her voice, in all senses, that she refuses to relinquish, the voice that resembles more the eagle than any bird of feebler wing.

Both Thea and Lena follow Armgart's example. Fred asks Thea, " 'Suppose I were to offer you . . . a comfortable flat in Chicago, a summer camp in the woods, musical evenings, and a family to bring up? Would it look attractive to you?' Thea sat up straight and stared at him in alarm, glared into his eyes. 'Perfectly hideous!' " (317). Thea, too, identifies with the eagle (321) and is not a "nest-building bird" (317).

Though at one point in *Of Lena Geyer*, Lena suggests to Elsie that living without a man is living without the most important thing in life, she replies to Elsie's teasing question, "What would you do if you had one hanging around this summer?" "Kill him . . . I have to learn *Tristan*" (342). When Elsie again brings up this "important" man, Lena says, "You'll be worse than an idiot if you don't stop talking drivel . . . You'll be a corpse" (344). We have already seen that Lena dismisses the duke because his love-making drains power from her voice. She only accepts his attentions in the first place with the understanding that "I shall try to be yours and live for my art too . . . but I must be fair with you. If I cannot do both, you know what my choice will have to be" (152). When the duke, exercising what he feels to be his male prerogative, tells Lena not to go to Salzburg to sing with Lilli Lehmann, her voice teacher, she is incredulous. "You do not wish me to? . . . But I have already said that I must. I am going" (175). She refuses to allow him to accompany her.

When Lena dismisses the duke, she effectively dismisses the male world:

Lena Geyer's new menage . . . was the greatest possible contrast to the romantic one of the five preceding years. Instead of the duke to watch over her she had Elsie de Haven. Instead of the ubiquitous Pierre as major-domo . . . she had Elsie's prim and correct Mademoiselle. Instead of the French and Austrian retinue provided by the duke, the household consisted of her own Dora . . . , Elsie's . . . maid, Nellie; and a cook . . . " (236).

A "gynaecium" the narrator calls this substitution of women for the duke and his retinue. These choices of art over wifely domesticity, of independent existence in the context of a female community over dependence on a man are choices of power over impotence, of voice over silence and drivel. When Armgart loses her singing voice, she contemplates suicide because she fears she has lost this voice-in-the-world:

I can do nought
Better than what a million women do—
Must drudge among the crowd and feel my life
Beating upon the world without response (127).

Armgart's decision to live—in order to pass on her voice—illustrates the final power of the diva that I will discuss here: the power to change the lives of those who hear her, but especially to change the lives of other women, to give them a voice in all senses. Armgart's cousin Walpurga asserts, "She fills my life that would be empty else,/ And lifts my nought to value by her side" (73). Although most of Thea's associates are appreciative and sensitive men (created, of course, by a woman writer), "to no individual has she given more than to her queer old aunt in Moonstone. The legend of Kronborg, the artist, fills Tillie's life; she feels rich and exalted by it" (468). The power and exaltation Tillie experiences in Thea she then invests in her own speech. It is talk of Thea that animates Tillie's limited verbal skills and allows her to claim status in her community.

Most dramatic is Lena's effect of Elsie de Haven. The first time Elsie hears Lena sing

It was exactly like the unlocking of a prison door. The voice poured into me. . . . The whole identity that my parents had so carefully created melted into the force of the singing. . . . All the barriers built up by convention and habit seemed to shrivel, and I felt . . . a free and purposeful individual. I did not know I was repressed, or inarticulate, yet once I felt freed, I knew that I had never lived before (225).

This power is perhaps the most important function of the diva in these works. She receives the gift of singing voice from a mother and a female voice teacher (both Thea and Lena are taught by the historical diva Lilli Lehmann); when she loses that voice she passes it on to another generation of women. She is an exception among women, to be sure. Her voice is no ordinary woman's voice nor can most women live her ambitious, powerful life. But this voice and this life empower other women, free them from the necessity of marriage, and give them voice, in Armgart's words, for channel to their souls.

NOTES

This essay is a preliminary chapter of a much larger work—on the diva figure in women's texts—which I am writing in collaboration with Rebecca A. Pope (University of Chicago). She worked with me on this piece from its inception but is not responsible for any lapses.

1. Sandra Glibert and Susan Gubar in *Madwoman in the Attic* brought this work to my attention.

2. I use "metaphoric" here in its broad sense of figurative or non-literal. These uses of "voice" are, more strictly, metonymic.

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Simulation, Gender, and Postmodernism:
Sam Shepard and *Paris, Texas*

Stephen Watt

To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence (5).

—Jean Baudrillard,
Simulations

Men worried how Women will see them. Men turning themselves into advertisements of Men. . . . Women turning themselves into advertisements of Women (81).

Sam Shepard, *Motel Chronicles*

While sometimes altered or cut in production, the inaugural moments of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) both establish definitions of gender prevalent in contemporary American culture and replicate the trajectories of several recent sociological ("environmental") explanations of engenderedness.¹ Recall the scene: dressed in denim work clothes and "bellowing" to his wife, Stanley Kowalski swaggers around the corner and heaves a blood-stained package of meat to Stella, who obediently emerges from their apartment onto a landing. This simple action foreshadows subsequent conflict in Williams' play and, as I hope to demonstrate, suggests a line of inquiry into representations of gender in postmodern theatre.² Stanley's role as "gaudy seed-bearer" entitles him to mobility *outside* the family home, to a self-definition in *occupational* rather than familial terms (something intimated by his work clothing), and—consequently—to levels of power unavailable to Stella.³ Conversely, Stella, as she informs her sister Blanche DuBois, fulfills the letter of gender laws *indoors*, depending on "the things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark" to render basic inequities "unimportant" (81). Significantly, in the opening scene Stella moves out to the landing, a space outside her apartment yet attached to it. This clears the way for Blanche, the real denizen of the interior, who serves finally as the absolute Other to verify Stanley's identity as phallic-empowered male.⁴ Nevertheless, a fundamental difference distinguishes Williams' characters from those in much postmodern drama and film, one I shall hazard to describe in a provisional, admittedly reductive hypothesis: in Stanley's rape of Blanche—the "date"

that Stanley views as "inevitable"—Williams presents the confrontation of the *completed* opposites male/female. To be sure, Blanche's sense of identity contains fantasy material, undergoes marked slippages, and is fabricated from her estimates of what men might find desirable in her. Still, Blanche insists that she possesses "beauty of the mind," "richness of the spirit," and "tenderness of the heart"; these "treasures" are locked in her heart, she maintains, constituting her unique identity. No one can take this away. In a similar way, both Stanley's identity and bestial maleness seem secure, as his personality traits are repeated with a consistency sufficient to identify them (repetition, in a sense, confirms identity). Hence, gender is inextricably linked with identity, and when Williams' characters look into mirrors, as Blanche frequently does, they tend to see themselves as completed subjects.

As I have mentioned, contemporary American drama frequently represents human subjectivity and gender in vastly different ways, though sexual violence toward women remains a brutal constant from Williams' *Streetcar* to, say, David Mamet's *Edmond* (1983), David Rabe's *Hurlyburly* (1984), and—the focus of much of the following—the work of Sam Shepard. As Fredric Jameson has speculated, one "component" of postmodernism, one of these differences, concerns the end of individualism or the putative "death of the subject" (114). Once the idealization of a unique self or "private identity" is exploded, Jameson maintains, selfhood consists merely of the imitation of dead styles, a speaking through masks. No unique subjective "treasures" glisten in the heart signalling a presence or irreducible self; on the contrary, one is left only with what Jean Baudrillard has termed "simulation"—a feigning of what one lacks. This feigning, it seems to me, is closely related to two other prevalent phenomena on the postmodern stage: first, what Jameson identifies as the effacement of "key boundaries" between "high culture" and so-called "mass culture"; and second, a conception of maleness characterized either by phallic mastery or by the sharp negation of femaleness. That is, in the theatre and cinema which I shall endeavor to describe as "postmodern," regardless of the perils in employing such a problematic adjective, men too often attain both identity and gender partially through a voracious appropriation of popular cultural representations of masculinity, and partially (perversely) through the brutalization or marginalization of women.

The Sam Shepard-Wim Wenders collaboration on *Paris, Texas* (1984) brought together two artists keenly interested in problems of identity, especially male identity, in postmodern culture. For the past twenty years Shepard's plays—and several pieces of prose and poetry in *Hawk Moon* (1973) and *Motel Chronicles* (1982)—have interrogated male identity in American society. And, in films like *Kings of the Road* (1976) and *The American Friend* (1977), Wenders seems to share Shepard's fascination for what Pauline Kael in a rather ungenerous review of the latter film termed "poetic

urban masochism," a criticism often accompanied by the descriptions "alienation" and "male wanderlust" (18).⁵ In addition, unmistakable stylistic parallels relate *The American Friend* to *Paris, Texas*: in both, photographs serve as an index of subjectivity; in both, Wenders skillfully meditates upon lost identity through motifs of mirror images and tight framing (and real picture frames in *The American Friend*). The narrative of *The American Friend* makes explicit what Wenders' shots imply as the American loner Tom Ripley (Dennis Hopper)—a criminal living in Germany who wears a cowboy hat and boots, smokes Marlboros, and simulates a rugged Western hero—tells his tape recorder of his confusion, and later plays back his monologue: "There's nothing to fear but fear itself. (Pause) I know less and less about, uh, who I am—or who anybody else is." His "friend" Jonathan Zimmermann (Bruno Ganz), once apparently secure in his role as husband and father, becomes neurotically uncertain about his identity as *The American Friend* progresses to its rather discouraging final shot: a lone man (Nicholas Ray) on the road again.

Paris, Texas concludes in similar fashion with Travis Henderson (Harry Dean Stanton) driving alone toward the Texas desert after returning his son to his estranged wife Jane (Nastassja Kinski). As is the case with *The American Friend*, underlying *Paris, Texas*—and Shepard's more recent plays such as *Curse of the Starving Class* (1978), *True West* (1980), and *Fool for Love* (1983)—lurks a familiar problematic of male identity represented by the binarism lone traveller/family man. However, more so than in *The American Friend*, women in *Paris, Texas* not only participate in a male quest for identity, but are also forced to confront or ignore their own identities (though women, for the most part, remain in the margins of Shepard's plays). Throughout the film, windows, window frames, mirrors, and photographs serve as figures of uncompleted identity, which erase any hints of a mythology of psychic wholeness. On the contrary, in one chilling medium close-up Jane looks into a mirror turned part window only to see Travis's face. The blonde hair and body are hers, the face his. Since her separation from her husband—and her surrender of their son to Travis's younger brother and his wife—Jane has worked as a "listener" *qua* nude model at the Keyhole Club, a sleazy Port Arthur, Texas peep-show. The "listening" system, which I shall describe momentarily, operates by eroding the division between public and private space. It is precisely this erosion, I believe, which characterizes engenderedness in contemporary drama, especially Shepard's. Baudrillard explains: "[The] loss of public space occurs contemporaneously with the loss of private space. The one is no longer a spectacle, the other no longer a secret. Their distinctive opposition . . . is effaced in a sort of *obscenity* where the most intimate processes of life become the virtual feeding ground of the media" ("Ecstasy" 130). Borrowing a metaphor from Rabe's *Hurlyburly*, as a result of this collapse between public/private, human subjects become mere "cardboard cut-outs bumping around in . . . this spin-off of what was once

prime-time life" (115). In the hurlyburly of Rabe's Hollywood, where the airwaves are saturated with millions of "TV waves," subjectivity is constituted of daily wanderings through a dense "fog of TV thoughts" (93).

Baudrillard's point might be repointed to dramatize the implosion of the private, most intimate human moments—those in which one might assume the presence of the "purest," most completed subject and gender—by the continual incursion of the public (the omnipresent television deep in the solitary *mise-en-scènes* of *Paris, Texas* and *The American Friend*). The consequences of this abduction of the private? An incomplete, constructed and reconstructed Lacanian subject, one neither anchored nor delimited by biology. In this obscenity, words like autoeroticism, even, resonate of antiquated impossibility as concepts of selfhood decay into unreliability. Not surprisingly, the death of the subject and its impact on gender become most apparent in those moments of the postmodern text when the separation between canonical and mass cultures is dissolved. One humorous instance of this occurs in Peter Nichols' *Forget-Me-Not-Lane* (1971) in which two boys compare masturbatory fantasies:

Ivor: Hey, man, you know when you toss off . . . d'you pretend you're a man or a woman?

Frank: I keep changing about. Sometimes I'm a slave girl like Hedy Lamarr. . . . Then I come in as the brave bloke—

Ivor: Alan Ladd?

Frank: Yeah. (38)

Concepts of femaleness are produced in analogous ways and more clearly represent a "simulation" due to an absence or lack of identity in Rabe's savage play *In the Boom Boom Room* (1972). Chrissy, an abused go-go dancer suffering from severe depression, sadly claims not to "have a real self in me. . . . No real self" (82). In lines sticky with what Rabe calls the saccharine "pop-rock sentiment" of the Shirelles, Martha and the Vandellas, and Aretha Franklin, Chrissy decides to construct a self by getting married and being "dedicated to the one I love." Simulation replaces identity and marks its absence.

Shepard and Wenders clearly understand this process. Following Jane into the Keyhole Club, Travis is forced to employ a special "communication" system if he wishes to speak to her. Presumably seeking either some variety of consolation (maternal?) or some means of sexual arousal, the customer (male) enters one of numerous booths, each one labelled to promise a different setting (fantasy) behind a mirror which is transformed into a window after payment has been made. He then picks up a telephone and orders a woman to appear behind the mirror which separates them. Travis does this and requests Jane, but another "model" known only as Nurse Bibs arrives behind the mirror which, through backlighting, has turned into a

window for Travis. At this point, he is surprised to learn that she cannot see him. As Nurse Bibs explains, for all the women the window remains a mirror, a kind of self-imposed blindness which they prefer to sight: "Listen, sweetheart, if I could see you guys, I wouldn't be working here. . . . I see what you see: Nurse Bibs . . . Nurse Bibs and her rubber horse" (77). One might infer from this—and from Jane's later admission that she has *never* attempted to recognize her customers—that the models at this club choose to be oblivious not only to their customers' identities, but to their own as well. They see in the mirrors only their commodified surrogates, the objects of a stranger's desire: nurse, stripper, prostitute, and so on. Ironically, in the "session" in which Jane recognizes Travis, he makes a similar choice not to see himself by turning his back to the mirror as he narrates the history of their relationship.

Travis's chronicle seems sadly predictable, particularly as it reveals his construction of his wife's identity. In the case of Travis's family, this "predictability" has a long history, as he reveals to Hunter that his (Travis's) father similarly contrived his mother's identity: "He [Travis's father] had this idea about her [Travis's mother] . . . he looked at her, but . . . he didn't see her. He saw his idea. . . . He actually believed it" (85). During his marriage, Travis supposed "all kinds of things" about Jane, including his unfounded conviction that she was "seeing other men on the sly." This fear resulted not only in Travis's excessive drinking, but also in a nasty daily ritual of roping her to a stove. Then, without notice, he abandoned Jane and his son, embarking upon the same odyssey into the desert as the fathers in *Curse of the Starving Class*, *True West*, and—especially important—in Shepard's own family.⁶ One might regard Eddie's exit at the end of *Fool for Love* as replicating this pattern of self-imposed exile, an emblem of men's inability to sustain a mature relationship in Shepard's plays. Perhaps more meaningful, however, than Travis's (mis)construction of his wife's identity, his absence has exerted a profound effect on Jane's sense of self, laying bare what for Lacan is already and always incomplete. She begins her account of life without Travis haltingly, conceding that it was much easier to talk with him when she only imagined his existence. Now, she laments while sitting with her back to the mirror, every man has Travis's voice. Above her clutching the telephone receiver and illuminated so faintly that only his head and hands are visible, Travis listens and gazes aimlessly straight ahead. Moments later, Jane is reunited with her young son and a battered El Camino rolls onto Interstate 59, heading toward the Texas desert.

These startling shots and motifs in *Paris, Texas* actualize, I believe, Shepard's scrupulously mean representation of gender and identity. Moreover, Wenders' stylistic signatures serve to dismantle the assumptions upon which many students of Shepard's dramas too often rely: the myths of a completed human subject and gender. These convenient fictions lead to conclusions like Florence Falk's that Shepard's characters are merely

"tourists caught in a world that has undergone a cultural landslide, looking through the debris to find images of themselves" (91). This is unlikely. If the fragmented and plural images of self in the mirrors of *Paris, Texas* reveal anything, it is that subjectivity is seldom absolute. How then might one glean the shards of cultural debris for something that was never there in the first place? Even Hoss, the aging rock star in *The Tooth of Crime* (1972), suggests as much when he claims to be "stuck in his image" or when he snarls to Becky that she might be "O.K." if she only "had a self." But *having* a self is vastly different from the enterprise of *making* a self, an achievement of which Hoss's young adversary Crow boasts. Accepting Hoss's challenge to show him "how to be a man," Crow celebrates simulation in the refrain of his victory song:

But I believe in my mask—the man I made up is me
And I believe in my dance—And my destiny. (*Seven Plays* 232)

In the postmodern nightmare, "I" makes "me," subject makes object, in a constantly modulating simulation of selfhood.

How does this simulation define Shepard's characters? What is its origin? In contemplating these questions, I have found Nancy Chodorow's primarily sociological explanation of gender coupled with Shepard's biography a powerful tandem. More broadly, studies like Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Motherhood* seem potently empowered to illuminate depictions of maleness in contemporary literature. Take, for example, Chodorow's observation that, unlike girls, young boys learn very early in life to define masculinity *negatively* as that which is "not feminine and/or connected to women." Further, boys in "father-absent" and "father-remote families develop a sense of what it is to be masculine through identification with cultural images of masculinity" (175-76), while girls tend to identify with their mothers and maternal roles. In this regard, May and Eddie's debate over the term "man" in *Fool For Love*, which for Eddie involves expertise in rodeo-cowboy skills, seems relevant. So too do the circumstances of Shepard's childhood as he outlined them in a now famous interview with *Theatre Quarterly* and amplified in *Motel Chronicles*: born at Fort Sheridan, Illinois ("My father was in Italy then," Shepard remarked); moving across the United States and once to Guam; living with his aunt, mother, and sisters in Pasadena; becoming inured to his father's periodic returns, often in the role of disciplinarian (Shepard recalls, "He was very strict, my father, very aware of the need for discipline. . . . I couldn't stand it"); turning to rock music as means of finding himself ("Metaphors" 3). It thus seems hardly surprising that Shepard's plays are haunted by ghostly fathers and would-be rock stars, cowboys, film detectives, quasi-athletes, or—most disturbing yet also most telling—mean-spirited phallic bullies. These images constitute, if nothing else, the "buried child" or myth of maleness in

Shepard's plays. Halie's illusions about Ansel in *Buried Child* (1979) provide an emblem of this fiction, as she ponders having a statue of him built with "a basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other" (*Seven Plays* 73). The fact that Shepard's characters define maleness by way of appropriations from popular culture has not eluded scholars. But the relationship between the need for these appropriations and *negations of the feminine, celebrations of the phallus, and the absence of the father* remains unexamined.

While Shepard's plays contain vivid instances of these postmodern symptoms, few plays in the contemporary theatre have been so explicit in presenting maleness as a negation of the feminine as Rabe's. Indeed, the basic training instruction in *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel* (1971) depends upon the drill sergeant's ability to convince his recruits first of their inadequacies as men and second, later in the training period, of their having ascended to a new plateau of maleness. In his first appearance, Sergeant Tower reminds his charges of their genital configurations: "[You have] BALLS BETWEEN YOUR LEGS! YOU HAVE BALLS! NO SLITS! BUT BALLS!" (15).⁷ In Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* (1972) this linguistic pattern continues with a vengeance: in one rage Ozzie insinuates that all Vietnamese women suffer from venereal disease, and in another he suggests that his wife Harriet's organs—her "internal female organs"—have "got some kind of poison in them" (174). Coincidental with these "negations," a woefully inadequate term, are Ozzie's equations of his past—"when I was myself," he declares and repeats—with a "scrapbook of victories, a bag of medals and ribbons" which attest to his maleness. So, of course, does his penis, as he threatens Harriet that at any time he could throw her on the floor and impregnate her. (A thoroughly unimpressed Harriet responds, "I doubt that, Ozzie.") As in Shepard's plays, gender in Rabe's drama is in part a product of mass culture. Much like Halie's vision of Ansel's martial prowess, Pavlo Hummel's mother informs him that his "fathers" were "movie men, filmdom's great" war heroes. Ironically, of course, Pavlo dies in the play's opening scene in a dispute over a prostitute when a shrapnel grenade explodes in his lap castrating him. No film heroes here—manhood in Rabe's plays is achieved through intercourse with a prostitute in *Pavlo Hummel* or with a fourteen-year-old runaway in *Hurlyburly*.

In Shepard's plays, being a man often entails one unsettling attribute of culturally-produced notions of the masculine: the violent display of phallic mastery over women. These self-aggrandizing moments appear routinely in Shepard's early work, as he attempts to discover an independent identity apart from his family. Sexual deployment of the phallus offers one means of asserting this independence and substantiating gender, the son's apparent goal in the final monologue of *The Rock Garden* (1964). Shepard notes in the interview with *Theatre Quarterly* that this play is about "leaving my mom and dad"; if this is so, then leave-taking is linked to an expression of genital sexuality, as the son's celebration of the phallus's overcoming of disparate

vaginas would seem to imply: "When I come it's like a river. . . . [And] if a girl has a really small vagina it's really better to go in from behind. . . . The thing with a big vagina is that there isn't much contact" (*Angel City and Other Plays* 226). As this monologue and the play end, the "masterful" boy achieves orgasm while bragging of his experience and denigrating women—and his father falls off a couch. But the phallus—or its surrogate like the computer-snake in *Operation Sidewinder* (1970) or the Buntline special revolver with an "extra long barrel" in the gruesome "Montana" in *Hawk Moon*—can also be used as a weapon against women or the feminine. Wes in *Curse of the Starving Class* urinates on his sister's 4-H project, and the hero of a pornographic novel perpetrates similar excremental violence during a debasing fellatio in the opening monologue of *Shaved Splits* (1970). Indeed, *Shaved Splits*, which begins with an effacement of divisions between public and private through the reading of pornography over a public address system, might be regarded as an absurdist male fantasy which simply reconfirms that women like the central character Miss Cherry secretly desire enormous penises. But surely the most graphic assault on women occurs in "Montana," the hallucinatory prose fragment in which "Super Cowboy Man" enters a woman with a pistol and pulls the trigger. The "Cowboy Man," drifting in a drunken haze in New York, then burns the woman's body, takes four hundred dollars, and asks a cabdriver to take him to Montana. This familiar desire in Shepard's drama—the desire for escape into the American West—is thus accompanied by a psychic imperative for the removal of the woman, although this removal generally takes the shape of abandonment.

The simulation of maleness in American drama—a phenomenon marked by a privileging of the phallus and the collapse of binarisms such as public/private, subject/object—may in Shepard's case lead to examinations of other social phenomena, most notably the decline of the family. Immersed in what some have called a period of his "family dramas," Shepard, in my view, has always intimated that the impact of parents on their child's sense of self-identity and gender is determinative. Several passages in *Motel Chronicles* would seem to denote this; in one of these, Shepard recalls the provenience of confusion about gender, a precocious reminiscence of his birth: "I'd come from her body but I wasn't sure how. I knew I was away from her body now. Separate. . . . I heard a humming which turned out to be airplanes. B-29's. I felt a tremendous panic suddenly. I was between these worlds" (53). Of course, the pressure to enter the world of the B-29's, the world of men, is enormous. As I have tried to outline here, genital-sexual activity is one way to move into this world. Yet this course is not without hazards, for it demands a level of self-identity few of Shepard's male characters possess. A much simpler option, it seems, is to escape into a world of one or, as Shepard does in *Motel Chronicles*, regress into an embryonic reverie that precedes subject-object dichotomy: "This was the place to be, he thought.

Right here. In the middle. Smack in the belly of California where he could eyeball both [Los Angeles and San Francisco] from a distance. He could live inside the intestine of this valley while he spied on the brain and the genitals" (121). This is the place, however, that the postmodern male (or female, for that matter) cannot reach: a womb that is paradoxically a distance between the brain and the genitals, between identity and gender.⁸

NOTES

1. For an especially helpful review of sociological explanations of gender, see Archer and Lloyd 250-80.

2. This is certainly *not* the place to debate about Shepard's "membership" in any literature designated as "postmodern," but certainly it is essential to explain my recognition of the perils associated with use of this term. I should like to think I employ this term of periodization not to designate an "arbitrary division" of what appears to be an "historical continuum," but as what Calinescu calls a "mode of questioning" (249). Of the important work on postmodernism by Jean-Francois Lyotard, Ihab Hassan, Charles Newman, Matei Calinescu, and others, see Hassan for a helpful overview. See also Cima for a discussion of Shepard's dramatic technique and the art of Robert Rauschenberg. More prudent than I, Cima carefully avoids the designation "postmodern," while she contributes substantially to our understanding of Shepard in a postmodern context.

3. See Chodorow 173-209 for sociological definitions of gender.

4. The concept of the female Other completing a male's sense of identity is discussed in detail in Mitchell and Rose 1-57.

5. Critics for some time have recognized the centrality of wandering males both in Shepard's plays and in Wenders' films. Mazzocco suggests that a "macho pantheon" of "errant sons and ghostly fathers" occupies the "center of Shepard's America" (21). See also Orbison (506-10) and Siegel.

6. In *Motel Chronicles* Shepard explains why his father lives alone in the desert: "He says he doesn't fit with people" (56).

7. Werner throughout and Homan 74-76 discuss Rabe's use of language as it relates to socialization and the threat of menace.

8. I wish to express my gratitude to Brian Caraher, James Hurt, and Barbara Klingler for their suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.

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The Architecture of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*

D. B. Jewison

Labyrinths have been built of stone and mortar, or even shrubs, or drawn on cathedral floors, but some cannot be built outside the imagination. The ambivalent conclusion of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* suggests that possibly it is the ones that exist in the mind alone that supply us with the most accurate metaphors for the world as we now find it. Certainly, that is the conclusion William of Baskerville reaches, although he might be an imperfect semiologist.

Some editions of the novel come with a plan of the fourteenth-century Italian monastery where the monks are dying from mysterious causes. The Aedificium, housing the library on the third floor, is the dominant structure. When William begins to investigate the apparent murder of the monk Adelmo of Otranto, he immediately decides that it is the library that holds the key to the mystery, even before he knows that it is laid out in the form of a labyrinth with rooms labelled in imitation of the plan of the then known world. That there has been no murder and that the library is not, in fact, the cause of Adelmo's death, never shifts the focus of interest from it. Two thirds of the way through the novel, William is able to construct a complete plan of the library by combining observation and logic. His map is somewhat less sophisticated in draftsmanship than the plan of the monastery which prefaces the book but clearly suggests the original non-fictional maze that Eco has partially used as a model, a diagram of which he provides in *Postscript to "The Name of the Rose."* According to the accompanying note in *Postscript*, the original existed on the floor of Rheims Cathedral till the eighteenth century when Canon Jacquemart had it removed " 'because he was annoyed by the children who played there and who sought out the pathways of the maze during the sacred service, evidently for nefarious purposes.' " ¹

The Rheims maze is apparently (though not actually) more complex than that of the library on the third floor of the Aedificium but almost identical to it in outline, that is, an octagon with octagonal projections at the four corners, a smaller octagon in the exact centre and more octagonal areas in the middle of each of the four octagonal corner projections. In the novel, the

small octagonal area in the south-east projection is apparently inaccessible and the larger central octagon is a light well and source of fresh air.

In the chapter "The Detective Metaphysic" in *Postscript*, Eco says that an "abstract model of conjecturality is the labyrinth" (p. 57). There are, he adds, three distinct kinds of labyrinths: the classical one, the mannerist maze, and the rhizome. Although one does not get lost in the first kind, "Terror is born . . . from the fact that you do not know where you will arrive or what the Minotaur will do" (p. 57). Despite its visual complexity, the Rheims Cathedral maze is of this order. At no point is the traveller given an option as to which way to proceed. The second order of labyrinth is, says Eco, something like a tree. There are many blind alleys but only one exit. Since you can get it wrong, you need an Ariadne's thread to keep from getting lost. In contrast, the classical labyrinth of the first order is "the Ariadne's thread itself," and unlike the mannerist maze is not conquered by trial and error but by mere persistence. In the rhizome, every path is connected to every other one and there is no centre, there is no periphery, and there is no exit, "because the labyrinth is potentially infinite" (p. 57). Having first said that the labyrinth is an abstract model of conjecturality, Eco qualifies that comment: "The space of conjecture is a rhizome space. The labyrinth of my library is still a mannerist labyrinth, but the world in which William realizes he is living already has a rhizome structure: that is, it can be structured but is never structured definitively" (pp. 57-58). Eco is suggesting that his novel depicts European culture at the moment of a paradigm shift in human understanding. The epistemological shift that he portrays is noted by Alinardo di Grottaferrata who becomes a mask for the author when he says that the labyrinth is a sign of the world. The reader must consider which labyrinth is the true signifier and precisely what world does it signify. The questions to be answered become those of what kind of labyrinth are we dealing with and what kind of world it signifies. In *Postscript* Eco suggests that the early fourteenth century was a turning point in the European perception of reality. He also distinguishes three kinds of historical novels: the romance, in which the past functions as scenery; the swashbuckler, which uses some historical figures to perform actions which the historical record neither records nor contradicts; and the true historical novel in which fictional characters make history more comprehensible, for instance, when a character compares two medieval ideas and produces a third, more modern one. Eco comments that at that moment, "he is doing exactly what culture did . . ." (p. 76). In terms of the architectural images that function as metaphors for possible epistemological systems, from the first and second order of labyrinths William of Baskerville produces the Borgean rhizome which frustrates all attempts to construct a definitive structure. The adoption of the detective novel mode in this case is meant to produce, Eco says, the "metaphysical shudder." The examination of the past which is carried out through the adoption (and transformation) of the established mode of

detective fiction is, Eco suggests, a clear example of the post-modern technique which, unlike modernism, does not require the rejection of the past but its ironic rethinking.

One of the places in *Postscript* where Eco is somewhat less than helpful (there are many) is where he mostly evades answering the question posed to him: why is the old blind monk named Jorge of Burgos so wicked? "I cannot say. I wanted a blind man who guarded a library (it seemed a good narrative idea to me), and library plus blind man can equal only Borges, also because debts must be paid" (p. 28). So far, not too much to go on. He also says that he ended up having to add some slits to his stone library to make sure there would be enough air for the conflagration at the end of the novel. I suspect this statement is intentionally even less helpful than the comment about Jorge, so let us look where we are more likely to find answers that will, in fact, link Jorge of Burgos and the air slits—in the work of Jorge Luis Borges.

The obvious place is Borges's "The Library of Babel" in *Labyrinths*. The story begins: "The universe (which others call the library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast shafts of air between. . . ."2 The labyrinth on the floor of Rheims Cathedral is obviously only one of Eco's models. While it is true that Borges's library is based on the hexagon instead of the octagon, there are obvious Borgean echoes in the novel, e.g., the mirror. Borges writes: "In the hallway there is a mirror which faithfully duplicates all appearances. Men usually infer from this mirror that the library is not infinite (if it really were, why this illusory duplication?); I prefer to dream that its polished surfaces represent and promise the infinite . . ." (p. 51). The mirror in the library of the monastery might be seen to perform a different function from those in Borges's story since it distorts the image of the person who stands before it in order to make him think he has encountered a ghost. Certainly this mirror does not "faithfully duplicate," but whether or not it has a different function from the one in Borges' story really depends on which of the two possibilities established by Borges's narrator is accepted, that is, whether the mirror is a sign of the infinite or a false indication. The mirror in Eco's library is clearly intended to create a false impression, and in particular to keep the hidden text secret in order to protect the false vision that human understanding is bounded by a particular conceptual limit. Jorge of Burgos wants to conscribe the mind because he fears that the secret book will triumph, but even though the book is destroyed, he can no more prevent what is to come than he can remain undetected in his apparently entranced retreat in the centre of the south-east tower. William of Baskerville as both a criminal detective and metaphysical investigator *will* break in.

The closed system that Jorge of Burgos seeks to protect contains within it the text he fears will destroy it, a text which he, in fact, has brought into the library. Symbolically and actually, he has introduced the agent of his own

destruction into the apparently entranced chamber where he hides because, fear as he might the effect of Aristotle's text on comedy, as bibliophile he cannot bear to destroy it until absolutely forced to do so. He has tried and failed to limit the dialogue between texts. The result is the fiery end to his world in both a physical and a philosophical sense. The flames from the pages of the Book of Revelation which Jorge has used to frighten the monks will leap off the page in a way he might not have expected. I say "might not" because it is a matter for speculation whether he would have experienced the fire he set (were he not unconscious as soon as it began) as simply a fire in the library or as the Armageddon he had spoken of. In either case, in the sense that the destroyed world is the one of his vision, Armageddon has come.

The vision that in the historical sense replaces Jorge's is the one that will, a little way down the road, produce the scientific world that evolves into the infinite but bounded and indeterminate one of twentieth-century physics and philosophy. The shift in thinking that had already taken place, however, had been developed by philosophers such as Roger Bacon, Abelard and William of Occam who obviously influence William of Baskerville in his investigations.

One of the reasons that Eco gives in *Preface* for dating the action of the novel in 1327 is that historically for the first time signs were being used to investigate individuals. This development is related to thinkers such as Abelard who argued that scientific knowledge could be vindicated because universal statements and words have a valid reference which does not depend upon the metaphysical assumptions of the medieval realists. To simplify greatly the nominalists' position, universals were mental constructs rather than the names of metaphysical entities. Nevertheless, they were not considered devoid of content and therefore of meaning. On a humorous level, we see William of Baskerville making use of the way general ideas can lead to specific knowledge when, from apparently insignificant data he constructs the story of Abo's escaped horse. This incident is not simply a bit of Arthur Conan Doyle in the middle ages but an indication of a new way of seeing.

Another of the reasons Eco gives for the 1327 date is that William of Occam was excommunicated in 1328 over precisely the same issue that divides the Franciscan leader Michael Cesena and Pope John—the vow of poverty—which was not, as the novel makes clear, about the vow as such but about whether the Pope was justified in his claim to temporal authority. The era in which the novel is set is that which we now see as the time which marks the eventual decline of that power. A new age which was to be secular as well as scientific was being born. What Barbara Tuchman calls the calamitous fourteenth century is about to be replaced by *quattrocento* Italy and the Renaissance.

It is important to the novel that in order to establish a firm footing for

science, Occam went back to that same Aristotle that Jorge is trying to suppress. Occam's science remained deductive and did not become inductive as was that later developed by Francis Bacon, but in European culture a corner had been turned.

William of Baskerville not only uses general principles to attain knowledge of individuals but also tends to follow the rule known as Occam's razor of not introducing more hypotheses than are required to answer the question. Like Occam, he does not postulate metaphysical explanations where naturalistic ones will suffice. This does not prevent him from constructing a false hypothesis, one that ironically leads him to the truth, as much as there is of it.

While Jorge of Burgos believes there is one way to the truth, and the world is a classical labyrinth with one way to the centre, William constructs a "false" hypothesis that nevertheless leads him to the centre, in this case to Jorge in his secret retreat, and in the process proves that the world is at least a mannerist maze. But his experience, Eco implies, carries him even further to the vision of the rhizome where nothing is structured definitively. " 'There was no plot,' William said, 'and I discovered it by mistake.' " ³ At this point William does what culture has done and moves into the Wittgensteinian and Borgean world of language as reality. " 'The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or like a ladder, built to attain something. But afterward you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that even if it was useful, it was meaningless' " (p. 600). This idea attributed by William to a German mystic comes from Wittgenstein. It is in this sense that the most useful readings of the novel are, Eco says, spatial ones, ones that relate to the implications of the possible structures of the labyrinth, or perhaps we should say impossible structures.

But what do we make of Eco's comments about the reader as the guilty party? There is still to be written, he says, "a book in which the murderer is the reader" (p. 80). The moral, he adds, is that "there exist obsessive ideas, they are never personal; books talk among themselves, and any true detection should prove that we are the guilty party" (p. 81). Guilty of what? Obviously not of killing the herbalist Severinus or the cellarer Remigio of Varagine. The crime, says Eco, bears the logic that has been imposed on events by the guilty party. A reading is the logic imposed upon the text by the reader, but the reading is never personal in the sense that it is dependent upon the fact that books talk to each other. The reader rethinks the past in the act of reading and thereby becomes the responsible party.

Labyrinths of any order are ladders that are necessary but meaningless. This is most obvious when the labyrinth is one that cannot be constructed out of stone and mortar but exists only in the text as in Borges's "The Library of Babel." Such a labyrinth is not less useful than the one at Hampton Court once one has entered the Wittgensteinian world. It is a sign and, as William tells Adso, signs are all that humans have to orient themselves in the world.

The crucial question is the nature of the relation among signs. The classical and mannerist mazes are also paradigms of human understanding, are conceptual nets like Borges's library. Jorge of Burgos sees his library not as a net or a ladder but as an absolute form which must not be altered.

In the "Preface" to her recent *The Translated World*, Debra Castillo states that the windowless library negates, parodies and apotheosizes history all at the same time. "For the librarian the issue is largely psychological and reflects how the human being identifies with the inhuman creation in his search for immortality (or death). Thus, the central point is not basically a question of illusion versus reality, but of illusion opposed to/joined with illumination in a willed blindness."⁴ The librarian, in this case the blind Jorge of Burgos, chooses the historical form of the sacred, committing himself, Castillo would argue, to a form that gives the appearance of control over a reality that seems too fluid and fatal. Because he chooses form, the librarian is placed in a metaphysical dilemma "that forces him to exercise his waning control over reality by excluding all apparent contradictions to the monumental form he has chosen. Eventually, the library becomes the world, as the librarian cannot allow even the smallest hint of life outside to remain. To do so would be to reveal a fatal flaw, to place the entire structure in danger of collapse, of burning down" (p. ix).

Castillo's generalizations about the metaphysical trap that the librarian constructs for himself and which is here most literally and physically deconstructed by the inevitable fire, could not find a more precise exemplar than Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. The blind librarian retreats into a windowless octagonal room. He neither needs nor requires the light that comes through the library's alabaster windows. As is the case for the narrator in Borges's short story, for him, the library is the world, with the exception that Jorge of Burgos has retreated into an even smaller octagon within the larger structure. He is the real and controlling curator of both the library and the catalogue, but the perceived incongruity of Aristotle's lost text forces him into an even more rigid and exclusive structure than the one he began with.

In order to move this discussion towards some conclusions, let me again quote Professor Castillo who begins her preface with a comment from Michel Foucault's *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* that says that "Literature begins when the book is no longer the space where speech adopts a form . . . but the site where books are all recaptured and consumed' " (p. vii). Obsessive ideas are never personal, says Eco. Books talk among themselves. Castillo continues,

Analogously, the library, a concrete visible structure, begins when the scattered documents housed under its roof are recaptured and organized according to a dream of unity imposed by a rigidly ordered catalogue and are consumed in silence and solitude. Gradually, as the ever-larger masses of documents threaten to expand beyond human

control, the librarian counters with ever more rigid structuring systems. Yet, eventually the place that was to serve as a repository of all knowledge, by the very fact of its existence comes to proclaim the inevitable failure of attempts to gather and organize the scattered documents of human production. As the library becomes less accessible, it also becomes more fear-provoking, and that which was an essential part of the sociopolitical structure becomes a threat to structure. One kind of consumption suggests another; the library is burned.

But the myth is not destroyed. (p. vii)

Castillo's comments very clearly state the rationale for the spatial reading of *The Name of the Rose* that Eco has recommended. Her comments also suggest why Eco chose to give the library to an order whose members take a (frequently forgotten) vow of silence. The library, which is the dream, the fantasy of willed blindness that Jorge of Burgos created, is inevitably destroyed, but as Castillo reminds us, the myth is not. Abelard's example of the pure name remains: *Nulla est rosa*. It is the name we encounter as we read the novel in silence and solitude.

A final comment on contradiction and ambiguity. William concludes that there was no "plan" to the murders and that the world is a rhizome. But the murders have taken place in accordance with the plan suggested by the "Book of Revelation," although this was not a plan conceived by a single human mind as William had originally thought. The plan is there nonetheless, and in the end we ask if William has indeed read signs correctly, or has he mistaken his labyrinth. Every book contains its counter-text. For the reader, the text must be a rhizome.

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

NOTES

1. Umberto Eco, *Postscript to the Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1984), p. 55. Further references will be parenthetical.
2. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel," *Labyrinths*, trans. and eds. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 51. Further references will be parenthetical.
3. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Warner Books, 1984), p. 599. Further references will be parenthetical.
4. Debra A. Castillo, *The Translated World: A Postmodern Tour of Libraries in Literature* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1984), p. viii. Further references will be parenthetical.

5. Both Jorge of Burgos and William of Baskerville might have done better to concentrate on Genesis rather than Revelation: "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven. . . . So the Lord scattered them abroad. . . . Therefore is the name of it called Babel" (Gen. 2:4-9). This passage enriches and complicates Borges's story as well as Eco's novel.

Collage Theory, Reception, and the Cutups of William Burroughs

Laszlo K. Géfin

In attempting to formulate a theoretical and practical context for his method of writing, William S. Burroughs has repeatedly made reference to the collage compositions of the Dadaists and Surrealists as the direct antecedents of the cutup. As he wrote in *The Third Mind*, co-authored by Burroughs and the painter-collagist Brion Gysin, "Writing is fifty years behind painting. I propose to apply the painters' technique to writing; things as simple and immediate as collage or montage. Cut right through the pages of any book or newspaper . . . lengthwise, for example and shuffle the columns of text" (34). Although the cutup was not used during the writing of *Naked Lunch*, its chapters were put together at random, giving the appearance as if some such "shuffle" had already taken place; but the writerly intention that later materialized in the cutup proper had been articulated quite clearly in Burroughs' "atrophied preface" to that work: "I am a recording instrument. I do not presume to impose 'story' 'plot' 'continuity'. In so far as I succeed in Direct recording of certain areas of psychic process I may have limited function" (221). In renouncing claims to an organizing self or ordering intelligence, and proposing instead an ostensibly undifferentiated, unpremeditated (re)recording of various data, Burroughs seems to restate a by now well-known modernist technique with a postmodernist twist (an opting for *reproduction* instead of production).¹ For while the heterogeneous juxtapositions in such works as *The Waste Land* or *The Cantos* do give the illusion that the diverse materials organized themselves "naturally," forming image clusters by "natural" cohesion ("by no man these verses," writes Pound in Canto XLIX), the ordering self is there all the same. In the Burroughs cutup, on the other hand, the disposing-arranging self is absent; the juxtapositions happen by "pure chance."

Since there is no clue to possible intentionality,² the question arises, In what sense can readers as further reproducers receive such garbled transmission? What is the cutup writer's "limited function" Burroughs alludes to? As opposed to the anti-art pranks and demonstrations of the Dadaists (for instance, Tristan Tzara's performance of pulling words from a hat to compose a "poem"), Burroughs' claims for the cutup sound almost conser-

vative and utilitarian: "Cutups," he says, "establish new connections between *images*, and one's range of vision consequently expands" (*Third Mind* 4). But just how exactly do these operations come about? Burroughs does not precisely define it; he only makes reference to the collage as an earlier, painterly form of the cutup, declaring that "the cutup method brings to writers the collage, which has been used by painters for fifty years" (*Third Mind* 17). The collage, therefore, as a legitimating ground for the cutup and as its privileged ancestor, should be briefly examined before we turn to the cutup, and especially since in the hands of recent theorists it has become a preeminent art form: in one formulation, "Collage is the single most revolutionary formal innovation in artistic representation to occur in our century" (Ulmer 84).

What does the collage, in effect, *do*? No general answer seems to be possible, for by their very indeterminacy and ambiguity collages would elicit different interpretations from (1) the maker/producer, (2) the scholar or art critic, and (3) the nonprofessional reader/viewer situated in his/her particular economic, political, social—in short, historical—context. The earliest practitioners of the collage, Braque and Picasso in their analytic cubist period around 1912, had already charged their innovative work with self-confessed messages, the most notable being that by the inclusion of printed characters, numbers, fragments cut out from newspapers and posters the painter sought to "blur" the boundary line separating "art" and "life." As Braque expressed it, he placed these objects in his paintings "in order to come ever closer to reality" (Wescher 20). The art critics were also engaged in providing a theoretical framework for the collage; according to E. H. Gombrich, in his comments on the cubists' objective of demolishing the mimetic tradition, they insisted that theirs was "an exercise in painting, not in illusion" (281). Later, the work of Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst, Hans Arp, Hanna Höch, and others was appraised similarly, both by the artists themselves and theorists of the avant-garde. Ernst, for example, chose to explain his collage technique by referring to Lautréamont's definition of the beautiful (sewing machine, umbrella, dissecting table meeting by chance), calling it the cultivation of "systematic displacement and its effects" (Quinn 166). The ideology behind the collage was expressed by Tzara, significantly widening the scope of the new method which he argued is a "powerful means of subversion and sabotage towards the actual world and towards its reality" (Quinn 186). The revolutionary wording does not, however, denote a commensurate revolutionary praxis; in fact, the ideology rests on a dual, and contradictory, philosophical premise. On the one hand, Dadaists such as Arp exalted the random nature of collage composition as a means of doing away with rationality and mimesis, calling Dada a liberating force that would reunite art with life. In proclaiming that "Dada is senseless like nature," Arp intended to signal a major shift in western intellectual history; as he wrote, "The Renaissance taught men to arrogantly exalt their reason. Modern

times with their sciences and technologies have consecrated man to megalomania" (Arp 232). On the other hand, this radical "dehumanizing" of art was coupled with the gradual construction of a new metaphysic, with mystical overtones. Ernst had already stated that the collage is an "alchemical product" (Waldberg 150); but in his appraisal of the work of Kurt Schwitters, Arp goes much farther. According to his assessment, Schwitters, in his collage work, "discovered the meaning of life: the metamorphosis of the visible, palpable world toward the formless absolute"; and that through his art Schwitters "fervently implored a redemption of this dark world, this corrupt nature" (Arp 251, 252). Nature, of course, has been corrupted by "man," whose "overweening presumptuousness and vanity" Arp deemed to be "too indescribably grotesque" (Arp 315). The antidote he saw as an extinction of the ego, the intellect and a reliance on chance—for chance, as Arp declared, "which guides our hands when we tear up paper, and the figures that result from this, reveal mysteries, deeper events of life" (Arp 341). Thus, the collage is both a nonmimetic artistic form, "just materials," and an alchemical-allegorical product that points beyond itself, to a transcendental "real" world, to an absolute realm.

The collage artists' "road to the absolute" through the creation of a modern and/or postmodern "sublime" will be discussed later; at this stage it is worth noting the ambivalence of the Dadaists' program, and the investing of the collage method with metaphysical meaning. Of the Dadaist collage artists Kurt Schwitters seems to stand the closest to Burroughs and the cutup, mainly because textual fragments acquired a prominence in Schwitters' work far beyond their role in Braque and Picasso, so that most of his collages have incited some form of *textual* interpretation in addition to a pictorial one. Schwitters himself and many art critics sympathetic to Dadaism saw the textual both as "clues" to the "real world," as well as "startling, exciting, fascinating, admonitory" (Schmalenbach 116). As later in the cutup, the intended effect is estrangement and reunification: the removal of a textual fragment from its original context and its incorporation in a new set of relationships, so that the various materials, in Schwitters' words, "lose their individual character, their own special essence [*Eigengift*] by being evaluated against one another; by being dematerialized [*entmaterialisiert*] they become material for the picture" (Schmalenbach 94). This loss by the individual piece of its own context results in incoherence, or the new relationship between the incongruous fragments—theatre, train, and bus tickets, program notes, parts of newspaper headlines, advertising slogans cut out from magazines—becomes, from a more sophisticated point of view, particularly ironic. Schwitters' fascination with the flotsam and jetsam of print culture, with the "value of the worthless," has just such irony for its basis; in his own words, "I tried to construct new art forms out of the remains of a former culture," in which "everything had broken down in any case" (Schmalenbach 96). The Dadaist dualism is present in the work of

Schwitters as well: first, the artist's initial private fascination with textual scraps, to the extent that "the forgotten, discarded, moldering things he worked with had for Schwitters an unprecedented magic—something akin to the power of fetishes" (Schmalenbach 112);³ and second, the social aspect of the juxtapositions, documenting Schwitters' own profound disillusionment with postwar German reality. As "magical" objects, the collages profess an access to the absolute; as cultural products, they aim to serve as historical indices of irony to that corrupt reality.

Leaving aside the "magical" element for the moment, it would seem plausible that the ambiguous nature of the collage would not strengthen, but rather weaken the effectiveness of its ironic stance. In several of Schwitters' textual collages, featuring names and pictures of commercial products (the artist's glue Pelikanol, for example), the intention and effect may be found ironic, yet viewed differently, or displayed in a different context, the work may also pass as an imaginative piece of advertising, designed to sell that very product. For its producers, as for its contemporary theoreticians, collage's instability and ambiguity has always counted as a definite asset; to quote Gregory Ulmer, "Each cited element breaks the continuity or linearity of the discourse and leads necessarily to a double reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of origin; that of the same fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality. The trick of collage consists also of never entirely suppressing the alterity of these elements reunited in a temporary composition" (Ulmer 88). Collage writing, as seen by Ulmer and others, is deemed revolutionary also by violating ownership, while also doing away with concepts such as property and propriety—all that is "proper" to logocentric discourse. That the essential ambiguity of the collage makes for a double-edged, rather than a single revolutionary, weapon, seems to escape the partisans of the method; that instead of unswervingly maintaining its irony the collage can easily be appropriated by the *culture industry* (Adorno's classic formulation), has been ignored by most artists and theorists. This blindness or innocence may be rooted in wishful thinking; that is, the collage has become invested with something akin to fetish power and surrounded with an aura that would conceivably be self-legitimizing and would also legitimate the critical and theoretical practices of those thinkers who have become disillusioned with most aspects of modernism, but would like to salvage for the present its prime method.

With the collage as ambiguous and indeterminate in the uses to which it can be put, we may return to Burroughs' cutup and the problematics of reception his own postcollagist method presents to the reader. Similar to the Dadaists, Burroughs has burdened his own method with a considerable ideological load; he claims, for instance, that the cutup initiates "a movement castrating the continuum of meaning, the breaking up of the Hegelian structure," with the result that "the text eventually escapes from the control of its manipulator" (*Third Mind* 17). As for Arp and Tzara, the disruption of

linear order and imposed structure in the cutup of heterogeneous textual material makes it for Burroughs also a potential (but also single-edged) weapon for those desirous of "scrambling" information/propaganda disseminated by the culture industry via its own controlled media. This blissful unawareness shows in the message on a greeting card sent by Burroughs to Gysin: "Blitzkrieg the citadel of enlightenment"—the weapon being the cutup (*Third Mind* 44). Also, Burroughs applauds the cutup because it, like the collage for the Dadaists, destroys univocality, uniformity, linear structure, and ownership. In his appeal to the readers to start making cutups, Burroughs counsels that "you'll soon see that words don't belong to anyone. Words have a vitality of their own and you or anybody can make them gush into action" (*Third Mind* 34). All this sounds deceptively simple; in point of fact, the apperception, interpretation, and final integration of the collage/cutup is somewhat complex and as ambiguous as the method.

Theoretically, the reception of the collage or the cutup may be seen either as *syntactic* or *semantic*, or both. From the point of view of artist/producers and other initiates, the syntactic approach receives emphasis, i.e., the single most significant aspect of collage composition is the removal of certain particles from their original setting and their placement in a new context. The semantic or hermeneutic approach consists in attempting to give meaning to this operation. (To illustrate: Dr. Johnson's definition of metaphysical poetry as "heterogeneous elements yoked . . . together" may be an example of the syntactic mode; but with his insertion "by violence" the definition also becomes semantic.) Either way, "collage experience" for the third type of receiver, the nonprofessional reader or viewer, will depend on that reader's *horizon of expectation*, to use Hans Robert Jauss' term (Jauss 22-24; also Gadamer 217ff), i.e., the entirety of the reader's past knowledge, experience, prejudice, and predilection. The reader can only know with some certainty if he/she is having a collage experience if the original materials are still there in their contexts and then are removed to form new wholes. Faced with a ready Schwitters collage or a Burroughs cutup, the reader cannot be expected to duplicate the original collage experience of these artists by being exposed to the *results* of that primary experience. In this case, the syntactic aspect of the collage situation must first be apprehended by the reader (i.e., "This is a collage"), before it can be subjected to a hermeneutic approach intent on producing a meaning of that already-recognized collage event. But with the understanding that "This is a cutup" the hermeneutic task becomes further compounded by the aforementioned ambiguous nature of the juxtapositions; for how does something begin to "mean" when it is deliberately made indeterminate?

The problematics of reading cutups without actual cutup experience can be seen in *The Third Mind*, especially where Burroughs and Gysin illustrate the making of cutups. They first give the "recipe" in grammatical English, using the text of the program quoted at the beginning of this study: "Writing

is fifty years behind painting, etc." Then they proceed to cut the text vertically into three strips of even width and switch them; thus, the original order of the sections designated as A, B, and C will be changed to A, C, B. The scrambled text is as follows: "Writing is fifty. I propose to apply ears behind painting. The painters' techniques as simple and use to writing; things immediate as collage through the pages or montage. Cut right of any book or newspr example, and shuffle into . . . lengthwise, for the columns of the text" (*Third Mind* 35). The new text makes nonsense of the original, although it may amuse certain readers aware of the irony in such semantic units as "ears behind painting," "cut right of any book," etc. Nevertheless even these readers, predisposed to enter a novel language game, will find entertainment or other value in these cutups because they were made aware of the "proper," unscrambled text preceding it, the "proper" text having become part of their own horizon before coming to the fragmented-reassembled version. It is thus important for readers to know that the cutup is a *version*, and that it is a version of something specific against which it can be tested. In such cases, however, when Burroughs merely informs the reader of the sources of the cutup by reproducing only the scrambled form and not the original version, the reader's disorientation will be more severe. Whereas in the first instance the reader, however differently, may be seen as a co-creator of the cutup (for it was the scissors and chance that decided what cuts and what new combinations will result, and Burroughs could no more predict how the lines will be reshuffled than the reader), in the second type it is only Burroughs who can be said to have had a collage experience. In the latter event the reader is forced into a situation where he/she is expected or invited to notice a new(?) unity and then to try to produce some meaning for it, without being told what brought that unity into being.

Even in those cases where the reader has access to the uncut version (a rare occurrence, for Burroughs' cutups in his collage novels are of the second kind) when attempting semantically to integrate the cutup, the attentive reader's mind should stop as it reaches the juncture where the cut-in fragment begins; or rather the mind is coerced to "jump" *over* the invisible yet perceptible "seam" as part of the initial syntactic reading, while also attempting a semantic reconciliation *across* the "seam." Since no causal relationship exists between the newly juxtaposed textual fragments, even after repeated readings the "mind jolt" at the "seam" remains. Whether the "jolt" is experienced as something disquieting, unpleasant, upsetting, ironic, silly, mystical, or just boring, will hinge on the particular reader's past experience, horizon, and receptivity. When there is no original, uncut copy against which to compare the cutup, the cutup's potential for an ironic interpretation will be reduced; nevertheless, some readers with certain intellectual inclinations may find the destruction of sense interesting.

If we assume that during the constant back and forth movement of the reader's meaning producing intention between horizons (the text's and the

reader's own) the reader will always experience the "mind jolt" at the "seam," is it likely that there will be a general corresponding readerly response to this ever-present obstacle to full semantic unification? If one may further assume, as I do, that since the act of reading consists in this unceasing fusion of horizons (see Gadamer 273) with the result that the reader and the text stop being separate identities but will constitute a single phenomenon, so that the reader's ordinary consciousness will be submerged in this new entity, then the cutup's "mind jolt" will be taken by all readers as an awakening, a distancing, estrangement, or alienation, a sudden self-conscious realization that the reader's intention cannot merge with the text. The reader may at this point be aware that he/she is not "reading," but observing him/herself in the act of reading. What, therefore, one may see emerging from the "jolt at the textual juncture is a self that reads, or rather a self caught outside the process of reading, aware of itself as a meaning producing consciousness. It is also evident that the emergence of this reading self, the presence of a subject comes about precisely at the moment when the aesthetic object ceases to be intelligible in a conventional sense, with the reader confronting it only as an absence. The textual cut brings the reader to the limits of language, to an estranged, self-aware consciousness that may, in fact, be prelinguistic. Moreover, the chance operation of the collage experience of an Arp or Burroughs that was instrumental in the obliteration of the "creative" subject has brought about the reappearance of that subject in the self-aware consciousness of the reader as he/she attempts to come to grips with the cut-in and cut-out textual fragments across the jolting "seam."

It may also be further asked: What may be the *content* of the estrangement experienced at the "seam"? It would seem that this content may be the absence of the aesthetic object that the reader had expected to merge with in the production of meaning: a coming face to face with an event/object that is unrepresentable. This notion approximates Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the sublime as it is applied to modern and postmodern texts. According to Lyotard, the sublime appears "when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept" (Lyotard 78). Lyotard follows Kant in his formulation, for whom formlessness, an absence of order suggested a possible index to the unrepresentable. As Lyotard sees it, the modern sublime differs from the postmodern in that for the former the unrepresentable is indicated as "the missing content," while the latter "puts forward the unrepresentable in the presentation itself" (81). Both the collage and the cutup would in this view, be considered postmodern, for as Burroughs observed, "Use of scissors renders the process explicit" (*Third Mind* 32). The "seam" in the collage/cutup as the universally experienced presence of an absence may also ideally "create" a community of readers that by the act of semantic reconciliation become co-creators, participants in the disseminating process initiated by the author

("first author" may be a more appropriate term), and by experiencing alienation and selfhood would complete the hermeneutic act. Notions such as "writing subject" and "reading subject" would disappear, replaced by a single transcendent identity reexperiencing together the unrepresentable.

This postmodern communion of intention and reception may, however, conceal a very real paradox, while at the same time it remains definitely naive. Authors and theorists posit, in a vein similar to their "forgetting" the ambiguous, indeterminate nature of the collage or cutup, that there can actually be a "work" that is not really a usual work at all but is characterized by a semantic-hermeneutic break, an absence that is present in it, while at the same time it attracts a community of readers that are not really readers but co-creators; the art that has become anti-art is thus intended to enter "life" and become synonymous with "praxis." Just as irony becomes nearly extinct because the collage can be appropriated by the controllers of the culture industry, so the metaphysical aspirations of the authors and critics for a new community via the "revolutionary" sublime of the collage/cutup can be seen to be illusory. As we have seen, from the beginning avant-garde artists refused to accept the traditional separation of art and life, and have used the collage (as Burroughs had used the cutup) as a means to reassume a role in society they no longer possessed. The avant-garde artist experienced the frustration of being without real, communally legitimated function; as Rudolf Arnheim wrote, "The craftsman who had fulfilled an established need in the affairs of government and religion was gradually transformed into an outsider—the producer of surplus luxury goods to be stored in museums or used to demonstrate the wealth and refined taste of the rich and privileged" (Arnheim 147). This historical shift in the production and reception of art has been documented by theorists such as Walter Benjamin and Peter Bürger, who have signaled the gradual change from sacral or ritual to courtly and then to bourgeois art.⁴ In Bürger's definition, both sacral and courtly art were integral to the life praxis of the recipient; in such contexts, "as cult and representational objects, works of art were put to specific use" (Bürger 48). The intention of the modern (and postmodern) artist to produce something "useful" may be observed in the privileging of the collage/cutup that denies habitual trance-like reception, and in fact proposes to "create" of the recipient, in the dislocating moment of the "jolt" at the "seam," a collaborator, a fellow guerrilla sharing a weapon with the "first author" and using it as intended by him/her: to "blitzkrieg" the "system."

The reappropriation of the sacral role of the artist and the creation of a real community—the motivating force at the basis of the ideology for the collage—can be seen to have been similarly embraced by Burroughs, offering in the cutup a device that would make "everyone" not only co-creators but creators in their own right. Both he and most collage artists/theorists seem however to have "forgotten" that reception has at all times been culture

bound and historically determined; and while the “mind jolt” at the alienating “seam” may be universal, and even reconstitutive of a “reading subject,” the *kind* of semantic reconciliation that would take place should at all times be dependent on the individual horizon of expectations inescapably different in each reader. Certainly, as Fredric Jameson wrote, “in the commercial universe of late capitalism the serious writer is obliged to reawaken the readers’ numbed sense of the concrete through the administration of linguistic shocks” (Jameson 20-21); but the real question is; To whom is the “shock” shocking and to what degree? For those critics and readers whose horizon already contains fragmented works, the “shock” will not be that acute. But for those who ideally would benefit most from the “mind jolt” of the collage/cutup, it would perhaps go unnoticed, for the “seam” would simply be an irritant to them since they exist in the hypnotic-seductive realm of the culture industry where the recording instrument of a Burroughs can be seen but not heard. In this realm the collage or cutup, born in the spirit of negation and revolt, become products with a marginal sales potential, ambiguous language games consumed by a tiny minority. The revolutionary phraseology, from Tzara to Burroughs, does not denote a praxis, as suggested earlier, but a utopia; *Naked Lunch*, *Exterminator*, and the other texts do not work like *samizdat*, i.e., something truly feared or at least objectionable, but can be found in bookstores among other reading matter. They are, unwittingly or not, consumer items; only for a few are they relics of a voyage to an ideal world.

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NOTES

1. See Douglas Crimp, “On the Museum’s Ruins,” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983) 53. Crimp applies the distinction to Robert Rauschenberg’s silk screens, arguing that the reproductive process effectively does away with the “aura” of the work of art.

2. The term, and also “intention,” are used in the conventional phenomenological understanding of them, i.e., the unification of subject and object in a thinking, imagining, meaning-producing consciousness that by definition is a consciousness of an object. The cutup disposes of the subject of the text by introducing chance.

3. Fetish, of course, should also be understood not only as denoting magical objects, but also as obsessive and exclusive substitutes for the “real.”

4. In Benjamin the corresponding terms would be ritual, aesthetic, and political (Benjamin 223-25). The failure of the avant-garde work of art as a reamalgamation and reassumption of the sacral/ritual is historically limited for Benjamin (confronting the phenomenon of fascism) and for Bürger it is hardly seen at all since he accepts the revolutionary character of the collage as a given, similar to the self-justifying pronouncements of Arp and Burroughs (Bürger 78).

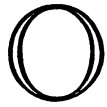
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Eine Kleine Wortmusik: The Marriage of Poetry and Music in the *Pisan Cantos*

Margaret M. Dunn

Poetry and music, often called the "sister arts," are yet so different as to make the construction of a viable analogy between them impossible. As Leonard Bernstein amply demonstrated in a series of televised lectures at Harvard University some years ago, an analogous relationship between poetry and music can be demonstrated up to a point in terms of rhythm and dynamics; after reaching that point, however, the analogy breaks down (*Unanswered Question*). Yet Bernstein's purpose in his lectures was not only to demonstrate the differences between the two art forms but also to point out that much poetry is indeed "word music," meant to be read aloud utilizing, as he puts it, the "sublime expressivity" of the human voice—"the greatest instrument there is" (*Joy of Music* 271).

Certainly, as Bernstein implies, poetry and music are often written to complement each other, and Ezra Pound, more emphatically than any other twentieth century poet, stressed this complementarity and championed the marriage of *motz el son* which had existed in lyric and accompaniment since the time of the troubadour poets and before. In Pound's opinion, however, the historical marriage of poetry and music foundered in modern times through the fault of poets who were not willing to study their great precursors. Thus Pound wrote in 1913: "It is not intelligent to ignore the fact that . . . poetry attained its highest rhythmic and metrical brilliance at times when the arts of verse and music were most closely knit together, when each thing done by the poet had some definite musical urge or necessity bound up within it." Decrying the divergent paths of the two art forms since the Renaissance, Pound concluded that "from the date of the divorce" between verse and music, "poetry declined" ("The Tradition" 91). Just a few years later (in 1917), Pound again affirmed his conviction regarding the necessary marriage between poetry and music when he exhorted fellow poets to remember that "the literary qualities are not the whole of our art" and stated flatly that "poets who will not study music are defective" (*Vers Libre* 437). Such statements by Pound are numerous, reticence not being one of his shortcomings when he believed passionately in an aesthetic principle. He was not content, however, merely to pontificate. Demonstrating his willing-



UT of Phlegethon!
 out of Phlegethon,
 Gerhart

art thou come forth out of Phlegethon?
 with Buxtehude and Klages in your sachel, with the
 Ständebuch of Sachs in yr/ luggage
 —not of one bird but of many

*(Dedicated to Gerhart Hauptmann: La canzone di Buxtehude -
 2. ed. della Camera di Berlino (5. canto) - Fiedler Meiner (3. canto) (po. molto mos.) -*

2^a ed. *pp*

(Dedicated to Gerhart Hauptmann) *pp*

I. marc.
(Caparra Andante) *pp* *c. acc.*

I. marc.

ff *pp* *pp* *cres.*

ff *pp* *pp*

ff tempo

dim. and. *pp*

pp

dim. and. *pp*

pp

22. 9. 33
 Milano

ness to put conviction into practice, Pound studied music, wrote numerous articles on music theory and criticism, played a clavichord for inspiration while he wrote poetry, and composed a number of works including two operas.

Considering Pound's devotion to music and his insistence that poetry and music are integrally related, it is not surprising that many poets and critics have commented upon music as a significant influence on and structural analogue to various sections of Pound's *Cantos*. For example, Yeats says in praise of the early *Cantos* that they "display a structure like that of a Bach Fugue" (4), and R.P. Blackmur echoes Pound himself in saying that the *Cantos* are a "composition in the sequence of the musical phrase" (25). Speaking specifically of the "Pisan *Cantos*," Richard Eberhart describes them as "a music of ideas" (385). George Kearns states that the Pisan sequence gives the effect of "contrapuntal music, in which each line is distinct, yet the lines sounded together form a single music" (157). And Charles Shere suggests that, because musical sounds are simultaneous as well as linear, music may have provided "a structural aesthetic which made the revolutionary method of Pound's poetry—especially the later '*Cantos*'—possible" (7). These are but a few of many such statements, all of which pay tribute to Pound's abilities as a maker of word music. In the "Pisan *Cantos*," however, Pound does something quite unique. He visually illustrates and symbolically effects the marriage of poetry and music upon which he insists, doing so by creating a counterpoint of imagery for which the highly unusual *Canto* 75 provides the major motif.

To the unsuspecting, first-time reader, *Canto* 75 comes as a shock. Opening with just seven short lines of poetry, the majority of the *canto* is a two-page, untitled musical score. Is it an anomaly? Perhaps just another idiosyncratic indulgence of Pound's? Commentaries offer the information that the musical score is a modern rendition of the "Chant des Oiseaux" ("Song of the Birds") written by a Frenchman named Clement Janequin, and that this modern rendition was composed by Gerhart Munch. Hugh Kenner outlines the composition's evolution succinctly, if in a somewhat headlong fashion: "a violin part which Gerhart Munch made from Francesco da Milano's lute reduction of Clement Janequin's choral arrangement of perhaps some Provencal tune descended from some remote act of invention inspired by the form of bird-song" (*Pound Era* 250). Kenner elaborates little on the significance of *Canto* 75, calling it "a brief parable on creation and re-creation" and concluding that it remains essentially "bird-music" ("Broken Mirrors" 29). Similarly devoting little time to *Canto* 75, James J. Wilhelm suggests a connection between its "bird-music" score and the fact that the troubadour poets whom Pound admired were "proud, birdlike hymners of the beauty of love and the honesty of the natural life" (40). Like Kenner and Wilhelm, other critics who go into great detail to illustrate the ways in which various groups of *cantos* are unified accept the "bird-music"

gloss regarding Canto 75 and then move immediately on. While it is indeed a descendant of "bird-music," however, Canto 75 is also much more.

The immediately apparent fact about Canto 75 is that it is a graphic union of poetry and music, a union in which the untitled musical score is introduced by seven lines of verse:

Out of Phlegethon!
 out of Phlegethon,
 Gerhart

art thou come forth out of Phlegethon?
 with Buxtehude and Klages in your satchel, with the
 Standebuch of Sachs in yr/luggage

—not of one bird but of many (450)

The "Gerhart" whom Pound addresses is Gerhart Munch, the German composer who adapted the Janequin "bird-music" for violin and piano. Pound had befriended Munch and actively encouraged him to study such early composers as Buxtehude, Klages, and Sachs, composers whose music was often originally composed for instrument *and* voice. Hans Sachs (1494-1576) was, in addition, a Meistersinger—a member of the German guild which established high competitive standards for the composition and performance of music and poetry. The allusions to Buxtehude, Klages, and Sachs in Canto 75's opening lines, then, refer explicitly to an era when music and poetry were still complementary art forms, and implicitly to Pound's conviction that the breach between the two must be healed. Thus the graphic juxtaposition of poetry and music in Canto 75 is in fact a strong statement of artistic principle on Pound's part, a principle which is echoed in other cantos in the Pisan sequence.

Canto 74, for instance, the long canto which begins the Pisan sequence, is a collage of images which are symbolically "ordered" at the canto's end when Pound asks if one has seen "the rose in the steel dust" (449). Quoted fully, the question is, "Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust / (or swansdown ever?)" and alludes to Ben Jonson's "Have you seen but a bright lily grow" (the third stanza of "Her Triumph" in *A Celebration of Charis in Ten Lyrick Peeeces*):

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
 Before rude hands have touched it?
 Ha' you marked but the fall o' the snow
 Before the soil hath smutched it?
 Ha' you felt the wool o' the beaver,
 Or swansdown ever?

.

O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!

This was one of Jonson's best-known songs, set to music by Dowland and subsequently recovered and published in 1938 by Arnold Dolmetsch. In this manner, then, Pound alludes in Canto 74 to the marriage of poetry and music in such seventeenth century works as Jonson's masques and songs.

In addition, Pound's question and the concluding lines of Canto 74 which follow it carry the implication that he has himself seen the "rose" and that the union of poetry and music which it represents has brought him artistic fulfillment, the means to survive his internment in the prison camp at Pisa:

Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust
 (or swansdown ever?)
 so light is the urging, so ordered the dark petals of iron
 we who have passed over Lethe. (449)

Pound obviously includes himself among those who have seen the order in "the dark petals of iron" and who have "passed over Lethe," escaping oblivion. Although he had earlier in the canto described himself as "a man on whom the sun has gone down," he ends the canto on a note of hope which alludes to his conviction that, in his work, poetry and music are once again closely knit together. From this affirmation, he moves immediately to the opening lines of Canto 75; having "passed over Lethe," he moves to Phlegethon, another of the rivers of Hell. Now Pound addresses Gerhart Munch: "Gerhart / art thou come forth out of Phlegethon?" Just as Pound escaped from Lethe through the ordering of the "rose in the steel dust," an aesthetic ordering which reflects the true union of poetry and music, Gerhart emerges from Phlegethon with his thrice-removed score which holds the voices "not of one bird but of many," that is, with his "satchel" containing the poetry-music of Buxtehude, Klages, and Sachs. The long-separated sister arts, symbolically carried by Munch, are thus joined together once again.

Other cantos in the Pisan sequence also contain allusions to the intrinsic connection between the artistic pursuits of the poet and musician. In Canto 81, preceding the well-known plea to "pull down thy vanity," Pound begins the "libretto" section as follows:

Yet
 Ere the season died a-cold
 Borne upon a zephyr's shoulder
 I rose through the aureate sky
 Lawes and Jenkyns guard thy rest
 Dolmetsch ever be thy guest,
 Has he tempered the viol's wood
 To enforce both the grave and the acute?
 Has he curved us the bowl of the lute?

Lawes and Jenkyns guard thy rest
 Dolmetsch ever be thy guest
 Hast 'ou fashioned so airy a mood
 to draw up leaf from the root?
 Hast 'ou found a cloud so light
 As seemed neither mist nor shade?

Then resolve me, tell me aright
 If Waller sang or Dowland played. (519-20)

In this passage one can see multiple references to the union of poetry and music which formerly existed, and to the need for a revival of this historical union. Henry Lawes, for example, set Waller's "Go, Lovely Rose" and Milton's *Comus* to music, and both Waller and Milton wrote in praise of Lawes's ability to set verse to music without distorting the verse. John Jenkins was a seventeenth century English composer whose music Pound wanted to include in a series of concerts which he organized in Rapallo, Italy. Arnold Dolmetsch published many early musical works, restoring and building the outmoded musical instruments on which they could be played (Pound's clavichord was purchased from Dolmetsch).

In addition to these allusions, consider the terms "grave" and "acute" ("Has he tempered the viol's wood / To enforce both the grave and the acute?") which apply both to language and to music—whose intrinsic connection, Pound implies, must be "enforced." George Kearns affirms the significance of the two terms: "The little clench on 'grave' and 'acute' gathers together words and music," says Kearns, who goes on to explain:

["Grave" and "acute"] belong equally to language and to music. In fact, music borrowed them from linguistics, precisely for the purpose of reaching toward the voice. Perhaps the highest form of art for Pound is the perfect union of words and music, *motz el son*. (164)

Commenting further on this first part of Canto 81's "libretto" section, Kearns suggests that in it Pound composes a " 'traditional' lyric in which the history of song is reconstructed." Thus, Kearns concludes, while the opening lines of the "libretto" section of Canto 81 repeat the allusion that was made in Canto 74 to Ben Jonson's "Have you seene but a bright Lillie grow," Pound actually patterns his own lyric after Jonson's in order to pay "homage to the marriage of words and music" represented by such works (159). It is clear, however, that even though Pound pays homage to those earlier artists such as Jonson who effected a "marriage" of verse and song, Pound believes the union to have been dissolved shortly thereafter. For, referring to its subsequent demise, several lines later in Canto 81 Pound laments: "And for 180 years almost nothing" (520).

The graphic “marriage” of music and poetry in Canto 75, then, is echoed in other cantos in the Pisan sequence, and Canto 75’s allusions to various poet-musicians are well explained in this context. But what of Canto 75’s last short line of verse: “not of one bird but of many”? The evolution of Canto 75’s musical score from Janequin’s “Song of the Birds” has been noted, and certainly anyone who can read music from a page can “hear” the violin’s runs and trills, its sharp staccatos and quick pizzicatos, and agree that the effect would be “bird-like.” But is this all? Hugh Kenner offers the suggestion that the musical score was inspired by the appearance of the Pisan prison camp itself, “a dusty square place around which birds sat like notes on a five-wire fence, under the guns” (*Pound Era* 251). Thus Gerhart Munch’s score invokes not only the “voices” of birds, but also a clear, sharp visual image of the barbed wire enclosure upon which the birds of the prison camp would alight.

This visual image appears in other cantos. In Canto 79, for instance, Pound describes the sight of “8 birds on a wire / or rather on 3 wires,” then “4 birds on 3 wires, one bird on one” (485). Constantly moving like notes which are being played, the black birds hop from wire to wire: “5 of ’em now on 2” and “on 3,” says Pound, and “7 on 4” (486). Again the birds change position quickly, looking—with their tails extended—like grace notes on a staff: “2 on 2,” then “3 on 3,” then “6 on 3, swallow-tails” (487). After hopping with pizzicato quickness, the birds slow their cadence in Canto 82 so that, as they rest, there are “three birds on the wire” (524). And as they change positions again, Pound graphically describes their musical configuration:

f f
 d
 g
 write the birds in their treble scale (525)

Further, Pound says in Canto 77 that the prison camp’s fence is constructed of “10,000 gibbet-iform posts supporting / barbed wire” (473). Each two “posts,” then, enclose a section of barbed wire, like the bars which divide each staff of Canto 75’s musical score into measures. Posts, wire, and birds; bars, staffs, and notes. In Canto 75 the musical score suggests an image of birds on wires; but in other cantos, the verbal description of birds on wires suggests a musical score.

Thus Pound effects a unique visual counterpoint within the Pisan sequence. As in confirmation, the voice of the poet says that “Some minds take pleasure in counterpoint / pleasure in counterpoint” (485). Indeed, writes R. Murray Schafer, Pound understood the musical concept of counterpoint “as well as anyone who has ever written in the English language” (28). Schafer is speaking of the rhythmic and metrical qualities of Pound’s verse, but in the context of the “Pisan Cantos” “bird music,” Schafer’s statement

applies equally to the visual counterpoint of birds and notes, words and musical notation. A musical score, of course, implicitly contains sound within itself, as does poetry on a page. Unless the score is played, or the poetry read aloud, the sound which resides in each is mute. While Canto 75's musical score remains fixed on the page, however, the bird imagery in other cantos in the Pisan sequence suggests the motion into which the musical notes would "fly" when played and thus the sound of the score itself. The literal "bird music" which resides in Canto 75's musical score is in effect heard contrapuntally in the "bird music" images in succeeding cantos, and this imagistic counterpoint reflects the essential union of poetry and music which Canto 75, in its entirety, graphically depicts.

And of what in this counterpoint do the birds, the notes, the words, the images sing? Certainly they sing of the isolation and despair of the poet imprisoned in the Detention Center at Pisa. "The loneliness of death came upon me," says Pound in Canto 82 as he sees "three solemn half notes / their white downy chests black-rimmed / on the middle wire" (527). But the birds move on, and life sings its counterpoint to death—just as Canto 75's musical score carries recurring motifs, and just as hope for the imprisoned poet was presaged early in the Pisan sequence by the appearance of "two larks in contrappunto / at sunset" (431). The poet who was described in Canto 74 as "noman" and as him "on whom the sun has gone down," not only survives the steel cage and hospital ward of the prison camp, but indeed also triumphs over his adversity. He finds that in the end, "nothing matters but the quality of the affection" (457); that although "beauty is difficult," it is possible (446); that even in the squalid prison camp, nature offers its healing power. The motifs of the "Pisan Cantos" are motifs sung in counterpoint, created by a poet who learns that "when the equities are gathered together / as birds alighting / [life] springeth up vital" (531).

At the conclusion of Canto 84, the last canto of the Pisan sequence and the one written on the day of Pound's release, he speaks for the first time directly to another person, "thru the barbed wire" (540) to a little Italian girl. Presumably the birds flew away as Pound approached the fence, but the images of their music etched against the sky remain. For, just as he broaches at the end of the "Pisan Cantos" the heretofore impassable perimeter of the camp, Pound in his poetry symbolically heals the breach which had existed—"for 180 years"—between music and verse. Thus Canto 75, itself a graphic union of words and music, takes its place as part of the larger sequence in whose imagistic counterpoint it is a significant voice. This unusual canto is literally descended from bird-music. But through the vision of a poet who insists upon the marriage of *motz el son*, Canto 75 is instrumental in creating throughout the "Pisan Cantos"—a little "word" music.

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