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The characteristic theory of B's comprehension of A's sounds is, that he will respond from A's point of view.....



THE POST-STRUCTURALIST ISSUE

New Orleans Review

Fall 1981

The Post-Structuralist Issue

Much remains to be said about the structural and post-structural enterprises, and the essays in this issue provide neither beginnings nor endings, existing rather somewhere in the midst of the ongoing evolution of textual theory. Mr. Schleifer's article, "The Poison of Ink," explores how the American critical scene unwittingly prepared itself, in earlier decades, for its present liaison (dangereux?) with French speculation, and essays by Ms. Lepick, Mr. Argyros, and Mr. Rapaport attest to the pre-eminence of Derrida among French theorists. Mr. Jay discusses the French connection as found in specific critics and theorists publishing in America today — Frank Lentricchia, Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, and Geoffrey Hartman. A second group of essays develops theoretical problems in ways clearly influenced by post-structural thought. In a somewhat different vein, Mr. Doody confronts the problem of presence in literature by way of the visual aspects of the literary-graphic code. Mr. Flores applies post-structural concepts to an analysis of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and Mr. Telotte demonstrates the applicability of post-structural thought to film.

As this issue demonstrates, the *NOR* is committed to the publication of essays in contemporary literary theory and of essays in practical criticism clearly influenced by contemporary theory. Contributions are invited on such topics as literary theory and politics, the marginal text, the rhetorical and tropological nature of non-literary texts, and the problem of a post-structural literary history. The *NOR* will also remain committed to the study of film as a literary form, to the publication of poetry and fiction, and to the publication of original translations of contemporary significance.

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Hermann Hesse

THE ENAMORED YOUTH

Translated by Rika Lesser

A Legend

This narrative refers to events which took place in the days of Saint Hilarion. In the town where he was born, near Gaza, there lived a simple, pious couple whom the Lord had blessed with a daughter of intelligence and great beauty. Reared by her parents in the ways of goodness, the sensitive girl, to everyone's delight, grew in humility and piety, and was, in all her discreet charm, as lovely to behold as an angel of God. Her dark, shining hair played about her white forehead; long, velvety-black lashes shaded her modestly lowered eyes; she walked on tiny, delicate feet, slender and light as the gazelles under the palm trees. She would not even look at men, for in her fourteenth year of age she had taken deathly ill, and she had vowed—should He save her—to take none but God as husband, and God had accepted her offering.

A youth who lived in the same town fell in love with this picture of undefiled maiden chastity. He, too, was handsome and comely, the son of well-to-do parents, who had bred and raised him with all due care. But once he had fallen in love with the lovely young woman, he would do nothing but seek out every opportunity to see her; and when he did, he would stand enraptured before the ever so lovely child, gazing at her with ardent yearning in his eyes. When a day would pass without his seeing her face, he would mope around pale and dejected, eat nothing, and pass many an hour in sighs and lamentations.

Having had a good, Christian upbringing, the youth was possessed of a gentle and pious temperament, but now this violent infatuation reigned over his heart and soul. He was no longer able to pray, and instead of meditating on the holy things, he thought only of the maiden's long, black hair, her tranquil, beautiful eyes, the color and contours of her cheeks and lips, her slender, shining neck, and her tiny agile feet. But he was reluctant to let her know of his great love and eager desire; for he knew only too well that she meant to take no earthly

husband, bearing no love within her but to God and to her parents.

Languishing with lovesickness, he finally wrote her a long, imploring letter in which he declared his ardent love; with all his heart he begged her to accept him, and, in days to come, to live with him in holy matrimony, as would please God. He scented his missive with a noble Persian powder, rolled it up, tied it with a silken cord, and secretly sent it to her by the hands of an old maidservant.

When the maiden read his words, she turned scarlet. In the first flush of confusion, her inclination was to tear the letter to pieces or show it immediately to her mother. But then, she had known and liked the youth well as a child, and in his words she perceived a certain diffidence and tenderness, so she did no such thing; instead, she gave the letter back to the old woman, saying: "Return this letter to him who has written it, and tell him that he may never again address such words to me. Tell him also that by my parents I have been promised as a bride to God; thus, I may never offer my hand to any man, but shall stand firm in my resolve to serve and honor Him in virginal purity, for love unto Him is higher and worthier than human love. Further, tell him that I hope not to find even one man whose love is higher and worthier than God's, and so I would persist in my solemn vow. To him who has written this letter I wish God's peace, which surpasseth all understanding. And now get you hence and know that never again shall I accept such a message from your hands."

Astonished at such steadfastness of purpose, the maidservant returned to her master, brought him his letter, and reported all that the maiden had said.

Although she added several consoling words, the youth burst out in loud lamentations, rent his garments, and cast dirt upon his head. He no longer dared cross the maiden's path, and sought to catch sight of her only from a distance. Nights he lay sleepless in his chamber, crying aloud the name of his beloved, and a

hundred fond terms of endearment; he called her his Light and his Star, his Roe Deer and his Palm, his Eyebright and his Pearl, and when he awakened from these reveries to find himself alone in the dark room, he clenched his teeth, cursed the name of God, and battered his head against the wall.

This earthly love had eclipsed and extinguished all piety in his heart. And scarcely had the Devil gained entry than he hurled the youth from one abomination to another. The youth took an oath that he would have the lovely girl for himself, and would do so by force. He journeyed to Memphis, where he entered the school of the heathen priests of Asklepios, and took instruction in the arts of sorcery. He zealously pursued these studies for a year before returning home to Gaza.

Upon his return, he incised on a copper tablet signs and words of power to induce a strong love charm. In the dark of night, he buried the tablet under the threshold of the house in which the maiden lived.

Even on the very next day, the girl was remarkably changed. She gave free reign to her once so modestly lowered gaze; she loosed her hair and let it fall freely; she neglected her prayers and failed to attend divine services, and to herself she sang a little love song which no one had taught her. Daily her condition grew more serious, and nightly she tossed and turned in her bed, crying aloud the youth's name, calling him her most dearly beloved, desiring him near.

Her much-altered condition could not long remain concealed from the bewitched girl's parents. Having become suspicious of her changed words and manners, they listened in on her at night, and were so shocked and horrified at what they heard that the father wanted to disown his ill-bred daughter, as he called her. The mother, however, begged him to have patience; they began to examine the matter more closely and recognized that their daughter must have fallen into such a sad state of confusion owing to the influence of a magic spell.

But the maiden remained possessed of a demon, spewing blasphemies and calling out loudly for her beloved. At long last, her parents remembered the saintly hermit Hilarion, who for many years had lived in a desolate spot far from the town and who was so close to God that all his prayers were heard. He had healed so many sick and had cast out so many devils that, next to Saint Anthony, he could perhaps be

called the most powerful holy man of his day. They brought their daughter to him, and while telling him all that had come to pass, they implored him to heal her.

The saint turned to the maiden and bellowed: "Who has made of God's handmaid a vessel of unholy lust?" But the girl, her body shrunken, her skin ashen, looked at him and began to revile him, boasting of her white skin and her sleek body, calling the man of God a scabious scarecrow, so that her poor parents sank down on their knees and hid their heads in shame. But Hilarion, recognizing the demon that resided in the girl, smiled and launched a vigorous attack, so that it acknowledged its name and confessed all. Forcefully, the saint exorcised the violently contentious demon from the maiden. Then she awakened, as if out of some feverish dream, recognized and greeted her weeping parents, asked Hilarion for his blessing, and was, from that moment on, the same pious bride to God she had been before.

The young man had been waiting for the charm to overpower the maiden and thrust her into his arms. He spent several days secure in his hope, during which time the things related with respect to the maiden had come to pass. Already healed, she had returned to the town, and as the youth was crossing the street, he saw her coming from afar and walked toward her. As she came nearer, he could see that her forehead again glowed with its former purity; over her face such a peaceful beauty spread that she seemed to be coming directly from paradise. Perplexed, the youth hung back, having begun, the moment he saw her, to feel ashamed of the sacrilege he had committed. But he defended himself against it, and when she came close by him, he put his trust in the efficacy of the charm, went over to her, took hold of her hand, and said: "Now do you love me?"

Without blushing, the maiden raised her pure eyes, which shone on him like stars. An ineffable loving kindness radiated from them. She pressed his hand and said: "Yes, my brother, I love you. I love your poor soul, and I beg of you, deliver it from evil, and give it into God's keeping, so that it can again be beautiful and pure."

An invisible hand touched the youth's heart. His eyes brimmed with tears, and he cried: "Oh, must I renounce you forever? But give me a command, I will do naught but what you bid me."

She smiled like an angel and said to him: "You need not renounce me forever. There will come

a day when we will stand before God's throne. Let us prepare ourselves for that day so that we can look Him in the face and endure His judgment. Then I will be your friend. It is but for a short time that we must remain apart."

Gently he let go her hand, and smiling she walked away. For a while he stood like one under a spell, then he too walked on, locked up his house, and went into the wilderness to serve God. His beauty left him; he grew thin and brown and shared his dwelling with the beasts of the field. And when he grew weary and suffered doubt and could find no other consolation, he would endlessly repeat her words: "It is but for a short time. . . ."

And probably the time seemed long to him; he

grew gray and white and stayed on the earth even into his eighty-first year. What are a mere eighty years? The ages flee and are gone, as if on the wings of a bird. Since the days of that youth, one thousand and several hundred years have gone by, and how soon, too, will our names and deeds be forgotten, and no more trace of our life remain than perhaps a short, uncertain legend. . . .

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Hermann Hesse

KING YU

Translated by Rika Lesser

*A Story from
Old China*

In the history of old China, there are but few examples of regents and statesmen whose downfall came down through the influence of a woman or a romantic involvement. One of these rare examples, and a very remarkable one, is that of King Yu of Dschou and his wife Bau Si.

The kingdom of Dshou abutted, in the west, on the provinces of Mongolian barbarians; its capital, Fong, was situated in the midst of insecure territory, which from time to time was prey to the raids and surprise attacks of those barbarian tribes. Thus, consideration had to be given to the best possible means of strengthening the border defenses, and especially to the better protection of the capital.

By no means a bad statesman, and one who knew when to heed the good advice of his counselors, King Yu, as the history books tell us, was able to compensate for the drawbacks of his border with ingenious devices; but as the history books also tell us, all these ingenious and admirable contrivances eventually came to naught, owing to the capriciousness of a pretty woman.

The same king, with the assistance of all the princes who owed him fealty, created a fortification along the western frontier, and this, like all political constructs, had two dimensions: to wit, one part moral and the other mechanical. The moral component of the agreement between the king and his princes was a loyalty oath which bound the princes and their officials to dispatch themselves and their soldiers to the king's residence to aid him at the very first sign of distress. The mechanical component, which the king devised, consisted in an elaborate system of watchtowers, built along the western frontier. A guard would be posted day and night in each of the towers, which were furnished with huge drums. Now, should an enemy raid occur anywhere along the border, drumbeats would sound in the nearest tower, and from

tower to tower the drum signal would fly with utmost speed throughout the land.

For a long time King Yu was occupied with this clever and meritorious project; he conferred with his princes, heard the reports of the master builders, arranged to have the sentries thoroughly trained. But he had a favorite wife by the name of Bau Si, a beautiful woman who knew how to exert more influence over the heart and mind of the king than is good for a ruler or his realm. Like her lord, Bau Si followed the construction works at the frontier with intense curiosity and interest, just as a lively, clever girl sometimes will look on with eager admiration at boys playing their games. In order to make the matter of the border defenses clear to her, one of the master builders made a fine model of painted and fired clay for Bau Si. There in miniature were the border and the system of towers, and in each of the dainty little clay towers stood an infinitely small clay guard, and a tiny bell hung in place of each drum. This charming toy gave the king's wife infinite pleasure; when she happened, now and then, to be in a bad mood, her maidservants would suggest they play "Barbarian Invasion." Then they would set up all the little towers, pull on the strings of the miniature bells, and soon would grow thoroughly amused and exuberant.

It was a great day in the king's life when at last the construction was complete, the drums installed, and their attendants trained to perfection. And now, on a day previously deemed to be auspicious, the new border defenses were put to the test. Proud of his accomplishment, the king was greatly excited; his court officers stood ready to offer congratulations, but more than anyone, the lovely Bau Si was expectant and excited and scarcely wait for all the preliminary ceremonies and invocations to be over.

At last things reached the point where the game of towers and drumbeats, in which the

king's wife had so often delighted, would be played out in real life. She could scarcely keep herself from intervening in the game and giving orders—so great was her excitement. With a serious look on his face, the king gave her a sign and she managed to control herself. The hour had come; now the game of "Barbarian Invasion" would be played with real, full-sized towers and drums and people, to see if everything would function properly. The king gave the signal, the head court official passed the order on to the captain of the cavalry; the captain rode to the first watchtower and gave the order to sound the drum. The drum boomed forcefully, and its solemn and gripping tone sounded in every ear. Bau Si had grown pale with excitement and began to tremble. Mightily the great war drum sang its harsh earthshaking song, a song full of warning and menace, full of the future, of war and misery, of fear and destruction. Everyone listened to it in awe. Now it began to fade, and the answer came from the next tower, distant and weak and rapidly dying away, until nothing more was heard, and after a while the solemn silence was broken, people began to talk again, to move about and amuse themselves.

In the meantime, the deep, menacing sound of the drum ran from the second tower to the third, to the tenth, and to the thirtieth tower, and as soon as they heard it, every soldier, under strict orders, armed and with his knapsack filled with provisions, immediately had to proceed to the rendezvous; every captain and colonel, without losing a moment's time, had to prepare to march and in all haste had to send certain orders, as previously determined, to the interior of the country. Everywhere within earshot of the sound of the drum, work and meals, games and sleep were interrupted and replaced by packing, saddling, assembling, marching and riding. As quickly as possible, and from all the neighboring districts, troops hurried on their way to the residence Fong.

In Fong, in the middle of the court, the intense emotion and suspense which, at the sounding of the terrible drum, had seized every heart had soon subsided. People strolled in the gardens of the residence, stimulated and chatting; the whole city had a holiday, and in less than three hours, large and small cavalcades approached from two sides, and from one hour to the next, new ones arrived. This went on all day and for the whole of the following two days, during which time the king, the officials, and the offi-

cers were seized by an every-increasing enthusiasm. The king was piled high with honors and congratulations, the master builders were given a banquet, and the drummer from Tower I, who had been first to beat the drum, was garlanded, carried through the streets, and given presents by all the people.

Utterly enraptured, as if intoxicated, however, was Bau Si, the king's wife. More glorious than she could ever have imagined, her little game of towers and bells had become real. Enveloped in the broad, vast sound wave the drum produced, the command was magical, and it disappeared into the empty land. And alive, large as life, enormously its issue came streaming back out of the distance; out of the heart-gripping howl of that drum an army had grown, a well-equipped army of hundreds and thousands, who came in a steady stream, in a continuous hurrying motion; archers, light and heavy cavalry, lancers came riding and marching from the horizon, and with increasing turmoil they gradually filled all the space surrounding the city, where they were met and shown their posts, where they were greeted and shown hospitality, where they camped, pitched their tents, and lit their fires. Day and night it went on; like ghosts in a fairy tale, they emerged from the gray ground, distant, minute, veiled in small dust clouds, so that here at last, right before the eyes of the court and the enraptured Bau Si, they stood in formation, overwhelmingly real.

King Yu was well satisfied, and especially so with his enraptured favorite wife; like a flower she beamed with joy, and never before had she looked so beautiful to him. But all holidays must come to an end. Even this great holiday had to fade and yield to the everyday; no more miracles took place, no fairy-tale dreams came true. To idle and moody people, such disappointment is unbearable. A few weeks after the holiday, Bau Si had lost all her good humor. Once she had tasted the big game, the smaller game with the miniature clay towers and the tiny bells with their strings had become vapid. Oh, how intoxicating it had been! And now everything lay ready for a repetition of the rapturous game: there stood the towers and there hung the drums, the soldiers were at their posts and the drummers were in uniform, all waiting, all poised for the great command, and all this was dead and useless as long as no order came!

Bau Si lost her laughter, she lost her radiant disposition; and deprived of his most beloved

playmate, of his evening consolation, the king grew sullen. He had to give her more and more extravagant gifts in order to bring a smile to her lips. Now would have been the time to acknowledge the situation and to sacrifice this tender affection on the altar of his duty. But Yu was weak. To see Bau Si laugh again seemed more important to him than anything else in the world.

So he yielded to her temptation—slowly and under protest, but he yielded. Bau Si brought him to the point where he became oblivious of his duty. Succumbing to her entreaties, repeated for the thousandth time, he fulfilled the single great wish of her heart: he acquiesced in giving the signal to the border guards, as if the enemy were in sight. Immediately the deep, agitating voice of the war drum sounded. But this time the king found it terrifying, and even Bau Si was frightened by the sound. But then the whole charming game was reenacted: at the edge of the world little clouds of dust suddenly appeared, the troops came riding and marching, for three whole days the generals bowed, the soldiers pitched their tents. Bau Si was blissful, her laugh was radiant. But these were difficult hours for King Yu. He had to confess that the enemy had not attacked, that everything was peaceful and calm. He tried his best to justify the false alarm, explaining it away as a salutary exercise. He was not contradicted, people bowed and accepted his excuses. But there was talk among the officers; they had been dealt a treacherous blow by the king, he had alarmed the whole border and set everything in motion, all those thousands of people, for the sole purpose of obliging his mistress. And the majority of the officers agreed that never again would they respond to such a command. In the meantime, the king took great pains to appease the disgruntled troops by seeing that they were entertained in a grand fashion. And so Bau Si had attained her goal.

But even before she had time to fall into an-

other one of her bad moods and could again repeat the unscrupulous game, both Bau Si and the king got their punishment. Perhaps by chance, and perhaps because they had gotten wind of this story, one day the barbarians in the west came swarming over the frontier. Instantly the towers gave their signals, the deep drum sound cried its urgent warning and ran even to the farthest border. But this excellent toy, whose mechanism was so greatly to be admired, now appeared to be shattered—certainly the drums sounded, but this time they failed utterly to resound in the hearts of the soldiers and officers of the country. They did not follow the drum, and in vain the king and Bau Si looked out all around them; no dust clouds were rising, no small gray platoons came creeping, no one at all came to the aid of the king.

With what few troops he had on hand, the king hastened toward the barbarians. But these came in great numbers; they killed the king's troops, captured the residence Fong, destroyed the palace and the towers. King Yu lost his kingdom and his life, and things did not go otherwise for his favorite wife, Bau Si, of whose pernicious laugh the history books still tell us today.

Fong was destroyed, the game had been played in earnest. No more would the drums sound, King Yu was no more, and no more was the laughing Bau Si. Yu's successor, King Ping, found no alternative but to abandon Fong and remove his capital far to the east; to insure the future security of his dominion, he had to enter into alliances with the neighboring princes and buy them off by surrendering to them vast tracts of land.

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Julie Ann Lepick

JACQUES DERRIDA AT THE LIMITS

The Egyptians in the old days only had one language, that is to say everybody used only a little of any language in the ordinary life but when they were in love or talked to their hero or were moved or told tales then they spoke in an exalted and fanciful language that has now become a written language because nowadays in talking they are not exalted any more and they use just ordinary language all the time and so they have forgotten the language of exaltation and that is now only written but never spoken.

That is very interesting I said, now the English language I said has gone just the other way, they always tried to write like anybody talked and it is only comparatively lately that it is true that the written language knows that that is of no interest and cannot be done that is to write as everybody talks as the newspapers and movies and radios tell them to talk the spoken language is no longer interesting and so gradually the written language says something and says it differently than the spoken language. I was very much interested in what I said when I gradually said these things, and it is very important all this is just now. So soon we will come to have a written language that is a thing apart . . .

Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*

THE ADVENT OF WRITING

By a slow movement whose necessity is hardly perceptible, everything that for at least some twenty centuries tended toward and finally succeeded in being gathered under the name of language is beginning to let itself be transferred to, or at least summarized under, the name of writing. By a hardly perceptible necessity, it seems as though the concept of writing . . . is beginning to go beyond the extension of language. In all senses of the word, writing thus comprehends language.¹

Derrida's stated project has been to deconstruct western metaphysics, to call into question the nature, being, and limits of philosophy itself. A first step in this deconstructive project/ process has been to examine the relation between language and thought in order to ex-

pose the logocentrism of the western philosophical tradition; to excavate the *logos*, word, thing, sign itself to reveal the inherent phonocentrism of that tradition; and to finally call into question the limits, borders, the within and the without of philosophy as an entity and philosophizing as an activity.

The question, "What is philosophy?" is, for Derrida, identical with the question "What is language?" From Socrates to Saussure, Derrida demonstrates that philosophical truth has been held to reside in the speaking voice, the *pneuma* or spirit in which truth is fully present. Writing throughout this tradition has always been considered secondary, a representation of the spoken truth; its function is mnemonic, not revelatory. In "La Pharmacie de Platon," Derrida describes how the venerable Egyptian god of writing, Theuth, is denigrated by the sage Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. As Socrates tells the story (and remember: the Platonic dialogues are just that—conversations), Theuth was responsible

¹Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. 6-7.

for the discovery of "number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, not to speak of draughts and dice, and above all writing" (Phaedrus 274c). Socrates' account continues:

Now the king of the whole country at that time was Thamus, who dwelt in the great city of Upper Egypt which the Greeks call Egyptian Thebes . . . To him came Theuth, and revealed his arts, saying that they ought to be passed on to the Egyptians in general. Thamus asked what was the use of them all, and when Theuth explained, he condemned what he thought the bad points and praised what he thought the good (274d-e).

When Theuth comes to explain writing, he praises it as "a branch of learning that will make the people of Egypt wiser and improve their memories." Thamus, however, is less than impressed with this, Theuth's favorite art:

"O man full of arts, . . . you, by reason of your tender regard for the writing that is your offspring, have declared the very opposite of its true effect. If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks . . . it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance" (274e-275b).

Insofar as the history of western philosophy is, as Whitehead suggested, a footnote to Plato, it is a history of the speaking voice, the spoken truth. Writing is relegated to a secondary status. At its best, writing is considered as "immediately united to the voice and to breath. Its nature," as Derrida describes it, "is not grammatological but pneumatological . . . the voice one hears upon retreating into oneself: full and truthful presence of the divine voice" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 16). At its worst, writing is deceptive, false, a mere *technique*: a slight-of-hand trick. Derrida reminds us of Nietzsche's epithet for Socrates (from *The Birth of Tragedy*): "he who does not write" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 6).

Philosophers write, and continue to do so, sharing the tacit assumption that "good writing" transcribes this speaking voice, the living voice of internal or eternal truth. Consequently, the wedge Derrida inserts into this apparently seamless web of language, truth (and, we might add, logic) is achieved by problematizing language itself. Language *comprehends* (surrounds, limits,

engulfs, makes comprehensible) philosophy. But language is also the traditional tool of the philosopher; and it is that tool which Derrida himself finds to hand. Therefore, he points out that

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally . . . the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work (Of Grammatology, p. 24).

In other words, the process/project of deconstruction must work from within the structure, that is philosophy, or rather, language. And because deconstruction borrows from the object upon/within which it desires (and it is also a matter of desire, of Freud and of Bataille) to operate, deconstruction will always fall into the same traps, will be subject to the same limits. Will seem, at least, to reside within the "prison-house of language."

It should come as no surprise that the deconstructive process sounds very like a kind of negative dialectic in the manner of Adorno, Marcuse, or the master himself, Hegel. Indeed, Hegel is thought by Derrida to be the first to indicate the "hardly perceptible" movement marking the appearance of "a historico-metaphysical epoch [which] must finally determine language as the totality of its problematic horizon" [italics mine] (*Of Grammatology*, p. 6). Hegel is, for Derrida, "the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 26).

"Last philosopher . . . first thinker." The distinction should give us pause. Because in its most basic sense, the deconstructive project seeks to find/put an end (a finish, a goal, a closure) to philosophy in order, by marking its limits, to exceed them. "The first thinker"—"of writing." And the limit, the horizon, is language itself; the first signs of its deconstruction a certain play of words, on words, that threatens the stability of the linguistic structure:

There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language. The advent of writing is the advent of the play; today

such a play is coming into its own, effacing the limit starting from which one had thought to regulate the circulation of signs, drawing along with it all the strongholds, all the out-of-bounds shelters that watched over the field of language (Of Grammatology, p. 7).

"Strongholds," "shelters," guards at the linguistic borders keeping careful watch: can this "play of signifying references" really liberate us from the limits of language? This liberation, "... strictly speaking, amounts to destroying the concept of 'sign' and its entire logic" (Of Grammatology, p. 7).

As to the form a sign should have, you say it's no problem because, whatever form it may be given, a sign only has to serve as a sign, that is, be different or else the same as other signs.

Italo Calvino, "A Sign in Space,"
Cosmicomics

LANGUAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF THE SIGN

This inflation of the sign "language" is the inflation of the sign itself, absolute inflation, inflation itself (Of Grammatology, p. 6).

In order to deconstruct philosophy then, in order to open it up or explode it from within, we must recognize that the limits of philosophy are the limits of language itself. If with Derrida we accept this premise, we must grant its corollary: that the problem of language at its most fundamental is reducible to the problem of the sign.

The sign has had what is for Derrida a problematically unproblematical and largely cohesive history throughout western philosophical tradition. Traditionally, philosophy has recognized two sorts of signs: phonetic and graphic. The former is the spoken word designating, representing, embodying the concept, the—in the Platonic sense—*idea* of the thing. Graphic signs—writing—are representations of these spoken representations, with no direct relation to the concept or idea, but rather to the sound that represents the concept. Graphic signs are a kind of false representation, then, a secondary, lapsed, fallen representation, not unlike, in relation to phonetic signs, Plato's opposition in the *Sophist* (235d-237) of *ikon* to *phantasm*, of true and false representation. Or another Platonic opposition, cited by Derrida and central to his argument in "La Pharmacie de Platon" as well as to the entire presupposition of the *Of Grammatology*, of "*hypomnesis* to *mnēmē*, the auxiliary aide-mémoire to the living memory" (Of Grammatology, p. 37). The continuity and authority of this kind of thinking is emphasized in

Derrida's strategic juxtaposition of Aristotle and Saussure:

Let us recall the Aristotelian definition:

"Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words." Saussure: "Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs: the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. (Of Grammatology, p. 30).

When Saussure, then, speaks of the *sign*, he is to be generally understood as referring to the linguistic—spoken—sign, and not to the graphic or grammatological sign. For Saussure, the term "sign" designates a whole, consisting of a material and a conceptual element: the signifier (S^r) and the signified (S^d). The signifier is the phonetic substance; for instance, in French, the sound "arbre," which embodies the concept "tree." Indeed, the signifier presents (makes present) the *idea* (hear Plato here) of tree-ness. Each sign is related syntagmatically to all other signs. But this horizontal relation of sign to sign, out of which the phonetic differences which enable signs to make sense emerge, is also the intersection of a vertical axis of the sign: a hierarchy of signs. Signs signify other signs.

"Sign" as itself a signifying mark has always, as Derrida points out, "been understood and determined, in its meaning, as sign-of, a signifier different from its signified which serves as signifier of yet another signified in an endless chain of signification grounded in and transcended by the Logos, the word-godhead: the final and fundamental authority.

Thus, the relation of S^r/S^d bears with it a host of metaphysical givens: external/internal, form/content, body/spirit, appearance/reality, representation/presence, and so on. And in this sense the sign is irreducible, a fundamental building/stumbling block to the dismantling of metaphysics: "the sign cannot in itself surpass [do we hear the Hegelian vocabulary here? Surpass, *sublatio*, *aufheben*? Derrida's verb is *dépasser*—it appears then not so much a matter of the Hegelian overcoming, but rather of *dépasser*, of going beyond the limits] this opposition between the sensible and the intelligible" ("Structure, Sign, and Play," p. 281).

Or is the sign in fact irreducible, inviolable, impenetrable? Derrida suggests two ways of surpassing (by-passing? a detour?) the opposition of signifier/signified, of "erasing the difference":

one, the classic way, consists in reducing

or deriving the signifier, that is to say,
ultimately in submitting the sign to thought
("Structure, Sign, and Play," p. 281).

This is the approach of classic metaphysics: to derive the signifier from the thing (*ens*) being signified: the signifier, willing slave, submits to, opens itself to the fullness of the idea: slave, victim, but blessed virgin as the vehicle of truth, the *Logos*, the fullness of meaning. Parthenogenesis of the Word in the word.

The second way of rethinking the opposition of signifier/signified is Derrida's own. This

consists in putting into question the system in which the preceding reduction [of signified to signifier] functions: first and foremost, the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible. For the paradox is that the metaphysical reduction of the sign needed the opposition it was reducing ("Structure, Sign, and Play," p. 281).

Two consequences of the Derridean enterprise as here defined: one, that the Derridean enterprise involves the problematization of the concept of *opposition*, of opposing opposition to itself. Not merely turning the old system on its head, and elevating the abased signifier to the lordly role formerly accorded to the masterful signified. Grammatological writing will indeed do this, will liberate the enslaved signifiers allowing the free, unregulated circulation of signifiers (the "play of the signifiers") in the written text/the text of writing. No more will the signifiers accomplish the *work* of the signified; King Thamus' question of the *usefulness* of the sign is no longer relevant. Thus the written text, (and here Derrida is following Georges Bataille's distinction of work/play) the disseminated text, is the text unrepressed, the text of unregulated desire, the text of a "general economy." The text that does not work.

Second: the paradox. That the metaphysical reduction of the difference of signifier/signified (and all the attendant metaphysical pairs) relies upon that very opposition. That in order to erase differences, you must differentiate. And it is this same paradox which haunts the Derridean project/process: even insofar as Derrida is able to think the *between*, the *hinge*, the *veil*, the *tissu*, the *hymen*, the *tympan*, the neither-either-this-and/or-that, his strategies are borrowed from the

²Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 278-293.

old battles, his weapons (and his wit) are reducible to the difference between sound and sense, the written, the heard, and the meant. Graphically, literally, to the bar or slash (/) which differentiates the signifier and the signified. And for Derrida, this second paradox was predictable, necessary. A foreword, a preface, a pre-logos. A necessary consequence of working within the limits. That which lies beyond the limits—of philosophy, of language—can only be indicated in marks, marginalia, the white writing between the lines of the "text," that texture of signs:

The "formal essence" of the sign can only be determined in terms of presence. One cannot get around that response, except by challenging the very form of the question and beginning to think that the sign ~~that ill-named thing~~ the only one, that escapes the instituting question of philosophy: "what is . . . ?" (Of Grammatology, pp. 18-19)

In the universe now there was no longer a container and a thing contained, but only a general thickness of signs superimposed and coagulated, occupying the whole volume of space; it was constantly being dotted, minutely, a network of lines and scratches and reliefs and engravings; the universe was scrawled over on all sides, along all its dimensions. There was no longer any way to establish a point of reference: the Galaxy went on turning but I could no longer count the revolutions, any point could be the point of departure, any sign heaped up with the others could be mine, but discovering it would have served no purpose, because it was clear that, independent of signs, space didn't exist and perhaps had never existed.

Italo Calvino, "A Sign in Space,"
Cosmicomics

But as for this writing? As for writing? Here the meaning is not someplace else, but with writing it is made and unmade. And if there is such a thing as truth, then this truth too can reside only in the imprint of an empty multiplied furrow which is both headless and tailless. It resides there that it should destroy itself there. This writing says nothing, but only confuses and confounds. It forces what it says into the margins and then seizes upon these margins in such a way that nothing may settle there. This writing is of an obscure sort, the sort that obliterates what it imprints and disperses what it says. It shelters nothing. Rather it exposes. And for this reason it is a white writing.

Stefano Agosti, Preface to Jacques
Derrida's *Spurs/Nietzsche's Styles*

"L'ÊTRE [LETTRE] À LA LIMITE"

Derrida writes. Prefaces, footnotes, glosses, marginalia, scribbles in the margins of the Text of metaphysics. Writing which is de-centered, on the edge of the page, at the limits of the philosophical frame, the linguistic structure. Writing which does and does not recapture the Voice of reason.

The very format of such Derridean works as *Glas* or "Tympan," the crucial prefatory text to *Marges*, graphically demonstrates Derrida's attempts to think of/at the limits of philosophy and language by writing in the white space, de-structuring our expectations about the order of the page and thus of thought. An effort to explode the unified text, and to free the linear march of signifiers working—the rank and file of signification—to embody forth the spirit of their meaning.

The text of "Tympan"—itself a text at once within and outside the limits of the collection of essays entitled *Marges* (limits), consists of three parts: the left two-thirds of the page are devoted to Derrida's excursus on the word *tympan*, in which the human ear, the printing press, and the philosophical text (considered as a kind of writing machine) are seen as structurally parallel. This part of "Tympan" is, above all else, a reflection on "L'être à la limite," *being* (the metaphysical question), existence (with a pun on "lettre" or *letter* the graphic sign), at the limit.

The right third part of each page of "Tympan" reprints Michel Leiris' meditation on the name and myth *Persephone* in which the sound-name "Percephone" is subjected to a series of phonological and semantic displacements and dismemberments.

Finally, at the bottom of many of the two-thirds of the page given over to Derrida's writing are placed his footnotes. These footnotes themselves often exceed the ordinary limits of footnotes, take over more of the page than the primary text (if we assume—at least to aid our description—that there is a "primary" text on these pages). Indeed, often the footnotes completely supplant (supplement?) the text to which they are appended, so that we have entire pages of footnotes. To read "Tympan" is to see the Derridean strategy—the process of his project—at its most concentrated.

In "Tympan," Derrida grants "un rôle quasi-organisateur" to the "motif de la vibration sonore" which he likens to "la proximité du sens de

l'être dans la parole" ("Tympan," p. xiii).³ "Proximité" is a loaded term in the Derridean lexicon and bears with it a meditation on *le propre*, *le proche*, and *la propriété* which is in particular a critique of Heidegger and more generally, a questioning of the problem of the association of being, presence, and truth. Let us bracket this very dense Derridean topic and look instead at the remainder of this phrase: "sens de l'être dans la parole." If we refuse—again, for the sake of simplifying our task as readers—to put the signifier, *sens*, into play, and agree that Derrida means to mean "meaning" here, our reading is still problematical. Are we to read this phrase as "the proximity of the meaning of being in speech" (*la parole*)? Or shall we read "the proximity of the sense of being in the word (*la parole*)? Or do we allow ourselves to read with our ears and hear instead "the proximity of the meaning of [the] letter (*lettre*) in the word? How are we to *determine* (which is to choose, to exclude, to limit) the meaning of the text? We cannot. We can only read. But reading with a difference. Reading, as Derrida desires us, *between* (*entre* which is also *antre*, the sheltering cave) the lines.

In "Tympan" we realize that it isn't so much the problem of the voice, of speech, of the speaking subject (another issue, that of the subject—an issue not unrelated to the problems raised by the concepts of *le propre*, *le proche*, and *la proximité*, which we note, and bracket, here). Rather, as Derrida points out (quoting Nietzsche's Zarathustra) it is a matter of learning to "ouïr avec les yeux," to "hear with the eyes." This displacement of (meta)physical function results in a disequilibrium, a transgression of the normal order and logico-anatomical separation of functions which is analogous to Derrida's dis- or re-ordering of the printed page. The resulting "vertige labyrinthique" (literally, that infection of the middle ear which disturbs an individual's sense of balance) is hardly a mere physical disorder. It is a literal dis-ordering of *l'être*, of the letter, and of the meaning-fullness upheld by traditional metaphysics. And the slash between signifier and signified extends to mark the parabolic trajectory of the Derridean project.

But the letters, if disordered, remain; and Derrida's dream of Zarathustra, laughing, dancing outside the house of "la vérité de l'être" ("Les Fins de l'Homme," *Marges*, p. 163),⁴ outside the

³Jacques Derrida, "Tympan," in *Marges de la Philosophie*. Paris: Minuit, 1972. pp. i-xxv.

prison-house of language, remains a dream. And a desire:

. . . all that desire had wished to wrest from the play of language finds itself recaptured within that play but also because, for the same reason, language itself is menaced in its very life, helpless, adrift in the threat of limitlessness, brought back to its own finitude at the very moment when its limits seem to disappear, when it ceases to be self-assured, contained, and guaranteed by the infinite signified which seemed to exceed it (Of Grammatology, p. 6).

A language without limits would not be a language without meaning. Nor would it be a language in which meaning would be more or less determined (and determinate)—this is the language we inhabit, our universe of words—language “brought back to its own finitude.” It would be a language in which all meanings were simultaneously calculated.

The problem of escaping the limits of language becomes, then, the problem of determining all meanings. And this may not in practice be possible. In his article, “Complexity and Transcomputability,” Hans J. Bremermann asserts that even computers are subject to “certain limitations” in their ability “to carry out enough computations to solve certain mathematical and logical problems.” “These same limitations,” he continues, “also apply to data processing by nerve nets, and thus ultimately to human thought processes” (Bremermann, p. 168).⁵

We solve a problem by means of an algorithm which takes “the data that come with the problem . . . and transforms them step by step” until a solution is obtained (Bremermann, p. 168). All algorithms have, however, a *computational cost*, defined as the number of calculations required to solve the problem. According to Bremermann, there are many problems in which the “computational cost exceeds the capacity of any computing resources on earth” (Bremermann, p. 171). Bremermann cites examples from mathematics and information science, including the travelling salesman problem and the attempt to program a computer to play a perfect game of chess. Note that Bremermann does *not* say that

solutions to such problems do not exist; rather, he states that the computational cost limits our ability to obtain these solutions.

The limits to problem-solving are the inherent limits of the physical universe. For instance, in a computing system, no matter how small the individual microprocessor, the physical laws relating time, distance, matter, energy and speed (of light, of electrons), as well as the necessary switching time (which can approach but never achieve zero) limit the number of computations which may be carried out. Thus in very complex problems with a great number of variables, such as the chess game problem, the computational cost exceeds the capacity of even the most nearly perfect machine. In the same manner, the physical limits of the neurological system prevent the resolution of certain problems.

In “Tympan,” we are faced with a text in which the number of variables—of spacing, spelling, and even sound (for the play of the signifiers is often that most undeservedly debased form of wordplay, the *double entendre*, the double-dealing pun)—may very well produce a problem (of deciphering the “meaning(s)” of the text) in which the computational cost outweighs our capacity to find a solution: that is, to read. Even in the brief phrase we examined above, we noted at least three variant readings. And as we proceed in the sentence, the number of variables increases. Variables not only of syntax and of lexicon, of sound and sense, but of allusion, of figural language, even of placement on the page. With each new variable, the cost of calculating meaning(s) increases far more rapidly than the mere increase in the number of variables.

We stand with Derrida on the marches/margins/limits of (meta) physics, then, seeking some escape from the prison of our thought, our language. Escape is impossible because we are always-already caught in the net of our own words. Meaning, within our universe at least, is indeed, as Derrida has shown, undecidable: not because it might not be here, there, somewhere, but because it is incalculable.

⁴Jacques Derrida, “Les Fins de l’Homme,” in *Marges de la Philosophie*. Paris, Minuit, 1972, pp. 131-164.

⁵Hans J. Bremermann, “Complexity and Transcomputability,” in *The Encyclopedia of Ignorance*. Ed. Ronald Duncan and Miranda Weston-Smith. New York: A Wallaby Book, 1978, pp. 167-174.

Alexander Argyros

THE POSSIBILITY OF HISTORY

*Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.*

Having once had the unprecedented good fortune of hooking a silver trout which subsequently metamorphosed into a glimmering but elusive girl, the narrator of "The Song of Wandering Aengus" (Yeats, 1897) wanders through some unsightly landscapes seeking to recapture her. His peregrinations, spurred by the memory of a supernatural event, are both spatial and temporal. His spatial trajectory is not unusual; its temporal counterpart, however, is interesting for having been doubled: "till time and times are done." This formulation appears vaguely redundant. What, after all, is time, but the concatenation, the linear juxtaposition of times? Whatever "times" may mean, we are at least certain that it represents a plural modality of temporality. Furthermore, we may surmise that it probably means something like what is implied in the phrase "the times of my life." Time, by way of contrast, would then be less a series of events than time in general, either the abstract concept of time or the totality of factual time. Such a distinction, however, appears to run counter to the traditional view of time as first formulated by Aristotle. Time, as this powerful current in the history of philosophy would have it, is the deployment of now-points along a linear line of succession. Simply, time is a sequence of instants in which one now-instant becomes a past-instant by giving way to a future-instant which consequently becomes the next now-instant etc. But, assuming that to be the case, time would simply be a certain combination of times and Yeats' line a poetically compelling pleonasm.

For Yeats' distinction to hold, time must be, in principle, distinguishable from times. Not only must one not constitute a definition of the other, but neither one can be the genus or species of the

other. In short, time must in no way resemble an event. For whatever the meaning of "times," whether it be an instant, a segment of personal history, or a period of world history, its distinction from "time" must reside in its determinability as a potentially isolatable and contingent event. Time, by way of contrast, would be all that times isn't: non-isolatable, unpunctual, and alien to the phenomenality of an event.

"Cogito et Histoire De La Folie," Jacques Derrida's commentary on Michel Foucault's *Folie et Deraison, Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, proceeds along lines which, I hope to demonstrate, are structurally parallel to the distinction I have suggested between time and times in Yeats' poem. "Cogito" is Derrida's reading of Foucault's reading of Descartes. As such, it is what in Derrida's lexicon is called a "deconstruction." The target of Derrida's deceptively vitriolic style is less Foucault's theme, the status of the insane in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Classical period, than the underlying assumptions governing his methodology. Even the most cursory reading of Foucault's book reveals the wealth of historical data apparently serving as the glue binding and strengthening his theoretical flights. In fact, the avalanche of dates, quotations, and other documentation Foucault adduces is, at least for me, the most salient feature of *Histoire*. Foucault's book is no fiction; its reality is awesome, and it is precisely this call to the power of evidence and the indomitability of the fact that Derrida eases onto his slide.

The specific locus of Derrida's analysis is Foucault's interpretation of Descartes' treatment of insanity. Briefly, Foucault maintains that Descartes participates in the historically pervasive penchant for expulsing madness out of the realm of reason. Derrida seeks to demonstrate that

Foucault takes as a single, unarticulated gesture what is actually two separate steps. In an early, natural, pre-philosophical stage of the Cogito, madness is rejected in a move that is fundamentally rhetorical and pedagogic. It is at this stage of Descartes' itinerary that Foucault chooses to halt, and having surveyed the landscape, condemns Descartes' provisional and strategic bracketing of the concept of insanity as an expulsion analogous on the philosophic plane to the ostracization of the insane from classical society on a historical plane. Foucault's critique, according to Derrida, is misdirected. The full philosophic thrust of the Cogito does not issue from this propedeutic moment, but from a subsequent, purely metaphysical gesture. The well known hypothesis of the Evil Genie, which provokes a radical scepticism of the entire gamut of the known and knowable, is, Derrida argues, the introduction of insanity into the cortex of this bastion of reason and normality. The Cogito, then, which will be subsequently linked to the ultimate guarantor of reason—God, is, at its formative stage, a movement of doubt so radical as to be essentially insane.

Such, then, are the rudiments of Derrida's analysis. It is not, however, with Descartes that I am concerned. My purpose is less to study the specifics of Derrida's philosophical objections to Foucault's reading of Descartes than to disengage from Derrida's article a position on the question of history. Let us return to Derrida's treatment of the Cogito. The reading has two fundamental steps. First—In its radical, hyperbolic phase, the Cogito is anterior to any schism between reason and unreason. The hyperbolic moment of the Cogito is not only ontologically prior to all decisions between logic and illogic, it is, in fact, the condition of possibility of philosophy's ability to think in/with such categories. Second—The protean, pre-philosophical level of the Cogito is, in the language of Husserl, a passage to the limit. It is a flight of thought that exceeds, as it thinks, the totality of *determined* objects (physical as well as ideational): "The extent to which doubt and the Cartesian Cogito are *punctuated* by this project of a singular and unprecedented excess—an excess in the direction of the nondetermined, Nothingness of Infinity, an excess which overflows the totality of that which can be thought, the totality of beings and determined meanings, the totality of factual history—is also the extent to which any effort to reduce this project, to enclose it within a deter-

ined historical structure, however comprehensive, risks missing the essential, risks dulling the *point* itself." ("Cogito and the History of Madness", in *Writing and Difference*, The University of Chicago Press, 1978; p. 57) Exceeding the totality of facts (understood as that which can be constituted or recorded as an object of consciousness), the hyperbolic moment of the Cogito is an *elan* towards the infinite. Just as Heidegger's Dasein achieves authenticity by refusing exclusive commerce with beings (Seiendes) and involving itself with Being (Sein), Derrida's version of Descartes' Cogito exceeds the totality of fact, including the totality of historical fact, towards that which lies beyond the province of thought. It is consequently unthinkable, thus insane.

Clearly, Derrida's version of the Cogito makes it a variant of *differance*. Both found the possibility of a world while remaining alien to any worldly determination. Both found the possibility of thought and language by being themselves essentially hostile to the logos. Both refuse to be delimited and determined into a concept. The Cogito, at least in its callow form, inaugurates the world as such by exceeding it. It is, in the full meaning of the preposition, not *in* the world. It is also, as the vocabulary of the previous paragraph amply demonstrates, no longer anything remotely resembling Descartes' concept. Cogito has joined Derrida's stable of deconstructive non-concepts. It appears to have earned its niche partially because Foucault has "misread" it.

The term *deconstruction* has been subject to much glib use of late. It has come to mean any style of criticism or reading which disturbs the supposed plenitude of a work. In Derrida's lexicon, however, its definition is much stricter. It is a specific philosophic term denoting a kind of reading which seeks to demonstrate that the condition of possibility (a phrase to be understood by analogy to Kant's categories) of every thing (idea, perception, self-perception, system, book, poem, novel etc.) is a radically unthing-like structure, a *text* (not, as in common post-Derrida parlance, a simple synonym for a book, novel, essay, etc., but, properly speaking, their antithesis). This *text*, although it constantly surfaces in catachretic reifications (such as the word *text*), is itself without essence.

In "Cogito", it is not Descartes' Cogito which Derrida seeks to "deconstruct" but the entirety of Foucault's enterprise. In *Histoire de la folie*, as

elsewhere, Foucault is fundamentally concerned with *events* (historical, discursive etc.) In "L'Ordre du discours" (Paris, Gallimard, 1971, English translation—"The Discourse on Language" in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Harper Colophon, 1972), for example, he says: "The fundamental notions now imposed upon us are no longer those of consciousness and continuity (with their correlative problems of liberty and causality), nor are they those of sign and structure. They are notions, rather, of events and of series, with the group of notions linked to these; it is around such an ensemble that this analysis of discourse I am thinking of is articulated . . . If discourses are to be treated first as ensembles of discursive events, what status are we to accord this notion of event, so rarely taken into consideration by philosophers? Of course, an event is neither substance, nor accident, nor quality nor process; events are not corporeal. And yet an event is certainly not immaterial; it takes effect, becomes effect, always on the level of materiality." (pp. 230-31) And, despite whatever notions of chance, discontinuity, and materiality are addended to the principle of viewing history as continuous, disrupted, or disruptive events or series of events, it is the very idea of an event, in all its materiality, that Derrida calls into question.

Derrida has often taken issue with Heidegger. Yet, in "Cogito", just as he resurrects Descartes to serve as an ally against Foucault, the kind of argument he appears to deploy is typically Heideggerian. A principle theme in *Being and Time* (Harper and Row, 1962) is that Dasein is in constant peril of losing itself (that is, its pre-comprehension of its own Being) in a worldly absorption with beings. This "fall" occurs both spatially and temporally. In both instances, to fall is to forget Being, another name for which is Nothing, by dealing with the world as if it were composed exclusively of things. Things can be material things, thought things (concepts, ideas, illusions) or time things (discrete points of time). Our specific concern, however, is history. In terms of history, the fallen, inauthentic modality of Dasein is to allow itself to get caught up in *events*: "The four significations (of history) are connected in that they relate to man as the 'subject' of events. How is the historizing character of such events to be defined? Is historizing a sequence of processes, an ever-changing emergence and disappearance of events? In what way does this historizing of history belong

to Dasein? Is Dasein already factually 'present-at-hand' to begin with, so that on occasion it can get 'into a history'? Does Dasein first *become* historical by getting intertwined with events and circumstances? Or is the Being of Dasein constituted first of all by historizing, so that anything like circumstances, events, and vicissitudes is ontologically possible *only because Dasein is historical in its Being?*" (p. 431) When Dasein loses itself in events, what it loses is its essentially historical Being. Absorption in events shields Dasein from that very temporal constitution that first allows historical events to appear as such.

Derrida's *deconstruction* of Foucault, via the auspices of a revitalized Descartes, appears strangely like a Heideggerian *destruction*. Like Heidegger, Derrida decries a reliance on the historical fact inasmuch as it may serve to mask a non-objective, frighteningly abyssal "state" he calls "historicity": "In its most impoverished syntax, logos is reason and, indeed, a historical reason. And if madness in general, beyond any factitious and determined historical structure, is the absence of a work, then madness is indeed, essentially and generally, silence, stifled speech, within a caesura and a wound that *open up* life as *historicity in general*." (*Writing and Difference*, p. 54) Having bifurcated insanity into a lesser, factual, worldly form, akin to the subject of Foucault's book, and a radical, infinite, purely excessive form, one of whose manifestations is the Cogito, he identifies a history of facts, or of sense, with the weaker form of insanity, and "historicity" with Descartes' hyperbole (Actually, historicity is more precisely the passage between the Cogito and logic, between fact and originary temporalizing non-presence). History, therefore, as long as it busies itself with the historical fact or event, is part of that onto-metaphysical edifice Derrida has been trying to undermine. In fact, a history of insanity, inasmuch as it purports to be unsettling or revolutionary while still being a "history", is actually a stellar example of the metaphysical machine's ability to strengthen itself by allowing and consequently encompassing negativity: "In this sense, I would be tempted to consider Foucault's book a powerful gesture of protection and internment. A Cartesian gesture for the twentieth century. A reappropriation of negativity" (*Writing and Difference*, p. 55).

The *difference* between an absolute excess and a domesticated form of madness represents, for

Derrida, a passage constitutive of consciousness, or, of the already temporal consciousness of history. For Derrida, it is utterly impossible to write a history of madness. At most, one could construct a chronology of a series of already reified metaphors for insanity. Insanity itself is silence. It cannot speak; for, retrospectively, there would have been no "it" to have spoken.

There are many possible objections to this kind of reading. Foucault himself has not indulged in a patronizing, Lacanian, kind of insouciance to Derrida's criticism, but has retorted trenchantly. A typical reference to Derrida, interesting because his name is never mentioned, appears in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

We must renounce two linked, but opposite themes. The first involves a wish that it should never be possible to assign, in the order of discourse, the irruption of a real event; that beyond any apparent beginning there is always a secret origin—so secret and so fundamental that it can never be quite grasped in itself. Thus one is led inevitably, through the naivety of chronologies, towards an ever-receding point that is never itself present in any history: this point is merely its own void, and from that point all beginnings can never be more than recommencements or occultation (in one and the same gesture, this and that). To this theme is connected another according to which all manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already-said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark (p. 25).

Since it is less my purpose to provide a forum for a philosophical debate than to elaborate a crucial problem in the notion of history, I would like to show that: a) the Foucault-Derrida debate does not occur where it appears to, and b) that in a sense, it is a false debate.

First—The debate appears to be over history. Foucault's thinly veiled reference to Derrida takes issue with the historical neutrality and impotence of his obsession with the originary neither-neither. Without an arsenal of concepts such as event, occurrence, reality, materiality, determination, presence, punctuality etc., history is disarmed. Derrida's "deconstruction" would deny history the use of the conceptual tools it needs. Of course, parts of "Cogito" appear to call for such an emasculation of history. I do not, however, think that Derrida's

ultimate purpose is to render the discipline of history impossible. In fact, it is not really history that he is concerned with. Were the uncritical use of those concepts which make history possible Derrida's sole target, he would in principle rail against every attempt to record fact. Not that Derrida isn't concerned with any supposed transcription of fact, but not simply, and not *per se*.

Second—The debate is not over history; therefore, to argue on historical terms would be to engage in a spurious dialogue. The object of Derrida's analysis is not the practice of history in general, but that *moment* in the practice of history when the facile use of historical concepts, many of which have been borrowed from philosophy, begin to erect history as a monument to the power of the event. His "deconstruction" is not a dismantling of history *per se*; in fact, Derrida never discredits the uncritical use of any metaphysical concept *per se*. It is only when ontic conceptualization is transferred to a philosophical plane, when the immemorial time of Being is veiled by the punctual time of the event, that Derrida's wicked pen intervenes.

In terms of my present topic, Derrida does not seek to deconstruct Foucault the historian. History is an essential discipline and Derrida would be the last to deny it. History, however, can never simply be a delimited, regional enterprise. The concepts it uses, whether they are borrowed directly from philosophy or whether they are of such a nature as to readily acquire a philosophic sense, are always transgressing the limits of a "discipline". Even if it remains pre-philosophic, that is, even if it never attains that philosophic stage when it begins to think itself (if, indeed, there is something prior to this stage), history traffics in a quasi-philosophical vocabulary which must assume responsibility for its own ramifications.

Derrida's subject in "Cogito" is not history; his real concern is the commerce between history and philosophy, between a history of facts and the fragmentation of those facts in the face of the infinite Cogito. That is why he chose Foucault's reading of Descartes as his point of entry into *Histoire*. It is also why he uses a typically Heideggerian tack to approach Foucault. History eternally flirts with philosophy, and *vice versa*. And if history is condemned to be a history of sense, a history of reason, ultimately the history of Being, philosophy, at least in its moment of greatest dehiscence, is alien to Being's

ancestral plot of earth, its foothold in the factuality of the event: "If philosophy has taken place—which can always be contested—it is only in the extent to which it has formulated the aim of thinking beyond the finite shelter. By describing the historical constitution of these finite protective barriers against madness within the movement of individuals, societies and all finite totalities in general—a legitimate, immense, and necessary task—one can finally describe everything except the philosophical project itself" (*Writing and Difference*, p. 58n).

The conflict, therefore, does not reside within history, nor for that matter, within philosophy.

The issue at stake in "Cogito" is the possibility of something like "historicity". Historicity is neither history nor philosophy, but the passage between the two. As such, Derrida identifies it with *différance*, the spatial and temporal extension of even the discretest instant. Historicity is neither philosophy, which is impossible, nor history, which, for totally different reasons, is equally impossible, but that tension between the two which institutes the possible. Ultimately, Derrida would maintain, it is because of something like historicity that an event is even thinkable, and it is because of historicity that the event can serve as the locus of nostalgia.

Horst Bienek

BAKUNIN: OR THE ANARCHY OF WORDS

Translated by Ralph Read

We arrived in the city
it was September and
raining lightly
thus sentences pass away
thus words fade
the present has already been and
 now the future is already the past
the same words and other meanings
doubt remains
(doubt for example and doubt above all)
 we never stop learning from it
the same images and other meanings
the words the images remain

Arrived in a city
Unsummoned
 uninvited
 unknown
we reconnoitre the streets
we explore the parks
we discover the bars
we freeze in hotel rooms
we bore ourselves reading newspapers
we sleep in ill-ventilated cinemas
we give ourselves away under the glance of a watchseller
we bury ourselves with the darkness of the city

We find signs
 we perceive signals
a snapped twig is something familiar
a bus driving up
 stuffed full of workers from the suburbs
a chestnut which bursts
a gathering of the curious
the wailing of a police siren
 the flush of a toilet
der Schrei der Menschen nach Fleisch
 sounds keep us from sinking
from giving up
 from dying
we take to the streets at evening
we call out
 we ask in the libraries
we search at the watchmakers'
at the co-operative
 at the taverns
 at the urinals
we don't reach him
we abandon our gestures
we look out of the station windows
nothing is there but future the bare future
but we do find his name
on a white stone in Bermgarten

We stay in the city
we administer his words
the same words and other meanings
we are in the city (Neuchetel)
it is September and
it's raining lightly

ON RECUPERATING DERRIDA

It was Friedrich Schleiermacher who in the early part of the Nineteenth Century writes about the hermeneutic circle, that tendency for a theory of perception to "force" evidence into a perspective, as if the look, the glance, the very broaching of perception were enough to give rise to an illusory object or construction, one which stood out from or mediated the "Real." Perception as *clinamen*, as deflection, as *aporia*, as misreading. How is one to go about seeing, then? This question remains something of a problem, and Jacques Derrida's remark that there is no such thing as perception only states this problem again without apparent modification. Not so much the re-elaborations of Schleiermacher by critics of all sorts, Szondi, Heidegger, Gadamer, Eco, de Man, Kristeva, or Hirsch, but the complication of the hermeneutic circle by thinkers like Horkheimer and Adorno proves most important in the long run, what we might call their inscription of a circle within a circle.

We recall that in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) Horkheimer and Adorno make the point that demystification always recuperates within itself the very illusions it rejects, and within the very apparatus whose purpose is to tell the naked truth, to regard no illusions, no veiled objects. "Just as myths already realize enlightenment, so enlightenment with every step becomes more deeply engulfed in mythology."¹ Enlightenment receives or collects its matter from the very myths it destroys; yet, as judge "it comes under the mythic curse." Already in the *Odyssey*, Horkheimer and Adorno argue, Homer is instituting a dialectic of enlightenment, a circle which purifies, distances, and re-envisions the past but which is nonetheless recapturing that past as future. For Ulysses, the clever managerial type of man, the one who dominates those whose ears are but stopped with wax, passes the Sirens (Presence, Voice, Mana) at once negating and recuperating them. By means of being bound to a mast, Ulysses ironically breaks the bond to Voice, institutes the lever

called "abstraction" in order to survive the false identifications which enlightenment man views as so many perilous rocks. But negation or abstraction, this binding of Ulysses to the mast, also implies a recuperation of the broken bond to Voice, and as what else but literature, culture, civilization, the state? In such recuperation an abstraction is fulfilled, the negation of Voice gives way to an elevation of the text. And isn't this mythological move rather Derridean? That subtle shift, that point at which Ulysses himself becomes literature, text, *écriture*, or, as the New Philosophers would say, Prince of Ithaca? And by what? Passing the Sirens, enjoying their song, taking part in their pleasure, but in staying at a level plateau, on board the ship, bound, refusing climax, *jouissance*, as Deleuze and Guattari would put it in their recent completion of the Capitalism and Schizophrenia study, *Mille Plateaux* (1980).

But this is just a note on the hermeneutic circle as *tourbillon* (see Michel Serres), as an abstracting that eventually returns the repressed: presence, myth, fetish, religion, mana, spirit. For the Frankfurt School critics, enlightenment philosophy, that most skeptical or analytical tool in the Humanities, is itself a mythology of rules and abstractions, what Derrida popularized under the title, "mythologie blanche," the white and Western system of demystifications whose critical moves form an ensemble of relations determined wholly by organizational prejudices which are by now only too well advertised in the leading journals: totalization, recursivity, nostalgia for centers, hierarchies, genealogies, teleologies, limits, insides and outsides, steady state, the rejection of remainders, and so on. *Of Grammatology* (1967) is nothing less than an exposé of this critical lapse into myth, and its tactic of posing writing against speech, trace against presence, eternal deferral against eschatological finality is, strangely enough, a strategy that repeats the moves of the enlightenment thinkers, or at least runs that risk, as Derrida himself is the first to admit.

This is the wager or *enjeu* of deconstruction: to run the narrows of negation, for deconstructing

¹(New York: Seabury, 1972), pp. 11 - 12.

philosophy must never simply mean to negate what has gone before, since negation is but the most sure and systematic way to recuperate or sublate the myths of presence one is attempting to deny. Hegel himself discovers this by the time he writes the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: that it is impossible to deny or distance oneself from *Geist* by means of employing negation, skepticism, distancing, or abstraction. The "repressed" will return or recuperate itself, though in far more purified and abstracted form, as spirit - intelligence. For Georges Bataille, who was interested in Hegel, the whole *Phenomenology* was a mechanics of excess in which Hegel simply overloads his system with negating and alienation apparatuses in order to "sacrifice" Spirit, metaphorically to crucify it, or dismember it, only for the purpose, ultimately, of watching it "return" in a far "truer" and "purer" form than before. Perhaps a Medieval thinker would have called this the *via negativa*, though it is clear that for Hegel the negative is not negative. Horkheimer and Adorno call it dialectical, what amounts to state business as usual in which certain identifications are broken up in order that they may re-emerge in more abstracted or mystified fashion within the very institutions which attempt to dispell them. If "spirit" returns in Hegel's phenomenology, one could say, too, that questions like "race" return ever more insidiously within the very States which may wish to cleanse themselves of these issues, which may attempt to demystify or simply exterminate the "false identifications" of such sirens.

But it is just a note that I am writing, like a Carte Postale from Chicago to someone somewhere else . . . the South perhaps. We recall that in Derrida's latest work composed of post cards and essays on the legacy of Freud, there is the reproduction of a Medieval drawing in which Socrates has turned his back on Plato and writes; or, is it that Socrates is merely transcribing what Plato dictates? "Regarde bein Socrate signer son arrêt de mort, sur ordre de Platon son fils jaloux . . ."²This is just another version of Ulysses and the Sirens: the Voice is always already writing, speech is mastered by script or managerial man (Plato). Perhaps this manuscript shows to what extent the Middle Ages was thinking about recuperation. However, the significance in terms of Derrida is that after having posed the project of deconstruction—by which he means a strate-

gy in which hierarchical relations are not so much reversed but made "undecidable" (completely indeterminate, yet *not vague*, but oscillating, as in a *tourbillon*), thus loosening the firm supports of any philosophic ground and thereby making impossible any certain statements about what were once termed limits, opening the field to new terms, not in themselves anchored in any finite truth, but just relays or markers (*la dissémination* is one which reflects upon its own activity: shifting, spreading, rupturing) temporarily propping up or unhinging (*la brisure*) any given project—he still agonizes over recuperation, the return to myth, what Nietzsche embraced as the eternal return of the Same, but as Different.

What is radical in *Glas* (1974) is the fact that Derrida at once wants to make his greatest assault upon the metaphysics of language, the notion that words must not slip promiscuously or be granulated or agglutinated (see Geoffrey Hartman's *Saving the Text* [1981]), and at the same time recognize that, as in nuclear physics, something still remains. Whether one wishes it or not, one has a remainder, a "thing," after one has deconstructed. The fetish, metaphorically a Rembrandt ripped to pieces in *Glas*, remains a fetish, sort of. Similarly, the ego in *La Carte Postale* is *Da!* and not *Fort!* More or less. Clearly, Frederic Jameson's comments in *The Prisonhouse of Language* (1972) that Derrida has reduced everything to language, a common cry so many symposiums produce, even today, is totally wrong; Derrida never claimed that. What Derrida wanted was to risk enlightenment thinking without falling into its traps and by doing so to point out to Horkheimer and Adorno's followers that the "dialectic of enlightenment" charge which says the critique of myth is itself a myth is finally a cheap shot, since the only way to break that circle is to do what Heidegger does with the hermeneutic circle: enter it head on, for it is a malestrom that cannot be avoided. How one enters, of course, is the key to deconstructing the circle, and that how has everything to do with the effacement of the subject. To enter subjectless, to refuse to perceive . . . to *not look!* Thus Derrida's odd remark that I unfairly brushed aside, a comment whose real significance is that when one enters the hermeneutic circle as dialectic of enlightenment, one enters by means of bracketing the perceptions, of taking the subject out of play, for then one can start to avoid the problem Schleiermacher noted about perspective. Indeed, what Ulysses did when he had

²(Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p. 20.

himself bound to his ship was to invent the "disinterested" subject or audience, the perceiving self as conscious of its alienation from the "world," or "totality," as Lukacs would have it. This invention phenomenology, Marxism, structuralism, and deconstruction wish to put into quarantine, but perhaps only for a time.

In *Glas* and *Carte Postale* the brackets come off again, but only after one has entered the turbines of interpretation and we notice what is left, the fetish, the self, presence, the center, certainty. But at this point such concepts are no longer metaphysical; they have undergone radical transformation and may no longer even be called concepts at all. That self which is the ego, for example, is not occupying the despotic zone of the Prince any longer. The fetish which is the Rembrandt cannot be properly worshipped like an Idol in a barbarian Temple washed in the white mythology. The centers, similarly, occupy no middles, presences no power of the absolute. The author himself is everywhere and no where, disseminated, castrated, deterritorialized: his text is rhizome. In *Carte Postale* even the cult of personality which has emerged around Derrida

and which he himself has produced by means of working the American intellectual circuit (in France, "his star has been fading," as Philippe Sollers announces)³ is subjected to so many boring fragments of the philosopher's life, to a weird copy of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, to what appears as a simulacrum of pensées peculiarly mundane. Here too something remains, but not the personality with a capital P, not a type like Gide, Frisch, or Anais Nin.

Whether we grant Derrida the success some claim, particularly in the *dépassement* of enlightenment's dialectic, is a matter of whether one is likely to grant him his *donné(s)*. We can deny them, of course, and this is the line critics like Meyer Abrams and Gerald Graff have taken. But what is interesting about Derrida is that one also has grounds for granting him the givens of his thought, that one does not have to pull back into the easy and usual criticism that after all, deconstruction is but a new myth, another intellectual fad, what some people disparagingly call nihilism and Derri-Da-Da-ism.

³"Le Cours du Freud" in *Tel Quel*, 79 (Spring, 1979), p. 101.

Ronald Schleifer

THE POISON OF INK:
MODERNISM AND POST-WAR
LITERARY CRITICISM

The "healthy man" is not so much the one who has eliminated his contradictions as the one who makes use of them and drags them into his vital labors.

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty

The critic is not able by any "method" or strategy of analysis to "reduce" the language of the work to clear and distinct ideas.

—J. Hillis Miller

When Emma Bovary kills herself at the end of *Madame Bovary* Flaubert describes the poison she takes as having "the frightful taste of ink,"¹ and such a curious and suggestive figure in the midst of the extended realistic description of Emma's suicide is just the metaphorical detail that post-war criticism would focus upon. Emma is a reader and not a writer, and while it is imaginable to understand the progress of her final illness—culminating in her vision of the blind singer as the devil himself—as an extended metaphorical conceit for the novel itself, the novel itself hardly ratifies such a reading. Nevertheless, literary modernism has taught us to read in just that way: it has taught us to conceive of ink as a kind of poison that halts life in some manner, as the blind singer's song creates a hesitation before Emma's death that even she, on her deathbed, tries to understand. Paul Klee has called this the modernist "striving to emphasize the essential character of the accidental," and Herbert Schneidau has called it the "sacramentalism" in modernist writing—allowing, as he says, "representation of divine things only if, paradoxically, the signifying figures are sufficiently humble and unremarkable, so as to offset idolatry."² This is exactly what my emphasis on Flaubert's metaphor of ink or on his seemingly interpolated stranger does: it attempts to under-

stand the text as possessing "secrets" within its metaphorical hesitations and its narrative movement. In much the same way Frank Kermode, in *The Genesis of Secrecy*—his extended discussion of the interpretation of narrative focussing on the Gospel of Mark—introduces his study with a short reading of a mysterious stranger in Henry Green's *Party Going* to make sense of the interpretations of Mark that follows.³ That the stranger in *Party Going* functions, as Kermode understands him, in many of the ways we can understand the blind stranger and the metaphor of ink in *Madame Bovary* is precisely my point: Schneidau's use of the metaphor of modernist "sacramentalism" of the literary image and Kermode's use of a modern novel to understand "divinations" of biblical plots both point to the fact that modernism has taught us ways of reading simply by offering us the texts it does: texts, as one commentator of *Madame Bovary* says, in which there is a "competition" between art and life, stylistic detail and narrative progression; in which, that is, ink might come to seem a kind of poison.

i

What I am arguing, then, is that post-war literary criticism is intimately bound up with literary modernism; some of its wilder proponents even say it is a form of literary modernism itself. One critic has likened modernism to revolutionary activity in politics, both of which, he says, "might well be seen as somewhat ambiguous post-Enlightenment humanistic inventions to destabilize the social and moral order, even to

¹*Madame Bovary*, trans. Eleanor Marx Aveling, rev. trans. Paul de Man (New York, 1965), p. 230.

²Klee cited by Malcom Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," in *Modernism: 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth, England, 1976), p. 48. Herbert Schneidau, "Style and Sacrament in Modernist Writing," *GaR*, 31 (1977), 438.

³*The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, 1979), ch. 1.

break it."⁴ Certainly post-war criticism, and especially that of the more recent stripes, has destabilized, if not broken up, traditional ways of reading: it reads literature as if it were, in some ways, poisonously *against* life, or, more positively, poisonously against the habitual, non-reflective, unconscious, cliché-ridden lives we lead. Instead of "discovering" in literature what Hugh Kenner has called "the authority of the Ancients, doughty men whom we had been accustomed to treating . . . with the familiarity we accord living eminences,"⁵ it reads literature as irreversibly *textual*, written not spoken, what Paul Valéry calls the "voice" of the Idea. Certainly New Criticism's "intentional fallacy," phenomenology's attempt to recover the text's "subject," reader-response criticism's attempt to transfer the text from the book to the responding mind, structuralism's attempt to discover the "grammar" of literature, and post-structuralism's method of "deconstructing" texts and all these other things—all participate in whatever we mean by "modernism" and its own self-conscious sense of its break with the past, its extremes (as opposed to earlier literature's humanistic reconciliations), its overwhelming anti-mimetic impulse, its foregrounding of language, its simultaneous freedom and despair.

At the heart of modernism, I would argue, lies a felt sense of contradiction that cannot be resolved, is not simply confusion, or passions to be cured, or fear to be overcome, or ignorance; at its heart is a kind of poison which denies what Sartre calls "idealistic humanism."⁶ Criticism

since World War II makes this modernist vision its own measure: New Criticism privileges "paradox," phenomenology and reader-response criticism foreground the unresolvable difference between texts and writing and reading subjects, structuralism emphasizes the play between synchronic and diachronic understanding, between the grammar of literature and the manifestations of particular texts, and post-structuralism makes, as modernism does, *irony* its central trope. It has not always been so: in English literature, for example, Romanticism depends, as Coleridge tells us, on *metaphorical symbols*, Victorian positivism depends on *synecdochal expansions*, neoclassical imitations have, at their center, *similes*; and I can imagine that *analogy* is the figure that engaged the Renaissance with the same power that *allegory* engaged medieval literature.⁷ But modernism favors irony and its paradoxes—that is, its undecidable play between literal and metaphorical understanding, a reading of a text *against* its interpretation—embodiments of what Nietzsche calls the "eternal contradiction," "the contrariety at the center of the universe."⁸ This is itself a function of our perceived sense of the human situation as being what Geoffrey Hartman calls "an indeterminate middle between overspecified poles"—a situation which is bred from the unresolvable contradiction between time (the sense of being "in between") and space (the metaphorical vehicle of "in between").⁹

In this way, then, one could find *Madame Bovary*, published in 1857 and often with justice called the first "realist" novel, a modernist text. Post-war criticism reads *Madame Bovary* this way: in *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language* Gerald Bruns claims that just as there is "a com-

⁴Kingsley Widmer, *Edges of Extremity: Some Problems of Literary Modernism*, Tulsa Monograph Series, 17 (1980), p. 1.

⁵*The Counterfeiters* (New York, 1973), p. 17.

⁶*What is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York, 1966), p. 149; this sentence paraphrases Sartre's discussion of how World War II taught "political realism" and "philosophical idealism" to take "Evil" seriously. "Modernism," Bradbury and McFarlane write, "was in most countries an extraordinary compound of the futuristic and the nihilistic, the revolutionary and the conservative, the naturalistic and the symbolistic, the romantic and the classical" (p. 46). More recently, Geoffrey Hartman has said: "Modernism, it is now generally recognized, was a movement that tried to bring together, in a mutual and saving compact, myth and irony, visionary figures of speech and verbal refinement, the rhetorical aspect of art and discriminating tonal values. Paradox, ambiguity, irony, dramaticity—these were the tough sinews, the inner iron, of a poetics that gave up nothing of literature's bardic daring despite the doubts and subversions of enlightened thought," see *Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy* (Baltimore, 1981), p. 145

⁷For a discussion of neoclassical *simile* and romantic *metaphor* see my "Simile, Metaphor and Vision: Blake's Narration of Prophecy in *America*," *SEL*, 19 (1979), 568-88. For modernist and post-structuralist irony, see J. Hillis Miller, "Narrative Middles: A Preliminary Outline," *Genre* 11 (1978), esp. 386-87; and my "Irony, Identity and Repetition: On Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*," *Sub-Stance*, 25 (1980), 4-54.

⁸*The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Glofing (New York, 1956), pp. 33, 64. On the play between literal and metaphorical understanding, see J. Hillis Miller, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," *Gar*, 30 (1976).

⁹"The Voice in the Shuttle: Language from the Point of View of Literature," in *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven, 1970), p. 348.

petition between language and reality, or between life and art" in Flaubert—a competition, I should add, that can lead one to figure ink as life's poison—

so there are two *Madame Bovarys*, one a representation of life, a tour de force in the realistic mode, the other an adumbration of an impossible book—a book which, given the nature of language as a semiotic system, cannot exist in a pure state but only in a relationship of competition with the reality which language seeks conventionally to articulate. One is reminded here of Valéry's observation that "the essence of prose is to perish—that is, to be 'understood'—that is, to be dissolved, destroyed without return, entirely replaced by the image or impulse that conveys according to the conventional language."¹⁰

Bruns doesn't go on to quote Valéry further, yet Valéry goes on to embody and define modernism and the aims of post-war criticism:

But poetry requires or suggests [something] different . . . : a universe of reciprocal relations analogous to the universe of sounds within which musical thought is born and moves. In this poetic universe, resonance triumphs over causality, and "form," far from dissolving into effects, is as it were *recalled* by them. The Idea claims its voice.¹¹

Such recollection, not always very tranquil, has been the aim of modern—indeed, I should say "modernist"—criticism. It has progressed from spatial representation to temporal presentation to, finally, the "use" of this contradiction in its vital labors.

ii

Thirty-five years ago Joseph Frank formulated the concept of "spatial form" in literature. By "spatial form" he meant the conception of the literary work as a whole in which the relations between the parts could be simultaneously apprehended. Such a conception is, as Frank himself was, firmly embedded in the school of New

Criticism, which sought to discover and examine a literary work as an autonomous, self-subsisting whole.¹² The great advantage of New Criticism was that it took, perhaps for the first time, literature seriously in literary terms—terms beyond those of biography, history of ideas, or vague impressions of literary works. Moreover, as we all know, its second advantage provided us with a means of doing our jobs as teachers of literature—jobs, as Ezra Pound said, which primarily consist in being able to talk "for an hour." "France," Pound added, "may possibly have acquired the intellectual leadership of Europe when their academic period was cut down to forty minutes,"¹³ but I should add that New Criticism might well have acquired the intellectual leadership of the academy in America because it provided the means to talk for an hour. In any case, the self-contained limits of a conception of literature as "spatial form" provided what often is the most difficult task of teaching, a sense of the limits of discourse. To conceive of a poem as an "object" focuses and reduces what is to be examined; as Richard Palmer wrote in 1969, in *New Criticism* "the text becomes an object and explication a conceptual exercise which works solely within the 'given,' accepting the restrictions of scientific objectivity."¹⁴

Yet this project creates its own problems. Early in his study Palmer had noted:

"Science manipulated things and gives up living in them" the late French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty tells us. This, in one sentence, is what happened to American literary interpretation. We have forgotten that

¹²"Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945); rpt. in *The Widening Gyre* (Bloomington, 1963), pp. 3-63. For two other studies that trace contemporary criticism from its origins in New Criticism, see William Cain, "Authors and Authority in Interpretations"; and C. Barry Chabot, "The Fates of Interpretation," both in *GaR*, 34 (1980). For an important critique of the assumptions and implications of a conception of literature as "spatial form" from the vantage of reading based on "the temporal dimension," see Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*," in *Reader-Response Criticism*, ed. Jane Tompkins (Baltimore, 1980), pp. 164-84, esp. pp. 172-73; for a critique of its assumptions and implications from the vantage of a "philosophical" position, see Geoffrey Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness* (New Haven, 1980), esp. "Past and Present" and "A Short History of Practical Criticism."

¹³*ABC of Reading* (New York, 1960), p. 83.

¹⁴This and the following quotation are cited by Gerald Graff, *Literature Against Itself* (Chicago, 1979), pp. 131, 132.

¹⁰*Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language* (New Haven, 1974), pp. 146, 148.

¹¹*The Art of Poetry*, trans. Denise Folliot (New York, 1961), p. 146.

the literary work is not a manipulable object completely at our disposal; it is a human voice out of the past, a voice which must somehow be brought to life. Dialogue, not dissection, opens up the world of a literary work. Disinterested objectivity is not appropriate to the understanding of a literary work.

Thus against the "spatial forms" of New Criticism, the "phenomenological" criticism Palmer is describing defined literature as more purely embodying "temporal form" and understood its interpretation as ongoing dialogue rather than the apprehension of simultaneous aspects of a literary work conceived in terms of space. To understand literature, the phenomenological critics believed, is to engage in dialogue with "a human voice out of the past," a "dialogue" in which, as George Poulet has written, there "are the thoughts of another, and yet it is I who am their subject."¹⁵ To understand literature is to apprehend the living author and his ongoing world within and beyond the text.

Other forms of literary criticism in the sixties also responded to the "spatial form" of New Criticism with their own versions of "temporal form." In the late sixties "Reader-Response" Criticism, formulated at first by Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Norman Holland, followed the temporal process of reading to explore the development of meaning in the temporal "dialogue" between the reader and the text. To give a sense of the breadth of such concerns—broad both in approaches and the expanding terminologies that often go with new approaches—I need only cite the beginning of a recent study of reader-response criticism by Steven Mailloux:

Recent literary theory has seen an explosion of interest in readers and reading. There is talk of implied readers, informed readers, fictive readers, ideal readers, mock readers, literents, narratees, interpretive communities, and associated kinds of reading audiences. The term *reader-response criticism* has been used to describe a multiplicity of different approaches that focus on the reading process: affective, phenomenological, subjective, transactive, structural, rhetorical, psychological, psycholinguistic, speech act, and other criticism have been indiscriminately lumped

together under the label *reader-response*.¹⁶

This sounds like a parody of the discriminating powers of critical analysis—more like Polonius's famous piece of literary criticism, his own "explosion" of generic terms in *Hamlet*, than like the reasoned, passionate, eloquent, discriminating but not-too-discriminating acts of reading we all perform in our classes and studies. But whatever the excesses, in reader-response criticism, as in phenomenological criticism, is a felt need to emphasize the temporal aspect of literary works, the fact that it simply takes time to read. In *The Critic as Artist* Oscar Wilde defined the problem this way:

The stature is concentrated to one moment of perfection. The image stained upon the canvas possesses no spiritual element of growth and change. If they know nothing of death, it is because they know little of life, for the secrets of life and death belong to those only, whom the sequence of time affects, and who possess not merely the present but the future, and can rise or fall from a past of glory or of shame. Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly realized by Literature alone. It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest.¹⁷

It is no accident that Wilde, like many of his contemporaries—like Valéry—took Pater's dictum that poetry aspires to the condition of music to heart; for music is the most temporal of arts, even if it is an art, as I will suggest, in which the dichotomy of time and space is not as clear as Wilde and Pater assert.

Against the temporal and musical metaphors that underly Wilde, reader-response criticism and phenomenology, there is a spatial metaphor that governed Renaissance thinking about art: it is found in Horace's phrase, *ut pictura poesis*, "as is painting, so is poetry." Classical theories of art based on this dictum "strive," as Paul de Man has said, "to reduce music and poetry to the status of painting. . . . The possibility of making the invisible visible, of giving presence to what can only be imagined, is repeatedly stated as the main function of art."¹⁸ Northrop Frye, who has

¹⁵"Phenomenology of Reading," in *Issues in Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Gregory Polletta (Boston, 1974), p. 106.

¹⁶"Reader-Response Criticism?," *Genre*, 10 (1977), 413.

¹⁷In *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York, 1969), p. 363.

¹⁸*Blindness and Insight* (New York, 1971), p. 124.

been claimed and disclaimed by New Criticism and various other schools of criticism, puts it this way:

The words of a poem form rhythms which approach those of music at one boundary of literature, and form patterns which approach those of painting at the other boundary. To the rhythmical movement of poetry we may give the general name of narrative; the pattern we may call the meaning or significance. The Renaissance maxim *ut pictura poesis* thus refers primarily to the integrity of meaning which is built up in a poem out of a pattern of interlocking images.¹⁹

"Integrity of meaning" and "interlocking images" suggest the spatial form of the work, while "narrative" suggests its temporal form, the experience of reading. And these different approaches to literature—as musical or visual, through the process of narrative or at the product of meaning, as temporal experience or as spatial apprehension—define the general critical methods of understanding literary art that have developed since the end of World War II.

iii

There has arisen in our time, however, a form of literary criticism which makes use of these contradictions, as literary modernism does, and "drags" them self-consciously into its vital labors. Sometimes it is called "post-structuralism," "deconstructionism," "semiotic criticism"—the names "explode," as Mailloux said of reader-response criticism, faster sometimes, it seems, than the time it takes to say them. But what is crucial about this movement—I will call it "post-structuralism" for reasons which I hope will become clear—is its insistence (or, as its critics imply, its *anxiety*) to confound the oppositions between space and time, self and other, primary and secondary, central and peripheral, that govern traditional thinking about literature and, indeed, about the world itself. What is crucial is that it is self-consciously and uncompromisingly "modernist": it revels in contradiction. Thus Paul de Man writes in *Blindness and Insight*:

The picture of reading that emerges from the examination of a few contemporary critics is not a simple one. In all of them a paradoxical

discrepancy appears between the general statements they make about the nature of literature (statements on which they base their critical methods) and the actual results of their interpretations. Their findings about the structure of texts contradict the general conception that they use as their model. Not only do they remain unaware of this discrepancy, but they seem to thrive on it and owe their best insights to the assumptions these insights disprove (p. ix).

De Man's description of criticism participates in the overwhelming obscurity it describes and comes close to the "difficulty" George Steiner has recently noted in modernist readings: "There is a distinct sense," Steiner says, "in which we know and do not know, at the same time. This rich undecidability is exactly what the poet aims at. . . . It is, simultaneously, a subversion and energizing of rhetoric drawing attention . . . to the inertias in the common routine of discourse."²⁰ This "tactical" difficulty Steiner is describing opens onto a more sweeping—a Heideggerian—"ontological" difficulty "in which the poet is not a *persona*, a subjectivity 'ruling over language', but an 'openness to', a supreme listener to, the genius of speech" (p. 46).

Steiner's analysis of "difficulty" is instructive: it underlines what seems to me the crucial critical act of structuralism and post-structuralism, namely the undermining—or "calling into question," or "problematicizing": all are recurrent metaphors in post-structuralist writing—the *undermining* of the identity of both the text and the subject. "The new turn in criticism," Hillis Miller has written, "involves an interrogation of the notion of the self-enclosed literary work and of the idea that any work has a fixed, identifiable meaning"; it involves, as Roland Barthes has written, an interrogation of the notion of an author, "the death of the author": "it is language which speaks," he writes, "not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality (not at all to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'."²¹ This double "subver-

²⁰On *Difficulty and Other Essays* (New York, 1980), p. 40.

²¹J. Hillis Miller, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," p. 333; Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London, 1977), p. 143.

¹⁹"Poetry and Design in William Blake," in *Discussions of William Blake*, ed. John Grant (Boston, 1961), p. 48.

sion" is expressed by the chief philosophical proponent of this school, Jacques Derrida, in the title of a chapter of his *Of Grammatology*, "The Outside is the Inside." But how can the outside be the inside? How can the "spatial form" of New Criticism be confounded with the "temporal forms" of later criticism? How can criticism—the reasoned seeking after meaning—question the notion that texts have "fixed, identifiable" meaning and authors?

What is called the structuralist movement finds at least part of its origin in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist who died in the early part of our century. Saussure radically questions the notion of identity—the self-identity of space and time—and he questions it in ways that shed light on what his modernist contemporaries *were doing*. How, he asks, do we recognize or identify phonemes, given the fact that each phoneme is susceptible to multiple pronunciations? How do we identify sound-symbols whose sound varies according to who speaks them, where, when, etc? His answer is that the identity of phonemes is determined by their "relation and differences with respect to other terms of language," their *difference* from other phonemes in a system (i.e. a "structure") of language. That is, *cat* is recognized, not because of any inherent quality of the sound *cat*—not by virtue of any present informing essence that might be conceived of spatially, and not because of any essential ongoing relationship to the human subject that might be apprehended temporally—but by virtue of its opposition to other elements in an *impersonal* system of language, by virtue of difference from what it is not. This difference, this opposition, is without poles: *cat* is not a positive pole to which *cut* is negatively opposed; rather, *cat* and *cut* are mutually constituting in a system—a structure—of differences. Here is how Saussure says it:

Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*.²²

Thus the difference—the "contradiction"—between *cat* and *cut* exists in a system where neither is thinkable or recognizable without the

other; they participate in one another, "laboring vitally" together, and neither can be said to be the first positive term of the opposition. This concept of constituting differences completely undoes traditional notions of identity; in fact, the "positive terms" Saussure rejects *are* traditional identities. Here identity is not inherent in something or someone, its traditional *essence* existing in time or space; rather, identity itself is determined in the interchange, the play, with something *other*, something outside in space and before or after in time.²³ One has only to think of Eliot's "composition" of his poetry from lines of other poems or Yeats's "creation" of Maud Gonne out of Irish and Greek and occult mythologies to see how "modernist" this conception is.

Saussure's conception of language is both spatial *and* temporal, each aspect depending on the prior existence of the other so that the opposition between space and time is *undermined* and *made a problem*. The structure or system of language, which he calls *langue*, is a system of forms, and, as the metaphor of *structure* suggests, it is conceived of as a "spatial form"; the actual manifestations of speech, which he calls *parole*, seemingly exist only in time. I say "seemingly" because all speech acts—including literary texts—participate in both time and space, and time and space are themselves, as Saussure says, differences without positive terms. New Criticism privileges space—it makes space the positive term: hence Frye's notion that the "integrity of meaning" is best compared to a painting. Phenomenological and reader-response criticism privilege time: hence their emphasis on the process of reading. Modernist texts bring these together *as a problem*: as an example, I will use and allegorize a metaphor from Flaubert describing Rodolphe's experience when he looks at Emma's portrait as he writes to break off their affair: "from looking at this image and recalling the memory of the original, Emma's features little by little grew confused in his remembrance, as if the living and the painted face, rubbing against one another, had erased one another" (p. 145). Here time and space—memory and portrait—erase one another to prepared for writing. Such erasure is best exemplified, I think, in the Cyclops episode of *Ulysses*, where

²²Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wade Baskin (New York, 1966), p. 120.

²³This paragraph appears, in slightly different form, in my review article of Robert Langbaum's *The Mysteries of Identity*, MLN, 93 (1978), 1057-58.

the text juxtaposes the movement of speech and the "spatial" parodies of writing. But it can also be seen in the juxtaposition of privileged moments and seasonal movements in Lawrence, the haunting rhythms and non-narrative fragments of Eliot, the Apollonian and Dionysian imagery of Conrad. In all these cases the "fixed, identifiable" meaning of life—those conventional meanings that we have to assume to live and act at all—are poisoned by the ink of texts.

The lack of positive terms for Saussure and his followers—Derrida in philosophy, Roland Barthes in semiology, Lévi-Strauss in anthropology, etc.—confounds time and space. To return to a musical metaphor which I have mentioned, the differences Saussure bases his analysis on are *dissonant*. Like musical dissonances which gain their significance from their relationship to the "key" of the *whole* composition which itself is determined by its *parts* (thus creating a "problematic" relationship between the parts and the whole), so specific language (*parole*) gains its meaning from the system of language (*langue*) of which it is a manifestation and a constituting part. The musical composition—a "composition" of parts—creates its "key" in an over-all structure which determines the value and meaning of its parts. The analogy with music is readily seen in the "compositions" of writers: both musical and literary compositions are based precisely on spatially conceived structures which are constantly modified by the temporal ongoingness of the composition itself. It is this complicated relationship between the parts and the whole which destroys the possibility of privileging time or space. Since, as Saussure implies, "meaning depends on difference of meaning,"²⁴ the opposition itself between time and space, parts and whole, breaks down: each category depends on its opposite—Derrida would say, embodies a "trace" of its opposite—and thus the opposition is never "pure" or "absolute," its elements never self-identical. The classical modernist formulation of this relationship is T. S. Eliot's "museum" metaphor in "Tradition and the Individual Talent": "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the

supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered."²⁵ The privileging of "order" in Eliot distinguishes him from Saussure, and marks not only his conservatism—in politics, religion, art—but also calls forth the "spatial form" (and the conservatism) of New Criticism.

But, in any case, the relationship between the parts and the whole is the identifying element in each of the schools of criticism I have been talking about. In discussing Joyce in his essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Joseph Frank says that his argument, "it should be realized, is the equivalent of saying Joyce cannot be read—he can only be reread. A knowledge of the whole [of *Ulysses*] is essential to an understanding of any part" (p. 19). On the other hand, Stanley Fish, in his reader-response study of seventeenth-century prose, *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, notes that "it is characteristic of these [seventeenth-century] works . . . first to involve the reader in discursive activities—in evaluating, deducing, interpreting—and then to declare invalid or premature the conclusions these activities yield."²⁶ Post-structuralism—that school "beyond" the "spatial forms" of structure—attempts the impossible task of confounding the *first reading* of reader-response criticism and the *re-reading* of New Criticism. It attempts the understanding of *Ulysses* as a stream of consciousness and a dictionary of the world, *Madame Bovary* as a representation of life and a book about nothing.

iv

What this is, after all, is a *modernist* conception of reading, and its implications for literary studies are profound. No longer will critics seek simply to explicate the literary work; rather, the critic will seek to find constituting oppositions of a work—between the "real" and the "conventional," between "inside" the novel and "outside" the novel, between the parts and the whole of a work—and show how they participate in one another and undermine their own oppositions. In demonstrating this, the critic will demonstrate the generation of meaning out of constituting oppositions, constituting contradictions. One example of this approach emphasizes the *textual* nature of literary works, the

²⁵Selected Essays (New York, 1960), p. 5.

²⁶Self-Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley, 1974), "Abstract," n.p.

²⁴Jonathan Culler, *Saussure*, in "The Modern Masters Series" (London, 1976), p. 92.

fact that particular works, like *parole*, inhabit a system of texts which create the possibility of reading. The implication of this notion is that to one degree or another all literary texts participate in citation of previous texts—an insight which Eliot emphasizes—and such citation, creating those “differences without positive terms,” undermines the idea of an “original” work in much the way that Barthes undermines the notion of an “originating” author. This is just the point: post-structuralism undermines the notion of *origin* altogether; what comes before and after in time and space is part and parcel of the present. Here is how I have put it in a recent study of autobiography: in speaking about the ubiquitous occurrence of quotation in autobiography, I noted,

the charm [of quotation] comes from quotation’s ability to simultaneously take in and leave out, to remember and forget; [quotation of previous texts in an autobiography, as in] criticism, creates a new context by leaving out the old context, and in so doing it alters the meaning without altering the text. Quotation appropriates the past: it achieves autobiography’s ambiguous task of “authoring” the past so that what came after at least creates for itself the illusion of priority.²⁷

This explains, I think, current criticism’s recurrent interest in hybrid texts: autobiography, historical fiction, non-fiction novels, all present texts which both are and are not “themselves.” They are, to use a term of Derrida’s, “irreducibly nonsimple,”²⁸ irreducibly at odds, both temporally and spatially, with themselves. And such hybrid texts are those of modernism: Woolf’s lyrical novels, Joyce’s impersonally autobiographical art, Lawrence’s novels with recurrent interpolated polemic.

It is easy to see why such criticism is called, again following Derrida, “deconstructive” criticism: it is a criticism that is radically ironic, claiming that language itself, like irony, *both* says and fails to say what it means. Such criticism discovers what Roland Barthes calls a “mul-

tivalent text,” the two *Madame Bovarys* we have seen already:

A multivalent text can carry out its basic duplicity only if it subverts the opposition between the true and the false, if it fails to attribute quotations . . . to explicit authorities, if it flouts all respect for origin, paternity, propriety, if it destroys the voice which could give the text its (“organic”) unity. . . .²⁹

Barthes’ remarks create a sort of definition of modernism altogether, whose multivalent texts, subverting authority and unity, subvert both time and space.

Derrida’s term, “deconstruction,” is itself his own quotation and modification of Heidegger’s term “destruction,” and Derrida modified it, I suspect, to allow for the confounding of the positive and negative attributes of this criticism. The negative aspects of the criticism are clear, and have been recently articulated by Gerald Graff in his broad condemnation of post-war criticism in *Literature Against Itself*. There Graff argues that current criticism is undermining the authority of literature by emphasizing how literary works are “about” their own fictionality rather than “about” the world. “From the thesis that language cannot correspond to reality”—and, as we have seen, this is a central tenet of modernism—Graff writes, “it is a short step to the current revisionist mode of interpretation that specializes in reading all literary works as commentaries on their own epistemological problematics” (p. 169). Such criticism he calls “the cult of the disintegrated, disseminated, dispersed self and of the decentered, undecidable, indeterminate text” (p. 51). The great danger of such criticism—its “negative” attribute—is that all its readings—reducing, “deconstructing,” ironizing texts—begin to sound much the same; they arrive at the same “logic” of language wherever they begin.

Yet this ironic, deconstructive criticism—like the modernist movement in literature—also provides us with great exhilaration as readers, teachers, and scholars. For the great questions it asks—the basic questions of our discipline and, as the modernist writers suggest, questions basic to our lives as well—are “how is meaning possible?” “how does understanding help us to constitute the world?” and, finally, “how will

²⁷“George Moore’s Turning Mind: Digression and Autobiographical Art in *Hail and Farewell*,” in *The Genres of the Irish Literary Revival*, ed. Ronald Schleifer (Dublin and Norman, 1980), p. 79.

²⁸“Differance,” in *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David Allison (Evanston, 1973), p. 143.

²⁹Cited by Graff, p. 80.

these questions help us to situate ourselves in the modern world?" Its questions, finally, are literary and rhetorical questions the answers to which the old New Criticism simply assumes in its spatial metaphors of pre-existing meanings; phenomenological criticism begs in its positing of the transcendental subject of discourse; and reader-response criticism reduces in its more or less satisfying psychologizing. "Is the statement," Graff asks, "that we make sense of the world by fictions itself a fiction?" (p. 181). The fact that he cannot see that this statement is itself both true and false, that it is, as Aristotle said of tragedy and of literature in general, "more philosophical and significant than history," precisely because of its "irreducible nonsimplicity," marks the poverty of Graff's conception of literature and his failure to achieve the vision modernism presented.

Post-structural criticism, to paraphrase Eliot, makes literature possible for the complexity and irony of our world: its understanding both derives from and originates the modernist vision itself. Moreover—to return finally to *Madame Bovary*—it allows criticism to repeat another aspect of modernism, the appropriation of the past. By reading in ways that modernism itself teaches, it allows us to understand Dostoyevsky, Wordsworth, Flaubert, as contemporaries, laboring for health amid our own contradictions. "What quality went to form a Man of Achieve-

ment especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously," Keats asks in a famous letter. By that quality, he answers,

—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge.³⁰

Post-structuralism, unlike Coleridge and unlike Graff, is content with such self-contradictory, nonsimple knowledge, the modernist sense that poison often possesses healing powers; and with this knowledge, at its best it returns to both literary studies and literature, in their irreducible mixture of time and space, the simultaneous verisimilitude and mystery of our world.³¹

³⁰21, 27 (?) December 1817, in *Selected Poems and Letters*, ed. Douglas Bush (Boston, 1959), p. 261.

³¹In *Saving the Text*, Hartman devotes his last chapter, "Words and Wounds," to what he calls, not a refutation, but, "among other things, a counterstatement to Derrida," who "himself has stressed that the written sign is indefeasibly poison and cure" (p. 121). Hartman's chapter is an attempt to explore what he calls in *Criticism in the Wilderness* the "knowledge" of the critic "that poisons can be remedies" (p. 200). A version of the present paper was presented at the 1980 SCMLA meeting in Memphis.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra

THE DROWNED HORSE

Translated by Steven White

After the tempest
in the dark silence
they watched the dead horse
floating
upon the waters.

—It's the floods, said
the fisherman

and they stopped
their boat.

The waves
moved its long mane.
The eye, open,
fixed its fright
on the sky.

Stretched out, death
has made it immense.

They sensed
a strange
omen

and saw
a crown
of white gulls
in the wind.

Gregory S. Jay

GOING AFTER NEW CRITICS: Literature, History, Deconstruction

"Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas any more . . ."
Dorothy, arriving in Oz

I. SOMEWHERE OVER POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Today, not even Kansas remains a refuge of innocence.¹ A recent symposium on hermeneutics at the state's University features such wizards of the odd as Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, and Richard Rorty. It has been 15 years since the landmark conference on structuralism at Johns Hopkins,² and the debate begun then over meanings and methods in the humanities now dominates critical discussion in academic literary circles, as rightly it should. However it turns out, the response to poststructuralism will largely shape the study of literature and related fields for some time to come. Structuralism in the strict sense brought to bear the methods of semiology, derived from Saussure, on the whole range of the human sciences. In the United States, the assimilation of structuralism often continued a tradition of formalist criticism it resembled in many ways. Poststructuralism arrived as early as 1963, in Derrida's "Force and Signification," a lucid interrogation of the literary structuralism of Jean Rousset's *Forme et Signification*. Poststructuralism begins in the undoing of the idea of the sign (and thus in the deconstruction of representational theory) that provided the ground for structuralism. Moreover, this critique goes on to take apart the edifices of totality (of closed meaning, of immediate presence, of ruling concepts) built upon signs: ". . . what is in question is the metaphysics implicit in all structuralism, or in every structuralist proposition" (WD,24).³ "Form" and "structure" are

spatial metaphors that effect a closure of signifying force, but one that language's work always exceeds. The text's "force is a certain pure and infinite equivocality which gives signified meaning no respite, no rest, but engages in its own *economy* so that it always signifies again and differs . . . [T]hat which is written is never identical to itself" (WD,25). No wonder so many have hesitated to follow *this* yellow brick road, which seems to promise only an endless wandering, or wondering, and an exposure of the wizards' own mystifying machinery.

Of the many responses and rejoinders to these changes in literary theory, Frank Lentricchia's *After the New Criticism* is by far the widest in scope, taking the grateful reader in logical steps from Northrop Frye through existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism and poststructuralism. The virtues of this organization will be appreciated by any one seeking an introduction to the maze. But readers will find more than an at times masterful summary and analysis of contemporary methods in criticism. Lentricchia's book has another, and I think primary, purpose, hinted at in his punning title. He is going after "the newest Yale New Critics," that New Haven Deconstruction Company of Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, J. Hillis Miller and Geoffrey Hartman. Their work is placed by Lentricchia within a monolithic, hegemonic tradition of neo-Kantian aestheticism he sees dominating Anglo-American theory from Coleridge to the present. Against this "hedonism" he urges a return to "history," and especially to the methods of Michel Foucault, whose appearances are calculatedly staged here as those of the Knight in Shining Armor.⁴ This polemic seriously compromises the value of Lentricchia's otherwise outstanding contribution, and may well mislead readers

¹This essay grew out of seminars conducted by Professor Joseph N. Riddel at The School of Criticism and Theory, Northwestern University, in 1981. My debt to him is enormous, as is my appreciation for the friendship and conversation of so many of the School's participants.

²These proceedings were published as *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970).

³*Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. Chicago, 1978). Page citations noted parenthetically.

⁴For a brilliant critique of Lentricchia's attempt to wed Foucault and Derrida, see Andrew Parker, "'Taking Sides' (On History): Derrida Re-Marx," forthcoming in *Diacritics*, September 1981.

less familiar with the primary sources than is the author. Fortunately, the recent publication of new books and essays by members of the indicted Yale Misprisionary Company offers an opportunity to test Lentricchia's argument, and to consider some of the major issues now at stake in the debate over the theory of literary study and its function in our culture.

First, however, it should be remembered that poststructuralism is not synonymous with Yale. Rather it broadly designates the impact of our readings in a group of texts whose most prominent authors are Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Althusser, Lacan, and Derrida. To translate such readings into the domain of what, at least until now, we knew as literary criticism involves difficulties and disjunctions not yet fully appreciated.⁵ These writers emerge from a common intellectual heritage which has not been shared widely in the United States. That heritage is rooted in speculative philosophy from Hegel to Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger; it takes Freud seriously, considers Marxism a pre-eminent political position, and marks its descent or dissent from the implications of Saussure's structural linguistics. Those of us trained as humanists in the United States do not know this tradition well, or know it only as its fragments intersect our narrowly pursued specialties. Most of us who take an interest in poststructuralism find ourselves back in the position of frenzied students cramming for exams. Indeed, the most salutary effect of the poststructuralist debate may be the quality, rigor, and scope of the intellectual activity it requires.

So far the effort to translate our encounters with these texts into the work we are accustomed to doing has been uncoordinated and spontaneous, a sometimes inspired and sometimes clumsy adventure. As a description of events rather than a name for a doctrine, poststructuralism indicates an intertextual and intercultural practice. Whatever else, it ought not to be thought of as simply "methods," as if deconstruction, for example, were a tool to be bought at the Franco-American Theoretical Hardware Store for digging in the boundaries of the old fields. Post-structuralist perspectives cannot be entertained, with any integrity, until and unless literary criticism (or history or sociology or political science) undertakes the critique of its own most basic assumptions. Otherwise it offers

only domesticated gimmicks for new "close readings" of the same old verbal icons. The current work of the Yale group has begun just such a critique, and is thus the most convenient resource for both opponents and supporters of the new wave in criticism. After considering the objections raised by Lentricchia, an analysis of the recent writings of de Man, Bloom and Hartman should clarify what their versions of poststructuralism have to offer.

II. HISTORY AS KANT

Lentricchia characterizes the Yale critics as "traditionalism's last formalist buttress," espousers of a "new hedonism" that recalls "the overt preoccupations of the nineteenth-century aesthetes with a *telos* of 'pleasure' and a quest for 'freedom' that have typified an astonishing variety of modern critical theories whose presuppositions are idealistic (in the Kantian sense) . . . (AC,169).⁶ Lentricchia adopts the rather tired caricature of Kantian aesthetics as a program for fleeing reality, one inaugurating 200 years of bad faith among artists and intellectuals seeking relief from the "oppression" of "social existence" (AC,181-182). The indictment depends on a largely unexamined acceptance of "history" as the ground of authentic existence and knowledge, in contrast to the "aestheticist isolationism" of "the pleasure-oriented formalism of the Yale critics" (AC,147,176). Lentricchia discovers a ruling class of "post-Kantian epistemology and aestheticist sentimentality" (AC,181) running from Coleridge to Nietzsche to Sartre, from Poe to Pound to Stevens, from Eliot to Frye to Bloom, from Kant to Heidegger to Derrida. Everywhere he looks he finds that "easy subjectivism that has barred recent theoretical critics from history" (AC,191). Against this "guilty aestheticism" (AC,53), this "crippling antihistoricism of idealist criticism" (AC,109), this "poststructuralist hedonism" (AC,145), he proposes "recapturing history for textual interpretation" (AC,153).

And yet Lentricchia never gives us a rigorously thought out theory of history, relying instead on allusions to Fredric Jameson or Foucault. The poststructuralist critique of representational modes has seriously undermined the use of "history" as a ground for stabilizing interpretative practice. Lentricchia knows this quite well,

⁵See Rodolphe Gasché, "Deconstruction as Criticism," *Glyph 6* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1979).

⁶*After the New Criticism* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago, 1980). Page citations noted parenthetically.

yet retains the term, together with its questionable privilege, as the ground of his own argument. In the absence of either a poststructuralist theory of history or a cogently defended traditional historicism, Lentricchia can only earn his own authority as history's author through negation, in the repeated discovery of "ahistoricism" in others. He writes, then, as if his place of judgment on the secure real estate of history could be legitimized by pointing out the absence of history elsewhere. Too often, the insecurity of such a strategy leads to judgmental hyperbole where we expect convincing argument. The reader grows weary of his finger-wagging jeremiads against the "new hedonism," his relentless cudgeling of Wallace Stevens as the evil genius of our dandyism, his condemnation of almost everyone surveyed as "aesthetes." Who, one wonders, shall 'scape whipping?

Lentricchia's reading of Foucault, via Edward Said's, results in a history of exclusion, this time the supposed exclusion of history from literary criticism. Although his recent review of *Writing and Difference* acknowledges Derrida's devastating inquiry into Foucault's method, this is apparently a lesson Lentricchia learned only after completion of his own study.⁷ In writing a history of history's exclusion, he has inevitably repeated that exclusion. His effort to restore the silenced voice of history falls prey to the same dilemma as Foucault's: the voice he gives to history can never be its own, for it is always already a literary form, an aesthetic construct, an interpretive translation that loses history all over again when transforming it into sign-ificance. To "recapture history for textual interpretation" puts history back into the bondage of "idealistic" thought from which Lentricchia hopes to save it. If history exists for us only in signs, as recaptured in interpretation, then what immediate or privileged knowledge of history can be set against "ahistorical" readings? Lentricchia's book does not give us a systematic or convincing argument for distinguishing an "historical" from an "ahistorical" textual practice. Neither the critique of "aestheticism" nor the figurings of Foucault will do the trick. In fact, Lentricchia's attack on aesthetes depends, I think we shall see, on the very division of art from history that he describes, a division that Foucault's model only weakly heals with a theory of "discursive formations" which continues to privilege history over

writing by a finally conservative attitude toward representation. Thus a nostalgia for a history outside of interpretation surfaces occasionally in Lentricchia's rhetoric, but more importantly it surfaces in his argument. The classical hierarchical division of the textual from the historical informs his program, which asks us to concentrate on the ways that "history" determines literary practice, as if a binary opposition or cause-and-effect relation governed the two. Indeed, for Lentricchia the supplement of history is what gives significance to literary study: this supplemental economy, as Derrida would call it, exposes the dependence of history on writing, and thus the illusion of the former's original privilege. These quandaries stem in turn from Lentricchia's participation in a "perception" of history as an alien and oppressive otherness.

Vague generalizations about the "fashionable and casual historical despair of contemporary criticism" (AC,207) are of no service to Lentricchia's powerful and admirable desire to make literary criticism an agent for social change. He can no more escape the dangers of such a reductionism than his precursors Arnold and Eliot. In particular, his radical's voice castigating "the conservative fictionalist tradition in modern poetics and philosophy" obscures the basic ambivalence of his own attitude towards history's character. Is history actually oppressive, or is such a vision of disgust the aestheticist's excuse for his elitist self-indulgence? Echoing Lukacs and Raymond Williams, Lentricchia accuses Frye and "the new Nietzschean rhetoricians at Yale" of celebrating "a fantastical, utopian alternative to the perception of a degraded social existence: a human discourse free of all contingency, independent of all external forces, a discursing empowered by unconditioned human desire" (AC,26). The flaws of this summary of the Yale group will be addressed later. Here I note the ambiguous word "perception," for on it turns history's need of the literary critic's curing powers and history's role in his alienation.

We need not turn to Derrida's outrageous maxim that "perception does not exist" in order once again to raise the question of representation, of how history's interested representation produces its absence or presence for the critic. "History" in this book is sometimes an oppression inspiring flight or reform and sometimes an indistinct crowd of everyday people snubbed by artists and professors. He admirably quotes Frost's objection to doomsayers: "you will often

⁷Derrida, *History, and Intellectuals*, "Salmagundi," No. 50-51 (Fall 1980-Winter 1981).

hear it said that the age of the world we live in is particularly bad. . . . It is immodest of a man to think of himself as going down before the worst forces ever mobilized by God" (AC,28). Yet it seems exactly this thought that drives Lentricchia's zeal to recapture history for the purposes of revolution, and his zest in villifying those "worst forces" who eschew this *telos*. He remains essentially traditional in his perception of social and political evils as "external forces," though now thought in the slightly paranoid version of Foucault's ruling discursive formations. The Yale critics, he says, "fail to credit the coercive power of the historical determination and cultural enclosure of semantic potential" (AC,121). Paraphrasing the early Barthes in the language of Foucault, Lentricchia writes that semiological systems

are put into operation, put into force by force. Vast, diffuse, and nearly anonymous "deciding groups," establishments of power, in so elaborating the perimeters and structures of a language, define our ways of thinking and behaving and our norms of value: the individual has no say, and neither does that sentimental construction called "the people." (AC,132)

The anxiety of influence indeed. The new historical determinism here adds little to the analyses of C. Wright Mills, except a semiological vocabulary that is contradicted by the return to an intentionalism and concept of action divorced from the workings of representation. How is "force" separable from representation or interpretation. How does power govern without itself being governed by the structure constituting it? How, after all, can we be so sentimental as to excuse "the people" from the acts of those so aptly termed their "representatives"? Social or cultural discourses are also intertextual, involve both authors and readers, and likewise may not be so simply divided up into creators and recipients. The crucial significance of an analysis like this may be lost if a metaphors of victimage replaces the hard task of deconstructing from the inside of a system for which we always share some authorial credit.

It is never clear how Lentricchia feels about the terms "humanism" and "antihumanism" so frequently dotting his text, and this uncertainty may point toward discomfort with a position that embraces the poststructuralist critique of subjectivity and the traditional liberal's belief in the individual's centrality and worth. Clearly

Lentricchia needs a perception of history as a machine of oppressive inscription in order to fuel his own alienated polemic and his redemptive project. He blames "romanticism of the isolationist variety" for "cutting ourselves off from all common modes of vision" (AC,223). These pre-lapsarian images of communal harmony express the author's own longings for power, order, union and discipline. He chides those who refuse to be common, as if the erasure of difference (with or without an "a") were the progressive *telos* of authentic historical being. In this escape from personality lies truth, but of course it is an escape structured as an individual's revisionary response to a misprisoned discursive and institutional hegemony. Perhaps this "common vision" is only the conservative fiction of one oppressed by the resistance of art and criticism to any totalizing or levelling interpretation.

We hear about the "powerful constitutive forces of the historical process (political and economic contexts, class differences, and so on)" (AC,111), but these play no constitutive part in his own history of critical cant, which comes out as a self-enclosed totality of men and ideas. That "and so on" refers to no comprehensive analysis elsewhere, and thus signals just how specific and theoretically rigorous are Lentricchia's notions of history's composition. His most detailed "imperatives" for the "would-be historical critic" appear in the section on Barthes. This program includes study of the writer's contemporary audience, a radical questioning of the "fortresslike walls" isolating the critic from other disciplines, attention to "collectives" of literary language and literary mentality, a critique of canon formations, and the historicizing of the discipline of literary theory itself (AC,135-136). I believe it fair to say that none of these imperatives informs the execution of Lentricchia's own book in any substantial way. Had it been otherwise, *After the New Criticism* would be a far more helpful work, for these *are* important directions for future study.

Flawed or not, Lentricchia's book raises a number of key questions in literary thinking today. How are the analyses (or deconstructions) of language or discursive formation in one field to be related to those of another? It is not enough to dismiss the differences between poetry and politics, history and the novel, or philosophy and criticism as simply arbitrary. These divisions have histories that require reinterpretation, and their contemporary crossings into each

other pose formidable obstacles of intent and method to any theoretician. How, in the case before us, is the relation of literary theory to socio-political conditions to be approached? We cannot leave the nature of such conditions an uninterpreted touchstone for measuring the unreality of literary thought. Should literary theories be altered to fit the perception of a history, or must history be revised according to literary theory? More fundamentally, have texts—critical or poetic—ever really left history behind, or only abandoned a naive empiricism and untenable philosophy of mimesis?

Lentricchia believes that "American poststructuralist literary criticism tends to be an activity of textual privatization, the critic's doomed attempt to retreat from a social landscape of fragmentation and alienation" (AC,186). No qualifying "perception" here. Positing his own culture of history against this anarchy, he hopes to "turn off the stereophonic Sirens of naive idealism" (AC,208), and yet to maintain "the sanguine thought that these changes and differences [of history] can to a reasonable extent be known, that accurate historical consciousness, while difficult to come by, is not out of the question" (AC,140). But "reason," "knowledge," "accuracy," and "history" are among the logocentric coinages poststructuralism has devalued most tellingly; until these painstaking deconstructions have been rigorously assimilated and accounted for, there can be no sanguine recourse to common sense and pragmatism (but see Bloom's attempt at pragmatism, discussed below). Meanwhile, the assertion that "poststructuralism . . . sometimes sinks irretrievably into the stupor of a self-satisfied solipsism" (AC,141) will only turn back on the speaker to caricature his own self-congratulatory return to the fiction of a common history.

III. DESCANTING YALE

Lentricchia's frequent denunciations of "American Derrideans" or poststructuralists name, with one or two fleeting exceptions, only the Yale critics. When not denouncing these four individuals, his criticisms allude to a larger discursive formation he never fleshes out: the actual practice of poststructuralism by a variety of established and younger scholars never receives comprehensive treatment or much informed mention.⁸ Thus as generalizations about this mode of contemporary criticism his judgments

carry little weight, but they do prompt a closer look at his major antagonists. Despite the ill-conceived publication of *Deconstruction and Criticism*, the work of the Yale group is not homogeneous, and is only partially Derridean. A fair appraisal ought to discriminate their positions from each other's, and from Derrida's. (Since J. Hillis Miller has yet to publish his promised new books, his exclusion from the following discussion seems warranted.)

Two of the Yale foes, Bloom and de Man, receive the dubious homage of a whole chapter of reprimand in the second (and weaker) half of Lentricchia's book. The other two "exemplary" critics included are E.D. Hirsch and Murrari Krieger. Hirsch emerges as a somewhat admirable, perhaps Quixotic, quester for objective truth in literature, but the chapter on Krieger is an overstated and ungenerous hatchet job performed on Lentricchia's own mentor and precursor (Bloom's revenge). The de Man chapter presents him as a Sartrean existentialist, and takes insufficient note of the new positions set forth in the essays collected as *Allegories of Reading*. The section on Bloom avoids, except by pejoratives, the question of psychoanalysis, a perspective wholly repressed throughout the book. (Somehow Lentricchia's new historicism cannot stand without the exclusion of psychoanalysis; the subtler theoreticians of the Frankfurt School provide a lesson in the opposite direction.) In the end, Bloom too is reduced to the "academic elitism of his aestheticist historicism" (AC,337). Do the Yale critics, we are asked, have anything more to offer than Kant? I suggest they offer us the most interesting and persuasive reevaluations of literature and its study since the old New Critics (and we ought to stop using *them* as straw men or whipping boys as well).

In "The Rhetoric of Authority," Lentricchia accuses de Man of "unwavering belief in the enduring truth of his metaphysical perspective" when de Man dares to call another critic "entirely wrong" (AC,301). The common mistaken notion here is that poststructuralism makes all statements of value, judgment, or truth equally impossible, so that any claim for deconstruction's results must be paradoxical. On the con-

⁸The first book of American deconstructive criticism was Joseph N. Riddel's *The Inverted Bell* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1974). For a guide to the wealth of criticism since, see the bibliography in *Textual Strategies*, ed. Josue V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell, 1979).

trary, the enterprise of Derrida, de Man and others is neither nihilism nor a negative theology. Rather it questions prevailing philosophical and rhetorical structures that enable ideas and meanings, asking about the role of language in producing whatever appears to stand apart from or in control of writing. If the validity or interest of a critical text can only be thought in metaphysical or theological terms, than of course deconstruction is willfully untrue. But deconstruction attempts to write in such a way as to break or broach prescribed silences, to make us try to think what philosophy, logic, or other discourses have ruled impossible or out of bounds. The texts of such a criticism cannot be read or judged simply by the light of the system whose assumptions they subvert.

For example, de Man is not another adherent of "romantic epistemology" (AC,300), as Lentricchia characterizes the thesis of *Blindness and Insight*. Lentricchia quite wrongly identifies de Manian blindness as "rational and logical" thought and insight as "intuition, imagination, spontaneity, the unconscious" (AC,299-300). Nothing could be more truly blind to de Man's argument than this misreading. De Man claims rather that a systematic irony or disjunction characterizes the relation between what a critical rhetoric advocates and what it figures in its readings. It is imperative to understand that this irony, soon to be called the "aporia," is a theoretical postulate exactly aimed at deconstructing the mystified notions of "intuition" and "imagination."

In *Allegories of Reading*, de Man means to carry deconstruction beyond thematic criticism (finding emblems of books or writings or interpretation in the text, thus demonstrating its "self-reflexivity") and toward a rigorous articulation of the gap or incongruity between grammar and rhetoric, or statement and trope. The deconstruction of a position by the language it employs, however, cannot be a newly privileged content: that would make the text's deconstructive activity a controlled theme adequately represented by its form. De Man wants a more radical reading: "The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction. But since this model cannot be closed off by a final reading, it engenders, in its turn, a supplementary figural superposition which narrates the unreadability of the prior narration" (AR,205).⁹ "Deconstructions of figural texts," he observes wryly, "engender lucid

narratives which produce, in their turn and as it were within their own texture, a darkness more redoubtable than the error they dispel" (AR,217).

Yet de Man's book, like those he analyzes, "persists in performing what it has shown to be impossible to do" (AR,275). His chapters are extraordinarily intricate and compelling readings, as illuminating as they are demanding. This infuriates his opponents, who fail to read de Man through his own methods. De Man's authoritative statements about the impossibility of reading and the undecidability of aporias are themselves caught up necessarily in a rhetoric undone by the figurings of de Man himself:

. . . the deconstruction states the fallacy of reference in a necessarily referential mode. There is no escape from this, for the text also establishes that deconstruction is not something we decide to do or not to do at will. It is co-extensive with any use of language. . . . (AR,125).

Moreover, the figure of the critic himself will always also be a product of deconstruction, undoing the grammar of a purely linguistic explanation of deconstruction—although this latter conclusion only appears as the ironic reading of de Man's statements banishing subjectivity from textual analyses:

Deconstructive readings can point out the unwarranted identifications achieved by substitution, but they are powerless to prevent their recurrence even in their own discourse, and to uncross, so to speak, the aberrant exchanges that have taken place. Their gesture merely reiterates the rhetorical disfiguration that caused the error in the first place. They leave a margin of error, a residue of logical tension that prevents the closure of the deconstructive discourse and accounts for its narrative and allegorical mode. When this process is described in terms of will or freedom and thus transferred to the level of reference, the differential residue is bound to become manifest as an empirical awareness that affects and indeed constitutes a world in which it now appears to be "taking place"; a mind, a consciousness, a self (AR,242).

Reference of texts to historical conditions likewise requires caution. In what may be the book's most provocative chapter, on Rousseau's *Social Contract*, de Man contends that an analysis of "rhetorical patterns" in political and legal

⁹*Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale, 1979). Page citations noted parenthetically.

acts (documents, theories, institutions) precedes their privileging or evaluation as history: "... questions of valorization can be relevantly considered only after the rhetorical status of the text has been clarified" (AR,258). What follows is an astonishing explication of the role played by grammar, reference, and figure (all in the extended significations de Man gives them) in the operation of political *écriture*. Laws must be promulgated as universals no matter the particulars of the case, yet justice cannot be done except by reference. There exists "an incompatibility between the elaboration of the law and its application" that repeats "the fundamental incompatibility between grammar and meaning," or text and reference (AR,269). Anticipating the recurrent nostalgia for grounding criticism in history or the "real world" that will challenge his findings, de Man warns that when "critics cry out for the fresh air of referential meaning" they only reproduce a spurious metaphysical criticism "under the aegis of an inside/outside metaphor that is never being seriously questioned" (AR,4-5). The discursive formations of Foucault and Lentricchia remain within an empiricism and determinism which foreclose an adequate account of their rhetoricity or representational practice.

De Man's "theory of reading" pushes us into a "state of suspended ignorance" as regards its key terms: deconstruction, reading, grammar, rhetoric, writing, trope, figure, allegory. He profoundly disturbs our complacent deployment of these terms through relentless "close readings" of texts from a variety of genres and periods. He further upsets convention by assembling his book in a reverse chronological order, from Yeats to Rilke to Proust to Nietzsche to Rousseau, unmaking the myth that literary history is a *telos* of any kind, deconstructive or otherwise. The structural principle of the book is rather that of its accelerating complexity as each essay opens up onto a second or third or fourth level of deconstruction until the process seems exponential if not endless. His final lines take up the vocabulary of his best known work, going back to "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in a hyperbolic assertion that seems to throw his whole book (and career) into the aporia:

Irony is no longer a trope but the undoing of the deconstructive allegory of all tropological cognitions, the systematic undoing, in other words, of understanding. As such, far from closing off the

tropological system, irony enforces the repetition of its aberration (AR,301).

Ironically we understand this, read the allegory of the aporia here between the statement and its cognitive figures. De Man's dead-pan delivery of his own "understanding" as an "aberration" is required by the grammar of his deconstructive machine. His rhetoric, however, his own authorial figure, slyly grants us repeated insights outside the boundaries of the epistemological structures he so meticulously dismantles.

While de Man has used Derrida to privilege language in the study of rhetoric, Harold Bloom has been countering him with Freud, the Kabbalah, and now American Pragmatism in maintaining the stature of the "critical personality" in the rhetoric of criticism and poetry. "Emptying out the authorial subject," he notes, "is an ancient play and recurs in every Modernism from second century B.C. Alexandria down to our moment (ARCP,44).¹⁰ Bloom insists that tropes be read as "crossings," "the negative moments that collect meaning in the post-Romantic crisis poem" (WS,400).¹¹ Bloom tropes the de Manian aporia into the significant crossing between "revisionary ratios," between modes of figurative thinking that compose the text by will and desire. A writing turns, re-aims, re-sees, re-directs a previous writing, and in the "strength" of that turn marks its own *ethos* and *pathos*, inscribes its own identity. This "intratextuality" of revisions takes place in all thinking, though Bloom finds it best in poetry. Meaning begins in a will or desire against previous meanings, and so cannot be read impersonally. The crossing of an aporia or mental dilemma produces the individual voice, the persuasive prophet, the strong poet or critic who triumphs over the "it was" of time and influence. Bloom's theories of influence and misreading first turned our attention to the *agon* in the poet's relation to precursors, profoundly changing both how we read and who or what we find in poems. The tropology Bloom sets against de Man's grows out of this earlier systematic of strife. Moreover, it is now joined to Bloom's anxious defense against deconstruction. He promulgates an "American re-

¹⁰"Agon: Revisionism and Critical Personality," *Raritan*, V.1, no. 1 (Summer, 1981). Page citations noted parenthetically. This essay is excerpted from Bloom's forthcoming *Agon: Toward a Theory of Revisionism*, to be published by Oxford University Press.

¹¹Wallace Stevens: *The Poems of Our Climate* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1977). Page citations noted parenthetically.

centering" of criticism and the literary cannon, putting Pragmatism's critique of metaphysics in the place of Derrida's and Emerson's central figurations in place of Milton's or Rousseau's. The staging of the individual writer's transumption of the past revives, as Bloom introjects the Emersonian stance, the project of an original American literature or American language of criticism.¹²

Bloom characterizes de Man's rhetorical theory as "conceptual" and "epistemological," whereas his own tropology hopes "to see rhetoric as transcending the epistemology of tropes and as reentering the space of the will-to-persuasion" (WS,388). "For the deconstructive critic," Bloom argues, "a trope is a figure of knowing and not a figure of willing," and thus deconstruction limits rhetoric to the analysis of how linguistic problematics subvert cognitive claims. "But what," Bloom asks, "can a cognitive or epistemological moment in a poem be? Where the will predominates, even in its own despite, how much is there left to know? How can we speak of degrees of knowing in the blind world of the wish. . . ? (WS,387). Bloom promotes instead a "diachronic rhetoric" of stances and crossings, in place of truths and their deconstructions, theorizing "that every synchronic concept of trope is itself necessarily only another trope" (WS,387). The diachrony of this rhetoric, like the tradition of anxiously influenced poets, occurs as a series of misreadings or lies against time, other poets, and one's own texts. This makes structures of cognition into figurations that trope against past figures. Why? Because "the love of poetry is another variant of the love of power . . . the power of usurpation. We read to usurp, just as the poet writes to usurp. Usurp what? A place, a stance, a fullness, an illusion of identification or possession: something we can call ourselves or even our own" (ARCP,19).

This severance of poetry (or criticism) from orthodox ideas about truth and expression, once grounded in Freud and Nietzsche, now begins to adopt a surprising native philosophy:

What is a poem for anyway, is to me the central question, and by the question I mean pragmatically what is the use of poetry or the use of criticism. My answer is wholly pragmatic, and therefore unacceptable either to those who call themselves humanists or to those of the supposedly new modes.

¹²For a critique of Bloom's project, see Riddel's review of the Stevens book, "Juda Becomes New Haven," *Diacritics*, June 1980.

Poetry and criticism are useful not for what they really are, but for whatever poetic and critical use you can usurp them to, which tends to suggest that interpretive poems and poetic interpretations are concepts you make happen, rather than concepts of being (ARCP,36).

The substitution of this metaphors for those of Gnosticism or psychoanalysis is not a change of knowledge but of stance. It tropes Bloom's American critical identity against the French disease and recenters him in a tradition (William James, Peirce and Dewey) likely to further shock his already exasperated detractors. This misprision of Pragmatism, inspired by Richard Rorty, allows Bloom to fend off Derrida's influence, to form a curiously adamant theory of the closed circuit of American writing, and to salvage critical personality from the deconstructions of epistemology, language, and consciousness. "The language of American criticism ought to ask of a text: "what is it good for, what can I do with it, what can it do for me, what can I make it mean?" (ARCP,21).

This program retains what Bloom continues to learn from Freud: to "revivify the ancient identity between rhetoric and psychology" (WS,397) by interpreting desire's economy of willful revisions, displacements, translations, reductions, hyperboles—the modes of tropology—in the production of personalities and texts. The unsettling effect this has on traditional investments in the epistemological use of literature is reflected in Lentricchia's sublimation of psychoanalysis into the erection of history. The play of the unconscious in representation, individual or social, upsets historical, external, or philosophical determinisms. One need not be debauched by Freud to notice Lentricchia's obsession with irruptions of the pleasure principle. Bloom himself points to the obvious psychology of a manifesto against subjectivism, be it that of Lentricchia or de Man: ". . . beware the rhetorical or ironic impersonalist, whether traditionalist or deconstructionist, whose cool tone is a reaction-formation defense of a private quest for power" (ARCP,38).

Here Bloom is responding to Lentricchia's charge that his work "invites an interpretive anarchy: a programmatic subjectivism that can only lead to the purest of relativisms" (AC,339). No compromiser, Bloom delightedly replies that "strong reading" is "Gnostic and elitist," the "literary culture of the isolate individual, the solitary construer" (RCP,22). That isolation and

solitude, however, are tropes of interpretive power, of misreadings or lies or poems, and as such revisionary within a trans-personal (if not trans-parent) context. The emergence of meaning from "catastrophe" (Bloomian "differance") indicates the intimacy of meanings and agons, of individual significance and relation: "... because *contra* Foucault [in Lentricchia's final epigraph] the human mind cannot conceive of interpretive power without the king. Interpretation is implicitly hierarchical and cannot proceed without a usurpation of authority" (ARCP,40). Difference-as-meaning comes not from the linguistic machine, or from the oppression of history, but from the attachments we make to tropes: "Erotic choices and rejections, whether of poems or persons, are transactions in power, authority, and tradition, and not just interplays of language" (ARCP,46).

Lentricchia's charge (one made against every innovation in interpretation) falls back upon the unexamined dualisms of order and anarchy, objectivity and subjectivity, the absolute and the relative. The fine section on Derrida in his book shows that Lentricchia knows better than to depend upon such discredited props. Since deconstruction disables a subject/object opposition, its practitioners (assuming for a moment that, despite his defenses, Bloom is one) can hardly be called subjectivists. After Freud, there is no "inside" of the subject dissociated from "outside" structures, or vice-versa. Where the accusation of subjectivism is made we can read a difference in interpretative methods at the same level. What absolute will be employed to discriminate subjective and objective criticism? Rightly understood, Bloom's theory is neither subjective nor objective: it exposes the fallacy of those terms and insists on the critical role played by the intratextual dialectic composing texts and personalities, poems and histories. There is simply no such thing, literally, as a purely subjective interpretation, one that is not constructed relative to other interpretations—except perhaps as the fiction of those who would conserve history's true authority.

Bloom's theses prompt Lentricchia to the following defensive reduction: "The aestheticist impulse in his criticism severs the natural man from the poet, and the Freudianism in his theory dissolves the conscious human subject and so robs Bloom of any genuine claim to humanism" (AC,336). Bloom's "aestheticism" lies in his affection for Wilde and Pater, and in the narrowly

"literary" sources of his intratextual histories. Bloom is vulnerable on this latter point. His canon remains the same from book to book, and his division of poetry from epistemology too quickly elides "primarily political, social, economic, or philosophical processes" (ARCP,38) from the writer's *agon*. This elision, however, cannot be answered by a return to epistemology or empirical history, but by what might be termed a tropology or rhetoric of the historical, something neither Foucault nor Lentricchia seems ready to provide. On the other hand, Bloom's theory works in textual practice. His close readings of poets and poems make a persuasive case for the priority of the literary or poetic in intra- or intertextual revisions. He cannot be faulted for severing the "natural man from the poet" until the existence of such a man—his ontology, how we would find him through a text, how we would place him discursively, how his relation to writing works—is demonstrated. Lentricchia would do better to counter Bloom by a line-for-line disputation of the interpretation of a specific poem or poet. As for "Freudianism," it does not dissolve the "conscious human subject." It makes the idea of consciousness or humanism problematic by inserting questions about desire, representation, and economy into analyses of the mind's textual operation. It gives us back the beginnings of a theory of the human purged of the sentimental cant that has idealistically defended humanism.

Near his close, Lentricchia falls back on an unconsciously comic protestation against Bloom's style: "The problems with the theory are not so much problems of principle as they are of tone, rhetoric, and scope" (AC,342). Is this reduction of "tone" and "rhetoric" to mere formal matters, separable aesthetic qualities as opposed to solid content of principle, aware of its naivete or its contradiction of Lentricchia's basic thesis? The "reinstating" of the "principle of the author," of Bloom himself and of the poets, is most decidedly not "against every theoretical point" Bloom makes. Though often hard to take, Bloom's rhetoric performs his theories. But Lentricchia's theory, unlike his practice, treats the play of language as something fearful to be controlled. This linguistic chastity would presumably serve the serious work of a history which has somehow overcome the errancies of representation and arrived at a transparent self-knowledge. The argument against Kant made by Richard Rorty and Derrida aims at Kant's failure

to question the language of philosophy or the role of representation, thus inaugurating a tradition of untroubled epistemological speech whose truest descendent is Lentricchia himself.¹³

The most thoughtful current essays on the style, scope, and function of criticism are those of Geoffrey Hartman. Moving to center stage an argument begun in earlier essays, Hartman's two recent books challenge the dogma which declares literary criticism a plain discourse secondary to the creative text whose truth it self-effacingly reveals: "literary commentary may cross the line and become as demanding as literature: it is an unpredictable or unstable genre that cannot be subordinated, a priori, to its referential or commentating function" (CW,201)¹⁴. *Criticism in the Wilderness* builds a strong case for ending the isolation professors of literature have imposed upon themselves, as writers and as members of a culture. In chapters on Carlyle, Bloom, Eliot, Benjamin, Frye and Burke, Hartman explores the "extraordinary language movement within modern criticism" (CW,84), reading the voices (inter- and intratextual) at work there. Asking us to read criticism with the same interpretive skill and human care we bring to "literary" texts, Hartman advocates a critical practice that tests the powers and limits of its own language, and one that will cross over the lines separating literary study from other intellectual, religious, and scientific discourse. The book's second half argues persuasively that such a movement could reinvigorate literary study and reassert its institutional, cultural, and sociopolitical powers. In *Saving The Text*, Hartman puts his method to work in an erudite, often

¹³Derrida writes: "A politico-institutional problem of the University: it, like all teaching in its traditional form, and perhaps all teaching whatever, has as its ideal, with exhaustive translatability, the effacement of language [la langue]. . . . It can bear more readily the most apparently revolutionary ideological sorts of 'content,' if only that content does not touch the borders of language [la langue] and of all the juridico-political contracts that it guarantees." See "Living On: Border Lines," *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. H. Bloom et al. (New York: Seabury, 1979), p. 93-95, lower "notes." Also Richard Rorty, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida," *New Literary History*, X, no. 1 (Autumn, 1978).

¹⁴Hartman's works are cited parenthetically by the following abbreviations: BF: *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale, 1970); FR: *The Fate of Reading* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago, 1975); CW: *Criticism in The Wilderness* (New Haven: Yale, 1980); ST: *Saving the Text* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1981); LF: "Diction and Defense in Wordsworth," in *The Literary Freud*, ed. Joseph H. Smith (New Haven: Yale, 1980).

hysterically funny commentary or echo of Derrida's *Glas*, the *Finnegan's Wake* of deconstruction:

The soundword glas, which provides the title of Derrida's book, refers to death knell or passing bell. It is endlessly "joyced" by the author, to suggest that voice has no monument except in the form of a rattle in the throat covered or sublimed by the passing bell. . . . Glas: a science of remnants. Perhaps philosophy has always been such because it finds remainders (mere sounds, waste-products, contradictions, excrement, death) intolerable (ST,5-6,16).

But these remainders, aural deconstructions, become the flowers of language (Genet, in one column) as opposed to language as absolute knowledge (Hegel in the other column). This flowering, or pun-filled dissemination of the signifier, is ultimately Hartman's cause for rejoycing:

And that is why poetry makes its curious alliance with critical reading, in order to reactivate the ear. Both are auscultations that have the capacity of putting us on the alert toward the silence in us: the wrongly silenced words as well as the noisy words that get in their way and prevent thoughtfulness. The words of a text, in their silence, are but divining rods to disclose other words, perhaps words of the other (ST,142).

An intoxicating aestheticism or eery philosophy? "Only one thing is certain. There is no putting the djinn back into the bottle" (ST,21).

Thus Hartman continues speculations about the soundness of criticism begun in *Beyond Formalism* and *The Fate of Reading*. He refuses to be systematic, however; he is criticism's Proteus, which perhaps explains Lentricchia's fleeting and insubstantial attempts to grasp this "philological athlete of poststructuralism" (AC,162). Though Hartman's output rivals even Bloom's, and his knowledge of Continental models matches de Man's, he has had less impact than these more easily identifiable theorists. The combination of scholarship and critical imagination in his work is unsurpassed, yet it resists (as Hartman knows) any easy formulation into a "model" or "method," whether aestheticist or Derridean. However, since the mid-1960s, two concerns have largely shaped Hartman's theoretical career: the writing of literary history and the role of sound in poetic genesis. The two join, in fact, as Hartman writes a history of the changes in poetic language, analyzing how a Collins or

Wordsworth internalizes and rewrites the language that he hears: "Temporality and authenticity are aspects, finally, of the largest topic of historical criticism: the relation of words to place of utterance" (BF,38). Reflecting on the traps laying in wait for those eager to proceed "beyond formalism," Hartman cautions that no literary history is possible except as it goes through a formalism, not around it in obedience to an ideological notion of the historical as extrinsic to questions of form. But the form of the medium and its analysis must be linked to the artist's historical consciousness, which Hartman would locate in the history of re-sounding poetic conflicts, in the writer's clash with inherited or overheard scripts. Thus (for example) he plots the development of the Romantic lyric out of native and classical models by focusing on the topos of the *genius loci* as geographical inscription and inspiring voice, a strategy that anchors utterance firmly to place and time, to a self-consciousness of site. The *genius loci* in this reading is the voice of a national poetical imperative of originality, of the vernacular, and thus both a challenge and burden for the aspiring poetical character. Using this topos of voice, Hartman writes literary history as an echo-land of contradictions. His acknowledged model in this is Erich Auerbach, whose narratives of the emergence of the vernacular from Latin stand behind the work of both Bloom and Hartman.

Co-existing in Hartman's historicism (sometimes uneasily) is a sustained meditation on the psychogenesis of speech and writing. The *genius loci* may be a trope of influence, an historical formation, or both. Or, as Hartman acknowledges, the *genii* may be internalized demons, whose words have wounded, prompting a language of defense, deferral, allegory, interpretation, trope. The *genius loci* traditionally provides the poet his origin and end, source and fate, and is also the Persona of the Ancient God or Father archetype in antique mystery cults. The play of literary memory in the poet's figuring of the *genius loci*, whether invoked or a haunting spectre, becomes entangled in the larger question of an individual economy of psychic inscriptions. Hartman thus adds a "phenomenological thematics" of the voice to his history, one based not so much on a Bloomian thesis of influence as on a psychoanalysis or psychoanthropology of hearing. Writing "recalls the origin of civilization in dialogic acts of naming, cursing, blessing, consoling, laughing, lamenting, and be-

seeing" (BF,39). In *The Fate of Reading*, criticism too becomes a re-hearing of the case always before us, lending our ear to the disseminative economy of sound and sense that always undoes the project of fixed meaning, neoclassical diction, the serious and single signified as opposed to the uncanny punning signifier. For both poet and critic, literature becomes an interior polylogue, a cacophony whose orchestration has numerous genres and geneses: "Poetry, I surmise, is the working through of such 'voices,' which are often projected as coming from the outside, or attributed to supernatural agency. They summon or entice the hearer, they urge him to some fatal step" (LF,207). We never know literature, the source or supernatural agency, except as an outside we interpret from what remains within us: "Through the 'wakeful descant' of poetry we become conscious of the immensity of the detour from absence to presence, or from symbol to symbol rather than to the 'real thing' " (FR,162).

The justification for an "extraordinary language movement" in criticism follows, then, from its participation in opening this hearing, in inducing a shock of language to rival or translate those it reads. Hartman uses Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" ("Did she put on his knowledge with his power. .?") as emblem and experience of writing as a "sudden blow," a surprise that "engenders" disturbing images. Literary commentary begins in the bewilderment of strange texts: "it acts out a solution, trying various defenses, various interpretations," until it gets its voice back, though now in other tones, "keener sounds" (Stevens) (CW,22). Writing "is a calculus that jealously broods on strange figures, on imaginative otherness," making timely utterance from resonant estrangements. Critics, he chides, "are scared to do anything except convert as quickly as possible the imaginative into a mode of the ordinary" (CW,27). This imagery of critical genesis suggests the pervasive importance of biblical hermeneutics as a resource for Hartman's enterprise. The "strange figures" we find in poststructuralist criticism resemble the allegorical commentary of theology, and seem sometimes to rehearse the endless displacement of Word by words (CW,112). Allegory appears to offer a break with representational theory, but its attentive refinings save the texts, keep them echoing in time. "Can there be nonallegorical kinds of reading?" asks Hartman, and it's a question his own strange figurings try to make

us hear.

In a psychogenesis of reading/writing, the *genius loci* becomes the spirit of the place of the unconscious, Freud's "mystic writing pad," and criticism the re-figuring of images of voice and meaning, power and knowledge. In criticism and literature, "we deal not with language as such, nor with the philosophy of language, but with how books or habits of reading *penetrate* our lives" (CW,203). This brooding upon, or playing along with penetrating texts fosters a hermeneutics of "indeterminacy": "it encourages a form of writing—of articulate interpretation—that is not subordinated naively to the search for ideas" (CW,269). "To keep a poem in mind," he writes, "is to keep it there, not to resolve it into available meanings. . . . The seduction of understanding through a fiction should provoke something more active than bemusement or suspended disbelief: it should provoke me to break, however provisionally, the very frame of meaning" (CW,274). Such criticism might help free the professor/critic from his status as the humble "retainer," the "high-class servant" of received ideas and dispensed truths who has the "freedom to work on any topic that does not make him rich" (CW,288).

These same concerns with literary history, inscribed sounds, and the breaking of dictated or dictionary meanings inform *Saving The Text*. Hartman's "commentary" echoes or translates Derrida's philosophical sonic booms: "We don't always know what we mean," he advises at the start, "and the speech that echoes our speech—the interpreter's—need not lay the 'haunting melody' of words to rest" (ST,xxii). In staging his text in two columns on Hegel and Genet respectively, Derrida spaces an intercourse between father and mother tongues, (de)constructing a linguistic family romance around the writing of philosophy and the philosophy of writing. Hartman's misprision of Derrida's book concentrates on the effects of its punning style, on the signifying effects of multiple meanings in one sound ("Hegel/aigle": the philosopher's name itself equivocal) or the multiple soundings of a single syllable or word in a dissemination of meanings ("le débris de . . . Derrida"). "Where the word was," he notes, "the pun shall be. The reality-reference of literature is subdued to intertextual allusions, omnivorous flowers of speech. . ." (ST,79). The emphasis of Hartman's translation is on the death knell of the proper name, the erection of identity's tomb ("tomb-

er": the Fall, castration, "nommer") in every effort at capitalization. The psychoanalytics here, however, go on to remark the flowering of meaning from such grave robbings:

psychiatry—especially the Lacanian kind—moves within this eery domain of "tour d'écoute" or "tour d'écriture." It giddies us with its turnings, whether rising or fall; for tour itself is an equivocal word, and what we really feel, in listening or writing with sensitivity, is that the screw of language can always be turned further. Hence a nausea, or ecoeurement, coming from language itself. We know meaning always gets screwed (ST,45).

Recalling a distinguished tradition of writers and scholars, Hartman wants to "recover the link between literature, language, *work* and *play*" (CW,262). The "serio ludere" of Hartman and Derrida turns the cry at language's wounds into a knowing laughter.

Lentricchia objects to all of this (fore)play as irresponsible free play, an unserious flight from sound reasoning. He insists that "Derrida's denial of absolute authority, of ontological agency as governance and closure of free play, is equal to the denial of all agencies and structures of authority and constraint" (AC,180). The either/or mathematics of this defensive equivalence demonstrates a fear of equivocation. It rises out of that critical and philosophical dogmatism of proper meaning, propriety, capitalized(-ist) signifieds and textual real estates Hartman does intend to make pun of. How often must one point out that Derrida works always from within "structures of authority and constraint," and that their "denial" would be to him the most naive of all strategies? Lentricchia elides the subtle nuances of "jeu," of game, risk, sleight of hand, speculation, action and verbal slippage. Derrida's reinscriptive use of "free play" turns Kant (its first formulator) on his head. Kant had argued that "free play" reigns in the aesthetic representation precisely because in it "no definite concept limits them to a definite rule of cognition."¹⁵ Derrida's writing broaches the division of aesthetic from philosophical writing promulgated by Kant, one meant precisely to enable a philosophically serious and stable discourse of representation uncontaminated by the errancies of art. Kant's formula erases the signifier and its

¹⁵*Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), p. 52. See also de Man's remarks on Kant's theory of "hypotyposes" in "The Epistemology of Metaphor," *Critical Inquiry*, V, no. 1 (Autumn 1978).

remainders from philosophical speech, while delimiting literary art to a play undisturbed by cognition. Derrida insists, contra Kant, on the problematics of representation both as the metaphoricity producing cognition and as the metaphysics underlying aesthetics. "Reading," says Hartman, "should be an *errance joyeuse* rather than the capitalization of great books by interpretive safeguards" (ST,52).

It would be a mistake, however, to identity Hartman and Derrida, or to confuse Hartman's misprision of Derrida's wit for the whole texture of *Glas*. Hartman frequently expresses discomfort with *Glas*'s "epigrammatology"; more importantly, his counterargument posits the blessings of language's dying falls in contrast to the "milk of mourning" that nourishes deconstruction. Derrida emphasizes the irrevocable play of remainders that undoes reconstruction or an Hegelian "Aufhebung" of the negative. Hartman's psychoanalytic phenomenology of revoicing grants a new hearing to these disseminated names inscribed in text or psyche by the *genii loco* of writing: "*Glas* appears as a meta-comic celebration of literature's power to externalize, to draw into the realm of appearance, the most deeply encrypted words, the extremest modes of internalization" (ST,80). He postulates the redemption of the mother tongue suppressed by paternal dictates. The recurrent vernacular voice emerges in those slips of the tongue that strangely figure the return of the repressed. Critical "pornosophy" solicits such improper *liaisons dangereuses* of words.

Following Lacan and Derrida, Hartman reads the breaking up and distribution of proper names through the model of the castration complex: a parcelling and deploying substitution that constitutes the mediating power of symbols and the recognition of genuine differences (compare the use of vegetation gods by Pound and Eliot). His hypothesis is "that literature is the elaboration of a specular name" (ST,111). (YHVH? Da Da Da?) Hartman's counterstatement turns deconstruction into a "restored theory of representation," a self-subverting allegoresis (allegory extended, not by anagogy, but by the orchestration of silenced aporias) that revises the names we suffer and seek, "the sweet piercing that counters or sublimates a bitter one" (ST,123). His focus on name-making and name breaking underscores how intrinsic the problem of identity is to literature: "by wounding I mean principally the expectation that a self

can be defined or constituted by words, if they are direct enough, and the traumatic consequences of that expectation" (ST,131). The blessing of this "blessure," however, is that these "consequences" inspire the creation of the literary-critical voice.

Hartman's poetics of the Voice continues a Romantic quest for the subject: "But though a text is discontinuously woven of many strands or codes, there is magic in the web. The sense of an informing spirit, however limited or conditioned, or outwitting those limits and conditions, is what holds us" (FR,254). The magic of the critic's voice allies itself with that of the poet to unspeak language's murder of identity, or the "entomberment" that is writing. In discussing the usurping image of Milton's voice in Wordsworth, Hartman finds a complicated "exchange of eyes for ears," "as if a blinding of that kind could restore Voice to its most powerful mode, that of Logos or fiat" (LF,214). He cautions against the wishful reading of Voice as recuperation of plenitude, but this seems the inescapable danger of his theory. He never explains the exchange of ears and eyes, perhaps wanting to avoid a repetition of the accusation made against *Wordsworth's Poetry*: that his version of imagination required the death of nature. He denied the inference, as he resists some of Derrida's darkness. But here isn't blindness not only the erasure of nature, but also the wished for castration of impressive inscriptions? How are hearing and seeing, listening and reading, to be distinguished? How are we any the less wounded by what we read than by what we see? Is not the real "blessure" the undecidable relation of the two? To systematize Hartman, could we not say that the trope of Voice he develops, with all its flowery seductions, means to usurp the voice of Derrida's "écriture," to speak up against the belaboring of the Negative in deconstruction? He "saves" the text, and all its strange characters, from a double threat of erasure and stifling: those of traditionalism's dogma of univocal meaning and deconstruction's program of interminable analysis: "By equivocation or figurative action we substitute for the dread words another meaning, in effect another set of words" (ST,157). These words may come back to haunt Hartman's own ears.

* * *

Clearly the appellation "Yale Derrideans" wounds reality with a capitalized critical myth. The works of de Man, Bloom, and Hartman re-

spond to Derrida's challenge in quite different, often opposed ways. Each is a defense, translation, and appropriation whose nonidentity with the origin or proper name is described by theory and demonstrated in practice. The lesson here for other adaptations of "method" in poststructuralism is apparent, as is the caution we should observe when evaluating them. Neither a "concept" nor a "system," deconstruction points toward a writing activity situated at a discourse's juncture between identity and difference, or in the scriptive time between the voice of the origin and the speech of last judgments. The discomforts and awkward posturings of this position embarrass even its most dexterous performers. Nevertheless, the strange figures they form there richly reward our attention to such an eery scenery.

If I have sounded like Lentricchia in reprimanding him, it is only by way of re-voicing what his theoretical hyperbole has silenced: the ventriloquism of any "history" and the finer tones of those critics he shouts down. I conclude

by observing that the question of style, as Derrida shows, always cuts two ways. The "quill" or "stylus" "could just as easily be a stiletto, or even a rapier," something to be used "in a vicious attack" on a body of "truth" or "as protection against such an attack."¹⁶ Style, too, is a dangerous supplement. The question of poststructuralism may be a question of style, and thus the most serious and laughable of all penetrating thrusts. The ultimate inadequacy of Lentricchia's study escapes his control, for it characterizes every attempt at critical translation. To make poststructuralism digestible for readers would be to already compromise its interest, make impotent its style. This is not to mystify these texts, but to suggest that their value begins and continues best in their direct and difficult encounter, in the labor of their reading, for the question of style—of the form of truth and the truth of form—is rewritten in all their voices.

¹⁶*Spurs/Eperons: Nietzsche's Styles/Les Styles de Nietzsche*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: Univ. Chicago, 1978), p. 37.

J. P. Telotte

FORMULAS AND LABYRINTHS: ON TRACKING A LEOPARD MAN

For much of its history, the American cinema has been marked by its use of a few simple and highly recognizable formulas, patterns of storytelling which have produced satisfying if largely predictable cultural myths. That formulaic nature has, however, often acted as a barrier to critical evaluation of films which sought to work unexpected variations upon a well-worn genre and thus defied our formulaic or narrative expectations. The work of Val Lewton at RKO in the 1940's represents a case in point. A minor novelist and former story editor for David Selznick, Lewton came to RKO to produce a series of thriller and horror films which might successfully compete with Universal Studios' B-film product. Although moderately successful with audiences of the era, those genre films met with quite mixed critical opinion, Lewton's first works being lauded for their effective use of the typical horror formula and several of his later films derided for what was seen as narrative confusion. In retrospect, though, modern critics have almost unanimously praised the imaginative style of this group of genre films, one terming it "one of the most distinguished and individualistic bodies of work in American movies."¹ This transformation of critical opinion, I would suggest, might be better understood by closely examining Lewton's work in terms of that rather unconventional approach to genre narrative for which it had often been criticized.

Although nominally the producer of this series of B-films, Lewton was given an unusually free hand in the fashioning of his movies, and that freedom permitted him to exercise an almost unprecedented creative influence.² Within the bounds of his general directive to produce "chillers" on a minuscule budget, he could select the cast, writers, crew, and stories; in fact, he typically composed the original story himself or rewrote the final shooting script, usually without taking screen credit. His directors were all essentially untried people—Jacques Tourneur, Mark Robson, Robert Wise—who could be

counted upon to carry out his carefully detailed designs in a workmanlike manner. This creative formula produced admirable results in *The Cat People* (1942) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), but the third film, *The Leopard Man* (1943)—like the first two, directed by Tourneur—was panned for its loose and confusing narrative structure and its departures from genre conventions, all charges which would be made against a number of Lewton's later works. This third film, however, demonstrated the same labyrinthine style, characterized by formula-defiant twists and unexpected revelations, which marks most of the Lewton series; it simply exaggerated—and thus called perhaps undue attention to—those elements which were probably more obscured by formula in the prior films. In the example afforded by *The Leopard Man*, therefore, we may better see the full range of Lewton's unconventional narrative skills, disencumbered by the sort of critical "tunnel vision" which our formulaic expectations often foster.

We might trace this underlying critical problem back to the way we traditionally view narrative, especially in the area of genre. Audiences usually associate meaning or significance, J. Hillis Miller suggests, "whether in a narrative, in a life, or in a word," with "continuity, in a homogeneous sequence making an unbroken line."³

¹Joseph McBride, "Val Lewton, Director's Producer," *Action*, 11 (Jan.-Feb. 1976), p. 11.

²Joel Siegel in his *Val Lewton: The Reality of Terror* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), has effectively argued for Lewton's status as "auteur" of the films which emerged from his production unit. The only major restraints on Lewton's powers he summarizes as follows: "He was to set up a production unit which would make only horror movies with budgets limited to \$150,000 per picture. The films were to be 'programmers,' slated for placement on double features in less than key theatres, with a running time not to exceed 75 minutes. Koerner's office was to dictate the titles of these films, based upon a system of market pre-testing" (p. 21). With the success of his first two films, however, even some of these restrictions were lifted.

³"Narrative Middles: A Preliminary Outline," *Genre*, 9 (Fall 1978), 375.

What often goes unrecognized, however, is that the true interest of a narrative often arises from digression, the repetitions and deviations from the expected or causal connection of incidents. And every narrative harbors an element of this labyrinthine potential, even the most straightforward tale containing a tendency to narrative subversion "by becoming 'complex'—knotted, repetitive, doubled, broken, phantasmal."⁴ In classic American cinema, of course, that complexity usually went undeveloped, its potential unnoticed because of the dominance of a tradition of "cause-effect logic and narrative parallelism" operating "through psychologically defined, goal oriented characters."⁵ Only later, with the influence of European filmmakers on the post-war cinema, did this "classical narrative" form give way to what David Bordwell terms the "art film," in which "ambiguity is the dominant principle of intelligibility" and a "broken teleology" replaces the conventional linear development toward a specific goal or statement.⁶ That "broken teleology," however, essentially represents the expansion of that complexity or knottedness which inheres in all narrative, and which carries with it a far more discomfiting message. As the narrative twists or turns back on itself, a clear goal or resolution is usually lost from sight, and it tends to speak more and more of that ambiguity which becomes the tale's informing principle. Such a discordant element clearly has distinct advantages for representing the chaotic welter which often seems characteristic of modern life. Properly underscored, though, it may prove a most fitting complement to certain disconcerting themes, such as those frequently encountered in the horror and mystery genres in which Lewton usually worked.

At first glance, *The Leopard Man* seems like a narrative at odds with both itself and its generic roots. Its broadest outlines suggest a classical narrative formula, such as we find in the detective or mystery story so popular at the time, but it repeatedly veers off from those expectations, never staying with the actions of a single character long enough for us to identify with him, and its various sequences appearing almost accidentally linked to a single line of concern. It is this

⁴Miller, "Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line," *Critical Inquiry*, 3 (Autumn 1976), 68-69.

⁵David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," *Film Criticism*, 4 (Fall 1979), 57.

⁶Bordwell, p. 61.

very style, of course, which distinguishes the film from the typical genre programmers of its day and which helped to inject a greater complexity—even a sense of the modern—into its seemingly formulaic elements.

While Lewton's previous films were largely the product of his own inventive imagination, *The Leopard Man* drew on a rather conventional murder mystery, Cornell Woolrich's *Black Alibi*, and the plot distilled from it clearly retains much of its generic form. The film tells of a leopard accidentally unleashed on a small New Mexico



town in a publicity stunt; it then describes the three, apparently random murders which ensue; and it follows the investigation into those deaths which turns up not only a leopard, but a man who, following the cat's pattern, killed two of the victims. Following the traditional pattern of such stories, the film initially plunges us into a mysterious and threatened world, and then, through the detective work of Jerry Manning, the publicity agent responsible for the leopard's escape, it provides a solution and seems to vanquish that threat. The narrative also at first appears to affirm that a cause-effect logic, characteristic of most classical detective tales, is at work here. Much of the narrative describes the three parallel murders of young women, the episodes all sharing a common tone, atmosphere, and structure; but it is because of this narrative

repetition that we initially assume, as do the film's characters, that the killings are all the leopard's work. To further this misconstruction, Lewton withholds full visual corroboration, cutting away just prior to the murder in each instance. He hints at an alternate possibility, though, through another element of repetition, demarcating the death sequences with scenes of the two parallel investigations into the murders: one, the formal police investigation conducted by Sheriff Robles, who assumes from all appearances that the leopard is the sole danger here;

Within this broad generic structure, *The Leopard Man* also evidences a pattern of psychological motivation akin to that of classical narrative. Since Jerry and his girlfriend Kiki Walker are responsible for the leopard's escape, they naturally feel guilty for the death of Teresa Delgado, the first victim, and both secretly give money to the girl's family to pay for her funeral. Raoul Belmonte, the second victim's fiancé, feels similarly responsible, since Consuelo was killed in the cemetery where they had arranged a tryst. And even Charlie How-Cum, owner of the leo-



the other, Jerry Manning's personal inquiry, as he follows his "hunch" that a demented person, one of those "men with kinks in their brains," is using the leopard's escape to disguise his own pathological assaults. This pattern of parallel investigations thematically links *The Leopard Man* with the classical detective formula also, for as in films like *The Maltese Falcon*, *Murder My Sweet*, and *The Big Sleep*, the official investigation here stumbles along in a fruitless search for "facts," while the private operator, working outside the sanction of the law, effectively becomes an extension of that justice which his society, because of its limitations, is incapable of administering.⁷

⁷See Frank McConnell's discussion of this melodramatic formula in his study of myth and narrative, *Storytelling and Mythmaking* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 138-99.

pard, when told that in a drunken stupor he might have murdered one of the girls, readily accepts the burden of guilt, asking Robles to lock him in jail because, "if I do things like that, I want to be put away. I don't want to hurt nobody." A number of people, therefore, seem moved by that feeling of guilt and spurred to assist in ridding the community of its menace.

Those abrupt shifts are quickly forgotten once we enter into each of the three murder sequences, for they operate like typical interpolated narratives, asserting their own logic against the larger plot which shifts into the background. Each of these embedded narratives adds to that larger labyrinthine pattern, though, by describing its own maze in which some Minotaur-like half-man, half-beast waits for his victim, and through which we too are relentlessly taken,

ever mindful of the threats which await. Again it is that tracking camera, with its unsettling mobile subjective view, which draws us into those labyrinths, and which sidetracks the reflection which would tell us that this is all simply part of the natural environment seen from a different, more revealing perspective. Teresa threads her way through the streets of the town and across an arroyo on what would normally be a simple trip to the grocery, but which here turns into a nightmarish wandering and wondering at the eerie transformations darkness effects in even familiar geography. She is repeatedly frightened by commonplace objects, such as a tumbleweed and train, rushing out at her from the shadows, and is finally attacked and killed by the leopard just when she seems to have reached a safe exit from that maze—her own door which her mother has bolted against her. The labyrinth which Consuelo enters is appropriately the cemetery, where she goes to lay flowers on her father's grave and meet her boyfriend Raoul. Locked in after dark, she wanders through a maze of statues, trees, and surrealistically twisted and angled crosses, looking for an exit or help of any sort. In this case too, she meets a locked gate, a blank wall, and finally a killer just when help seems at hand. For Clo-Clo the city streets which she walks alone each night from the club to her home turn into a frightening and confusing pathway. Having lost that \$100 bill while returning home, she goes back into the darkness, attempting to retrace her steps, to follow the thread through this labyrinth, only to meet the killer she mistakes for her boyfriend. In each situation, the individual leaves the safety of her home to wander through a circuitous, ultimately imprisoning world within which there lurks death. And as we become involved with each of these characters, the narrative momentum of each sequence takes over, our concern for connection and plot progression tending to fade away in their maze-like attraction. We only regain a sense of the larger narrative structure in the face of that ultimate connector, the one common point in which, Lewton suggests, life's labyrinthine stories all eventually converge—death.

Each sequence further underscores another maze-like element of the narrative which is generally foreign to classical narrative. These episodes demonstrate that the most confusing yet common labyrinth to be found here is the human mind itself; it is the puzzle which ultimate-

ly refutes that notion of an intelligible psychological causation. Once he has an inkling that the murders may be the work of a man rather than a leopard, Jerry Manning repeatedly seeks to have explained the killer's psychology in hope that finding some explanation, rationalizing these actions, might allow him to deduce his identity or at least determine what sort of person he is. Ironically, it is the killer himself, Galbraith, to whom Jerry goes for help in this matter and who notes how difficult the task is. The killer, he says, perhaps not even truly aware that he is speaking of himself, would "be a hard man to find . . . , especially if he were clever. He'd go about his ordinary business calmly, except when the fit to kill was on him." That difficulty traces back to that disjunction between appearances and reality which seems so common in this world; for it is a place where, as we have seen, characters carefully cultivate their public images, and where actions may be linked to many possible causes or to no apparent ones at all. That sense of randomness and of the inexplicable, though, imparts to *The Leopard Man* its unsettling and frightening atmosphere, as we find that the killer is the one person who seems the least "twisted" member of the community—an intellectual, former college professor, curator of the local museum, in fact, the "expert witness" Robles calls in to consult on the "cat murders." Even when he finally confesses to those murders, Galbraith strikes a disturbing note, evoking how little we can ever hope to understand of these events. He tells Jerry, "You don't know what you're doing. You don't understand. Nobody understands," and with that declaration drives home a greater danger lurking here, not simply an external threat like a cat or common murderer, but one that is immanent and internal, lodged in the convolutions and irrational elements of every human psyche. Although the murders are finally solved, the "leopard man" unmasked, we are left with a stubborn sense that a satisfying explanation for these actions or for Galbraith's sudden aberrance will never be forthcoming, and that we have simply had a glimpse into the darker winding passages of the mind, within which motives, identities, even a sense of humanity, can easily become lost.

Explanations or rationales for human action, of course, typically occur in Lewton's films as an apparent debunking of those mysterious or supernatural forces. However, he then usually undercuts those same accounts, demonstrating

how incommensurate or insufficient they are for human experience. In *The Leopard Man* causes seem to abound for every action, but it is their very multiplicity which makes them rather bewildering and unsatisfactory, and suggests a maze of motivation which promises that it could never be adequately explored. In their superfluity, then, those causes come to represent a kind of subtle dissent from the classical orthodoxy of motivation and cause-effect behavior.

The film's opening, on close inspection, demonstrates that this sense of multiplicity and that attendant confusion of human impulses are its true concerns. A tracking camera introduces us to three women, as it tracks down the dark hallways of the nightclub where they work. In its initial movement from foreground to background, we see the dancer Clo-Clo reflected in a mirror; during the camera's approach, she dances into and then out of our view, as she practices her act before that most revealing of audiences. Suddenly moving to the right, the camera tracks along another dark hall toward an adjacent dressing room in which Kiki Walker and the club's cigarette girl also gaze into mirrors, similarly concerned with the appearances they must present to the public. Through that irregular camera movement, we are thrust immediately into a dark labyrinth, a confusing nighttime world akin to that of *film noir*; the characters there display a marked concern with the image they project to the world, with those appearances which inevitably mask all motivations, and whose maintenance can lead—and soon does—to tragedy. Within this sort of geographic and psychological maze, Lewton's narrative style, employing that fluidly tracking camera to encounter and introduce new characters or to shift randomly from one line of action to another, seems perfectly complementary. The leopard's first victim is introduced, for instance, by that same tracking technique, as the camera follows Clo-Clo from the nightclub and along the dark city streets until she passes the home of Teresa Delgado, who happens to be looking out her window. When Clo-Clo greets her, the camera tracks in to the Delgado home, thereafter following Teresa's actions until she meets her death. The second murder sequence is similarly introduced, this time with Clo-Clo encountering Rosita, Consuelo Contreras' maid, whom the camera then follows back to her mistress to begin her story. In several other instances as well that sort of chance meeting, as if the natural occurrence in

a world characterized by the random nature of events, allows Lewton to switch scenes suddenly or introduce an entirely new line of action. Through that technique he can fully acknowledge the jarring multiplicity of events and character concerns which abound, yet at the same time smooth the transition between them and thus inject an overriding sense of human complicity in all that transpires.

Lewton is hardly content with such a simple, melodramatic line of reasoning and motivation in this film, however. In fact, he carefully establishes multiple layers of motivation, of many causes for every effect, all working together to determine, in a way they can never quite comprehend, his characters' every action. What results is, at first glance, a thoroughly naturalistic narrative, reminiscent of Lewton's novel *No Bed of Her Own* in its detailing of the economic, environmental, and psychological forces moving these people. That economic determinant is clearly enunciated in the first murder sequence, when Teresa Delgado's mother forces her to go to the store for corn meal, lest the neighbors think they are too poor to provide the usual tortillas for her father's dinner. The grocer then tells Teresa to pay him "the next time," that he trusts her because "the poor don't cheat one another. They're all poor together." Although the second murdered girl, Consuelo Contreras, is rich, her boyfriend is not, so she must meet him secretly to avoid her family's disapproval; in this instance, that assignation in the cemetery leads to her death. Those same economic pressures determine the very life-style of Clo-Clo, a nightclub dancer and the third victim. She admits to being a "gold digger," and "why not," she asks, since she must support her mother, brother, and sister. She is therefore always hoping to meet a rich man who might support her, even if it means forgetting about the poor clerk she loves; but one's own feelings do not matter, she says, since "feelings don't buy houses and pay for rent and help bring up kids and buy clothes for them." That attitude indirectly leads to her death, though, for she is killed while looking for the \$100 bill given to her by a wealthy man she meets in the nightclub.

In just a slightly more subtle fashion does the environment seem a controlling force in these events. Lewton's frequently employed "bus" technique underscores this impression, as in a narrative set largely at night, almost every element of the setting—a tumbleweed, passing

train, or even a noisy car—can equally suggest a threatening world, an environment filled with bestial forces like the leopard, ever ready to prey on mankind. In fact, the environment here seems essentially coterminous with that maze-like cemetery where Consuelo is accidentally imprisoned and murdered, the desert arroyos and stark city streets equally as lifeless and menacing.

It is the leopard itself which Lewton employs to link that threatening environment to an element of psychological determinism, to suggest an unrecognized bestial influence within man at work here. In the introductory sequence Kiki announces that when she walks into the nightclub with the leopard she will wear her black dress, since "then I'll be just like him." She is unable to control that leopard, though, because of its great strength and the fact that, as the museum curator Galbraith explains, such animals "are unpredictable; they're like frustrated human beings." From this perspective, Lewton is able to link the cat with an element of the human psyche. When under leash, he suggests, it resembles man repressing his most violent anti-social impulses; once loosed, it is like men such as Galbraith, moved by a savage, inexplicable instinct and free to strike out in dangerously unpredictable ways. When he finally confesses to murdering Consuelo and Clo-Clo, Galbraith reminds us of how uncontrollable those psychological forces can be, even in a scientist like himself; "You don't know what it means to be tormented this way. I didn't want to kill, but I had to," he protests.

The key to threading a labyrinth is, of course, a distance or safe perspective from which one may map its pattern, discern the full figure in the carpet. What Lewton fashions, then, is, on the one hand, a sense of detachment through Jerry and Kiki who pretend to be untouched by the events in which they participate, and on the other, an involvement by immersing the viewers in his plot's convolutions and the basic inexplicability of these tragedies. So as an audience we are never quite granted that distance we seek, one which might impart a sense or meaning to these deaths—although that is itself sufficient commentary on the very inaccessibility of satisfying meaning here. It is a sign of human "smallness," of our inability not only to perceive the larger pattern within which our lives transpire, but also to discern if there is any pattern to be perceived, a single interpretive thread which

might lead out of the labyrinth. The ball precariously balanced atop a column of water in the nightclub's courtyard effectively, if a bit overtly, points up this limitation. Lewton returns to this image several times during the film, and with his usual ironic touch he has Galbraith first explain its significance to Jerry. As Jerry later relates, that ball represents humanity, people like him and Kiki constantly being "pushed around by things bigger than themselves. That's the



way it was with us. Only we were too small to see it that way."

Ignorant of those "forces that move us," we continually seek, individually and collectively, some means of ordering, narratizing, explaining that enigma or safely passing through the labyrinth of life. Jerry and Kiki hope to unravel a mystery, Sheriff Robles to track down a dangerous cat, Clo-Clo to find the rich man who will solve her financial problems. Lewton comments on this very human ordering impulse in two small but disturbing scenes which serve to frame the first murder. As Teresa hesitates to go out into the night, her brother mocks her fear, noting that "It's because of the leopard." At the same time, he uses his hands to cast the silhouette of a cat on the wall—an image effectively juxtaposed in medium shot with Teresa's fright-

ened face. Later, at her funeral, he again amuses himself with his ability to project that fear-filled shadow of the cat on the wall, though now it serves as silent explanation of the cause of his sister's death. By this action Pedro not only "explains" the situation, but also demonstrates how we often try to cope with those things we fear the most, by fashioning games around them, turning them into play—even by projecting them onto the movie screen. In this way we can demystify those fears of the unknown and assert, however tenuously, our control over them. Of course, the very inappropriateness of this bit of play, there in the funeral parlor where Pedro's sister lies, stands out and shocks us. It is so obviously incommensurate with the situation, so out of place—yet pointedly an action performed in innocence of its effect—that it casts an ironic light on the attempts by these characters to sort out, sift meaning from, and assert control over their situation. All explanations seem equally like forms of play when faced with the inescapable fact of pointless death and the presence of that irrational brute force ever there in nature—even in human nature.

The real mystery which *The Leopard Man* explores, therefore, is the most persistent but unfathomable one, that of human life which moves reluctantly yet inexorably toward death. The film climaxes with a fitting image of this concern in the black robed and hooded processionists who, almost blindly, wind their way past the scenes of the previous murders, through those labyrinthine streets and out into the desert surrounding the city. This procession too is "explained" for us as a quaint local custom whose purpose, Galbraith says, "is to remind us of the great tragedy that took place here," the massacre of a peaceful band of Indians by an army of Conquistadores in the seventeenth century. Through the film's ensuing actions, though, that procession is transformed from a simple memorial for the dead. When Galbraith is revealed as the cat murderer, he hides among the marchers, and when Jerry and Raoul, his pursuers, locate him, they too strangely fall in march beside him, all becoming a part of that funereal procession. More than a reminder of some distant historical event, of an inexplicable horror of human action in the past, this winding procession becomes emblematic of an eternal human condition. With this almost allegorical image the detective formula of *Leopard Man* intersects with Lewton's previous horror films, the procession almost literal-

ly describing R. H. W. Dillard's metaphoric interpretation of the latter genre as a "pageantry of death," whose function it is to teach us "an acceptance of the natural order of things" and to help us to cope with a world we "can never hope to understand,"⁸ one in which life and death, meaning and mystery are ever inextricably intertwined.

In keeping with this image, even as the mystery seems solved, the town freed from the murderer's grip, we are plunged further into a world of inexplicable and alarming events. As Galbraith compulsively recounts the details of his murder of Consuelo, Lewton intercuts several close-ups of Raoul's almost wild, staring face—his gleaming eyes recalling those of the leopard shown in close-up during the first murder sequence—as he is moved beyond all self-control by this confession. One of Galbraith's supposedly sane pursuers, Raoul now seems similarly beset by that "fit to kill," a rage which suddenly prompts him to shoot his captive. With this identity between pursued and pursuer asserted, the killer's captor himself becoming a killer, Lewton demonstrates the frightening ease with which one may slip between normalcy and aberrance; in this unexpected, almost unmotivated twist, he forces us to see how tenuous are our attempts to maintain a semblance of order and rationality in the face of unpredictable human nature and a world so given to flux.

With this unsettling resolution, *The Leopard Man* further departs from the sort of narration traditional in tales of detection. A fundamental need of this formula, John Cawelti argues, is for a "fantasy projection of guilt away from the reader" and onto some identified or identifiable culprit within the world of the narrative.⁹ No sooner is Galbraith caught, though, than a measure of that guilt is transferred to Raoul. This can come about because guilt is here such a *universal* state, not admitting of easy assignment. Certainly Jerry and Kiki share the blame for those murders, having unleashed the leopard which, in turn, apparently triggered those murderous instincts previously dormant in Galbraith. It is also Teresa Delgado's mother who locks her out of the house and refuses to open the door, despite

⁸"The Pageantry of Death," in *Focus on the Horror Film*, eds. Roy Huss and T. J. Ross (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 37.

⁹*Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 106-07.

her pleas, when the leopard attacks. Furthermore, Lewton paints Galbraith, like so many of his "villains," as essentially a pathetic figure, not blameless but not truly evil either.¹⁰ In fact, when Kiki tries to trap him into revealing his murderous intentions, by visiting him in the night and offering herself as another possible victim, Galbraith hesitates, fearful of turning off the lights because some part of him recognizes what sort of fall he is prey to in that darkened world. Although Robles throughout the film makes a practice of absolving characters of guilt in the murders, assuring them that it is not their fault, what we nevertheless recognize is how all-inclusive and *unprojectable* the guilt really is. In keeping with his narrative style, Lewton has fashioned a world characterized by a broken teleology, a fall from both moral and logical meaning. The threats this world contains are not simply the random and frightening aberrations from some larger design, but the lack of design, or at least the weakness in man's capacity to project and conscientiously maintain a humane pattern in that confusing environment he inhabits.

Having revealed those disconcerting mazes in which the human psyche can so easily become lost, Lewton attempts to pull back and reassert, however tenuously, some hope or lesson to be learned from this. Jerry and Kiki have continually reminded each other not to "be soft" and blame themselves for what has happened. As Jerry confesses, this attitude was instilled in him by that world in which he grew up: "Where I was brought up you had to be tough. It was a tough neighborhood. I learned it didn't pay to let anybody know how you feel or really think." Faced with a realization of how unreliable that individual detachment is and how vulnerable it makes one, both subscribe to a new code of be-

havior. Kiki comes to admit that she is "tired of pretending that nothing bothers me, that all I care about is myself, myself and my two by four career," and Jerry allows that he is really "a softie" who wants "to do something about all of this." It is a humane response to the horrors they have witnessed, of course, but in that reaction we also see an acknowledgment of and coming to grips with the disparity between their true selves and those deceptive images of "hardness" they have had to cultivate for a world clearly all too prone to deception and misleading appearances.

Between our expectations of the formulaic fictional world and the demands of the film's non-classical structure, the narrative may seem strained at this point, ineffective in its apparently harmonious end. The detective has played his hunch and unravelled the murder mystery; the killer has confessed his guilt and is killed in retribution. However, even as Jerry and Kiki walk off, satisfied with these results and their new understanding of each other, the in-depth photography catches the background scene in the Coroner's Office where Raoul, told he must now stand trial for Galbraith's murder, convulsively breaks down. There is, then, no real ending yet in sight, no true consolation here for the victims' families, no satisfying sense that things have at last been "made right," just a disturbing residue from this terrible sequence of events. By juxtaposing these residual concerns with his two conventional characters who are free to leave this tragic scene, Lewton fashioned a conclusion neither open nor closed, not quite modern but hardly classical in style, and yet one whose very ambiguity perhaps best indicates the sort of innovative perspective he brought to those genre narratives. Most obviously in a film like *The Leopard Man*, we can see him measuring off the potential of narrative against the traditional demands of genre, his own labyrinthine impression of reality against the linear, ordered world audiences of the period still expected to see. It is through this tension that he effectively revealed the leopard in the labyrinth, the mysterious and threatening alter ego of man in modern society, while also pointing the way to a more complex style of genre narrative.

¹⁰We might compare Galbraith's pleading confession to the speeches mouthed by other of Lewton's antagonists, especially by Boris Karloff's character in *The Body Snatcher* and *Bedlam*, to clearly discern his hand in these narratives. In the latter film, Master Sims is captured by the inmates of his asylum and pleads for his life, confessing that he "was frightened . . . of the great world, the great world of this age that gave me my place . . . What that world thinks, I must think; what they do, I must do."

Terrence Doody

READING IS A VISUAL EXPERIENCE

*Both nuns and mothers worship images,
But those the candles light are not as those
That animate a mother's reveries,
But keep a marble or a bronze repose.
And yet they too break hearts - O Presences
That passion, piety, or affection knows,
And that all heavenly glory symbolize -
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise*
-W. B. Yeats

Reading is a visual experience before it is an interpretive act; so, if we look into reading's visual aspects, we can learn something about what we do when we interpret and about what interpretation means to physical experience. We can also inquire, by proposing the issue in these terms, into language's ontology, the relationship words now have to photographs, and the assumptions of literary criticism which has not looked into photography. Finally, we can also develop an answer to the question that freshmen and philistines pose when they think they have us over the barrel of their wit. How, they ask, do you know *this* is poetry? It's poetry, we can say, because it looks like poetry and poetry doesn't look like prose. It is almost as simple as that—unless, of course, we're looking at a prose-poem, which seems to argue by its nature that appearances are never deceiving, just complex.

Prose looks like the model of referentiality. It runs all the way across the page in regular stable lines, which become transparent. Since there is so little of interest to look at on the prose page, prose itself must be there to be seen through. It is the justified right-hand margin that squares prose with the world and suggests the world is as stable and continuous, as easily perceived, as the type.

Of course, this is overstated. There are some important visual elements to prose, but we overlook them so easily we forget how important they are. Indentations and capitals signify beginnings; periods and widows define ends. (Syntax requires the sense of an ending even if modern narrative doesn't.¹) Quotation marks distinguish thought from speech, author from character, and seem too casual to be making

such fundamental, ontological distinctions. Yet, quotation marks also engage us in the debate over the differences between speech and writing, for they are necessary, as all *images* are, only when something absent is being signified—in this case, the speaker himself.² Exclamation points and question marks give this absent speaker an emotional life, an inquiring mind, a tone of voice. Italics make him, make *me*, emphatic.

Since I am a writer at the moment, and present to you visually, italics are enough for me to assert myself. And this effect raises the question of many other, more interesting effects. Where, for instance, do the headlines in the Aeolus chapter of *Ulysses* come from? They give to the pages of the novel the look of journalism, and they are written against the characters' speech about rhetoric. Yet the headlines are not exactly prose, and we see them without hearing them. They are, perhaps, *images* of "writing", heightened by a thicker typeface. Molly Bloom, on the other hand, is not "writing" at all; we hear her eloquently, and the Penelope chapter is simpler to parse and understand if we treat it as interior

¹Against Frank Kermode's famous argument, see Wesley Morris, *Friday's Footprint: Structuralism and the Articulated Text* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1979), pp. 46-83. Lewis Thomas' remarks on punctuation in *The Medusa and the Snail* (New York: The Viking Press, 1979) are also interesting. See pp. 125-29.

²John Berger defines the image-as-absence in *Ways of Seeing*, A Pelican Original (London, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, and New York: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books Limited, 1977), pp. 9-10. Berger also cites Walter Benjamin's classical essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969). Berger, however, is clearer than Benjamin, and shows slides.

monologue and read it out loud. Molly doesn't sound unpunctuated, she just looks that way; and what her look means is that she is built nothing at all like the interrogative structures of the Ithaca chapter or the cinematography of Circe. Our eyes tell us, too, that her last long sentence, which ends with the famous "Yes," begins with "no."³ This is an important transformation to see as she changes her mind and turns her thoughts away from Boylan to Bloom.

Prose without punctuation is not always as "natural" as Molly is, however. In Benjy's section of *The Sound and the Fury*, the absence of punctuation suggests the simultaneous presence of everything in Benjy's disorganized world, which Faulkner once wanted to clarify by coding the levels of Benjy's past in different colored inks. In Garcia Marquez' *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, the huge chapter-long paragraphs suggest a communal consciousness which creates, supports, and depends on the patriarch and the myths and legends which constitute his political being. Moreover, the sentences, which run on and on, seem to be trying to imitate the patriarch's immortality and the national effort to grasp everything *sub specie* his *aeternitatis*. Unlike Molly's speech, Garcia Marquez' indirect discourse looks like an idealization and feels claustrophobic or obsessive. Sentences that never seem to end are not liberating.

Obviously, a lot of experimental modernist writing has made it harder to make distinctions between prose and poetry because prose and poetry have borrowed so much from each other. Prose like Joyce's and Woolf's has again taken on poetry's self-involvement and opacity; poetry like Williams' *Paterson* and Ashbery's "Daffy Duck in Hollywood" has opened itself to include a great deal of the "anti-poetic." Still, today, most poems do not look like prose, for most poems do not take up the whole page. Most poems stop short of the justified right-hand margin and call attention to the device that stops them—the rhyme, the meter, or the syllabic count—which has more to do with the poem itself than with the world it does not refer to. We look, therefore, at poems, not through them; and in looking at them, we seem to hear them better. So, their vocal or auditory values contribute to the intensity of *presence* that poetry seems to have in greater measure than prose. But as soon as we look more closely at the phenom-

enon of a poem's presence, we begin to see that not all rhyme, for instance, is audible. Marianne Moore's rhyme, in a poem like "The Fish," is not. Her stanzas are so visually determined, they seem to dramatize not the music of the words, but a conflict between the hemispheres of the brain, the spatial right against the verbal left, the tension between sight and sound.⁴ Moreover, they are so austere arbitrary they allow her to say anything she wants to, to put beached whales in arithmetic gardens and make this freedom seem like discipline. Her example in particular encourages us to notice that there are many other strictly-written poems that make their formal point only to the eye. A surprising but unavoidable example is the "Author's Prologue" to Dylan Thomas' *Collected Poems*. It is 102 lines long: at the center, lines 51 and 52 rhyme "farms" and "arms"; lines 50 and 53 rhyme "asleep" and "keep"; but we cannot hear the rhyme. In fact, only our eye knows that all the rhymes keep backing away from each other in perfect step, so that lines 1 and 102 eventually rhyme on "now."

The prosody of the English and American languages is hard to regulate, and discussions of it are generally mystifying.⁵ I would guess, however, that we hear in poetry less than we think we do. Alliteration is usually audible—initial consonants are "beaded bubbles winking at the brim"—but consonance is not so easy; and the assonance of short vowels in complex patterns is available mostly to the eye. For instance, how much of this lyric from *Paterson* would you "hear" at a reading?

Without invention nothing is well spaced,
unless the mind change, unless
the stars are new measured, according
to their relative positions, the
line will not change, the necessity
will not matriculate; unless there is
a new mind there cannot be a new
line, the old will go on
repeating itself with recurring
deadliness: without invention
nothing lies under the witch-hazel
bush, the alder does not grow from among

⁴This insight came first, in class, from Laurie Adams.

⁵For a thoroughly demystifying, and therefore complex, discussion of these matters of prosody, see John Hollander's *Vision and Resonance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), especially the first and final chapters, entitled "The Poem in the Ear" and "The Poem in the Eye."

³James Joyce, *Ulysses*, A Vintage Book (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 776.

the hummocks margining the all
 but spent channel of the old swale,
 the small foot-prints
 of the mice under the overhanging
 tufts of the bunch-grass will not
 appear: without invention the line
 will never again take on its ancient
 divisions when the word, a supple word,
 lived in it, crumbled now to chalk.

What seems most audible are the echoes of Canto XLV, but what is more important to the lyric's meaning is the extended play of long against short vowels, "change" against "chalk." In my own experience, it has always been easier to "hear" a song for the first time on the radio than to "hear" a poet reading new work. A poetry reading offers many pleasures, but its very nature seems more theatrical than "poetic" and its utility, therefore, Dionysian and political.

The technology that has influenced modern poetry most profoundly is not, therefore, the microphone or the phonograph record, but the photograph. Hugh Kenner has some wonderful observations on the importance of the typewriter to modern poetry, and it is easy to see the truth of his insight—in Pound's spacing, in Williams' variable foot, in Marianne Moore's stanzas for the eye.⁶ It is also easy to multiply other examples: from the tricks of e e cummings, to Charles Olson's typographic "fields," to the dialect in Berryman's *Dream Songs*; and from these, to bring new perspectives to the appositional colons in A. R. Ammons' long poem *Sphere*, the iron uniformity of each page of Lowell's *History*, and the elegance of John Hollander's emblematic poems in *Types of Shape*. But it is the photograph, nonetheless, which has had the greatest effect, for the simple reason that photography has been the most important and influential aesthetic form of the century. We can see by now how much more like photography than the Chinese ideogram the aesthetics of the Image was, with its aspirations of anonymity, objectivity, artlessness, and silence; we can also see how the presence of so many thousands of photographs

in our daily experience has probably fostered in all of us an unprecedented tolerance for fragments. And by now it also seems true that photography's ubiquitous stare has created a new context in which to discuss the ontology of signs and the way we read and think about all of literature, not just Imagism. Marshall McLuhan has argued that movable type created the context we read in; but for us in 1981, who have always been used to type, photographs are more important and problematic. They are themselves present as real things, they are also always images of the absent; and as Susan Sontag says:

... print seems a less treacherous form of leaching out the world, of turning it into a mental object, than photographic images, which provide most of the knowledge people have about the look of the past and the reach of the present. What is written about a person or an event is frankly an interpretation, as are handmade visual statements, like paintings and drawings. Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.⁷

Reading, therefore, is a visual experience in obvious ways as well as in the ways influenced by photographs which may be not so obvious. And as photography has increased our comfort among fragments, it has also fostered our ease in making these fragments *idealizations*: not merely the advertising ideals of physical beauty and portable property, but the idealization of all of experience to which photographs casually deny the truth of time, of context and continuity, that the last great, new, dominant aesthetic form, the Novel, taught us to believe in.⁸ Every photograph is still, perhaps, a Grecian urn: a real thing in time and an artifact that seems eternal; and, therefore, a small system of interpretation that plays diachrony off against synchrony. In this way, perhaps, photography has encouraged us to read the printed page as an image too: not as language moving through our minds and time, but as a static iconography of signs, out of all

⁶See Hugh Kenner *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 76-93, especially. Lewis Simpson quotes a remarkable letter from Kenner on Williams in *Three on the Tower* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc. 1975), p. 305. And Kenner's discussion of Moore, "Disliking It," in *A Homemade World* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1975), is interesting and important.

⁷Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 4.

⁸In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger is especially good on the idealization of beauty and property. Sontag says, explicitly, there can be no understanding of anything without the temporal function of narration. See p. 23.

context but itself. This effect is exactly what Roland Barthes achieves with the visual pun of his title *S/Z*.

Contemporary criticism talks a lot about the "act of reading" when it really means the act of thinking about reading—the idealization of the page. Hermeneutics has no interest in the reader's real body in time because the act of reading, the actual experience of reading—with all it has to account for in terms of your mood or comfort—are you alone, or distracted? listening to music? have you read this before? are you going to teach it?—is much more complex than even interpretation.⁹ Interpretation is a refinement of the reading experience, in the way that a photograph is a refinement of context or scene. Both involve a deliberate act of repression or denial in order to affirm something apparently purer: meaning rather than experience, the ideal rather than the real, the absent rather than the present, the mind rather than the body. And when you idealize any page, you can idealize every page and create that system of simultaneous presences we now call *texts*. Reading *texts* is not a visual experience. It is not even like reading a book. It is having ideas about relationships.

Jacques Derrida, therefore, seems to be right in a powerful and important way when he argues that writing is only "writing," a trace of something absent. And we are forced to recognize as we read a page of *Middlemarch* and feel George Eliot's insistent, hectoring presence that we are not really having a visual experience, but a religious experience. For it takes a great act of faith to believe we hear her tone, her voice.

Unless, of course, Derrida is wrong. Or oversimple in the sense that what may be linguistically, structurally, ideally true is not historically or experientially true. For if we take seriously the notion that reading is a visual experience, we must also admit we have been reading signs of absence, *images*, like quotation marks, without much problem for our whole reading life. And we have accepted these signs as the only

⁹See Walter J. Slatoff, *With Respect to Readers* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1970). When Stanley Fish attacks Slatoff in a long footnote at the end of *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972), Fish reveals very clearly that he himself is never talking about reading, but about thinking about reading. See pp. 426–27. Fish can think very fast, but apparently he reads very slowly. This should be of interest to freshmen and philistines, too, because so many of them think they fail to get the meaning of the poem because they read so slowly. They probably also enjoy *ejaculatio praecox*.

form of visual embodiment language can take. And in doing so, we have also accepted a situation of discontinuity, of systematic absence, so preposterous we have almost forgotten its enormity. This system is the alphabet. "The phonetic alphabet," Marshall McLuhan says,

is a unique technology. There have been many kinds of writing, pictographic and syllabic, but there is only one phonetic alphabet in which semantically meaningless letters are used to correspond to semantically meaningless sounds. The stark division and parallelism between a visual and auditory world was both crude and ruthless, culturally speaking.¹⁰

McLuhan takes Saussure one step further: not only are signifier and signified arbitrarily joined; for the purposes of written recording, they are dependent on another system even more arbitrary, which further divides the reader's body against itself—ear against eye, hand against brain. Yet when we also realize that our alphabet is not simply ours, but that it can express all there is to say in French and Swedish too, we have to recognize as well that the free-play literary interpretation now celebrates is like child's play and the languages of criticism are even less than local dialects.

The ontology of language is difficult to define. We don't seem to want to, however, because language has become the most exciting and complex thing we can talk about. And language's old and maybe scandalous failure to live up to the thick certainty of sculpture or painting now seems an irrelevant problem because the technology of mass production, in general, and the art and technology of photography, in particular, have altered the relationship between the original and the replica: they have changed our ideas of ontology, and our understanding of written language has benefited from the change. A manuscript page of *Ulysses* may be a valuable relic or fetish; but it has no more significance as prose or as art than any of its thousands of accurate reproductions. A picture of Chartres, however, has nothing essential in common with Chartres at all. A picture of Chartres is more like quoting Joyce on a picture postcard of himself and mailing it to a friend who couldn't come to Ireland. It all spells absence.

¹⁰Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media, A Signet Book* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1966), p. 86.

Language cannot be reified, so its ontology can never be firm, but *words* themselves are things in much the same way photographs are, for both are images of something absent. But, as Susan Sontag suggests, the presence of photography in our lives has made the written word seem more stable and less deceptive than ever. From manuscript, to typescript, to Xerox copy, to proof, to the pages of this journal is a transformation much stabler than, say, the transformation of written song lyrics you hear from two different singers, one now dead, on a car radio and a concert stage. Or from the dead singer taped before his death for an appearance on *Saturday Night Live* where, visually, you wouldn't know the difference.

Because reading is a visual experience, it is a physical experience, as working a camera is. Reading is something we do in the world among positive objects, like the chair, the desk, the typewriter. And most words are, for most of us readers, more stable now as things, more regular and prosaic, more governable, because they have been confirmed by the *images* of words in writing—on billboards, in ads, in novels, on the sides of buses, in anthologies of oral poems their authors never "wrote." Words, written, have always been images, have always been signs of some *thing's* absence. Yet nothing whatsoever in our experience has ever been presented to us without an absence suggested in the presentation: this thing is always *not* that thing; and nothing really happens outside the context of *other* things. For readers like us in 1981, who have now had thirty years' experience of television, absence is no big deal—as Johnny Carson can tell you three or four nights a week. And this has been, for most of us, no cognitive crisis. In making another point altogether, Joyce Carol Oates has said: "The serious writer restructures 'reality' in the service of his or her art, and surely hopes for a unique esthetic vision and some felicity of language; but reality is always the foundation, just as the alphabet, in whatever motley splendor, is the foundation of *Finnegan's Wake*."¹¹ *Finnegans Wake* is, among other things, a book about the confluence of different languages through the same orthographical locks: it is a book about spelling, and the way spelling strikes the eye and ear. It insists that reading is,

first, a visual experience because the prose of *Finnegans Wake* is as transparent as brick. Recent critics would call Oates naive for her faith in the "reality" of the alphabet, but most writers and artists wouldn't. As Picasso and Braque have used letters, words, and typeface as elements in *collage*, words have acquired the ontological status of chairs and guitars. Whatever meaning the word may acquire, its physical presence is always visible, hard, authentic. In fact, the word has become so visually indispensable that Calvin Tomkins can say of the Guggenheim Museum's recent show, "19 Artists—Emergent Americans":

The most striking common characteristic of the works in the show was the use of writing—numbers, letters, words, sentences, paragraphs,—in the work of eight of the artists. Language has been seeping into art since the early days of the century, of course, and more than ever during the last ten years. But eight out of nineteen? . . . Vernon Fisher . . . superimposes so much prose on his images that he might be suspected of being an emergent novelist. Writers do not expect their prose to be admired visually. A lot of artists seem to want their pictures to be read, though, which doesn't seem quite fair.¹²

On the evidence of *Ulysses*, Joyce did want his prose to be admired, or at least heeded, visually; and on the strength of his constant attention to his books' production, so does John Updike.¹³ And so, perhaps, does every author who allows a picture on the dustjacket. At the very least, the picture gives the book's voice a visual embodiment, and it is important to know that Truman Capote does not resemble James Jones, that Thomas Pynchon prefers invisibility. But painters who want to be read are no anomaly. The world itself wants reading. But before we read signs, we must see things, and the book in our hands must be seen to be interpreted.

¹²Calvin Tomkins, "The Art World: Three Salons," *The New Yorker*, April 13, 1981, pp. 112-116. The quotation is from p. 114.

¹³See John Updike, *Picked-Up Pieces*, "One Big Interview," (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 517. You may also be interested in my article, "Updike's Idea of Reification," *Contemporary Literature*, Spring 1979, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 204-220.

¹¹Joyce Carol Oates, "Why is Your Writing So Violent?," *New York Times Book Review*, March 29, 1981, p. 35.

Nielsen Dinwoodie

SEVEN DAYS IN MOGLOS,
CRETE

1

There are no public statues in Moglos.
In the square, a pumping well,
a cold water tap.

The houses are made of stone.
There are two taverna cum general store,
one hotel for visitors

from nearby Agios Nikolaos.
Behind, the hills have lush green trees
which somehow grow on white earth,

scorched, like the road,
until night when it is cool,
and dangerously steep in pitch blackness.

2

Truth and beauty is
a desirable combination—also,
quite demanding. We

break off for breakfast, and,
avoiding the leaf-fringed taverna
with the vine-entangled terrace bursting
full of Mercedes Benz,

choose the taverna by the quay,
where fish are being packed
into wooden fish boxes

by strong young men with curly hair.
Speedily and rhythmically they
are stamping the boxes HERAKLION,
modern-day capital of Crete.

3

One other tourist here, a fair-skinned
Irishman, bemoans the lack of cheese.

"Cheese," he keeps saying, in a voice
as soft as cheese. To which the small hotelier

smiles and nods his head:
there is no cheese in Moglos.

4

Constancy gives birth to definition.
So, midday, in the square, I sit
to watch the women, identical in black:

and, in black, in the baking heat
of the square, what describes them,
labouring, to and fro, is

of stoical resolve. They pass,
hunched: purpose undisclosed, other than
that they carry, midday, in public,

the strength of symbols which are known.
But singly—
as each bereavement must have come—

in black, how do they survive this heat?

Chestnuts, fruit once picked going rotten,
springs too easily to mind.

In fact, they spend most of the day indoors.

Avril Sharpe's *Grecian Cookery Explored*
describes them as excellent cooks.

5

Floating on the blue of the silent bay, old
Mediterranean, arms, legs, outstretched
and hotter than bronze, as the sun beats
down onto monstrous red seaweeds, swaying
underneath, their labyrinthine passages,
my daydream is broken
by a grinding of gears—the butcher-meat van,
around the cliff, has brought Tuesday's supplies.

6

The chapel caretaker is Georgio,
aged 53, husband of the fishwife whose
two sons are soon to depart for Athens
to be apprentices in light industry.
Georgio's sister has been resident there
these past fourteen years.
After a dinner of squid (*calemara*,
not to be confused with good morning,
calemera) I like awake trying to work out
where I got this information from,
and if it is true.

Floating on the blue of the silent bay, waiting
 for the chug of the fishing boats,
 arms, legs, outstretched in perfect cruciform
 plan—the beating heat of the sun become
 hot golden rivets—I begin to ponder, inevitably
 I suppose, the likelihood of not returning home.

Aphorisms bubble to the surface, each
 involving a dazzling use of the verb “to live.”
 And the legend of the lotus-flower beckons,
 with its appeal—that tempting and mysterious fruit
 which kept men deliriously happy,
 unable to leave a foreign land. . . .
 But how could I avoid the worried letters
 from friends, telling me what I already know?
 (Also, the lotus, *cordia myxa*,
 was a type of sour plum.)

In the road-top village behind the hill
 this morning for the Heraklion bus, we stood
 while a group of children, leaning

over their balcony, amused themselves
 by throwing us figs. Sign language again
 to say thank you: we pretend to munch

the thick flesh. Except that when we shouted
 “Thank you” a new game began. They darted
 back through beaded curtains into a kitchen,

and brought more figs, more figs—to hear us shout?
 “Very many thanks, we appreciate greatly
 your bountiful gifts of succulent fruit. . . .”
 Much laughter from all sides, and more figs.

Tomorrow the famous site of Knossos,
 the palace of King Minos which was
 excavated by Sir Arthur Evans in 1901.

Tommaso Landolfi

THE CRYPTOGRAM
Translated by Lawrence Venuti

The old man closed the book, removed his glasses, and remained gazing into the air. The door turned noiselessly on its hinges; a matron appeared, dressed entirely in black.

"There is someone here."

"Someone? Who is it, dear sister?"

"He didn't say."

"You could have asked him."

"He didn't say," repeated the woman, slightly impatient.

"Well, show him in," concluded the old man with a sigh.

A man entered, still young, wearing elegant clothing. He bowed ceremoniously and took a seat in the armchair which the old man, rising to receive him, indicated.

"Do I have the honor," he asked, "of speaking with the celebrated Professor***?" And having gotten a modest nod of assent, he continued: "The one who for a long time meritoriously held a special chair in our university? The man, furthermore, who dared to challenge the entire world in his day, publicly declaring himself ready to decode whatever cryptogram might have been submitted to him, and who won the wager without one failure? . . ."

"Yes, indeed, sir, I am that man . . . or was," interrupted the other, more annoyed than embarrassed by so much praise.

"In a word, are you that man who professes to be a specialist of the game?"

"I was, at least, if I can assert it without modesty. But permit me to ask you in turn with whom I have the honor of speaking."

"My name would mean nothing to you, or else you yourself will fathom it in due course; in any case, it is entirely secondary."

"I understand." The old man smiled. "You are not my first visitor who, as it appears, wishes to avail himself of a certain mystery. As you like. Now tell me what brings you here."

"I must explain," began the man, "that on our property stood an ancient and uninhabited country house, of doubtful purpose. Just as it looked, nearly bare of furnishings, it alone was

the scene of my childhood games with my prematurely dead younger brother, since our family lived in the ancestral residence on the central street. Having become an adult, I no longer had occasion to visit the building in question; I have, however, done so recently, after the entire district had undergone a furious bombardment by the French during the last war. Those old walls used to appear, and still do appear, demolished to a large extent, or gutted, where they are still standing; and, to come to the point, they have brought to light a sort of trench between two wings, of which I was ignorant. More plainly, the walls of a room revealed what is called a false partition. Well, it was while I idly walked along this narrow passage, between the barely rough-cast interior walls, that my eye fell on . . ."

"Finally," the old man exclaimed at this point. "Now I know with whom I have the honor: the last Marquis of Z."

The other man nodded in agreement.

"Now continue: on what did your eye fall?"

"On a deceptive patch in the rough-casting: which, that is to say, appeared in one spot, at almost a man's height, more fresh and even less firm, as if it hid a hastily covered hole. When I tested the mortar with a hammer, it crumbled away, discovering indeed a shallow recess."

"And in this hole?" encouraged the old man, moderately interested.

"In the hole . . . here, take it," concluded the visitor, pulling out and offering a small roll of parchment.

"What is it?"

"I don't know: something indecipherable. It is your affair."

"Hand it over here; let's take a look."

The old man put his glasses on again and, since the writing was minute, provided himself with a magnifying glass; then he plunged into an examination of the parchment, while the Marquis remained silent. Finally, he said:

"It will not be easy, assuming it is possible."

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"The Cryptogram" was first published in *Le labrene* in 1974.

"Eh, whay do you mean" protested Z. "You, of course . . ."

"At the time of my youthful exploits, you may deign to recall, I made a commitment to decode within twenty-four hours any cryptogram whatsoever—provided it had a fixed key. I never spoke of cryptograms with a variable key; indeed, I specifically excluded them from the contest. This seems to be precisely of the second type, if it is not something even more arduous."

"What now?"

"Now . . . I shall do my best, and perhaps in time I shall unravel it."

"In time!"

"Yes. And meanwhile, since the accessory circumstances have their importance in cases of this kind, try to tell me briefly about everything that seems to you to be connected with your find."

"But what more would I have to tell you?"

"For example, to what, in your opinion, does this message refer?"

"I am here in order to understand it."

"To what end? I mean, you must still have some expectations."

"Well, yes," Z. admitted, "I am tempted to believe that it deals with a signal."

"A signal for what?"

"For a treasure."

"What makes you think that?"

"The fact that my grandfather and my father (I don't know about our more remote ancestors) each found a treasure, although not a very considerable one, and in each case, it was announced by more or less mysterious writings; from which I have gotten the idea that endowing descendants in such extraordinary ways may be a tradition in my family. And, what the hell, do I have to be the only one not to find anything?"

"Ah, Marquis," observed the old man, "I am afraid you are given to fantasies; I ask you for concrete circumstances, and I see that I cannot expect them from you. So there is nothing left for you to do except wait for me to brood over this document: assuming that I arrive at some sort of result, I shall give you a call, or rather beg you to come. I can tell you nothing more at present."

Z. rose with a sigh and prepared to leave. But having reached the door, he turned back. "What do I owe you for your trouble?"

"Don't worry; we shall not quarrel. Granted that you have your hands on your treasure, you will give me, I hope, a small portion of it." Then changing his tone, he continued: "It is I who ought to be grateful to you: this business carries

me back to my lost youth."

A few weeks passed before Z., having waited in vain for the old man's summons, decided to call on him again. When he did so, the former spread his arms in a gesture of impotence:

"Sir, I am sorry," he said, "it is useless to rush me: I cannot solve your cryptogram, no matter how much study and diligence I apply to it. You need to be patient."

Z. obtained more or less the same response a month later, and then three months later; until he finally lost hope and stopped his visits. But after half a year had passed, the old man got in touch and sent for him.

"Marquis," he began gravely, "sit and endeavor to follow me. . . . Here, this is the document which it pleased you to submit to my investigation: glance over it carefully once more."

The cryptogram was composed thus:

o u s a m q r e t
t e i o o i s o y
l e t e o a r m m

"Well then," resumed the old man after a moment, "What does it say to you?"

"Nothing at all, as you already know."

"See then, see!" continued the other, growing excited. "Yesterday it still said nothing at all to me too. In other words, it looked like a typical indecipherable cryptogram: a cryptogram not even with a variable key, but simply without any key; the fruit or offspring of caprice; one destined, as they say, to carry its secret to the grave."

"... Until yesterday, I seem to have heard: from yesterday to today, then, what new fact arose?"

"No new fact, you can be sure; what has rather happened is that my thoughts have taken the right turn, or I am deceived."

"Well?"

"In similar cases, you know, the last or remaining hope of decoding resides in the study of the extrinsic circumstances: that is to say, not at all in analysis of the text, but in historical criticism. I therefore had too few elements at my disposal: that in your family there was the singular habit (or perhaps necessity) of indicating the presence of some deposit in some place by means of encoded writing; and that probably the message was drawn up in Italian. . . . Not

much, is there? For many months, as a matter of fact, I did not derive any light whatsoever from these details."

"And so?" Z. asked. "What led you to the solution of the enigma?"

"Solution, you say! I have not mentioned any solution; or rather, yes, there is one, but it is only probable. It may even be highly probable, but of course not certain, given the circumstances."

"My God, sir, you amuse yourself by exciting my curiosity. Let us hear this solution or translation or transliteration, allowing for every possible reservation."

"If you," said the old man, avoiding the request, "if you had to compose an encoded message such that no one could ever understand it, what would you use, what would you do?"

"Well," replied Z., after having considered it a little, "in such a case I believe I would draw the letters of the document randomly and arrange them on the page in the order indicated by the random drawing. This would doubtless be enough to discourage every future inquirer and render the message indecipherable for all time."

"This is what your ancestor, or whoever put this parchment in the hole, ingenuously believed."

"Ingenuously?"

"The best arrangement would certainly have been the one in which a finite and generally very limited number of messages were not in fact reconstructable from the letters drawn at random, in whatever manner and however much jumbled; a number which could keep to the unit, in the case of brief writings, or finally coincide with it."

"Pardon me . . . I don't fully understand."

"Consider, above all, the actual brevity of our cryptogram. It is composed of only twenty-seven signs or letters. Now, combining these signs in different ways, we would obtain a small number of Italian sentences: of which, nevertheless, some would have to be discarded because manifestly absurd, others because lacking in complete sense, and so on; until, when the process is finished, only a single plausible sentence will remain."

"And what is this sentence?"

"Wait, damnit! . . . Plausible does not mean certain, neither with respect to the solution nor its possible interpretation."

"Why is that?"

"Why is what?"

"The interpretation aside, why is it that the solution is uncertain?"

"Because of two categories of facts. First: as far as I know, the message could have been drawn up in one of the hundred or thousand, living or dead languages unknown to me; second, nothing entitles us to conclude that the author of the message seriously intended to achieve a complete meaning, which is to say his communication may be defective or fragmented from the beginning."

"Oh enough!" exclaimed Z. "All right, I give you credit for everything, and I excuse you for every possible error at the start; but finally put aside the reservations and tell me frankly the sentence you have reached with so much diligence."

"I have transcribed it for you on this paper," replied the old man with simplicity.

Z. took the paper and read:

*Amo Myrta e questo è il mio tesoro.**

"What does that mean?" asked Z., disappointed after having repeatedly skimmed the singular message. "Sir! I entrust you with the decoding of a document destined to make me the possessor of a treasure, and you render me a gallant little sentence in which the treasure is merely a trope?" he added with grim humor.

"You are right," said the other meekly, "but perhaps you ask too much of me . . . or too little. In any case, I am well aware that I owe you some sort of explanation, at least to justify my results. In other words, I will have to help you, within my power, to interpret this message."

"Indeed, I beg you to do so."

"But you will have to help me on your part . . . Come now, to begin with, who is, or better was, Myrta?"

"I do not know."

"Think about it carefully."

"Myrta is a recurrent, hereditary name in a certain family in the city: this is all I can say about it."

"So there is no objection to the idea that your ancestor might have been in love with a Myrta?"

"No, I don't believe so."

"Then your ancestor was enamored of this Myrta?"

"The transition is not so smooth."

"Naturally: we must proceed by conjecture."

"Granted, for the sake of argument. But his would still not explain why he felt the need to

*I love Myrta and this is my treasure. [Translator's note]

declare his infatuation to his descendants with so much mystery; or rather the need not to declare it at all, considering he concealed the message in a place which was, so to speak, inaccessible: a passage in a wall that was definitely closed and that nothing, except for the unforeseen French shells, could have brought to light again."

"Calm down, Marquis, I have an answer ready. First, however, I must caution you and repeat that, if the decoding is uncertain, the explanation will be even more uncertain: everything I am about to tell you could be, after all, nothing more than my imagination."

"Go ahead."

"Back rather, for the moment. Has your family maintained its first splendor in every period?"

"You ask me whether . . .? Oh no, no!" Z. nearly shouted. "About two centuries ago, during a local uprising, a member of my family was taken hostage: the payment of the exorbitant ransom impoverished us greatly. In consequence . . ."

"Stop there. The document under examination dates back precisely to about two centuries ago, as one can gather from the peculiarity of the handwriting. Is it imaginable, therefore, that the author might have been a man who was very nearly indigent?"

"By Jove! Imagine it," confirmed Z., "and you will not be far from the truth."

"And—excuse the effrontery—you yourself?"

"Do you mean to say, what is my condition? You did not permit me to finish just now: I would have declared it to you plainly. In consequence, I meant to say, the family recovered somewhat; but, later still, through the harsh passage of time, it once again fell to a low state; and finally today, save a few outward appearances, there is no one in the world poorer than me."

"Fine. Let us start with you, then, and leave your ancestor for now: will you bequeath a treasure or the relevant directions to your descendants?"

"I have no descendants."

"If or when you had any?"

"I would then have nothing to bequeath or direct."

"True. All the same, would you resign yourself to remaining unknown to your own flesh and blood, bequeathing them nothing, not even directions? Would you, moreover, resign yourself to interrupting the custom of your forefathers?"

"I don't know what I would do," said Z., struck by the implications of his interlocutor's questions. "I could perhaps strive, in the absence of a real treasure, to distill the essence of my bitter worldly experience for the use of those imaginary descendants."

"In any event, you would not refrain from leaving something? You would not refrain, although without descendants? In other words, you would and you will obey a sort of automatism effected by family traditions?"

"Mmm . . . I don't know; perhaps."

"But on the other hand will you be fully aware of the uselessness of such a process, and will you consequently try to secrete your bequest in a place . . . yes, exactly, in an inaccessible place?"

"Come now! I clearly see where you are heading," Z. answered with a trace of impatience, but more and more perplexed and disappointed, he did not answer confidently. "In short, as far as I'm concerned, this is nothing more nor less than a gibe at the losses I have incurred through my illustrious ancestor: nothing is gained from this line of investigation."

"Ah, do not be unjust," the other replied spiritedly. "There is no gibe, no sneer at anyone's losses, as the very circumstances of the discovery bear witness. Speaking in the absolute sense, then, the poor fellow did bequeath you something."

"A gallant confession!"

"But with a treasure," smiled the old man.

"A figurative treasure."

"Merely? Merely figurative?"

"Doubtless, my God. I do not understand your inquiry: what would you want me to make of it, of *his* treasure?"

But suddenly at that moment the matron who appeared at first quietly came back and announced:

"Supper will be ready soon."

"Sister, go and have something by yourself," the old man hurled at her with unexpected harshness, "we are having an important discussion which we would not want interrupted again."

"You see, Marquis, the long practice of my modest activity has convinced me of one thing."

"Of what, sir?"

"That nothing happens by chance."

"I congratulate you: your faith in an ordering intelligence is no doubt a great comfort."

" . . . You will allow me, therefore, to attempt an experiment. I would like to try, that is, to

establish a precise relationship between you and the message that has come into your hands *by chance*; I do not know whether I shall achieve it."

"I am at your command."

"Can I interrogate you without restraint?"

"Certainly: I no longer have anything to lose."

"You will then have something to gain."

"You are a shrewd talker, but unfortunately my general condition does not permit me to be hopeful."

"One never knows . . . Tell me: why did you want a treasure?"

"Oh that's a fine question! It seems to me I have already made clear that I am poor as a church mouse."

"Nevertheless, your response, as far as I can understand, was merely a figure of speech: your poverty is not extreme, nor particularly troublesome; it is such only if compared to a past opulence."

"Ha, I admit it."

"Nor, on the other hand, are you the man you claim to be: greedy for material goods and incapable of enduring a few privations with dignity. So I repeat: for what purpose would a treasure have served you?"

Z. was silent for a moment, with the doubtful air of one who feels surprised in his secret; at last he murmured:

"Sir, it is as if you read my heart. I confess, it is not for vulgar ambition or desire of riches or aristocratic vainglory that I longed to ransom myself from my poverty."

"Why, then?"

The interrogated man hesitated a little, then seemed to gather strength and began again:

"You wish to know, and I shall surrender to you my now threadbare secret: I am in love, sir!"

"In love?" said the other, not surprised, nodding in agreement as if to an expected reply. "Yet this, by your leave, still does not account for anything . . . Are you loved in return?"

"No!" Z. blurted out, no longer controlling himself.

"I could have sworn it. But what is the relation between your longing for treasure and your unhappy love?"

"Do you not see it?"

"I do indeed, but I desire you yourself to inform me of it."

"Well . . . I planned to conquer my beloved's reluctance with the power of gold."

"Oh blasphemer! Oh apostate of love!" ex-

claimed the old man facetiously.

"I did not have . . . I could not conceive of any other means."

"Silence, Marquis, under pain of being accused before all Olympus, or rather before the least exacting court of love."

"Moreover . . ."

"Who is this lady, your beloved?"

"A married woman."

"Doesn't she love her husband much?"

"On the contrary, very much."

"And would you demand . . ."

"I demand nothing: I am in despair, that's all."

"What is your supreme aspiration?"

"To be requited by her."

"Through the power of gold."

"For want of a better means."

"A dream, in the least sad construction."

"Yes," admitted Z., almost sobbing, "It is a dream, a vain dream of happiness."

"Another thing: what, in your words, is the greatest fortune that can befall a human creature?"

"Ah, what does it matter? Does now seem to you like the time for syllogizing?"

"No, I beg you, reply."

"My God, to be loved: it is obvious."

"No!" the old man shot back with sudden vehemence. Then more calmly he said: "no, sir, a thousand times no. What you have proposed is certainly a grand fortune, but there is another which surpasses it a great deal, as much as good surpasses evil, genius ignorance, generosity avarice, or, in fact, love hate. Would you like to know about this fortune of fortunes?"

Z. nodded, but as one who considers every possible explanation inadequate and only pays attention so as not to appear discourteous; and the old man continued.

"Such as you see me, sir, I too have been young and in love; in short, I too—observe the workings of chance—have loved without hope. Like your lady, mine was, if not already married, promised to another and heedless of me; I shall not tell you what terrible depression, what anguish and cruel disappointments I suffered, nor to what dire thoughts I was finally prey. For me, that love had become something exclusive, consuming, even delirious: a life not illuminated by my lady's smile, not shared with her in a common destiny, did not seem worth living to me;

nothing else, nothing the senses, heart and mind put within my reach delighted me . . . One night, when my anguish had become more intense and the horizon of my soul more gloomy, I planned to kill myself: in fact, a poisonous draught was already before me, when nature came to my aid and sent me a brief oblivion, a short sleep.

"Very short: I nodded off, hearing the grating of the crickets from the garden and the persistent amorous call of a distant owl; and I heard these very sounds now. Nothing seemed changed about me, and nothing had been, as a matter of fact: not about but inside me had been turned round, the sky had revolved. From above, where malign stars watched a moment ago, there now rained a salutary power, a beneficial calm, an amazing peace; in place of my scarcely passed agitation, of my furious and desperate yearning, I now experienced a pleasant feeling, although equally strong, which was nourished by itself and content with itself . . . Will you be able to understand me, Marquis? Through the intercession of some heavenly champion, I was at that point aware of the highest truth that the human soul can reach: I discovered with inexpressible joy that happiness lies not in being loved, but in loving. 'Let her love you or not: do you love her?' I asked myself. And I answered that I loved her with all my strength, and I added that this is the most precious of gifts, the most precious *treasure*. 'Because,' I argued, 'if she loved you in return, your love would in fact have been subject to the corruption which threatens and assails all that is human; whereas when you alone love, your feeling and image of her have to remain pure, uncontaminated by earthly disease; and at the same time, your soul, beyond the vulgar contest of desire for the beloved object, will be able to preserve it in an immortal beauty. . . .'

"And more: I well understand how much such arguments, in fact the very need to argue, may seem inadequate: it is not for such reasons that what I assert is right, but for others, much more true. . . . And what are they? Ah, I am ignorant of them; I know only that love, not possession, is necessary to the soul. To love is its first, unique condition; love is its natural state!"

The old man stopped suddenly and with a timid smile raised his eyes toward his interlocutor who, pale and speechless, looked at him attentively.

"Pardon my too long, too ingenuous speech," resumed the old man. "Returning now to the

question which concerns us, you see, then, if my deductions are correct, what your ancestor's intention might have been. I shall summarize everything for you simply. A family tradition obliged him to leave a treasure to his descendants; but (according to the records, and as happens to you today) he did not have any treasures at his disposal; yet he wanted at least to acquaint one of his descendants, in place of a treasure, with his singular, his exalted discovery: which is my own (the wording of the message is unequivocal). I said one of his descendants intentionally then: who, in fact? Naturally, some highly unlikely person who might have been in a position to pick up the communication, or rather one who found himself, through natural inclination or sentiment or circumstances, in a situation to benefit from it. Someone so unlikely that your ancestor need not take him into account and could leave the task of locating him to a miracle (which explains why the message was hidden in an inaccessible place). . . . Between us, your ancestor must have been an imaginative man, one of our own breed; he must have conceded to so-called chance, to predestination, to the secret kinship that sometimes unites human creatures across the abyss of time. . . .

"Well then, let me not digress. I ask you, has he succeeded in his possibly unconscious or unconfessed intent? Speak: the answer is up to you now, no longer to me, I who have exhausted my weak insights."

But Z., although he seemed moved, still remained silent.

"Come now," exclaimed the other man, "permit me to recall your earlier affirmation. You declared that you would like to conquer your cruel fair's reluctance with the power of gold. Now, supposing that this is possible and supposing, too, that all I have been telling you until now was nonsense, what victory would have been yours? Consider it a moment: in what earthly esteem, if not at first, then in the long run, would you hold a woman won by gold? And what future of distaste, tedium, even contempt of your companion would you be preparing? What bitterness, what ignominy, what shame would you have spared yourself? And supposing, finally, that your gold might have aroused, by some incredible consequence, genuine sentiment in her, would you be able to rest content with this, knowing its origin? And if you could, would such love not be a fire and a tempest which rushes into your soul, upsetting

it and, who knows, expelling its first light, that is, your own love? Believe me, the soul does not thrive on another's love, but rather on its own, consubstantial love! . . . Excuse me, I return to my favorite ideas and my pompous phrases. . . . Excuse me. And so?"

Senectus loquacior: the old man would certainly have continued, but the door opened once again and in the doorway appeared the familiar matron. Without even a hint of arrogance, in fact

with a perplexed and almost humble air, she said:

"Everything is getting cold."

"What? Supper?" the old man cheerfully replied. "You are right, my good sister. Well, *procedamus in pace* . . . Would you like to stay for supper, Marquis? . . . Ah no, I understand: sister, our guest is summoned elsewhere and is leaving. And may God will that my many words have sown a beneficent seed in his heart."

DOUBLING AND THE SPECULUM AENIGMATE IN ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS.

*interrogavi mundi molem de deo meo, et
respondit mihi: non ego sum, sed ipse me fecit.
Confessions, X.6.9.*

Post-structuralist criticism has devoted itself by and large to Romantic, post-Romantic or avant-garde texts: medieval theological or theological-literary texts (such as those of Boethius for example, or even Dante) are often ignored, presumably as "logocentric," even though "decentering" or the subversion of logocentrism is said "always already" to have started.¹ How is this "always already" to be read, we might ask, in medieval theological instances? How much "free-play" is inscribed in for example St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and what might be said to happen there to a decanted/decentering "self" and to the ontotheological constraints which, with the narrator's conversion, purportedly rectify it? Aspects of the question can be located in the Augustinian problem of "confession" itself, that is, in the tactics—and radical questioning—of the "communication" of the narrator with God, with himself and with readers. Any apparent metaphysical "resolution" of that problem turns out, rhetorically or psychologically, to be not quite decisive.

Since conversion is "central" to the *Confessions*, let us start there. As some readers might be startled to learn, the episode in which Augustine hears a voice urging him to read ("*Tolle, lege*") before his conversion may be, in Pierre Courcelle's terms, a "literary fiction" rather than an "historical truth."² This would seem pe-

culiar, since "confession" by definition should be strictly truthful and since the entire Augustinian itinerary, with conversion as its decisive moment, is away from errors and lies. Without entering into discussions as to how far Courcelle is warranted in his claims, we might speculate on the strong possibility that Augustine would not have regarded such an embellishment as a lapse from truth but on the contrary as truth's intensification. By the rhetorical theory of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, the "slavery" and "death" of the soul is to be limited to literal meanings,³ and in the *Confessions*, having disclosed the power of allegorical reading for his conversion, Augustine would be likely to use allegory to show his own figural rebirth.

This is hardly to qualify our contentions that the notion of "confession" is problematic; it is, but not owing to questions of empirical referentiality. The problem comes with assertions that Christian figurative language is somehow less erroneous or sinful than the language of secular rhetoric. Connected with this problem, and crucial to his story's suspense, is whether Augustine, converted, will know God, and if so, how he will communicate that knowledge. The second question is pertinent, since with conversion Augustine relinquishes a career as secular rhetorician and presumably employs thereafter a "better"—Christian and allegorical—rhetoric to convey what he has learned. An autobiographical narrative, however, and much else besides, may be tied too closely to temporality and to a supposedly abandoned rhetoric for the author properly to represent the "higher" stages of his journey. Indeed the very notion of temporal representation is considered flimsy in Book XI, and no doubt Augustine's divided atti-

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), p. 20, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 280. Some relevant exceptions are: Eugene Vance, "Augustine's *Confessions* and the Grammar of Selfhood," *Genre*, 4 (1973), 1-28, Margaret Ferguson, "St. Augustine's Region of Unlikeness: The Crossing of Exile and Language," *George Review*, 29 (1975), 842-864. See also Marcia Colish, "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence Revisited," *Augustinian Studies*, 9 (1978), 15-24, and Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1970).

² *Recherches sur les Confessions de S. Augustin* (Paris: Boccard, 1968), pp. 188-202.

³ *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 3.V.9, p. 84; Latin Citations from the *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, v. 32 (Turnholt: Pontifici, 1962).

tude (amazed yet disappointed) toward his discovery of time as the *distentio animae* (XI.26.33)⁴ has something to do with his narrative's doubled perspective and his attempted erasure of "external" autobiographical narrative (after Book IX).

In the difficult search of Book XI, Augustine is troubled that "time" seems to crumble before his cognitive gaze. He observes that time can be measured by a psalm-reciting voice but also that the time so marked has no "what" except in the mind which conjoins syllables in a fragile *distentio* of itself. The capacity for *distentio* (memory-intuition-anticipation), which at first glance had seemed a marvel, also spreads out and flattens the soul; it differs/defers. It bears a make-shift resemblance to logocentric eternity and a strong resemblance, Augustine suggests, to the erroneousness familiar from his earlier sinful ways (XI.29.39). In relation to God's Word, the voice whose syllables arrive and pass away must be "distantly other" (*aliud et longe*) (XI.6.8). How then is that Word to be approached, heard, known, confessed?

The question is reiterated at every turn. The starting narrator for example performs a speech-act which is immediately shadowed by doubts. His "*Magnus es, domine,*" however familiar as liturgical convention, is posed as a dilemma (and so interrogated as a convention) for a narrator who asks, "Grant me to know and understand which is first, to call upon you or to praise you, and also which is first, to know you or to call upon you?" (I.i.1) Should not the opening sentence have already quieted and answered the query? Had that opening sentence somehow been neither praise nor knowledge nor calling? To wonder about priorities in the give-and-take of exchange is to wonder about what kind of transaction—if any—can have occurred: "You pay debts, although you owe no man anything; you cancel debts and lose nothing" (I.4.4). Such an economics is none; it simply repeats the question, Can the exchanges between humans find any "true" analogy to supposed or desired exchanges with God? Is the "thou" of God in relation to human selves metaphoric or metonymic or neither? ("Are you in truth anything at all, that I may speak to you?") (II.6.12). The long series of opening questions "about" or "to" God

are rhetorically forceful because they are also—piercingly perhaps because only—about, or to, the asking self: "Is there anything in me that can contain you?" (I.2.2) The question, with its two poles, is part of a doubleness in the *Confessions* of paired terms (time/eternity, flesh/spirit) which fail to satisfy the narrator even in the most versatile oscillations (as opposites, supplements, repetitions, analogues).

The pairings or doublings allow, however, for certain strategies of narrative rhetoric. The "now" of performative utterances regarding God must be "present" for any reader any time as "this" instance of action. The event always happens even though, for the same reason, it *already has* happened. The doubleness is not quite symmetrical with another doubleness, that of the narrator-narrating and the narrator-narrated. With his conversion as *the* allegedly unifying turn among other, allegedly dispersive, turns (tropes), the narrator can paradoxically "divide" himself into pre and post-conversion identities: he emphatically is both "different from" and "the same as" himself, and this is complicitous with a strong pressure to privilege the conversion as a hiatus.⁵ The narrator shows his earlier "self" as sinfully errant and his confessing, present "self" correctively above, witnessing the first (happily aware of God's once "secret" providential script) (I.12.19, IV.14.22, V.7.13, V.8.15). Yet there is also a counterpressure to admit that "the same I" is involved, since the point of confession is to establish by an enlightened opposite (grace or knowledge) that the earlier doings can properly be called sinful. Although in this, too, the post-conversion narrator undeniably assumes himself on—or nearer to—"God's side," his more godly self strangely reduplicates the earlier, supposedly superseded errings and questings in the performative "now" of worry, questioning and beseeching. The conversion, we recall, has several related aspects: (1) hearing Ambrose's allegorical readings of Scripture and (2) Ponticianus's story followed by the "*Tolle, lege*" voice, leading to (3) a reading of *Romans* 13 and (4) a decision to reject sexual activity as well as (5) the teaching of secular rhetoric. The young orator, "proud of neck," "committed fornication against you" by speaking to ap-

⁴ References are by book, chapter and section to the John K. Ryan translation, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960); Latin from the bilingual edition of Pierre de Labriolle (Paris: "Les Belles Lettres," 1944).

⁵ For some applicable theoretical considerations on this point, see Robert Jordan, "Time and Contingency in St. Augustine," in R. A. Markus, ed., *Augustine* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 255-275.

plause (I.13.21, III.3.5); his conversion, by comparison, is to be a self-effacing submission of voice and will.

The submission of voice begins when the as-yet unconverted Augustine, having no interest in Ambrose's subject (*res*) tries to listen only to the figures and eloquence (*verba*). Such listening proves impossible: "with the words, which I loved, there entered into my mind the things themselves [*res etiam*]" (V.13.24). What sort of *res*, however, is this? In the *De Doctrina Christiana*, the *res* is meticulously separated from the *signum*: "Strictly speaking [*proprie*], I have here called a 'thing' that which is not used to signify something else, like wood, stone, cattle, and so on."⁶ Even on the assumption (which Augustine entertains elsewhere) that there are "mental things," the rhetorical tactics here seem suspect: precisely at the moment Augustine claims that "things" enter him, he makes clear that they are *not* things, but signs. That the signs in this instance have both "literal" and "spiritual" dimensions in no way differentiates them from other signs, except for some untold "special" quality of their spirituality, a quality conveyed by the very term for what (in itself or in a sign) is *not* semiotic or spiritual but corporeal or dumb. The narrator thus tropes what "strictly speaking" (if it is to remain the *res etiam*) he urges—morally and eschatologically—should not be troped.⁷ He inverts or allegorizes what by his own definition is only a part—the "lower" part—of the allegorical sign. In the rhetorical (and sexual) operation here, a listening Augustine is pierced and affected by "direct doctrine, and the mediation of sign is apparently—and/or apparently allegorically—bypassed. Supposedly Ambrose "would draw aside the veil" (VI.4.6). But the veil—of mystery, dissimulation, modesty—can be opened only upon others: what is drawn aside is both from and of literal meanings, disclosing (despite contrary suggestions) not the silent simplicity of things but other aspects of allegorical double-talk.

The unveiling/veiling marks, here and elsewhere, the force of desire. The *De Doctrina Christiana* urges not only that "things" and "signs" be conscientiously kept apart, but that natural and conventional signs be carefully distinguished. Natural signs, such as involuntary facial expressions, "make us aware of something . . . without [there having been] any will to signify,"

whereas conventional signs are those which living creatures show to one another for the purpose of conveying, in so far as they are able, the motion of their spirits, or something which they have sensed or understood." Having admitted natural signs as signs, Augustine excludes them from further discussion, claiming that they might not "truly" be signs at all;⁸ he moves quickly thus to suppress possible accidents, slippages or gaps between (or within) agents, messages, intentions, meanings.

Although serious communicative difficulties remain despite this narrowing of the field, Augustine attributes them to divinely purposive obscurity (for aiding our faith) and to mistaken (but rectifiable) readings of Scripture. The stakes here are eschatological; charity is thus crucial, and allegory restrains "wrong" possibilities even as it vindicates itself. To read literally is the "death of the soul"; it is to take signs only for things and to be enslaved, beastlike, to the flesh. The economy is somberly efficient: Scriptural passages not literally pertinent "must be figurative" and "the evil of wandering error is to interpret signs in a useless way."⁹ The whole hermeneutics, it could be said, of (non-)communication and (mis-)reading is geared into the machinery of salvation—its obstacles, exclusions, and perhaps conversely, its possible "end" in a more direct vision of the Lord.

If reading is especially valued as communicative, reading—even controlled Scriptural reading—is no more (and, convention has it, much less) "direct" than seeing or hearing. A number of tactics, however, valorize proper reading and writing by making them mimetic of Scripture; among the tactics are not only citation, allusion and exegesis, but the dramatized effects of Scriptural reading. Doublings such as "thing"/text, text/text, text/effect are themselves repeated or redoubled, and strongly at work in the conversion narrative. Ponticianus tells of two associates, one of whom reads from a biography of Anthony's conversion and is converted, the second associate then imitating the first. An Augustine distressed by his hesitancy to do likewise is urged to read (as was Anthony), reads, converts, is himself immediately imitated by Alypius. As instances of what René Girard calls "mimetic desire,"¹⁰ these doubled conversions may be deceptively reconciliatory.

⁶ *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.II.2, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.I.1, p. 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.I.2-2.II.3, pp. 24-25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.IX.13, p. 87.

While some of them may—as in Augustine's case—temporarily intensify rather than resolve conflicts, they also invite readerly imitation as a stabilizing, though perhaps less controllable, "end." The narrator's mimesis is agonizing as a threatened erasure of social differences: he can duplicate not his predecessors but only his own wayward, non-communal self: "You stood me face to face with myself, so that I might see how foul I was, how deformed and defiled, how covered with stains and sores. I looked, and I was filled with horror, but there was no place for me to flee from myself" (8.7.16). The on-looking self, positioned by God, is (like God) piercingly self-seeing and all-seeing, yet *at the same time* foul, deformed, defiled. The polarities which strengthen each other are unstably vertiginous; the double is a monster, the monster duplicates itself.¹¹ The self "is" at once utterly godlike and—horribly, because—utterly monstrous. The narrative at this point, however, is on the Christian God's "side," and *pursues* the narrated narrator: as [Ponticianus] spoke, you, O Lord, turned me back upon myself"; "if I tried to turn my gaze from myself, he still went on with the story" (8.7.16). The sinfully evil self (evil "is" not) needs at this point to be brought back into being; "his" wills have become radically split into unconnected similars or dissociations: mind uncontrols mind—*Unde hoc montrum?* (8.9.20-21).

The monstrous doubling is ostensibly resolved by a violent cancellation of one of the contending opposites: "I made sacrifice, slaying my old self, and hoping . . . in you" (9.4.10). This supposedly leaves a "single" will. But the problem here is that the self only at its most aberrant can "see" its aberration, and the decision to convert is for the very same reason suspect. Indeed the decision, almost forced upon it by a devoutly relentless act of narration, is somehow "literary" or unreal: "I said some such words . . . I did not speak in my usual way. My brow, cheeks, eyes, color and tone of voice, spoke my state of mind more than the words that I uttered" (8.8.19). This is an allegorical reading (body bespeaks mind) of what neither the narrating nor the narrated narrator can have seen directly: it is speculative, specular, specious: how can he "see" himself except in an imagined-remembered *speculum*? God is similarly seen,

however, and the narrative begins to counteract vertiginous doubling with reiterated models of sanctioned doubling: Anthony, the associates, Augustine, Alypius, all read and convert. The imitations are controlled by close and imperative text-self connections: when an undecided Augustine opens the Scriptures at random, the verses—which ordinarily (randomly) are no more or less referential than others—can and therefore must (presumably by will as much as by re-cognition) refer to him. The passage to which he opens (*Romans* 13:13-14) urges that wavering oppositions be fixed in their "right" places, that flesh be firmly subordinated to mind and will. The conversion thereupon resonates with familiar movements (old to new, slavery to freedom, crucifixion to resurrection) which are gradually to explicate the sanctioned doubling of man "made in God's image."

Conversion once recounted, Augustine negates (in Book IX) the "external" temporal self's narrative. Although the sometimes troublesome narrator/narrated doubleness is largely abandoned in favor of the self as its own object, the "confession" problem is only intensified: has conversion brought a greater "closeness" to God, and if so, how is this told? The Ostia moment is both a partial vision and the hope of something fuller ("When shall this be?") (9.10.25); how are we to read the agonizing speech-acts which still haunt the discourse and make it so poignant? The narrator has supposedly learned, with conversion, of a doubling which should be identification—"not to will what I willed but to will what you willed" (9.1.1). Can submission, however, be performed without cognitive slippage? Granted that historically narratable erring is "past," there is as much possibility for erring (presumably of a different kind) in the "present" quest of a narrator who struggles to systematize the orderings of memory, speech and creation. In this quest, encounters of the self with itself, *as if* of an "I" with a "thou," are bound to be artificial (rhetorically, prosopopoeia); communication of self with self is fictive or substitutive, and a questionable model for attempted contact with the Lord.

Augustine experiments perforce with just such a model, and wonders in Books X and XI at veiled or ungraspable ("inner" yet somehow always "outer") (10.8.15) dimensions of self. On the one hand, he finds himself master of a huge world of memory: "even when I dwell in dark-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁰ *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 143-149.

ness and silence, I bring forth colors in my memory, [and if I call for sounds,] . . . immediately they are there on the spot" (10.8.13). Sensed temporal events pass away, but their images (and the "things themselves" of abstract thought) are retained in memory, which thus partakes of a reassuring non-temporality (10.9.64). On the other hand, memory is full of deceptions and unknown recesses, and though its images of things are partially classified (10.8.13), Augustine must consult God's light "as to whether they were and what value they possessed" (10.40.65). The suggestion is that if he can place himself in a stable relation to the doubled but *correctly graded* contents of memory, he might move toward rectification of earlier monstrousness. God's assistance is called for, however, not only because the self regresses and is uncontrollably enormous ("*nescio quid horrendum*" (10.40.65; 10.8.15; 10.17.26), but because the investigation of memory, as of temporality, rapidly becomes self-deconstructive; how is it possible, the narrator asks, to remember "*oblivio*" (forgetfulness)? *Oblivio* may be considered as the image not of an external but an internal *res*, yet it cannot be present as either one or the other. How, indeed, could *oblivio* inscribe a mark on memory, what mark could be the "sign" of non-presence? Augustinian logocentrism may make this all the more acute: "How did forgetfulness inscribe (*conscribebat*) its image on memory, since by its very presence it wipes away whatever it finds noted there?" The question is not quite resolvable by mystery or assurance ("in some . . . inexplicable manner, I am certain—*certus sum*—that I have remembered forgetfulness") (10.16.25). For it is God who seems to be inscribed as just so doubtful a mark as *oblivio*: He is "in" memory only in the manner of something lost and half-forgotten, and the narrator must, if possible, move "beyond" memory (10.19.28; 10.17.26).

He offers to do so in a reading of *Genesis* which he hopes will supersede the incomplete testimony not only of memory but of created things. Recall his encounter (to reiterate our epigraph with the "outer" world:

I asked the heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars: . . . "Tell me of my God! Although you are not he, tell me something of him!" With a mighty voice they cried out, "He made us!" My question was the

gaze I turned on them; the answer was their beauty (10.6.9).

The world is aimable—things have voices and answer questions. The voices, however, are immediately translated into silence or space (gaze, beauty), and the directive (in the next paragraph) to move from outer to inner things will yield, as we noted, equivocal results. What is urged is a promisingly close tie between creature and Creator (made and Maker), and a special significance in the process of creation.

An allegorical reading of creation in *Genesis* resituates—though perhaps only slightly—the problem of confession. In contrast to human words, God's Word speaks eternally, not one thing then another but "all things at once and forever" (11.7.9). He makes the world by speaking, but any analogy to human speaking or making must be firmly rejected (11.5.7). Any similarity of Word to word is misleadingly homonymic, and any correlation is conceptually odd; created things can only be signs of Him, while He, neither sign nor thing, is unrepresentable, or visible for now at best, in the recurrent phrase from *Corinthians 13*, *per speculum aenigmate*. The *De Trinitate* (succeeding the *Confessions* by a few years) gives Augustine's reading: "What we have tried to do is to gain through this image, which is ourselves [*quod nos sumus*] some vision, as if in a mirror, of Him who made us."¹² The mirror offers not only an alternative to self-seeing monstrosity but a possible transit from creature to Creator. Attention might well be directed, then, to the *per speculum aenigmate* trope which Augustine glosses as an allegorical doubling, or an allegory of allegory:

As the word "mirror" was intended to signify an image, so the word "enigma" was meant to stand for a similitude, but one that is obscure and hard to discern . . . We may understand the apostle to have expressed the notion of certain similitudes adapted for our understanding of God.¹³

Obscure yet adapted: the accommodation points to an oddity, "our not seeing that of which we cannot be without the vision. Can any

¹² *On the Trinity*, trans. John Burnaby, in *Augustine: The Later Works* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), p. 141; Latin from the *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, v. 50a (Turnholti: Pontifici, 1968).

¹³ *Ibid.*, XV, 16 (ix), p. 143.

man *not* see his own thought? And can any man see his own thought . . . by inward vision? Both seeing and not seeing are unimaginable."¹⁴ The enigma ("greater," he allows, than the one he explicates) is that within ourselves we cannot see the seeing-source of even what is clearest and closest.

That enigma is eventually to be lessened, so we are to believe, when we see God "face to face." And as if following such a promise, Augustine's doctrine of signs expands, with sometimes surprising rapidity, to the point of dissolution (in what R.A. Markus designates, although excessively, as a "profound shift in perspective"¹⁵). Whereas in the *De Doctrina Christiana* signs stand for things, in the *De Trinitate* certain unspoken words can present unmediated meanings: "It is possible to understand a word, not only before it is uttered aloud, but even before the images of its uttered sounds are rehearsed in thought."¹⁶ This shifts rather than alleviates the problem of communication and *oblivio*: such special words, despite contrary intimations, are like other words in that they operate as signs of something else:

Any man can understand this unspoken word, can see through this mirror and in this enigma a certain likeness of that Word of which it is written, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."¹⁷

The unspoken word and others perhaps like them, if writable, presumably show a closer similitude than ordinary words to God's creation.

In the *Confessions*, just so, to write about making parallels God's making—not mimetically or referentially, since the Word is enigmatic, but allegorically—as an unfolding (clarifying and expanding) of enigma. Augustine's attention to *Genesis* should by all rights fulfill his speech-act yearnings for full communion; it should in some sense "complete" his quest. For if God's making of the world allegorically "converts" the unformed void (13.4.5). Augustine's early life—as the chaotic void converted—"makes" him. It makes him partly into an allegorist, both because Ambrose's readings pre-

pared for conversion and because a post-conversion Augustine can map out creation from the turnings of his life: "our darkness displeased us, and we were converted to you, and light was made" (13.12.13; also 13.4.5; 13.5.6). Such allegory enables a deftness at connections; personal making is related not only to cosmogony but to the emerging Church—the evangelists live allegorically, manifesting creation by working "corporeally amid many waters . . . to produce mystical deeds and words" (13.20.28). The waters below signify a restless mankind, the earth (Christian believers) rises out of the sea as a place of solidity. Words of mystery can then be replaced by exemplary actions, which may in turn be read as fulfilling the commandment to increase and multiply:

I have known a thing to be signified in many ways by the body [per corpus] that is understood in one way by the mind, and a thing to be understood in many ways by the mind that is signified in but one way by the body. Consider sincere love [*simplex dilectio*] of God and neighbor, see how it is expressed corporeally in many holy rites, and in innumerable turns of speech. Thus do the offspring of the waters increase and multiply. Note this again, whoever you are who read these words [*adtende iterum quisquis haec legis*]. (13.24.36)

Allegory here again is sanctioned by doubling, that is, by allegorizing itself. Augustine tells the reader to pay attention: the "same" Word generatively expands to control local languages and signs. In creation-conversion, mind dominates body: multiple corporeal significations are understood in "one way" while the mind's "one way" finds multiple corporeal expressions.

Creation is a going-out, a proliferation of meanings limited by hierarchical ordering; dissemination or sin (Augustine prays) is recuperable, or convertible "back" to God. Yet the economy's boundaries are defined by deviations and the economy itself is enigmatic. The Augustinian quest would seem "fulfilled" with the chain conversion-text-self-creation-cosmos-Church and with the text's approximation, by citation or allegory, to the Scriptural "firmament of authority" (13.15.16). The narrator is nonetheless naggingly aware of potentially tendentious readers with whom he must plead (in lengthy hermeneutic musings) that different Scriptural readings may be variously true rather

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "St. Augustine on Signs," in R. A. Markus, *loc. cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁶ *On the Trinity*, XV, 19(x), p. 145.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

than contradictory, that plurality— if seen charitably—may be plenitude. The request for charity is made along with special (and for that reason, possibly countereffective) claims that Augustine hears God's voice in his "interior ear" (12.15.18; 13.29.24). Troped though it may be as God's voice, the act of reading ((I hear your Scripture saying . . .) (12.13.16) requires distance. Even when the narrator imagines the angels to know God not enigmatically but by face, the metaphor is still—strangely, perhaps—of reading: "Let your angels praise you, they who have no need to look up at this firmament, or by reading to know your Word. They always behold your face, and without any syllables of time, they read upon it what your eternal will decrees" (13.15.18). The angels read yet they do not read; they know without reading but their knowledge is describable only as mediated, at least to the non-angelic.

And indeed allegory as plenitude never quite

ends or recompenses the narrator's opening and continuing perplexities. He reads and inscribes God's text: "with us it is still by faith and not yet by sight," adding—more strongly—that when men see "through your Spirit, you see in them" (13.13.14; 13.31.46). This latter claim is directed to the Manichaeans, who doubted the divine authorship of Scriptures and thus prompted the young narrator to respond that precisely that authorship was most of all to be believed (6.5.7). Here he offers his concluding attack against them by almost alleging that he sees as God sees ("the answer is made to me"), namely that the world was not made piecemeal or by a hostile intelligence (13.30.45). What he must strenuously insist upon—and we might note that he must do so—is the prestige of authorship, of the Author-authored link, of the voices of created beings (such as himself) saying that they do point, if only that, toward their Maker.

John Mosier

CANNES 1981: THE UNDERGROUND FILMS

Although the Cannes Film Festival is justly regarded as a celebration of the rich and famous, it is also a formidable launching pad for the poor and the unknown, although in the cinema such attributes are relative. It is doubtful if anyone in the United States would regard Coppola as either, and yet his rush to debut *Apocalypse Now* in 1979 is certainly the attempt routinely made by every artist in a position to do the same. While the twenty odd films shown in competition draw the attention and riches of theatrical distribution in the United States, the festival has several other coordinate events that offer a sympathetic hearing from distributors.¹

Cannes offers nearly too many opportunities. Hardly anyone can cover the entire festival, and adequate coverage is difficult even for viewers working in teams.² Any overview, particularly when it is of the films shown out of competition, must therefore be accompanied by a disclaimer that these are simply the most interesting films one was able to see. What follows is a personal listing of the most interesting non-competition films. The films shown in competition will be covered in the next issue. In no particular order of significance, the films discussed now are these: Dusan Makavejev's Swedish produced *Montenegro, or Pigs and Pearls*, Slobodan Sijan's *Who's Singing Over There* (Yugoslavia), Tomasz Zygadlo's *The Moth* (Poland), Yaky Yos-

ha's *The Vulture* (Israel), Luis Filipe Rocha's *Cerromaior* (Portugal), and Gabor Body's *Narcissus and Psyche*.

Dusan Makavejev is scarcely a newcomer. His first feature film dates from 1965. *Innocence Unprotected* won him a Silver Bear for Best Director at Berlin in 1968. In 1971 W.R. *Mysteries of the Organism* was shown in the Directors Fortnight and became a quick success and enduring cult film here and in Europe. As the production notes for *Montenegro* make clear, this success "meant no roses for its producers and director Makavejev found himself without work in his native Yugoslavia."³ His latest work is his most accessible, his best paced, and of all of his films the one most aided by good actors. Susan Anspach plays Marilyn Jordan, the bored and eccentric wife of wealthy businessman Martin, played by the respected actor Erland Josephson. Per Oscarsson, perhaps less known but equally talented, is the Armenian psychiatrist Dr. Armen Pazardjian. The plot is simple: Martin is called away on New Year's Eve to Brazil on business. This is the last straw for Marilyn, who tries to go with him, only to run afoul of Swedish airport security, where she misses the flight and meets Tirke, a young Yugoslavian girl also having problems with the police. Quickly she meets Tirke's employer, Rossignol, who runs the ramshackle nightclub Zanzi Bar, a center for Yugoslavian workers. Marilyn tags along with them, meets a charming young man, Montenegro, and spends two wild nights at Zanzi Bar. As the New Year begins she returns to her family for a touching reunion, and as her husband, two children, grandfather, and psychiatrist are sitting around the table, she passes them a bowl of fruit. A message flashes on the screen: The Fruit is Poisoned. A few seconds later: This is a True Story.

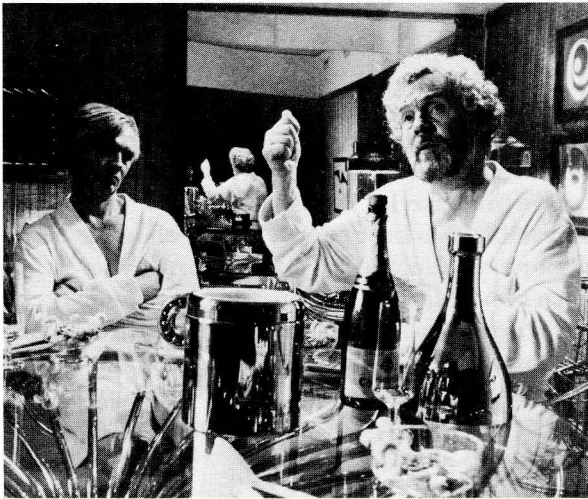
Critics and Makavejev cultists—although not

¹These are the *Quinzaine* (Directors Fortnight) organized by the *Société des Réalistes*, the *Semaine* (Critics Week) organized by the French Film and Television Critics, *Un Certain Regard* organized by the Festival Management itself, and of course the Market, where films are simply shown—there is no selection process as in the first three. There is also a special showcase for French films, the *Perspectifs*.

²Approximately one hundred screenings a day are listed in the daily newspapers produced for the festival. Many of these are multiple screenings of one film, and films are repeated. Anyone who covers other events will have seen some of the films before. That leaves one with a hard core of perhaps forty films each day. *Variety* provides the most comprehensive English coverage, and *Cahiers* the most coverage in French, both using teams of viewers.

³Taken from the *Production Notes* furnished to critics. The quotations that follow are also from this document, some of which appear to have been written (or dictated) by Makavejev himself.

the preview audience—were disappointed by the film's whimsical but conventional approach, the raucous humor, and there was a general impression that the master's talents had fallen off.⁴ My own minority view is that he is much better at this kind of filmmaking than he was with *W.R.* and *The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* in 1967. In contrasting the hapless but affluent Swedes with the lovable but shiftily Yugoslavians his portraits are satiric to the point of being caricatures, but there is an enormous amount of illumination. "Everyone has to come from somewhere," Dr. Pazardjian says to Martin, who replies, "Not me, I'm from here." Any visitor to Scandinavia or Germany (or Switzerland) no-



Montenegro. *Un Certain Regard*, 1981. Dr. Pazardjian's Armenian therapy begins to cure Martin Jordan (right).

tices the ramshackle community of ethnic guest workers, living its own recreation of life in the old country, and perpetually at odds with the bourgeoisie and the police.

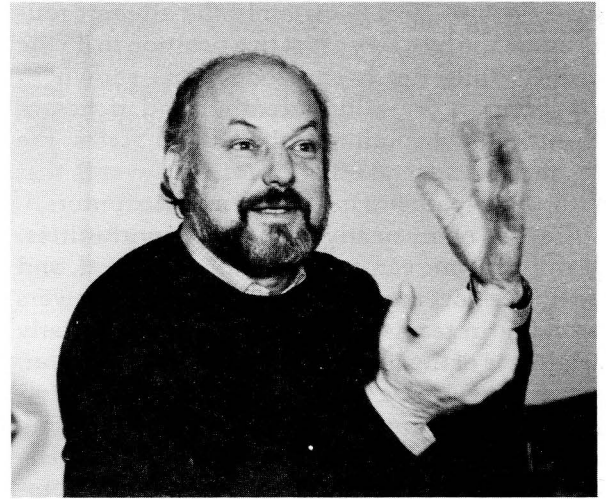
Makavejev has seized on a real issue, one suggested by the original dedication for the film: "This film is dedicated to the new invisible nation of Europe, the fourth largest, of eleven million immigrants and guest workers who moved

⁴*Le Programme*, daily journal of the festival, keeps box scores on the ratings by the Parisian dailies. The "scores," which have to be interpreted cautiously, are nonetheless reliable within limits. It is significant when a film draws generally low scores—or is ignored. No. 14 (26 May) had two critics giving it an "assez bien" one a "passable," and one a "nul." These are, respectively, the three lowest ratings. The critics were: Jacqueline Carter (*France Soir*) and Michel Mardore (*Nouvelle Observateur*) for the "assez biens," and Michel Boujut (*Nouv. Lit.*) and Michel Perez (*Le Matin*) for the passable and the nul. Given the overall picture, the scores are very low.

north to exploit rich and prosperous people, bringing with them filthy habits, bad manners, and the smell of garlic." That Makevejev is still a man to be reckoned with is best seen by the fact that he replaced this sentence with the following: "A little girl questioned a monkey in a zoo: 'why do you live here? Isn't it nicer where you came from?'"

The exile of Makevejev does not mean that Yugoslavia is bereft of artists. Although Slobodan Sijan's *Who's Singing Over There* is a much more conventional film, it is an impressive work whose themes embrace many diverse areas of national existence.⁵

The film follows passengers on a ramshackle



Montenegro Director Dusan Makavejev.

bus going to Belgrade in the spring of 1941. The first morning is peacetime, the second morning is war, the end of an era, and the end of a society. Along the way we get a guided tour of this society, whose members make love, quarrel, exploit one another, die, get buried, and degenerate into racist squabbling of which the gypsies are both spectators and victims. Sijan's point is the war destroyed a society that no matter how picturesque and charming was fundamentally evil, and this evil was an organic part of the old way which could no more be separated from it than could its robust humor. The point is a powerful one, and the film is surprisingly aus-

⁵Sijan was born in 1946, and this, his first feature film, was shown as part of *Un Certain Regard*. Gene Moskowitz, writing in the August 27th *Variety* for 1981, called it a "robust, raunchy road film" that "does get repetitive and bogs down a bit before the sudden tragic denouement." The film recently won a special jury prize at the 1981 Montreal International Film Festival.

tere, though genuinely funny.

It is poor luck for Sijan that his film was bracketed with so many other successful films from Eastern Europe, one of which, *The Witness*, attracted more attention.⁶ *The Moth* has had the same problem. It was originally shown in Gdansk in 1980 where it was eclipsed by the *Accords* (since the strike at the Lenin Shipyards was concluding at the time of the festival), by the general political situation, and of course by Kutz' *Beads of a Rosary*, the prizewinner.⁷ Set against a general tendency in Polish film to articulate national political problems, expose corruption, and generally paint in bleak pictures, *The Moth* also has the additional problem of be-



Who's Singing Over There. Un Certain Regard, 1981. His driving skills questioned, the bus owner prepares to let his son drive blindfolded.

ing a comic film that is primarily about feelings, not about ideas. The hero, Jan, is the host of an allnight crisis line show where people call in their problems live on the radio. Jan too is only live at night, and this situation worsens as he becomes steadily enmeshed in the collective neuroses coming over the wires, while totally unable to function during the daytime. Everything is inverted, and the film does an excellent job of showing us how complete this inversion is; in fact, how much of it is purely the complement to a society that is equally inverted. At the beginning of the film we witness a lunatic being

⁶This film together with *Man of Iron*, was covered in the first article in this series, which appeared in *NOR*, 8.2, 95-98.

⁷This film was discussed in the article on Karlov Vary, 1980, where it won a prize: *NOR*, 8.1, 91-94. *The Moth* was shown as part of the *Semaine*. It was reviewed when shown at Gdansk in the Wednesday, October 1, 1980 *Variety* by Ronald Holloway.

recaptured and put back into an ambulance. This mysterious comic scene is a paradigm of the film, which works by turning everything around, to the point that we become persuaded that the scene is actually funny, that it says something, and that the film is a general statement about the state of emotional affairs in Poland.

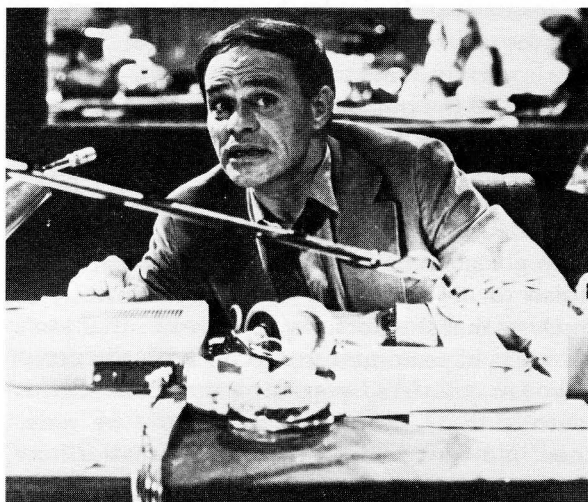
Jan goes to a psychiatrist who gives him tests which reveal that he is extremely neurotic, so much so that the doctor at first thinks that Jan's job must have something to do with the economy. Jan counters by arguing that Poland is so neurotic that "normalcy" must now be redefined. No, the doctor counters, no matter how



Who's Singing Over There. The passengers inspect the bridge.

neurotic we are, you are more so. But when the doctor appears on the show, callers hang up on his bleak and abstract analyses of their lives, and Jan, unchecked, becomes even more enmeshed, to the point that he now sees people that no one else can see (in a memorable sequence, the director of the film, who tells—what else but—a Polish joke). On the radio again, he takes to the studio piano and pounds out a truly demented song. It becomes a hit record. Who is really crazy here? Jan? Poland? Finally he is shipped off to a high level rest home and cured. He no longer cares about the people around him, and they too seem happier at his idiotic calm. *The Moth* is so good that it could be retitled *Poland 1980* and used as an animated monument, although not, one hopes, as a tombstone.

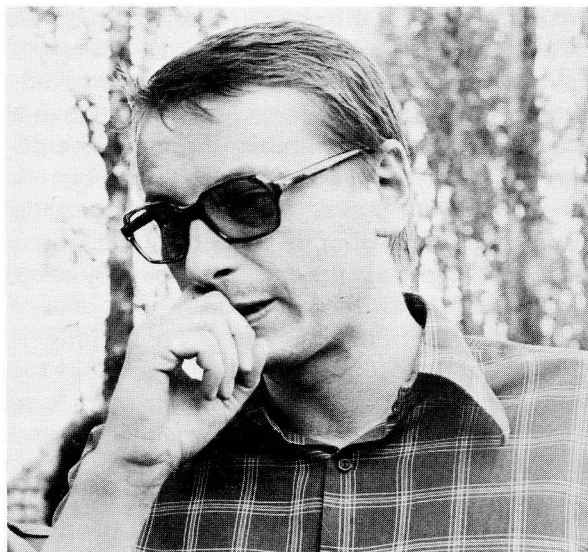
The comedy is all the more effective because the film, like the majority of the Polish films of



The Moth. Critics Week, 1981. Jan leads Poland through another night of therapy.



The Moth. Jan's sound engineer right after he slugs his girlfriend in the sound studio.



The Moth Director Tomas Zygadlo.

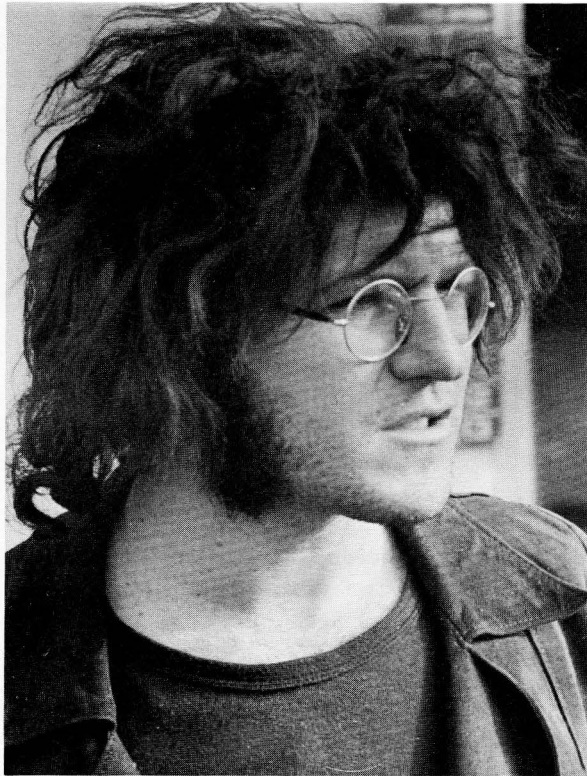
late, is so personal and intimate. It is difficult to make a personal film that is really comic unless one lapses into the state of being a comedian—and even Woody Allen's personal comedies seem the less successful the more personal they become. Yaky Yosha's *The Vulture* is potentially a bitter film, since it involves the exploitation of the war dead in Israel, and parts of it are intensely personal. But in the end it too is a comedy, albeit one in which much serious thought is conveyed.

The Vulture documents a real practise in Israel—the production of memorials (books, monuments) honoring the memory of the dead soldiers. Understandable on a personal basis, the practise is somewhat irreligious, since Judaism has little truck with the glorification of the dead, as Yardeena, the young woman who works at the Defense Ministry Liaison Office tells our hero Boaz. This Boaz is a reserve officer who saw his friend Menahem get himself killed at the close of the Yom Kippur War. It is a stupid act, and one gets the impression that Menahem was a rash and possibly stupid young man. But Boaz is unable to avoid his Father, who desperately wants some remembrance of his son. In equal desperation, Boaz manufactures one: a poem, which allows the Father to construct a fantasy about Menahem's literary pretensions. The Father decrees that Boaz and Mooga, Menahem's fiancée, will put together a memorial book, which they do. In the process the fiancée moves in with him (as does Yardeena), and the three go into the memorial production business. *Vultures*. Boaz's own motivations are complex, and in some sense he is simply trying to give these parents something that will sustain them. He does retain his honesty intact: at the end he tells Menahem's Father that he wrote the poem. In a final scene we watch Boaz' platoon gathering for another brushfire encounter. All right, he tells them, take out pen and paper and write a poem so your parents will have something to remember you by.

The film is on an embarrassing subject, and the Israelis, who have always had mixed feelings

⁸The IDF apparently objected to at least one sequence involving a rather perfunctory speech at a memorial service by an army officer; there were some objections to certain scenes involving Boaz and his two girlfriends as well. However, the film was subsidized by Israel's Fund for the Promotion of Quality Films, and it is difficult to see—assuming that only the scenes referred to were trimmed—that they would have any influence on the impact of the film.

about Yosha's work, insisted at one point that the film be trimmed, probably because of some rather acrid comments directed towards the IDF, which is somewhat more sensitive—and powerful—than armed forces generally are.⁸ But Yosha is an unmistakable talent who has made the two best films done in Israel. The first of these, *Rockinghorse*, was shown at the Directors Fortnight in 1978. It was made on next to nothing, and full of flaws. But it revealed an overriding artistic intelligence. *The Vulture* has none of the



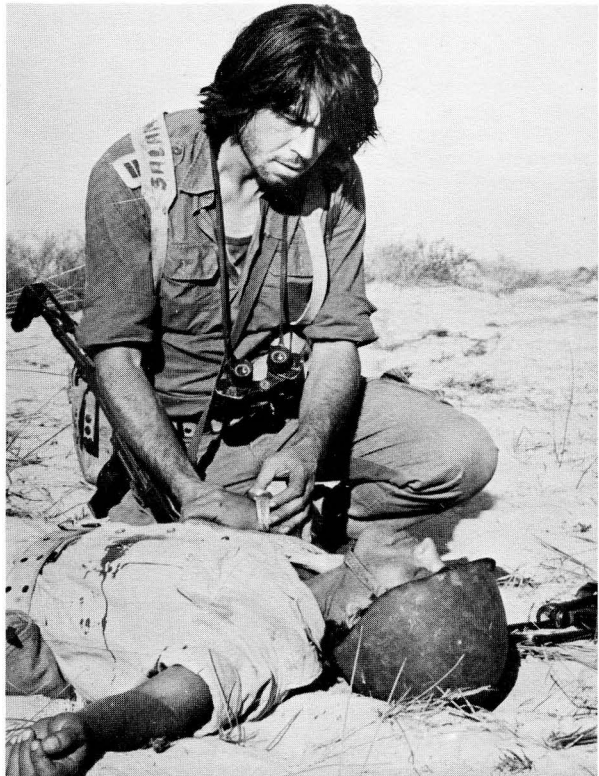
The Vulture. Directors Fortnight 1981. Director Yaki Yosha.

technical problems, but it retains all of the artistic force.⁹ Yosha's films are marked not merely by their literacy (both were based on novels) and their humor, but by the signature of their maker. One of the most important things that we can look for in a young director is his ability to impose some sense that the film is "his." *The Moth*, for instance, is very much in the manner of a whole set of films made in Poland, but it

⁹Israeli critic Edna Fanairu, writing in the Wednesday April 15, 1981 *Variety* review (Ha'ayit/*The Vulture*) said "technically, this is one of the most satisfying productions Israel has had lately." *Vulture* was shown in the Quinzaine, and Yosha's *Rockinghorse* was the first Israeli film shown there (in 1978).

stands out from them because we sense that it is shaped by someone whose views are different from those of his colleagues. While their films begin to run together, his stand apart.¹⁰

This approach easily drifts into an overemphasis on novelty, of which Makavejev is an instance. Because his films were so unmistakably different from those of other Yugoslavians he became singled out, then praised, and finally overrated—a difficult trap from which to extricate oneself. But I remain persuaded that the



The Vulture. Boaz lifts a watch from an Egyptian he has just killed.

same thing ultimately holds true in film as does in the other arts: when we read Tolstoy, hear Mozart, or see Van Gogh, we tend not to get their works mixed up with those of other artists. There is a distinctive signature to their works, and this signature tells us whether we are dealing with an artist or a craftsman, an individual or a factory. All too often such discussions reduce themselves to one of technique, which is

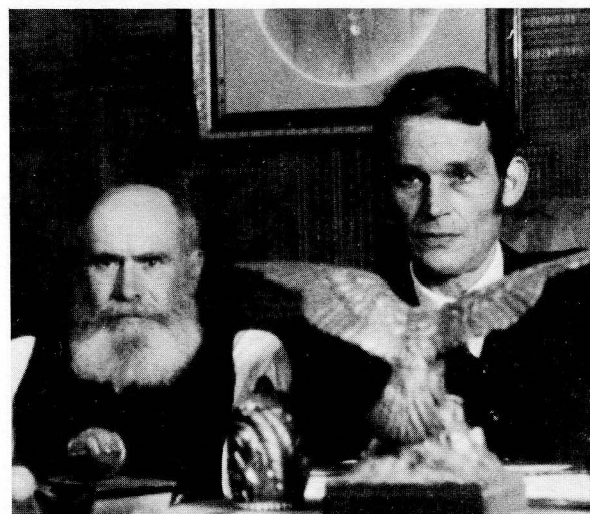
¹⁰Zygadlo's work in *Chance*, Wajda's *Without Anesthesia*, and Agnieszka Holland's *Provincial Actors* reveals him an accomplished actor, the sort whom we remember long after we forget much of the film itself. This same ability marks his directorial debut abroad, although like most "new" Polish directors he has made films before.



Cerromaior. Cannes Market, 1981.



Cerromaior. Young Adrian listens to the peasants speak of freedom.



Cerromaior. Adrian's cousin (right) hard at work devouring land.

only a very small part of the signature. Of all the artists discussed so far only Yosha impresses me as possessing such a signature. *The Vulture* is not simply a talented film, but a film that reveals there is an artist behind it. Although Israel is a far from film-less country, I know of no one working there with the explosive potential of Yaky Yosha.

Portugal, like Israel, is another one of those small countries with the infrastructure to support a film industry and not simply one or two isolated artists. In recent years a surprising number of films have been made, enough to reveal the emergence of both an industry and some artists. Luis Filipe Rocha appears the best of these, and *Cerromaior* the most accomplished work.¹¹ The title refers to a village in the Alentejo, where the young man from an affluent family is brought back from, presumably, Lisboa or Coimbra to live. This is the Portugal of the 1930's, and the situation is aptly described: "the traditional exploitation of the farm workers is represented in those years of the thirties (when only a few echoes of freedom filter through by radio from the Spanish Civil War) by an arrogant, overbearing cousin, symbol and mainstay of the fascist power that is consolidating itself. The young man's course proceeds amid shadows and ghosts, conformism and prejudice, madness and suicide, rage and confrontation, marking his contact with others who sacrifice themselves, put off decisions, or refuse to bow their heads."¹²

Such descriptions make films sound all too political, with the ideology overpowering the art. This is far from the case, since *Cerromaior* is free of any narrative at all, and done so well that Rocha's "eye for compositions and dynamic images says everything without the assistance of dialogue."¹³ To give an example: one realizes through these images that women are among the chief victims of such an oppressive system, and yet the women in the film collectively have less

¹¹It won the grand prize at Portugal's national film festival (Figueira da Foz) in 1981. Ronald Holloway, reviewing it in *Variety* on Wednesday, October 15, 1980, called Rocha the "leading sociopolitical voice in the Portuguese Cinema."

¹²This quotation is taken from the publicity material on the film, which also says that Rocha was born in 1947, and that this is his second feature length film. The first, *A Fuga*, may be the film that Holloway refers to as *The Escape* in the review quoted above. The film is based on a novel of the same name written in 1943 by Manuel Fonseca.

¹³Quote taken from Holloway's *Variety Review* of October 15, 1980.

than a dozen lines of dialogue. Our realization comes from images: the hero's married admirer languishing behind the barred windows of her townhouse, his cousin's passive seances in the parlor, the abuse of the female servants. What also comes through is that deep sense of provincial boredom that Chekhov delineated in *My Life*. It is not the alienation of an educated and affluent elite, the Marilyn Jordans of Sweden, but the stagnation of an entire society in which there has been so little progress that except for an occasional lightbulb it could be the Portugal



Narcissus and Psyche. Directors Fortnight, 1981. Actress Patricia Adriani as heroine Erzsebet.

of Eca de Quieroz's *The Sin Of Father Amaro* of the 1860's.

Cerromaior reveals an artist who has a sure sense of what he is about. Although he may not develop into an artist of real achievement (and I say this only because I have only seen one of his films), he certainly has something that goes hand in hand with a decisive signature—the ability to make us believe that there is a method in what he is doing. The film moves slowly and deliberately, but it is obvious that the director is controlling the pace, which is the cinematic equivalent of the pace of the society itself. The danger here is twofold: on the one hand it throws an enormous emphasis on the cinematography, which must deliver some very rich frames if our interests are to remain, while on the other hand the slow pace makes it difficult for any sort of action to intervene and conclude the film. Perhaps there is no reason why these things have to be true, but they seem to be so, and it is a pleasant surprise to see that Rocha can sustain our interest and vary the pace when he

chooses. The ending of the film, when the arrogant cousin is virtually murdered, is one of surprising violence, and it is action well handled.

All of these films are minor masterpieces, and as such they have a certain aesthetic conservatism, even though they reveal a sure sense of what the artist is about. Gabor Body's *Narcissus and Psyche* is the exception. Perhaps the high level of technical competence in Hungary, the relatively lavish state support, and the leisurely schedule of production make it easier to be genuinely experimental; but if so, his is the first



Narcissus and Psyche. Erzsebet aging nicely as she passes her first century as Psyche.

really experimental film since Jancsco's older works. Much is possible, but Body manages to work his resources right to the limit, and perhaps past it. In the end I am not sure how successful the film is, but it is certainly a memorable event.

It is based on Sandor Weores' *Psyche*, which is "a pretended autobiography of a fictitious early nineteenth century poetess The film is based on Weores' writing, but in it the life-story of his fictitious poetess is extended to cover the years from the early nineteenth century to the middle of the 1930's. During this lifespan of over one hundred and twenty years, the characters never age."¹⁴ Any film that covers this much time in slightly more than two hours is going to be brisk work, and the film moves at such speed that it seems impossible that any audience could get it all. My own impression is that the film falls

¹⁴This quote is taken from the publicity material supplied with the film. It won the Ernst Artaria Prize given at the 34th Locarno Film Festival owing to its experimental nature (*Variety*, August 19, 1981, p. 7).

into two halves. There is a pre-Napoleonic half separated from a *fin-de-siecle* half by a sequence which juxtaposes pixillated battle scenes and bedroom encounters between the heroine Erzsebet and her lover and future husband Baron Zedlitz. The first part seems almost medieval, and, quite frankly, almost incomprehensible, since events are thrown at us with such speed that about all that we can gather is that Erzsebet is a talented young poetess who is hopelessly (but not chastely) in love with an even more talented poet, Lazlo Toth. This is the Narcissus and Psyche pair. The second half relies extensively on sets and grand sequences, and appears to track their parallel lives, as Erzsebet marries after many adventures and Toth finally (about 1914) succeeds in having his play, *Narcissus*, performed in Vienna.

Tacked on to this is an epilogue of sorts. Zedlitz and Erzsebet return from America after the war and two things transpire. First, she finds the dying Toth, who is living in a scene of singularly revolting squalor. The passion of his life has failed, since the play was not performed (although whatever it was the audience saw shortly before was *some* dress rehearsal in that case). His death leads to her own. Zedlitz takes her for a last ride before selling all and returning to America. She stops to fuss over the horses and he rides over her and tramples her to death. One supposes this is a fitting end for Erzsebet. At any rate, it is the end, and by this point audiences are probably not going to quibble, even though the roughly one hundred and forty minutes is far less than the rumored six hours of the original print.¹⁵

Does the work involved in the viewing appear justified? Mostly yes, although how enthusiastic one is depends partially on the extent to which one is concerned about the lives of the artists. Aside from his ability to hold the film together, Body's achievement has been to give us a History of the Great Neurotic Artists of The Last Century, something that more experienced artists have been picking at for years. There was Ophuls' *Lola Montes*, Visconti's *Death in Venice*, Liliani Cavani's hagiography of Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and of course Ken Russell.

¹⁵Referred to by Gene Moskowitz in his March 18, 1981 review of the film in *Variety*. Moskowitz called Body "one of the most unusual though perhaps overly ambitious directors to emerge from Hungary in some time," and spoke of the film's "striking visual inventiveness" and "firm structure." He too makes a brief comparison with Jancso, which I did not notice until writing this note.

Gabor's film is certainly more successful than any of these, if for no other reason than it is a film which manages to convey the idea of aesthetic obsessions without making them funny or extreme. Toth's attempts to get his play performed in Vienna are such painful accounts of the sort of *schlamperei* that artists go through that those sequences alone make the film worthwhile. He finally manages to get to dress rehearsals (in about fifty years), only to have war break out and the whole enterprise declared too oldfashioned. So there is a genuine story here of the long suffering artist, as well as a social history of the Empire and an encapsulation of Hungary.

All along the way, Body is extremely careful to keep his film firmly ensconced in a highly symbolic universe. He never allows the audience the liberty of simplifying what is going on. For example, in Visconti's *Death in Venice* the director allows us to "simplify" Aschenbach's complicated yearnings which are symbolized by the youth Tadzio into what looks suspiciously like homosexual desires and nothing more. Similarly, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, an awful lot of what we see appears to be explicable in the same way. One could throw out all of the aesthetics and philosophizing and see, quite simply, works about blocked sexual impulses. Perhaps both Aschenbach and Nietzsche were simply able, owing to their stature as intellectuals, to rationalize their behaviour and the film makers are showing us the reality. But if so, it is a vulgar reality that is ultimately unsatisfactory to anyone who believes that there is more to *Death in Venice* than getting worked up about young boys. I doubt if any one who sees the film does not have the more carnal interpretation cross his mind, and I question whether any reader of Thomas Mann would want it spelled out quite so baldly.

Body works his scenes very carefully to avoid this, and he manages to convey a genuine sense of blocked love, of unconsummated union, that emerges as a deeply spiritual blockage, not simply a physical one. The comparison with Cavani's film is appropriate, because both Toth and Cavani's Nietzsche have syphilis and thus are unable to consummate their attractions (or able to persuade the objects of their desire to do so). The difference is that in *Narcissus and Psyche* we are constantly given the feeling that this is simply a tragic excuse, one that was chosen to remind us of the more sordid relations of art and life. It enhances the mythic dimensions of the

couple, while in *Beyond Good and Evil* one is driven very close to saying that Cavani wants us to believe that had Nietzsche not had syphilis he would have married Dominique Sanda and lived happily ever after in some sort of intellectual pornotopia.

What such differences finally reduce themselves to is that Body is firmly in control of what he is doing. Even when one would prefer him to do something else, one has to admit that he keeps his audience moving along the track that he wants. And his most stupendous effects work exactly in the right way. Handling similar themes, neither Visconti nor Cavani were able to do this. With both the effects are hit or miss. When Nietzsche mistakes a coach horse for his

beloved Wagner and begins addressing it, everything falls into place beautifully. But when he fantasizes Christ and the Devil appearing as nude male ballet dancers, the scene becomes, finally, ludicrous. Body never makes this mistake.

In the concluding section, which will appear in the next issue, I will discuss the competition films, and this issue of control will become even more important; it appears that many of the more established directors were unable to maintain this control over their work. They either misjudged the effects of their film, or pursued such extreme courses that their works, no matter how accomplished, became purely personal exercises.

REVIEWS

The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction, by Jonathan Culler, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, 242 pp.

Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy was a culmination of the eighteenth century's interest in epistemology and how the mind works. Twentieth century philosophers have continued this interest in the psychology of the mind by studying language, the tool of thought. Linguistics has developed into a major science, engulfing other disciplines with its methods. Structuralism, or synchronic linguistic method, has come to embrace literary criticism and has caused a minor Copernican revolution there. We can know the reality of the literary work only through the structures of our minds, through the structures of language. To take the revolution further, one dissolves the work into a text of codes which does not refer to reality but only to other books. Thus in texts there is not so much "presence" as Derridian "différance." Meaning resides in the actual process of reading, brought to the work by the reader who is not so much a mirror as a lamp. But the reader has no cause to rejoice. As the work is dissolved to text, both reader and author are dissolved to a priori structures of the mind which have always, "already," been. Intertextuality, or a sense of "déjà lu," haunts both reader and author with the knowledge that there are no beginnings and no heroes. Foucault names this the disappearance of man. It is also the disappearance of the work of art.

Jonathan Culler's latest book is a continuation of his earlier, more brilliant *Structuralist Poetics*. Culler is a commonsensical, worthy guide through the dark wood of structuralist criticism. He defines and discusses much of the seemingly impenetrable linguistic rhetorical jargon which makes mush of a seemingly intelligent reader's mind. *Structuralist Poetics* gave the linguistic background of this critical movement and then went on to discuss the important works of Barthes and Lévi-Strauss and the beginnings of a semiotic poetics for the lyric and the novel. On coming to *The Pursuit of Signs*, the reader has an extreme sense of déjà lu. Ah, the reader asks himself, is he at last settling into the structuralist mode of always, already? No, not really. The first two chapters are mere allusion, often exact word for word repetition of the earlier book, and thus they lack the anonymity of real intertextuality, as Culler defines it. But one never gets too much of a good thing, of something difficult simply put. In these chapters Professor Culler makes a level-headed assault on interpretation, witnessing its flashes of genius and yet recognizing that it has become boring to most of us. He is not intransigent against interpretation. He just sees that it is time for a change in critical method. His clear expositions of Derrida's ideas make one wish for more of them, but because in *On Deconstruction: Literary Theory in the 1970s* he treated Derrida and deconstruction, in this

book he deals only with the aftermath of this splinter group of the structuralists.

In *The Pursuit of Sign*, Professor Culler seems much more convinced of the value and future of a semiotic poetics than he did in *Structuralist Poetics*. Whereas he once had reservations about Barthes' structuralist endeavors, he now finds deconstruction to be a development of, not a rebellion against, structuralism, so that he sees Barthes' deconstructive S/Z as firmly in the semiotic line. The middle section of the book goes into the midst of structuralist poetics and explains practices and principles. There are chapters on "Semiotics as a Theory of Reading," and "Riffaterre and the Semiotics of Poetry." There is a most clarifying chapter on the principles of "Presupposition and Intertextuality" which are of the anonymous, subconscious structures we are born with or into and which differ from conscious allusion and imitation. But these principles bring up the question of the place of history in this synchronic criticism. Culler makes conflicting statements about the value of historical studies. The presuppositions of readers do change with their times and cultures, so that diachronic works are useful. On the other hand, these studies may depend on either a simplistic "questionable historical scheme" or on a "logical or epistemological system whose momentum is its own, not the movement of history." But every endeavor has its Scylla and Charybdis. A good example of historically oriented affective criticism is Jean Hagstrum's *The Sister Arts* in which the aesthetic concept of *ut pictura poesis* is studied. Before the structuralist take over occurred, Hagstrum introduced us to eighteenth-century readers different from ourselves who tended to fill out, sketch in, and pictorialize the faintest, most abstract images. Samuel Johnson does this over and over again in his criticism. Another fascinating diachronic work which is more purely structural is E. H. Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*. Gombrich traces through history how artists depend on forms which they know to represent what they see. At the same time he begins the investigation into the relationship between the permanence of form and the change of styles.

The discussion of the place of history within structuralism brings up the question of the place of structuralism within history. Just because structuralism is new, based on linguistics and modern philosophical movements, doesn't mean it isn't old. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Structuralism is a concern for rhetoric, and battles between philosophers and rhetoricians have occurred throughout history since Plato's day. In a 1972 Clark Library Seminar paper, Richard A. Lanham discussed the tradition in his damaging "Theory of the Logoi, The Speeches in Classical and Renaissance Narrative." Whether one takes a pejorative view of structuralism or not, it must be placed in time. It must be related to other affective criticism. To teach and to please were affective poetic principles for a long time. How do they fit in with the present theory

of reading? In *Le Plaisir du Texte* Barthes discusses the erotic pleasure of reading. Riffaterre posits that to read a poem is to search for unity. Aren't these critics concerned with how a work teaches and pleases?

In the middle section of his book, Culler devotes an entire chapter to the American critic Stanley Fish. Although Fish's approach is quite different from Harold Bloom's, in Culler's eyes both these critics confuse their methods. Both, while adhering to structuralist principles, are tempted by interpretation, and Culler thinks it is impure and really impossible to mix poetics with interpretation. But Fish's readings of *Pilgrim's Progress* and a sermon of Lancelot Andrewes, interpretive gems, surely prove Culler wrong.

The last chapters are refreshingly different. Instead of talk about criticism, here we have the very thing, Culler's discussion of the apostrophe in poetry, of Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp*, of narrative, and of current ideas about metaphor. At this point it is clear that *The Pursuit of Signs* was created from previously written articles. Yet one must not be concerned anymore with unity, that old-hat ideal of the new critics. And Culler is an interesting critic. He deconstructs *The Mirror and the Lamp* so good naturedly we enjoy the game and almost forget our queasiness until it is too late. He accuses Abrams of narcissism. Abrams looked into Romantic poetry and saw himself, the new critic who valued organic form, whereas this poetry is really suffused with mimetic imagery and theories. And Abrams' own language in discussing the organic is actually imbedded in mimesis. Thus lamps turn out to be mirrors. At first enjoyable, this chapter leaves a sour after-taste in one's mouth. In his article Lanham pointed out that structuralism can only be circular in its reasoning and end up in self-destructive solipsism.

The chapter on metaphor has this same unsettling effect upon the reader. It is a masterful summation of current discussions of metaphor and metonymy. But metaphor, which many think expresses truth, is found to be only a form of metonymy, a lesser, more wholly rhetorical and conventional figure. Culler synthesizes the two antagonistic viewpoints of metaphor: it is seen from the aspect of its relation to reality or from its place in the conventions of language. Yet, disconcertingly, Culler deconstructs both points of view and discovers confusing, ambiguous lines of reasoning in each. One is left with the shards of thought.

All in all this is for the common reader a useful guide through the rocky straits of semiotic criticism. Yet understanding doesn't bring much relief. The banality of structuralist approaches to literature is not avoided by Culler explaining that this criticism must deal with the commonplace, and the cutesy clever, circular reasoning of deconstruction is not prevented by Culler adding more weight to this method by placing it within structuralism. One is left with a feeling of nostalgia. Something has been lost. Yet one forgets these complaints when reading something imaginative by Barthes, his essay on *The Encyclopedia* or *Le Plaisir du Texte*. Barthes is not banal, and his wit is essential, not puerile. He is one critic who shatters the reader's mood of depression. There may be a positive

side to all of this. If we are confined within language and its structures, language as a narcissistic preoccupation becomes insignificant. On the other hand, because criticism and literature are both language, they are of the same weave, and this may elevate criticism, not lower literature. Maybe we are witnessing the end of publish or perish policies. There will be fewer books written, and we will have only those of genius, rather than those of coercion, to read. For structuralist criticism is like any other writing. When it's good, it's very, very good, and when it's bad, it's very, very bad.

Reviewed by Nancy Cotton

Dorothy L. Sayers by Dawson Gaillard, Recognition Series, Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., Inc., 1981, 136 pages, cloth \$10.95, paper \$5.95.

In recent years the life and literary career of Dorothy L. Sayers have been written about by authors of several booklength works. None of these, however, has done what Dawson Gaillard accomplishes in this study devoted exclusively to the mystery fiction—short stories and novels—from which Dorothy L. Sayers' writing reputation chiefly derives.

Gaillard here is concerned with Sayers as an entertaining writer, but also with her as a major contributor to the development of the mystery genre itself. As she traces the writer's progress away from puzzles toward a detective novel of manners, and finally into mysteries with deeper implications of a spiritual nature, Gaillard utilizes Sayers' writings which deal with critical theory in relation to mystery stories. The comments of Sayers, E. C. Bentley, G. K. Chesterton and other friends (most of whom were members of the Detection Club) provide good reading and provocative views on the purposes and methods of this type of fiction. During the heyday of the Club, Sayers and other members applied to a popular, seemingly light form of literature, a seriousness and erudition whose impact is evidenced in mystery novels and stories of today. The best of today's mystery writers owe much to the creator of Lord Peter Wimsey and her cohorts.

Although from time to time Gaillard mentions pertinent biographical information in relating how specific works came about, the primary emphasis is not on the life of the author. However, the life of Sayers, the classics scholar who became famed for writing popular mystery stories, does have a piquant quality, and the interlacing of the private, personal life of the author is used judiciously and appropriately by Gaillard.

In her youth, Sayers evidenced her gift for languages. She also sang, acted, participated in the debating society, and edited the school magazine at Godolphin School, Salisbury, in southern England. She graduated after three years from Somerville College, Oxford, with First Class Honors in modern languages and medieval French. She knew even then that she wanted to be a writer, not a teacher. Two books of poetry were published in 1916 and 1918, and she went to work for Basil Blackwell, the Oxford

publisher of her poems. In the year with Blackwell's, she learned copy editing and the publishing business. It was after Sayers moved to London in 1922 to work as a copywriter for S. H. Benson, Ltd., an advertising firm, that she began to write the Lord Peter Whimsey short stories and novels. Sayers' literary canon is comprised of plays, poems, translations and writings on theology. Although these works have been praised by scholars, it was Lord Peter Whimsey, Montague Egg, Harriet Vane and other characters in witty and cleverly conceived detective or mystery stories that made Sayers famous.

Gaillard's *Dorothy L. Sayers* almost can be read as a "how-to" manual on the writing process. Substantive insights into what makes a good detective or mystery story are to be found throughout the volume. The insistence upon good characterization as the pivotal point and the stress upon consistency are aspects of writing of which any fiction writer should be aware. Tracing Sayers' development in mystery writing in chronological fashion, Gaillard notes the shifts in emphasis reflective of the growth of the author. Of particular merit to anyone interested in literary criticism or in writing generally, is Gaillard's chapter on "Values and Aesthetics." The author's approach to Sayers' work is scholarly, but not pedantic. Footnotes are kept to a minimum, but there is a well formulated bibliography for readers who may wish to pursue the diversified career of this entertaining writer. For the Sayers' fan, Gaillard's consideration of plots and characters will prove a delightful memory refresher. For the semi-initiated reader of Sayers, much of the commentary should be a stimulus to read more of her works. For both, Gaillard's work is valuable for its examination of the "why" as well as to "what" and "how" such fiction came to be written. The author states, "For Sayers, detective fiction became amusement that provokes reflection." Gaillard brings us closer to this multifaceted personality whose intellect produced translations of Dante as well as complex puzzles for the urbane Whimsey and Harriet Vane to untangle.

Reviewed by Dorothy Brown

In the Land of Dreamy Dreams, University of Arkansas Press (Distributed by University of Missouri Press) 176 Pages; \$14.95 Cloth, \$5.95 Paper.

Southern writers have long been attracted to New Orleans. Kate Chopin, Tennessee Williams, Walker Percy and recently, John Kennedy Toole, just to name a handful, have set fiction and drama in the lush courtyards, grimy tenements and exclusive soirées of one of the South's oldest cities. In the 1960's New Orleans-based fiction grew somewhat satirical, as evidenced in Percy's *The Moviegoer* where we got a taste in the ennui of New Orleans aristocrats through Binx Bolling and his cousin, Kate. Just last year, with the Pulitzer Prize novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, satire delighted many in the form of Ignatius J. Reilly, the flatulent philosopher.

Ellen Gilchrist's first collection of short stories,

In the Land of Dreamy Dreams, offers New Orleans satire for the 1980's. Her stories, like Toole's novel, ostensibly are first-hand looks at the people of Uptown New Orleans, their children, and the people with whom they surround themselves—i.e., black "servants," maids and tennis court groundsmen who moonlight polishing cars. But Gilchrist's book reaches out to encompass the timeless as well—the beautiful woman growing old; the courtly, mysterious relationship between father and daughter; children viewing the world as theirs utterly and learning how it can be taken away, and given back.

Writing in the Southern tradition of a short story writer steeped in locale, Gilchrist sharpens the edge of her satiric knife until it cuts as cleanly as a surgeon's scalpel—exposing what one feels (simply by the wealth of physical detail) is a fierce reality. Here, in the title story, for example, we see the old aristocrat and the new-rich achiever:

Claiborne thought about Roxanne a lot. He was thinking about her this morning when he arrived at the club and saw her cream-colored Rolls Royce blocking his view of the Garth Humphries Memorial Plaque. He was thinking about her as he got a cup of coffee from a stand the ladies had taken to setting up by the sign-in board. This was some more of her meddling, he thought, percolated coffee in Styrofoam cups with plastic spoons and some kind of powder instead of cream.

At the old clubhouse waiters had brought steaming cups of thick chicory-flavored cafe au lait out onto the balcony with cream and sugar in silver servers.

Claiborne heaved a sigh, pulled his pants out of his crotch, and went up the balcony to see what the morning would bring.

"In the Land Of Dreamy Dreams"

The volume's opening piece has already received national praise in a *New York Times Book Review* notice of the anthology of new writing, *Intro 9*, where Gilchrist's story "Rich" first appeared. It is the tale of Tom and Letty Wilson of New Orleans. He is the boy from Franklin, Tennessee, who dreamed up money-making schemes in high school, practiced magic tricks and attended Tulane where he met Letty, a plain-faced Catholic girl. Letty stays in awe of her obsessed husband right into his mental breakdown. Though Tom and Letty are rich, money can't keep them lucky.

In the Land of Dreamy Dreams live white folks who are rich, self-made or aristocratic, and black folks who aspire to be. One person who dreams of wealth and power is Gus, a black youth from the St. Thomas projects who pushes marijuana underneath a 200 year old live oak tree in Audubon Park. The story is "The President of the Louisiana Live Oak Society" and it might have been lost in the lampooning of rich whites and poor blacks if it hadn't been for the real story, i.e., that Lelia McLaurin and her husband are losing their son, Robert, to an alien world of adolescence, drugs and people outside their reach of protection. In short, it's a story about the horror when communication between parent and child breaks down.

Gilchrist calls one New Orleans-based story "There is a Garden of Eden," and it isn't difficult to see New Orleans, with its tropical palms and steamy summers, as such an ironic garden. In the stories of the garden we meet Alisha Terrebone, who seduces a young carpenter arriving to repair the cabinets, and La-Grande McGruder who throws her expensive tennis rackets off the Huey P. Long Bridge when she is "forced" to break the honor code of the Lawn Tennis Club and utter a blatant miscall in order to beat a "new-rich Yankee bitch" interloper.

These people are bound together by attributes other than place; they are universal figures—bored or in love, lonely or ecstatic.

In the Land of Dreamy Dreams might have been the perfect satire of New Orleans as seen through a contemporary eye if it had not been for the fact that it is not *all* about New Orleans. Ellen Gilchrist's best stories, some of her richest concerns, are about the past—childhood—and characters she creates from memory: children and teenagers growing up in the South. In particular is Rhoda.

We first meet Rhoda in "1957, a Romance," when she is 19, married and the mother of two. Pregnant again—or so she believes—Rhoda finagles her rich, indulgent father to take her to Houston to get an abortion. Later, she is a 9 year old in "1944" who is bewitched by a war widow playing tunes on martini glasses in a bar, and in the story "Perils of the Nile" Rhoda is a 7th grader who loses her heirloom pearl solitaire ring at the movie-house and prays to Jesus in her closet for its return. Perhaps the funniest and most endearing portrait of Rhoda, "Revenge," is the story of kids entertaining themselves in Issaquena County, Mississippi (a real place, too) during the Second World War. These stories are not simply vignettes of childhood hauled out to make us laugh. Rather Gilchrist renders the essence of childhood: courage and faith that what *could* happen, *will* happen.

In Rhoda, and other children named Lele, Matille, and Beber, there is still the promise of the future. There is not yet room for the boredom of rich adults who "write scripts" for themselves.

Ellen Gilchrist is a fine story-teller with a gift for capturing the rhythms and humor of Southern speech as well as for painting lush cinemagraphic pictures. Already a master of the Southern idiom, she is not going to be satisfied with a niche in the Southern School. Like Chopin, Percy and Toole, she will make her mark nationally—a writer with whom we must reckon.

Reviewed by Jeannie Thompson

The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, by Fredric Jameson, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 303 pp.

The publication of Fredric Jameson's new book, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, is, I think, a major intellectual event. Jameson makes some extremely large claims at the on-

set both about what his book hopes to achieve and the place of political perspectives in literary criticism. He proposes, in short, a new social, historical, and political hermeneutic of which this book is both the announcement and demonstration. And he assigns to this hermeneutic an absolute priority in the understanding of literary works. Jameson's work, as he states his position,

conceives of the political perspective not as some supplementary method, not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today—the psychoanalytic or the myth-critical, the stylistic, the ethical, the structural—but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation (p. 17).

The Political Unconscious demands attention from anyone seriously interested in literary criticism because, in my opinion, he substantiates this claim. Historical criticism, from New Criticism to post-structuralism the straw man for a thousand theoretical polemics, has found its champion in Jameson and has found in Jameson's work a method and theoretical articulation with which other modes and schools of criticism will surely have to reckon. I do not expect Jameson's theory to escape unscathed from that reckoning, but, as perhaps its greatest strength is its ability to use other critical methods as it argues for their limitations, a serious polemical confrontation may merely make the historical criticism Jameson is advocating that much more compelling. It should prove interesting to watch.

This simultaneous critique and appropriation of non-historical critical methods is the key both to Jameson's position and its force. Old-fashioned Marxism simply attacked non-marxist ideologies as examples of false consciousness which Marxism needed to discredit. Jameson's historical criticism is clearly and polemically Marxist, but his far more sophisticated position is that all consciousness is "false consciousness" in the sense that it is a deflection as well as a reflection of the real. Every cultural system, every intellectual structure, has areas of blindness and limitation that it cannot see. The proper path for criticism to take is to historicize these structures of understanding and by situating them in history to grant them their proper area of authority and force while exposing their areas of misunderstanding and weakness.

This is an extremely clever tactic whatever its theoretical validity. We are all prepared to grant, I think, no matter what our critical allegiances, that the methods we espouse are subject to certain limitations. Yet we hesitate to admit this, thinking that such an admission will discredit everything said by means of the method. Jameson somehow—and this is partially a matter of tact—manages to use an astonishing diversity of critical methods, from patristic allegory to Derridean deconstruction; and, by using them, he shows that he sees their utility. Yet this affirmation or appropriation has firm limits, for, by locating these methods historically and seeing their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their historical location, Jameson is at once "cancelling and preserving them." (p. 10)

One is the more prepared to assent to the cancelling because of the measure of preservation; Jameson's critiques of other critical methods persuade because they are not simply destructive or hostile. Yet, each method, preserved and cancelled in turn, is seen to be only locally valid, subsumed in the course of history. And the larger point Jameson wants to make is that all historical understanding works in this manner, by cancelling as well as preserving the past. The dialectic of appropriation and rejection Jameson offers as a model for literary criticism is a persuasive model partially because of this larger perspective. We are doomed to operate in this fashion, Jameson seems to argue, so let us become conscious of our situation and bring our notions about what we do into conformity with what we really do.

What I have described so far is the general or underlying argument of Jameson's book which is, in short, important, provocative, and convincing. I do not propose to go into much detail about his specific critiques and appropriations. An introductory theoretical chapter, "On Interpretation," is followed by four chapters which put that theory into practice. A chapter on genre criticism and on narrative before the novel is followed by a chapter each on three novelists, Balzac, Gissing, and Conrad. These are followed by a short and quite polemical conclusion. The middle four chapters form a historical or diachronic sequence and are, I think, intended to serve as a sketch of a narrative of narration. If so, there are some obvious holes and it is here that *The Political Unconscious* looks somewhat less magisterial.

The chapter on genre criticism is fascinating and shows Jameson's critical dialectic at its most ambitious, as he uses the models of Propp, Frye, Greimas, and Levi-Strauss in an attempt to develop a properly historical theory of genre. But it no more seems adequate as a history of narrative before the novel than the discussions of Balzac, Gissing, and Conrad that follow do as a history of the novel. Conrad is a puzzling final term as a great deal has happened to the novel since Conrad. Jameson, indeed, has charted some of that ground in his recent book on Wyndham Lewis, *Fables of Aggression*. I am far more interested in Lewis than in the figures Jameson discusses in *The Political Unconscious*, but I must confess that I found *Fables of Aggression* unpersuasive in detail. This may indicate that someone closer to the texts Jameson discusses here would see problems that I do not, but I find these chapters compelling and persuasive.

The major problem with these chapters is that there is a great deal that they do not say, both about the texts and authors that they treat and about the period in which these authors wrote. We move quickly over a large expanse and inevitably certain subtleties are obscured or denied by Jameson's argument. But the fact that much remains to be said is perhaps a compliment, not a criticism. The narrative of narrative which occupies the middle chapters is obviously intended to be suggestive, not exhaustive, and the points of emphasis are perhaps intentionally idiosyncratic to mark this. For Jameson's aim is not to build a structure which would answer every question and close off further inquiry; rather, he is arguing that history will always dismantle such structures and the role of the

critic is precisely to open up new questions and new ground.

But, of course, the territory Jameson is operating in is not as new as I have been implying so far; and, after praising *The Political Unconscious* as I have to this point, I think that I can best indicate my own reservations about it by placing it in context. Jameson is not the only person trying to articulate a poststructuralist Marxism and use that as a method of reading. In this country, the names of Hayden White and Edward Said come to mind in this regard and, though these three critics form nothing so coherent as a school, they do constitute a current of considerable importance. Broadly speaking, the importation of Structuralist and post-structuralist ideas into this country has been the work of two groups: a group once centered at Johns Hopkins and now at Yale, for whom Derrida is the figure of commanding importance, and a second, smaller, and more politically-oriented group, for whom Foucault and Althusser are the figures to praise and learn from. And I think the publication of *The Political Unconscious*, not long after Said's *Orientalism* and White's *Tropics of Discourse*, marks the point at which it becomes clear that it is the Marxist variant of post-structuralism which is the richer and more interesting of the two. I would argue this primarily because so much seems opened up by the work of Jameson, Said, and White; in contrast, in reading the "Yale critics," one has an overwhelming impression that everything has been done already, though it was also all done incorrectly.

But Jameson also teaches at Yale and this perhaps trivial fact can stand as a figure for the links between Jameson's critical practice and the other kinds of post-structuralism which have found their home at Yale. The respect in which these links enable Jameson's work is that his dialectic of cancellation and preservation is obviously a Marxist variant of deconstruction, and, shoring it of its axiomatic preference for cancellation, Jameson puts deconstruction to good use. But he also shares with his fellow francophiles a crippling preference for systems as opposed to the particulars that constitute systems, for structure as opposed to the components of structure, in short for *langue*, in Saussure's terms, as opposed to *parole*. (The anti-structural turn of post-structuralism twists this but does not break it down: it is merely systematic in its critique of systems.) This is not the proper occasion to enter into a discussion of what is wrong with this "urge to totalization." My point here, however, is that this urge sits uneasily with Jameson's sweeping critique of all such totalizations. Jameson consequently puts himself in the untenable Althusserian position of claiming that all forms of consciousness are false except his own and that all structures are false except Marx's.

This is not a problem inherent in Marxism as much as in Jameson's particular brand of Marxism, which is heavily biased towards *langue*, theory, and structure as opposed to *parole*, practice, and data. He would deny this, I expect, as he proposes in his preface (p. 13-14) that Marxism in fact offers a way to transcend this opposition and unite the divergent fields of critical theory and practical criticism. But the tradition of Marxism he comes out of, the Frank-

furt School and Althusser's structural Marxism, is a heavily philosophical Marxism, a Hegelian Marxism (though at times loathe to admit this), and is perhaps the Marxist tradition least well equipped to heal this rift. I would propose to Jameson the urgency and desirability of a de-Hegelianization. He needs to make his theory more empirical, more concerned with the level of *parole*, the individual speech act and individual literary text, before he can truly transcend the opposition which he claims to have transcended. This is not necessarily to become less Marxist, for there are alternative traditions within Marxism (I am thinking here of the quite distinct positions of Lucio Colletti, Sebastiano Timpanaro, and E. P. Thompson) which would criticize Jameson's position in exactly these terms.

That is precisely what one would never learn from *The Political Unconscious*. According to Jameson, only other ideologies and intellectual systems have their areas of limitation, their lapses and silences, and their areas of disagreement, not Marxism. Though Jameson draws on the work of a number of Marxist schools, no trace of the polemics within Marxism enters his text. This is, of course, the biggest silence or lapse of all. The object of scrutiny in *The Political Unconscious* is always the *other*, works of literature and literary criticism written by non-Marxists. His own tradition undergoes no scrutiny.

It is for his ingenuous and uncritical presentation of the Marxism he would have us accept that Jameson must, I think, be criticized most severely. (And I assert my own position the more freely here because, as someone who is not a Marxist but is interested in the political criticism Jameson proposes, I am exactly the kind of reader Jameson must hope to convince if Marxism is ever to become more than a marginal force in the United States.) For if Marxism is one big happy family, what then of the social and political reality of the Marxist states? What attitude would Jameson have us take towards the rather dubious accomplishments of Marxism to date?

It is unfair, perhaps, to expect that a work of literary criticism should have answers to such questions; a non-Marxist critic would never be expected to deal with the topic of the war in Vietnam, for example. So I shall content myself with saying that Jameson's repression of the problems and debates of Marxism disturbs me and that, if he is serious in his desire to spread a Marxist intellectual culture in this country, he will not be able to evade these issues forever. If my raising of them here marks me in Jameson's eyes as an Anglo-American upholder of liberal humanist values, I cheerfully plead guilty to the charge. The events of the past year in Poland have shown once again that these values are dear to people other than the capitalist bourgeoisie. For Marxism to become the authentic carrier of human aspirations that Jameson claims it is already, it needs to preserve some of the ethical and democratic values that so far it has cancelled all too readily. Given Jameson's glib reference to "the archaic categories of good and evil, long since unmasked by Nietzsche" (*Fables of Aggression*, p. 56) and his astonishing reference to Orwell as a counter-revolutionary in a tradition descending from Dostoyevsky (p. 202), I do not expect to see Jameson play-

ing a part in such a movement, even if it were to come into being. But I would commend his courage and insight if he did.

Reviewed by Reed Way Dasenbrock

Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, Julia Kristeva, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

"If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise."

—William Blake

"It is absurd to wish to devolve one's essence on some end or other. We have invented the concept of 'end': in reality there is no end."

—Friedrich Nietzsche

"How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

—William Butler Yeats

"If you want to find yourself, get lost."

—Norman O. Brown

Julia Kristeva defies categorization. She is neither linguist, nor post-structuralist, nor deconstructionist, for her interests and methodology span far beyond all fields of practice while simultaneously partaking of all. Herein lies a key to Kristeva's work: a radical dialectic predicated upon an inherent "uni-duality," one demonstrating, not surprisingly, a profound sexual foundation. In discussing her understanding of feminism, she writes: "I have the impression [some feminists] are relying too much on an existential concept of woman, a concept that attaches a guilt complex to the maternal function. The arrival of a child is, I believe, the first and often the only opportunity a woman has to experience the Other in its radical separation from herself, that is, as an object of love" (10). Pregnancy is uni-duality; motherhood is a sundering of that bond, a bond acknowledged, nonetheless. Prefatory to these essays Kristeva posits, "It was perhaps also necessary to be a woman to attempt to take up that exorbitant wager of carrying the rational project to the outer borders of the signifying ventures of men . . . But that is another matter, of which this volume nevertheless bears the discreet trace" (x). Because of her unyielding eclecticism, Kristeva is, in the noblest sense of the term, a philosopher. Like thinkers and visionaries from antiquity to the present, she transcends any boundaries instituted by particular disciplines. Even language itself dare not impale or impede her odyssey. Let Foucault speak of episteme: Kristeva, with an altered perspective and use, coins the neologism "ideologeme" in order to reveal how the texture of narrative in its evolution moved from the "ideologeme" of symbolism (characterized in the medieval epic) to an "ideologeme" of signs (in the novel). Kristeva's uni-duality allows her to partake of intellection preceeding her, while simultaneously allowing for rejection and alteration which results in a production that is new, self-conscious and meta-theoretical, uniquely

In "Le texte clos," translated as "The Bounded Text," the author posits the change in ideologue from symbol to sign as occurring during the second half of the Middle Ages, a transition period in European culture which evidences itself in its linguistic and pictorial artifacts. (Ernst Cassirer has made similar assessments in language theory, with emphasis, however, upon myth and etymology.) Kristeva finds that the symbol assumes symbolized universals, that it operates within its vertical dimension as restriction, and within its horizontal dimension to escape paradox. For example, good and bad are incompatible; once the contradiction appears, it demands resolution. The course of symbolic practice is thus closed, governed from the inception of its discourse. This serenity was replaced by the ambivalence of "the sign's connection, which lays claim to resemblance and identification of the elements it holds together, while first postulating their radical difference" (39). "Within their horizontal function the units of the sign's semiotic practice are articulated as a *metonymical concatenation of deviations from the norm* signifying a *progressive creation of metaphors*" (40). Multiple and possible deviations in narrative structures give the *illusion of an open structure which has an arbitrary ending*. This phenomena appears within the adventure novel of the Kristeva. *Desire in Language* thus may deal with literature and art but amount to neither literary criticism nor art criticism. The concern of the essays "remains intratheoretical: they are based on art and literature, or more precisely on a desire for art and literature on the part of the writer, in order to try to subvert the very theoretical, philosophical, or semiological apparatus" (viii). Implicit to Kristeva's theoretical approach is knowledge that "no belief in an all-powerful theory is tenable" (ix). Hence her term "intra-theoretical" and my term "uni-duality." Renaissance, which reveals a structural basis of surprise as reification at the level of narrative structure. Thus Kristeva characterizes the semiotic practice based on the symbol as resolved by *exclusive disjunction* (non-equivalence) or by *nonconjunction*. On the other hand, in a semiotic practice based on the sign, contradiction is resolved by *nondisjunction*. This leads, in the novel, to "an attempt of synthesis, resolving within a figure of *dissimulation* or *mask*" (43). This affirms negation as duplicity and "the *disjunction* which both opens and closes the novel is replaced by a *yes-no* structure (*nondisjunction*)" (43). Enter the carnival aspects of the novel (beginning perhaps with Rabelais), non-discursive logic, game-playing language, the double, the confidence man: in a brevity of words, in a bravery of words—Here come Finnegans, Fin again, *Finnegans Wake*.

Desire in Language is a collection of previously published essays which document its author's evolution of thought. An accruing process takes place within the reader of these essays, until, in a blinding moment of insight, it all comes together, which is not to say "makes sense," but rather that it transcends sense. Kristeva's first offering, "The Ethics of Linguistics," gives a clue to her style. It defines the split between destruction and reformulation of systematics

in intellectual, political and social ventures, finds Mallarmé and Artaud as France's significant linguists, pays lip service to Heidegger's attentiveness to poetic language, undercuts Freud's discovery of the unconscious as a necessary condition for a reading of poetic discourse, explores Mayakovsky and the Futurist's future: "The important element of this 'future anterior' of language is 'the word perceived as word,' as phenomenon in turn induced by the contest between rhythm and sign systems" (34). In another she queries "How Does One Speak to Literature?" and reviews Barthes' oeuvre as an answer. "The Father, Love and Banishment" investigates two Beckett texts after opening with epigraphs from *Paradiso* and *First Love*. Kristeva's confession: "Strangely enough, I needed a Venetian ambience—the complete opposite of Beckett's universe—to have a sense of grasping, within the parenthesis of *First Love* and *Not I*, both the strength and the limitations of a writing that comes across less as 'aesthetic effect' than as something one used to situate close to the 'sacred.' No name exists today for such an 'unnamable' interplay of meaning and jouissance" (148). And in "The Novel as Polylogue" she moves to "music that is inscribed in language" (159), to the novel *H* by Philippe Sollers, the man who is *Tel Quel*. Her epigraph from Sollers' *Logiques* illuminates more than this essay:

Unveiling is not reduction, but passion. Logically, the reader of the *Divine Comedy* is Dante, that is, no one—he, too, is within love; and knowledge is here but a metaphor for a far more radical experience: that of the letter, where life, death, sense and nonsense become inseparable. Love is sense and nonsense, it is perhaps what allows sense to come out of nonsense and makes the latter obvious and legible. . . . Language is seen as the scene of the whole, the way to infinity: he who knows not language serves idols, he who could see his language would see his god. (159)

Indeed there is method in madness—Nietzsche. In America few know this; Norman O. Brown is our finest exception. With *H* (in France *H* means hashish as well as heroin) the time of Dionysius may be re-discovered: "So you must read, listen immerse yourself in its language; discover its music, its gestures, its dance; and have its time, its history, and all of history join in a dance" (159). Thus spoke Kristeva.

The concluding essays move to painting and infantile language. "Giotto's Joy" is speaking through color, the formal equivalent of "carnavalesque" language. Color is sublimated jouissance, a liberation from the "transcendental signified" posited by Derrida, freedom from "One Meaning" (white) through the advent of its instinctual drives" (224). Like literature, in painting transformation was in the palette. Color entered the theological signified, distorted it, yet did not relinquish it.

In "Motherhood According to Bellini" Kristeva sets

into opposition Leonardo and Bellini. Her dialectic is biographic, aesthetic and the product of sexual fetishism and primal repression. Leonardo's humanist realism reveals fetishism of the body, a masculine object-oriented libido which is ultimately homosexual. In contrast, Bellini demonstrates a disquieting phenomenon that Kristeva calls "maternal space." His Madonnas gaze away and never center on the baby as do the women in Leonardo's work (*The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*). "And the painter as baby can never reach this elsewhere . . ." (247). This too is a fetishized image, but one "evoking an 'inner experience' rather than a referential 'object.' This experience, detectable in Bellini's paintings, seems to demand a consuming of the heterosexual relationship" (249). Kristeva arrives at the Oedipus complex. Her manner, not purely Freudian, is predicated on uniduality—having and not having, being and becoming.

By far her most fascinating foray into sign and meaning is "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," an essay devoted to the intuitive brilliance of Mikhail Bakhtin. Here the political and the counter-cultural share verbal space with the discourse of the novel. Bakhtin situates the novel's text within history and society. Both history and society are texts themselves, which are read by the writer, who inserts himself into them through his rewriting them. Hence, Bakhtin sees an infrastructure of texts wherein history and morality are written and read. He was the first to study the logic of the poetic word, a logic which exceeds that of any codified discourse, one that is realized only within the marginal aspects of culture. He found its roots in the carnival: "Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official law" (68). It is from Bakhtin that Kristeva derives her concept of "intertextuality." By this term she does not mean influence or matter of literary source, instead intertextuality involves the many components of a text's system (novel), and it is the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another; this transposition begets a new articulation. Bakhtin found texts to be constructed "as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double" (65). Poetic language, however, is not binary. The epic is theological, subordinate to the one, and hence to God. Further, realist narratives obeying this 0-1 logic are dogmatic, monological. "The only discourse integrally to achieve the 0-2 poetic logic is that of the carnival" (70). This dream logic is transgression in language and in morality. It is Dada, Surrealism, the polyphonic novel, Menippean Satire, whose examples include Rabelais, Swift, Dostoevski, Kafka, Proust, Joyce: "In its structures, writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis" (77). Kristeva writes of arts as subversive act, language as polymorphous perversity.

I have attempted to give a representative account

of the scope of Kristeva's writings in *Desire in Language*. Obviously, she speaks primarily to those who have read much of what she has read, and to those who are involved with that which she is involved. But then, she is involved in almost everything, so interest in such matters becomes relegated to degree. It is the finest piece of philosophic language analysis I have encountered. It also displays a density so characteristic of French intellectual prose; therefore, it cannot be easily or readily assimilated. Kristeva's writing must be approached with a spirit of what Sollers calls "love," which is sense and nonsense together, because this paradoxical duality paves the only road to an understanding of *Desire in Language*.

Reviewed by Claudia J. Jannone

The Age of Structuralism: Levi-Strauss to Foucault,
by Edith Kurzweil, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

As Edith Kurzweil states about her intentions in *The Age of Structuralism*, the book is to provide "an overview of the basic premises of current French thought, is meant to serve as a guide to further reading for those interested in the theories of one or more of the figures here included," Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Lefebvre, Ricoeur, Touraine, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault, "or of their successors," Kristeva, Sollers, Derrida, Deleuze. In achieving her aims, Kurzweil, of necessity, also relates how structuralism in part filled the void left by the decline of existentialism during the mid-fifties in France and reveals as well the assumptions structuralist thinkers share with three of Europe's most influential modes of thought: Marxism, linguistics and Freudian psychology. Hence, the text is aimed at an American audience, at thinkers less aware of the impact of both Marxist philosophy and Saussurean linguistics than their continental counterparts. (Although Freudian thought is no stranger to the American mind, here Freud's theoretical impact is concisely interwoven with the intellectual texture of French culture from 1955 until the early seventies.) From this vantage point Kurzweil's text is a valid endeavor, a mode of preparing the ground for enlightened reading of *The Raw and the Cooked*, *Writing Degree Zero*, *S/Z*, *The Order of Things*, to name only a few, serves as well as an entry into such post-structuralist and deconstructionist texts as Kristeva's *Desire in Language* and Derrida's *Writing and Difference*.

The Age of Structuralism is a guide book, an historic overview maintaining the right degree of objective presentation and description which documents both those thinkers who followed and amended Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology and those, like Lefebvre and Touraine, who dismissed structuralist concerns. However, the text's most interesting chapter by far, the one most deftly handled in terms of an intellectual form in congruence with its subject matter, is "Structuralist Psychoanalysis," on Jacques Lacan. Here Kurzweil relates Lacan's split with the empirical approach taken by the American Freudians and explains his expulsion from the International

Psychoanalytic Association. More importantly, she succeeds in explanation of the highly complex theories held by the psychoanalyst while managing to avoid a systematic closure which would be the most tyrannical form of reductionism from Lacan's perspective. Lacan himself makes much of the fact that he cannot be "understood." Understanding is not the object precisely because to understand Lacan is ultimately to misconstrue him. Paradoxically, misunderstanding is inherent to understanding. Yet Kurzweil does clarify his theory of the *mirror-stage* in a child's construction of the self as subject, not through "pure perception but needs the image of the body as intermediary. . . . Furthermore, Lacan 'fused' the mediating relationships of structural linguistics to neo-Hegelian dialectics; his psychoanalysis became part of large scale social history; free association turned into a methodological tool to uncover both cultural and individual origins" (141). If this sounds unclear, fine; yet it becomes more readily assessable within the context of the whole chapter, the whole book, and context always forms an important part of structuralist thought.

Lacan's micro/macro correlation reveals itself further in his study of language and meaning structures. For Lacan there is unique separation of selections of words (or language) into two categories: *Need* and *Desire*. Need is an organic drive which is linked with organic satisfaction. (I interpret need in language as pragmatic, as lust). Desire, on the other hand, is the mental image of objects of satisfaction, is less easily satisfied than need because desire involves the *Other*. (Desire, then, is less goal directed, like love, and it hearkens back to a somewhat Jungian view, recalls the anima and animus.) And it is a principle of absence which calls presence into play; presence exists only through desire. Language is central to Lacanian thought because only man organizes through this symbolic medium. Only man forms chains of symbols which signify. Thus, he dismisses all animal studies and militates against the "empiricism" so characteristic of American psychoanalytic thought. Ultimately Kurzweil knows Lacan through *trans-logical* acceptance, an activity of absurd metaphysical trust which must be initiated in order to approach Lacan's inspired work.

Kurzweil's entire text is important because she perceives the commonalities inherent to all the figures she discusses. As a group, structuralists share in a search for universal and often hidden relations. They are eclectic, partaking of anthropology, literary theory, politics, psychoanalysis, the history of ideas, deviance study, linguistics, religion and philosophy. As Barthes stated in 1964, "structuralism is neither a school, a movement, nor a vocabulary, but an activity . . ." Hence his later refutation of his own words, for structuralism remains in continual flux, adapting and transforming its concepts almost as often as Paris designers change "la mode."

Reviewed by Claudia J. Jannone

Sobre Esta Praia, by Jorge de Sena, bilingual edition trans. by Jonathan Griffin, Inkling's I (Santa Barbara: Mudborn Press, 1979).

The Poetry of Jorge de Sena, a Bilingual Selection, ed. by Frederick G. Williams (Santa Barbara: Mudborn Press, 1980).

In Crete, With the Minotaur, and Other Poems, Jorge de Sena, (Providence: Gavea-Brown, 1980).

The poet in exile is itself the subject of poetry—Ovid writing his life at Tomis or, to leap twenty centuries, Mandelstam his in Voronezh, or St.-John Perse his at Long Beach Island, N.J. Jorge de Sena was another such literary exile, double exile, actually, migrating first from Portugal to Brazil then from Brazil to the United States. Sena, like the others (many others), works his exile into poetry, not myth-making like a Perse in *Exil*, but close, domestic:

*Among themselves I hear my children
talking English. Not the younger children only
but the older ones as well talking
to the others. None was born here.
Growing, all had in their ears
the sound of Portuguese. Yet their talk is English;
they will be American. More: they've been dissolved,
they are dissolving in a sea that is not theirs.*

("Notions of Linguistics," translation
by Suzette Macedo)

The full weight of exile pulls at us in these lines, for all their domesticity. Sena, the self-conscious bearer of a literary tradition stretching back to Ovid and beyond, cannot prevail in his own house in a matter so central to the poet as the words of his language, which he must watch "die each day in the stammering of their rightful heirs."

Jorge de Sena was another of the many literary exiles who have lived a largely unrecognized existence in America, whose death in 1978 in Santa Barbara was mostly unnoticed, even at the University of California, where he taught. In Lisboa and São Paulo it was otherwise, for Sena's stature among Portuguese-speaking poets in the 20th century is probably second only to Fernando Pessoa's. But here, it seems it takes a Nobel Prize to awaken us to general notice of the literary exiles living among us, as in the case of a Czeslaw Milosz (attention unwanted) or a Solzhenitsyn (and there politics played a large role too). But death, perhaps, is second best. For Sena, author of over 100 titles, widely translated and generally esteemed where known, recipient of the Etna-Taormina International Poetry Prize in 1977 and a Nobel nominee in 1978, has received a little post-humous attention in his adoptive country, in the form of three volumes of translations: *Sobre Esta Praia* (1979), *The Poetry of Jorge de Sena* (1980), and *In Crete with the Minotaur, and Other Poems* (1980).

The booklet *Sobre Esta Praia* (over this shore) is the most satisfying of the three, I think, because it translates a complete work, a sequence of eight interrelated "meditations." The "this shore" of the title is the Pacific coast, in the neighborhood of Santa Barbara, and the source of the meditations is the nudity of the sun-bathers the poet observes as he "leans" over this

shore, or more precisely the cool indifference of the bathers to their own nudity and to the nudity of the others. The structure of the meditations is based on the alternation of remembered shores—where nudity suggested desire—and this shore. The remembered shores are more, though, than just Atlantic; they are informed by a greater before when the gods weren't dead. But "Here is a different ocean./A different time," and in the juxtaposing of the two there is an implicit criticism: "If gods were born here nothing's left of them/but mortal light of bodies." There is a criticism of the absence, in the bathers, of what gives "bodies a fervor, hot and human," but also an admission that this very absence is the condition of their particular and sculptural beauty, a beauty which Sena appropriates for his poems, where the bodies seem well placed, as in a sculpture garden (and when we leave off reading that beauty stays with us). There is also a paradoxical perception that in abandoning the realm of the human the bathers approach, on one side, a simulacrum of a divine indifference, and on the other, sex machines (for there is sex in these dunes, if little desire). What's lost, finally, is the possibility of metamorphosis which sexuality offers (on the remembered shores). Here,

*There are no metamorphoses in this
world which even when sunburning hides in
showing all . . .*

While there,

*falls horizontal into the embrace
in which from human tongues and interlacings
gods are made of whatever men may be.*

(translation by Jonathan Griffin)

Sobre Esta Praia enables us to see these shores differently, restructures our understanding; it deserves to be read.

The *Poetry of Jorge de Sena* is a more ambitious volume, too ambitious, I'm afraid. The editor, in what is always a perilous decision, chose to compile a representative collection, selecting about a fifth of the poems from each of Sena's published volumes. One need only read the two selections from *Sobre Esta Praia* reprinted in *The Poetry* to appreciate that that selection, from sequences, amounts to truncation. Everything that is established by the interrelation of the parts is lost, and that is a great deal (this is even more the case in the poems taken from the difficult and involuted sonnet sequence *The Evidences*, and there the problem is compounded by the divergent styles of the various translators, despite the manifest quality of translations like Rip Cohen's). But even when it is not a matter of breaking up sequences, we approach a poet better when we read his best work closely than when we read around in almost forty years of poetry of uneven quality and various intent. The pitfalls of trying to cover too much ground are even more apparent in Frederick Williams' introduction, which, with its one-line summaries of difficult poems, manages to make most of them sound banal, which they're not.

Criticisms aside, the reader doesn't have to look far in this volume to find excellent poetry. "Fidelity," for instance:

*Tell me slowly nothing at all, like
your mere presence with which you forgive me
this fidelity to my fate.
All you do not tell me like this is for me
that you tell it. And fates are lived
like another life. Or like solitude.
And who enters there? And who can be there
longer than the moment of being alone with himself?*

*Tell me then slowly nothing at all:
what would be told to death if it could hear,
or to the dead if they could return.*

(translated by Jean R. Longland)

There are, indeed, many poems which will arrest the reader's attention, such as the "Art of Love" (Ovid again!), "Notions of Linguistics," "I Know the Salt," "In Crete, with the Minotaur," "In the Shadows, How About It," "Roaming Around Europe, Nothing Sentimental," and the live voice which rings in James Houlihan's translation of "Love Not Loved" (here is the third section):

*Still today, my God,
there is a love which blinds me
at the moment when to see would be to gain time.
Let us allow lost ideals to cross
and the love not loved and the time that conquered it.
I stretch my hands and you rest in my fingers.*

The selection is very large; one can only hope readers will find their way to poems that speak to them.

George Monteiro, in his editing of *In Crete with the Minotaur, and Other Poems*, makes no pretense of representativeness. He chose poems which were compelling on their own and which he felt could be compellingly rendered into English. With just twenty-six poems, and most of them short ones, he does manage to bring Sena alive, if, as he says, "the poetry was the man that Jorge de Sena fronted for." And Monteiro's modest intentions with the volume keep us from being disappointed that the only "big work" of Sena's he gives us is the title poem, an exile's poem which manages by sheer brilliance to wed myth and satire in an evocation of an ultimate exile—which never came for Sena—when one would no longer hate "the absence of humanity in this world":

Yet, if I someday forget it all,

*I expect to grow old
Drinking coffee in Crete
With the Minotaur,
Beneath the gaze of shameless gods.*

(translation by George Monteiro)

But if there are no other longer works included, the "other poems" are well chosen. Little poems like "Mankind is Always the Same" and "Holding Hands," astonishing erotic poems like "I Know the Salt," and terrible ones like "Warning to Cardiacs and Others Afflicted with like Diseases," each has its own force.

Surely, if Sena had written in Spanish he would be well known here already, but, as he himself said, wryly, of the Minotaur, "Like everybody else, he knows no Portuguese." These volumes make that a less viable excuse for our ignorance.

Reviewed by Kevin Oderman

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Hermann Hesse's fairy tales have been translated by Rika Lesser and will be published soon by Farrar, Straus and Giroux under the title *Pictor's Metamorphoses and Other Fantasies*.

Gregory S. Jay teaches English at the University of Alabama. He has published in *Partisan Review*, and has essays on Poe and T.S. Eliot forthcoming. His book on Eliot will be published soon by LSU Press.

Tommaso Landolfi was born in 1908 and died in 1979. His last collection of short stories, *Del Meno*, appeared in 1978.

Julie Ann Lepick teaches English at Texas A&M. She has published in *The CEA Critic*, *Helios*, *The Michigan Academician*, and *Choice*. Her book on technical writing is forthcoming with Scott, Foresman & Co.

Herman Rapaport teaches English at Loyola University in Chicago. He has published in *Diacritics* and *Modern Language Notes* and has an article forthcoming in *Enclitic*. His book, *Milton: The Thanatopraxie of Writing*, a post-structuralist reading of Milton, is forthcoming with the University of Nebraska Press.

Ralph R. Read teaches in the Department of Germanic Languages at The University of Texas at Austin. His translations of two of Bienek's novels, *Bakunin: An Invention* and *The First Polka* were published by Victor Gollancz (London) in 1977 and 1978.

Ronald Schleifer teaches at the University of Oklahoma and is the Editor of *Genre*. He has published numerous articles in such journals as *Modern Language Quarterly*, *Philological Quarterly*, *Modern Language Notes*, *Studies in English Literature*, *Genre*, and *Criticism*. He is the editor of a book entitled *The Genres of the Irish Literary Revival*.

J.P. Telotte teaches English and Film at Georgia Tech. His previous work on film and science fiction has appeared in *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Popular Film*.

Jeannie Thompson has had a book of poems published under the title *Lotus & Psalms* by the Baltic Arts Press in Birmingham, Alabama.

Lawrence Venuti teaches in the English Department at Temple University. In 1980, he won the PEN American Center's Renato Poggioli Award for Translation from the Italian. He has published two book-length translations: *Delirium*, by Barbara Alberti (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980), and *Scientific Autobiography*, by Aldo Rossi (MIT Press, 1981). His translations have appeared in *Antaeus*, *Attenzione*, *Chicago Review*, *Parabola*, *Harper's*, and *Partisan Review*.

Steven White's bilingual anthology of Nicaraguan poetry will soon be published by Unicorn Press (Greensboro, NC).

OUR NEXT ISSUE will include articles by David Miller, Greg Jay, Herman Rapaport, an interview with David Madden, and a response from Frank Lentricchia.