

THE *DON DE LANGUE* AND THE ARCHIVAL PLEDGE: DADO'S *LES OISEAUX D'IRENE* AND NEMIROVSKY'S *SUITE FRANÇAISE*
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This article considers the underlying archival poetics of the collaboration between the artist Dado (Miodrag Djuric) and the author Claude Louis-Combet. In *Dado and Louis-Combet*, I argue, the archival is the privileged medium of expression for traumatic experience. I take Derrida's account of archival textuality in *Mal d'archive* (1995) and *Genèses* (2003) as a starting-point from which to consider the textual structures which characterize the Dado/Louis-Combet encounter, in particular the mediation of narrative and image via a series of manuscript traces. Those traces subtly rearticulate some of the recurrent preoccupations of Dado's work, including the figure of the bird which is redeployed in startling fashion in the collaborative work *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* (2007). Here, the figure is mediated by a series of intertexts: an ornithological manual; Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*; the music of Olivier Messiaen; and, most strikingly, Irène Némirovsky's *Suite française*. The texts function as pretexts in a material, as well as a formal sense: they are not simply referred to, but provide textual surfaces which are literally written and drawn upon on in the course of the work's composition. At stake here is the status of the archival document, suspended as it is between the imaginary and the real. As a result, the idea of the archival legacy is complicated by the ambivalent dynamics of textual and visual documents. The 'real' archives to which Némirovsky's and Dado's works belong are in dialogue with the way the archive is imagined by Dado, and enacted in the extraordinary history of the manuscript of *Suite française*. The manuscript functions as pledge and legacy before reappearing as a surface to be inscribed by Dado: in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* Dado repeatedly overlays folios from the manuscript of

Némirovsky's *Suite française* with his own fantastic drawings (Figure 1). The interplay of text and image which takes place here may appear playful, but the caricatural irreverence of Dado's superimposed birds and monsters conceals a deeper, ethical reflection. Dado draws upon the Némirovsky manuscript in order to consecrate a deeply felt bond between his work and that of Némirovsky. For all that Dado's encounter with Némirovsky takes place in the archive many years after her death, as we shall see, the extraordinary process of archival borrowing undertaken by Dado specifically recalls the way Némirovsky's manuscript functions as a pledge in her own lifetime.

I want to suggest that two aspects of Derrida's theory of the archival provide a model for understanding the archival exchange which takes place between Dado and Louis-Combet: Derrida's view of the archive as institution and the theory of textuality which Derrida subsequently develops. In *Mal d'archive*, Derrida defines the archive as an institution, rooted in its Greek origin as *arkheîon*, the building housing the *archons*, or magistrates.¹ *Arche*, the etymological root of 'archive', means both to begin and to command: as the location of the legal scrolls in ancient Greece, the archive constitutes the seat of institutional authority. It thus inaugurates the institutional gesture of control over what can be preserved, a gesture which is subverted both in Dado's appropriation of Némirovky's manuscript and in the ambivalently-titled virtual archive created by Dado in 2008 to house versions of his own works, *L'Anti-musée virtuel*.² This late period of Dado's career sees a further institutional inauguration, in the foundation of the physical archive of Dado's work at IMEC, the very institution in which Dado encounters the manuscript of *Suite française*. Rather than a simple relocation of existing materials, the constitution of the Dado archive initiates a form of archival practice, as Dado's work is increasingly

marked by a heightened awareness of archival processes. In the following years Dado conceives of his own work and its documentation, as well as a plethora of personal belongings, as a repertoire of materials to be mined and recirculated: ‘il “ADN-ise” des catalogues anciens ou récents ou tout autre imprimé le concernant’.³

The text-image gestures by which Dado and Louis-Combet negotiate the archival recall Derrida’s comments on archival textuality in *Genèses* (2003), a text written for the inauguration of the archive of Hélène Cixous’s work in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Derrida’s exploration of the archive is bound up with the idea of genealogy and genius: Cixous’s work belongs to a tradition of literary genius which cannot be classified by means of archives. The literal act of inauguration, that of the Cixous archive, is celebrated by Derrida as one which disturbs the archive’s capacity to contain and classify. Cixous’s work, for Derrida, is exemplary of archival procedures that pre-empt those of the archive which attempts to contain it:

Plus grands et plus puissants que les bibliothèques qui font comme si elles avaient la capacité de les contenir, fût-ce virtuellement, ils dérangent tous les espaces d’archivage et d’indexation par la démesure de la mémoire potentiellement infinie qu’ils condensent selon des procédés d’écriture indécidables dont aucune formalisation complète n’est encore possible. (p. 23)

The text, then, simultaneously celebrates and resists the passing of Cixous’s work into the institutional space of the archive, and elevates it to an alternative ‘bibliothèque imaginaire’ which exists alongside its real counterpart. Just as Cixous’s body of work performs this large ‘an-archival’ operation at a macro-level, a similar process, according to Derrida, can be observed within individual works. The complex structure of the corpus disrupts its relations of belonging with the cultural apparatuses which surround it and, at the same time, the works re-enact this disruption in their own internal structural operations.

Cixous's novel *Manhattan* (2002) contains a *prière d'insérer*, or loose leaf, a material remnant. This is material which attests to having been left out of the principal text, and yet demands that it be admitted to it. The *prière d'insérer* announces that Cixous's book deals with, and is situated within, the 'avant-œuvre': it self-consciously positions itself outside of Cixous's main body of work. The characters of *Manhattan* are aware of their predicament in this textual hinterland, and dream of becoming books within the upper-case, mythical Œuvre proper.⁴ The book's formal slipperiness arises both from this metafictional plot and from the material presence of the loose leaf, elements which ironize and comment upon the constitution of the Cixous archive within the BnF. Just as Cixous's book presents an internal drama of belonging (in the formal problem surrounding the *prière d'insérer*), Cixous's work will occupy a unique position within the BNF: it anticipates the essence of this great archive, as 'un livre fait pour parler, entre autres choses, de la BNF à la BNF, pour lui dire son fait et son œuvre'.⁵ This structural self-awareness is a key feature of Derrida's theory of the archive in *Genèses*, and highlights the status of Cixous's work as belonging to the category of the 'archi-archivable' or proto-archival, which he also describes as the 'inarchivable' (p. 18). As I suggest in what follows, this category suggests both a form of textuality and the peculiar, idiosyncratic ethical relation which arises from it. Dado's work engages both aspects of Derrida's account through the prism of pictorial (albeit highly intertextual) art.

Les Oiseaux d'Irène perhaps courts the archive even more insistently than does Cixous's work. Its intertextual relations, in particular, invoke two author-figures which trigger further reflections on archival structure: Claude Louis-Combet, whose work becomes a counterpoint to that of Dado; and Irène Némirovsky. The author of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, it appears, is Claude Louis-Combet, and yet its subject is the

work of Dado, and in particular the cycle of drawings (or collages) and ceramics produced in 2006, and shown in two exhibitions in the Marais in 2007. The book which I shall refer to here by the title *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* may be considered the catalogue of those exhibitions, but in fact inhabits a textual ontology every bit as uncertain as that revealed in Dado's works themselves. The intermedial problematics of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* ultimately refer us back to the archive: that of Némirovsky and, ultimately, that of Dado. Just as Louis-Combet's and Dado's work threatens classificatory distinctions in its shared preoccupations, the ontological confusion of Dado's work and that of Némirovsky is reflected in the presentation of Némirovsky as a phantom addressee, and in the adoption of *Suite française* as the title of one of Dado's last (uncatalogued) works, the 2006 painting subsequently purchased by Bernard Blistène on behalf of the Fonds national d'art contemporain. The Dado archive, meanwhile, proves to be the site of a reflection on origins and pledges which exceeds literary and visual thematics and ambivalently inscribes itself within institutional spaces.

Louis-Combet begins the lead essay of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, 'Dado l'Oiseleur', with a roll-call of the 'petits monstres hybrides, violents, effrénés et pathétiques' which populate Dado's earlier work, referring in particular to the installations created by Dado in Sérignan, Gisors and Fécamp.⁶ The 'hordes de dégénérés' (p. 9) which swarm through both Louis-Combet's essay and *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, as we shall see, have significant implications for the archival transactions which take place in and around Dado's work, and refer as much to Louis-Combet's artistic production as to that of Dado. Louis-Combet shares Dado's preoccupation with monstrosity, and expresses the imaginative negotiation of abjection and formlessness in works such as *Tsé-tsé* (1972), *Ouverture du cri* (1992) and *Figures à l'orée* (2001). The latter two

are examples of the *livre d'artiste*, a form which appears central to Louis-Combet's work, and which sees periodic collaborations with Dado, beginning with the poetry collection *Vacuoles* in 1987.⁷ They also exemplify the theme of the *retour à la source* which runs through Louis-Combet's work. This pervasive tendency operates both on a conceptual level, and as a generative procedure through which writing reflects on its own origins. *Tsé-tsé*, for example, is Louis-Combet's earliest and most sustained reflection on pre-birth existence and imaginative fusion with the figure of the mother, famously expressed in *L'Enfance du verbe* in the declaration 'on ne sort jamais de la mère'.⁸ Writing, here, is the site of an involved enquiry into origins in which the figure of the mother occupies a key, symbolic position, but the thematics of the beginning equally recall the specifically archival function of origins in Derrida's *Mal d'archive*, 'là où les choses commencent' (p. 11; original emphasis). That function is modified in Dado and Louis-Combet by an inscrutable pre-history, 'avant le commencement'.⁹

Louis-Combet's text is thus suspended somewhere between the two bodies of work, ostensibly commenting upon Dado while simultaneously revisiting the preoccupations of his own œuvre. I shall comment now upon two cases of mediation within *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* which shed further light upon the relation between Dado's work and that of Louis-Combet, and the archival strategies which underpin that relation. The first concerns the genesis of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, while the second is that of the imaginary figure of Irène as addressee. Firstly, the peculiar form in which *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* was initially conceived intersects with one of the key concerns of Derrida's account of the archive, that is, of the archive's standpoint to the public and private spheres. Dado's illustrations, according to Nahon's essay in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, were originally composed as individual postcards, and sent one by one to

Nahon: 'au bout d'un certain temps, la collection existait, qui aurait pu rester secrète, comme une correspondance entre amis. Avec le printemps, le projet de reconstituer l'encyclopédie dont Dado s'est servi est né'.¹⁰ Nahon's view of the encyclopaedic pretensions of Dado's project is debatable, but it does bear an echo of one of Dado's sources, Buffon's encyclopaedic *Histoire naturelle*. Nahon's description also recalls Derrida's *Mal d'archive* in the emphasis it places on the interface between the public and the private: for Derrida, the *arkheion* is the institution, and the building, which mediates between public and private: 'la demeure, ce lieu où [les archives] restent à demeure, marque ce passage institutionnel du privé au public' (p. 13). Dado's extraordinary dialogue with Irène Némirovsky takes place principally in and through the archive, by means of the documents Dado obtains from, and donates to, the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine. It consists of a series of 'loose-leaf' artefacts, which resist straightforward identification with the book or literary corpus in the way that Derrida describes in *Genèses*.

Nahon's account also highlights the inscrutable mediation of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* between Dado and Louis-Combet, between languages and between generic categories. The collaboration between Dado and Louis-Combet is at first entirely confined to this exchange of postcards. Louis-Combet's initial reaction ('Claude Louis-Combet avait regardé, lui aussi, les images et envisageait d'écrire un texte où Dado apparaîtrait plein d'espoir, printanier', p.115) contrasts sharply with the title which Dado suddenly announces:

Dado tenait à ce que le livre fût un hommage à Irène Némirovsky. Pourquoi pas? Petit à petit l'ouvrage changeait de sens... Puis, un matin, Dado m'annonça qu'il avait trouvé le titre idéal: '*Auschwitz birds*, en anglais, parce qu'en français, *Les Oiseaux d'Auschwitz*, ce serait un peu dur!' (p. 115)

Mediation, once more, is central to the constitution of the work: Dado's choice of title uses the intermediary of English in order to produce the title *Auschwitz birds*. The title

reads almost as a deliberate lure: *Auschwitz birds* is no less oppressive than *Les Oiseaux d'Auschwitz*, and Dado seems to be at pains to emphasize the immutability of the signifier 'Auschwitz' rather than the nuances which can be achieved in English or French. In the 'Anti-musée virtuel', meanwhile, the website in which Dado both creates a comprehensive archive of his own work and contests the authority of that archive, the online instance of the *Oiseaux d'Irène* project is entitled *Les Oiseaux d'Auschwitz*. Its English counterpart, online, is *The Birds of Auschwitz*, so that mediation (whether of text to image, or text to text) produces a relation of incommensurability and indeterminacy. Dado's *Oiseaux*, like Derrida's account of Cixous's *Manhattan*, proliferate across a range of generic categories, from Dado's original drawings to their larger, 'finished' versions, to the copies published in the *Éditions de la Différence* volume and, finally, to the reworkings which appear in the 'Anti-musée virtuel'. In creating a series of works which inhabit both the public and private spheres, Dado makes of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* a formal and ontological enigma. The relation between the works remains unclear, with none claiming definitive status and none, as we shall see, permanently consigned to the space of the archive. Dado's *Suite française*, most enigmatically of all, entered the public sphere when it was purchased by the French Fonds national d'art contemporain in 2007, but nevertheless remains something of a secret, existing in no published catalogue or critical monograph.

The incessant mediation which occurs around *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* is matched within the work in the figure of Irène which lies, unseen, at its centre. There is no real discursive engagement with Némirovsky or her work in the book, nor does Némirovsky appear as a visual trace. Instead, she is the work's addressee: the first plate from the *Oiseaux d'Irène* series contains the handwritten dedication 'Pour Irène

Némirovsky' (p. 15; see cover image). For Pierre Nahon, the work is thus 'un hommage à Irène Némirovsky', an unreadable, private gesture towards a dead interlocutor who cannot be invoked within the discourse the work constructs (p. 115). Central to this address to the dead is the work's peculiar formal construction, in which Dado superimposes drawings upon existing texts and images. The most obvious and most frequently used pretext is an illustrated ornithological manual, whose pages are progressively submerged in Dado's 'faction des oiseaux fous' (p. 13). While some of the images can be read as illustrations of the original images in the manual (the *Hibou*, for instance), others make the realistic drawings of the manual into truly monstrous creations (for example, the *rôle des genêts*).¹¹

The monstrous, for Louis-Combet, is grounded in Dado's experience of atrocity, which surfaces in indirect and uncontextualized form in his work: 'les hantises du jeune Dado, engrossées par la terreur collective, et hallucinées de visions insupportables, avaient pris formes définitives de monstres et puissances de volonté d'expression. Le mal absolu avait besoin de son artiste' (p. 12). For Louis-Combet, atrocity ultimately surfaces in the bird motif, which expresses both the inscrutable language of birdsong and the period in which Dado is supposed to have been reduced to eating birds in order to survive (p. 10). Although Dado's work does not refer directly to his childhood in Montenegro in the 1930s and 40s, the association of the monstrous forms it articulates with the atrocities Dado may have witnessed has become one of the commonplaces of critical accounts. For Alain Bosquet, the experiences of the invasion of Yugoslavia and the death of Dado's mother are simultaneously referred to by the shorthand 'l'enfance apocalyptique de Miodrag Djuric'.¹² The bird motif is notable in Dado's illustrations for Messiaen's opera *Saint François d'Assise* (1983), and later, in more sustained form, in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*.

Louis-Combet's account of the genesis of the bird motif is highly mystical, and reflects the concern in Louis-Combet's own work with abjection, formlessness and the transcription of the dynamics of the unconscious: 'Il dit: ces oiseaux, c'est moi qui les ai faits, mais ils s'étaient d'abord envolés d'une âme, essaimée, à sa mort, à tous les vents d'Auschwitz. Cette âme portait un nom: elle s'appelait Irène Némirovsky' (p. 13). The instrumentalization of Némirovsky as an imaginary figure is seen as an oblique response to the Holocaust, and to Némirovsky's death in Auschwitz:

Les mobiles purement inconscients, dont on ne dira jamais assez la valeur d'intimité, se sont unis, essentiellement, à des données historiques, collectives, au plus haut du tragique perceptible et narrable. Irène Némirovsky, remontée du fond de la tourbe souffrante des camps de la mort, a pris une dimension symbolique, et sa beauté de femme – de femme-oiseau – a cristallisé autour d'elle toute l'énergie créatrice de l'artiste qu'elle a poussé à l'acte: l'expérience intérieure, qui aurait pu rester purement onirique, s'est transformée en expérience esthétique, sous la forme de soixante-trois figures peintes à vif sur les pages du livre démembré, vandalisé, sans parler du travail réalisé, par ailleurs, en pièces de céramique. (p. 13)

The bird represents a form of unconscious communion between Dado and Némirovsky: *l'expérience intérieure* is transmitted, via the unconscious, as a formal presence. The transmission of the presence, which resurfaces in the images of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, takes place via a replication of forms: the immense imaginative investment in Irène is rooted in her image, and specifically 'sa beauté de [...] femme-oiseau'. How, we might ask, can Dado deduce such an image? The answer lies in the belated publication of Némirovsky's *Suite française* in 2004, and the preponderance of Némirovsky's image in this and subsequent editions of her work. The image of Némirovsky which adorns the cover of both the 2004 Denoël and 2006 Gallimard Folio editions has become truly iconic, and suggests precisely the space for phantasmatic projection which Dado, according to Louis-Combet, imagines. Curiously, the iconicity of *Suite française* operates differently in the Anglophone world, where the cover image of the 2007 Vintage edition is a relatively bland shot of

a couple in a Paris street. In the 2009 Vintage classics edition, meanwhile, the cover shows not a face, or faces, but a folio of the manuscript of *Suite française*.

The face, and its elision within Dado's book, points to the most important formal component of *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, that is, the manuscript of *Suite française*. Around thirty of the drawings in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* were realized on the manuscript of *Suite française* itself. Or rather, they were drawn by Dado on copies of manuscript folios made in the Némirovsky archive at IMEC, l'Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine. The extraordinary communion with Irène takes place both via an imaginary image and in this transaction between multiple textual layers. Curiously, the images presented within Dado's 'Anti-musée virtuel' only include those drawn on the pages of the ornithology manual, not the Némirovsky manuscript. Nonetheless, the website does publish two important documents which shed further light on the homage to Némirovsky: a letter from Denise Epstein, Irène Némirovsky's daughter, to Dado, and a second letter, from Yanitza Djuric, Dado's daughter, to Denise Epstein. The latter, headed 'Pour Denise', replicates in miniature the homage carried out in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* as a whole. Yanitza sets out to document her first meeting with Epstein and describes her wish to make a gift to Epstein: 'De fait, je vous ai si peu oubliée, depuis, que j'ai voulu, ce soir, vous faire l'humble cadeau de ces quelques lignes'.¹³

Although it is unclear whether the gift is the letter or *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* as a whole, the idea of the archival legacy runs through Dado's bird cycle, and through his intermedial transactions with Némirovsky and Louis-Combet. Epstein's letter suggests that, from her perspective, *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* is an extraordinary gift which somehow mitigates the loss of her mother, or memorializes her:

La découverte de votre œuvre qui ne peut que m'émouvoir et m'impressionner fait partie des grands mystères des liens intemporels... [...]

Vos Oiseaux m'entourent, encadrent le visage de ma mère. Ils sont si beaux et surtout si parlants, de votre passé, de ce vécu si dur que je prends en plein cœur.

Nous savons tous les deux la Douleur mais nous la dominons, moi avec une Mémoire vivante, vous à travers ces Oiseaux qui vont m'accompagner pour toujours.

Merci à vous d'avoir à la fois l'œil et le cœur. Irène aurait certainement aimé vous connaître. Continuez à faire parler les Oiseaux, dans ce monde si gris nous avons besoin d'eux et de vous.

Vous serez avec moi, avec ma mère, avec ses livres, avec tous ceux qui viendront admirer les 'Oiseaux d'Irène'.

The nature of the gift is complicated in two ways: firstly, in the gift which Irène Némirovsky herself attempted to make of the manuscript of *Suite française*; and secondly, in the relation of the Dado archive to that of Némirovsky. It has been suggested that, at the time of the composition of *Suite française*, Némirovsky attempted to use whatever standing she still had in the French publishing world to secure the future of her two daughters. The story is told in an unsigned text within *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* entitled 'Quelques précisions': 'lors de son arrestation, [Némirovsky] travaillait à la rédaction du manuscrit de *Suite française*, et espérait négocier avec un éditeur un à-valoir qui assurerait – en cas de malheur... – la survie de ses deux filles, Elisabeth et Denise' (p. 16). As the scenario is presented here, the manuscript would have acted as currency, or as a pledge, which would guarantee her daughters' safety. The plan is not recounted in the Philipponat/Lienhardt biography, which simply refers to Michel's instruction to Denise and Elisabeth: 'Ne vous séparez jamais de cette valise, car elle contient le manuscrit de votre mère'.¹⁴ Although Némirovsky was unable to obtain such a guarantee, Epstein, according to Yanitza, is subsequently able to restore life (in textual form) to her mother: 'c'est aussi à votre mère que vous avez un peu redonné vie'.

Secondly, the Némirovsky manuscript enters into a curious, reciprocal relation of giving with the Dado archive. Dado's debt to the Némirovsky archive is explained in

an apparently innocuous footnote in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, which indicates that Dado consulted the *Suite française* manuscript at IMEC: 'les reproductions de quelques-unes des pages de ce manuscrit, retouchées par Dado, ont été offertes par l'artiste à l'IMEC. Les "Oiseaux" de Dado reproduits sur les pages 6–7, ont également été offerts par l'artiste à l'IMEC' (p. 16). In fact, the footnote privileges the information that Dado deposited copies of *his* illustrated reworkings of the manuscript at IMEC, rather than acknowledging the vital role played by the Némirovsky archive in Dado's own artistic production. The word 'retouchées' is also, perhaps, rather *underworked*: rather than tiny, cosmetic changes made in an attempt to restore an original text or image, Dado's intervention constitutes a dramatic visual reworking. The *Suite française* manuscript, then, is incorporated within Dado's work; Dado's illustrated version is subsequently given, or returned, to the archive. Both archives are housed by IMEC, and enter into a dynamic of reciprocity which is documented in the correspondence between Yanitza Djuric and Denise Epstein.

The network of archival documents which grows out of Némirovsky's *Suite française* goes one step further. Yanitza's letter to Denise identifies Dado's *Oiseaux* as a work of mourning and of homage; the power of its address, she argues, is reinforced by another dead addressee, and another act of homage. Shortly before her first meeting with Epstein, Yanitza recounts, she was reminded of Dado's installation in a village house in Bez-de-Naussac in the 1990s. As in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, the piece was triggered by the memory of a specific individual, in this case the woman to whom the house previously belonged, Maria Lauré:

En effet, l'expression artistique de Dado, lors de ses différentes interventions dans la maison de Bez-de-Naussac a été entièrement commandée par une Rémanence particulière, celle d'une femme, 'Maria L.', la précédente propriétaire de la demeure aveyronnaise.

La réinvention de ce [*sic*] lieux par l'artiste n'aurait sans doute, en effet, pas

pu être sans la présence de souvenirs tangibles, pour certains, plus impalpables, pour d'autres.

Au regard de ce que je viens de vous exposer rapidement, je n'ai pu m'empêcher, Denise, de penser qu'il existait une manière de sororité modeste entre Maria L. et Irène Némirovski, votre mère, par la manière même dont Dado a pu et a su utiliser les réminiscences respectives de ces deux 'Eclatantes Absentes'.

For Yanitza, the residual presence of Maria is the trigger both for Dado's work within the house and for the extraordinary imaginative identification which Yanitza makes between Maria and Irène Némirovsky, installing them in a relation of symbiosis because of the act of homage which Dado undertakes in relation to each. The idea of Dado as a 'scribe' who acts as the conduit for others' words, meanwhile, is reinforced in Jacques Henric's reading of the Bez-de-Naussac project: 'c'est toujours la plus belle affirmation d'œuvre que celle osée par cette sorte de scribe qu'est un artiste et qui consiste à tenter une traversée "transhumaine": se recréer soi-même en transitant par l'existence d'un autre et en passant non seulement à travers sa vie mais à travers sa mort'.¹⁵ What is striking in Henric's account, once more, is the unstable nature of the body of work: the œuvre is the site of an affirmation or, in Louis-Combet's words, 'une volonté d'expression' but, as is implied in Yanitza's comment, leads ultimately to absence or formlessness. Finally, the Djuric-Epstein correspondence is itself 'archived' within the 'anti-musée virtuel', where it is reworked once more. Although the chronology of the documents is not explained, and Dado himself does not comment upon them, he illustrates Yanitza's letter of homage, entitled 'Pour Denise'. The private space of correspondence is thus ambivalently incorporated in the public space of the body of work. Its position within it, though, is marginal: since the illustrated version of the correspondence exists only in the 'Anti-musée virtuel', it belongs only to the archival aspect of Dado's work and not to the published corpus.

These images are remarkable, then, for their belatedness, and for the archival phase of Dado's work which they inaugurate, reflected in the constitution of the Dado archive at IMEC in 2006, and the launching of the Dado website in 2008, in the last years of Dado's career. While such gestures might appear definitive, indeed final, I want to suggest that they in fact point back to the genealogical structure indicated by Derrida's theory of the archive and the figure of the pledge within it. Despite the apparent closure which they bring about, Dado's archival strategies subtly engage with the idea of the pledge. Instead of placing text and image in a fixed archival framework, Dado's *Les Oiseaux d'Irène* gives rise to a secondary discourse: following the pledge which Némirovsky makes to her own children, Dado seeds a dialogue which is pursued by his daughter Yanitza in her correspondence with Denise Epstein. The pledge of Némirovsky's manuscript is only partially fulfilled: the document is powerless to guarantee Némirovsky's own safety, and can bring about only belated memorial consolation. In this second-generation discourse of unexpected intimacy, though, and the genealogy which it indicates, Némirovsky's and Dado's work suggests a particular kind of archival relation. The pledge reconfigures text and image, endlessly extending their discourse and making of their interplay the durable sign of future relations: 'l'archive a toujours été un gage, et comme tout gage un gage d'avenir'.¹⁶ The ambiguity of the sign lies in its ethical grounding: for all its contestation of institutional cataloguing, the archive ultimately suggests a place of official belonging. Despite their contestation of institutional spaces, Joyce, Homer, Cixous or Dado are all ultimately prey to the gesture of consecration which the archive suggests. For Benjamin Hutchens, though, the archive's ethical ambitions persist: in the 'opacity' of its own operations, or its reflexive treatment of archival processes, 'the necessary an-archy of the archive opens the political act of

archivization to knowledge of its own institutive and consignative violence – a knowledge it cannot archive and a violence against which the archive cannot shield it'.¹⁷ Dado's archival pledge, its message dispersed between canvas and manuscript, inhabits that ambiguity.

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), p. 12.

² Dado, *Syndrome Dado: l'anti-musée virtuel* <<http://www.dado.fr/dado-peintre-oiseaux.php>> [accessed 1/8/11].

³ Fonds Dado, IMEC catalogue <http://www.imec-archives.com/fonds_archives_fiche.php?i=DDO> [accessed 1/8/11].

⁴ Hélène Cixous, *Manhattan* (Paris: Galilée, 2002), prière d'insérer (p. 3), quoted in Jacques Derrida, *Genèses, généalogies, genres et le génie: les secrets de l'archive* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), p. 19.

⁵ Derrida, *Genèses, généalogies, genres et le génie*, p. 93.

⁶ Claude Louis-Combet, *Dado: Les Oiseaux d'Irène* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence / Galerie Beaubourg, 2007), p. 9.

⁷ Claude Louis-Combet, *Vacuoles* (Béthune: Brandes, 1987).

⁸ Claude Louis-Combet, *L'Enfance du verbe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1976), p. 96.

⁹ Claude Louis-Combet, 'Avant le commencement', in *Proses pour saluer l'absence* (Paris: José Corti, 1999), pp. 9–13.

¹⁰ Pierre Nahon, 'Les Oiseaux d'Irène', in *Les Oiseaux d'Irène*, p. 115.

¹¹ The monstrous is well established within Dado's work, and leads to the categorization of his creatures as 'Dadopathes' by Claude Louis-Combet. Louis-Combet, *Dadomorphes et dadopathes* (Paris: Deyrolle, 1992).

¹² Alain Bosquet, *Dado, un univers sans repos* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1991), p. 21.

¹³ All quotations from the Denise Epstein-Yanitza Djuric correspondence are from *Syndrome Dado: l'anti-musée virtuel* <<http://www.dado.fr/dado-peintre-oiseaux.php>> [accessed 1/8/11].

¹⁴ Olivier Philipponnat and Patrick Lienhardt, *La Vie d'Irène Némirovsky* (Paris: Grasset, 2007), p. 534.

¹⁵ Jacques Henric, 'Rites de passage', in *Le Trousseau de Maria L* (Paris: Rachelin Lemarié, 2000).

¹⁶ Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, p. 37.

¹⁷ Benjamin Hutchens, 'Techniques of Forgetting? Hypo-Amnesic History and the An-Archive', *SubStance* 36:2, Issue 113: *The Future of Anarchism* (2007), 37–55.