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Joint PhD thesis
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David VICHNAR

THE AVANT-POSTMAN: *JAMES JOYCE, THE AVANT-GARDE & POSTMODERNISM*

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Résumé

La thèse, intitulée « L'Avant-Postman: James Joyce, L'Avant-Garde et le Postmoderne », s'efforce de construire une généalogie littéraire post-joycienne, centrée sur les notions de l'avant-garde joycienne et de l'expérimentation littéraire, et prend les deux dernières œuvres de Joyce, *Ulysses* et *Finnegans Wake*, pour points de départ des avant-gardes d'après la seconde guerre mondiale, une époque généralement appelée « postmoderne », en Grande-Bretagne, aux États-Unis, et en France.

L'Introduction identifie la notion d'une avant-garde joycienne à l'exploration, par Joyce, de la matérialité du langage et l'identification de sa dernière œuvre, le « Work in Progress », à la « Révolution du mot », défendue par Eugène Jolas dans sa revue *transition*.

L'exploration joycienne de la matérialité du langage se comprend selon trois orientations : l'écriture conçue comme une trace physique, susceptible d'être distordue ou effacée ; le langage littéraire compris comme une forgerie des mots des autres ; le projet de la création d'un idiome personnel, défini comme un langage « autonome », qui doit être caractéristique de la littérature vraiment moderne.

La thèse est divisée en huit chapitres, deux pour la Grande-Bretagne (de B.S. Johnson, Brooke-Rose à Iain Sinclair), deux pour les États-Unis (de Burroughs et Gass à Acker et Sorrentino) et trois pour la France (le nouveau roman, l'Oulipo, et la groupe *Tel Quel*). Le Chapitre VIII retrace l'héritage joycien pour la littérature après 2000 dans ces trois espaces nationaux. La conclusion définit l'avant-garde joycienne, telle qu'elle est thématisée après la seconde guerre mondiale, comme un défi adressé à la notion de « postmoderne ».

***Mots clés : James Joyce, l'avant-garde littéraire, le postmoderne, littérature expérimentale d'après-guerre, histoire littéraire, littérature comparée*.**

Abstract

The thesis, entitled “The Avant-Postman: James Joyce, the Avant-Garde and Postmodernism,” attempts to construct a post-Joycean literary genealogy centred around the notions of a Joycean avant-garde and literary experimentation written in its wake. It considers the last two works by Joyce, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, as points of departure for the post-war literary avant-gardes in Great Britain, the USA, and France, in a period generally called “postmodern.”

The introduction bases the notion of a Joycean avant-garde upon Joyce’s sustained exploration of the materiality of language and upon the appropriation of his last work, his “Work in Progress,” for the cause of the “Revolution of the word” conducted by Eugene Jolas in his *transition* magazine. The Joycean exploration of the materiality of language is considered as comprising three stimuli: the conception of writing as physical trace, susceptible to distortion or effacement; the understanding of literary language as a forgery of the words of others; and the project of creating a personal idiom as an “autonomous” language for a truly modern literature.

The material is divided into eight chapters, two for Great Britain (from B.S. Johnson via Brooke-Rose to Iain Sinclair), two for the U.S. (from Burroughs and Gass to Acker and Sorrentino) and three for France (the *nouveau roman*, Oulipo, and the *Tel Quel* group). Chapter Eight traces the Joycean heritage within the literature after 2000 of the three national literary spaces. The conclusion contextualises the theme of the Joycean post-war avant-garde as a challenge to the notion of “postmodernism.”

Keywords: James Joyce, the literary avant-garde, postmodernism, post-war experimental literature, literary history, comparative literature.

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Per aspera ad astra.

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INTRODUCTION: JOYCE THE AVANT-

We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries,
to understand our interpreter. (Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*)

The task set by Richard Ellmann—"to become Joyce's contemporary" (*JJ*, 3)—is undertaken in the present work by charting the development of post-war writing that followed in the footsteps of Joyce's "revolution of the word," his exploration of the materiality of language and the aesthetic autonomy of fiction. Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, the latter propagated and interpreted by Jolas and the *transition* cohort, are a joint starting point from which genealogical lines of development or constellations of concepts are drawn and formed. The argument traces the many departures from Joyce's materialist poetics in post-war Anglo-American and French literature that came to be dubbed, by their adherents and detractors alike, "experimental," or "avant-garde." The timeframe is, roughly speaking, the last four decades of the 20th century, with a few post-2000 enjambments that bring the entire genealogy into the present. Ellmann's statement casts Joyce in a peculiar double temporality. As if Joyce were somehow ahead of us; as if the actuality of his writing and life had somehow not yet exhausted their potential; as if Joyce's writing, in a messianic fashion, were dependent upon some second coming; as if its message, just as Sir Tristram in the second paragraph of *Finnegans Wake*, had "passencore rearrived" (*FW* 3.4-5). As if the novelty of Joyce's work, its "being ahead," its *avant-*, brought about certain belatedness within our reception of it, a *post*-ness.

JOYCE THE AVANT-

The notion of being ahead, of being so novel as to seem to come from the future, is essential to the programmes of the movements of artistic avant-garde that have reshaped 20th-century art and literature. Writing described as "avant-garde" in what follows, will be understood along the lines of Renato Poggioli's seminal study on *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Here, avant-garde writing is marked by its concentration on linguistic creativity as "a necessary reaction to the flat, opaque, and prosaic nature of our public speech, where the practical end of quantitative communication spoils the quality of expressive means." This reaction has an essentially social task in that it functions as "at once cathartic and therapeutic in respect to the degeneration afflicting common language through conventional habits."[1] Hence, avant-garde writing is one whose "cult of novelty and even of the strange" has definable historical and social causes in the "tensions of our bourgeois, capitalistic, and technological society."[2] Conversely, the notion of belatedness, of having one's present moment already defined by a past that somehow pre-programmes it, with little left to do for the present beyond re-enacting, repeating or forging the past's originary actions and statements, resonates within the common detraction of post-war neo-avant-gardes in canonical criticism.[3] Peter Bürger's famous re-contextualisation of Poggioli's argument within a broader historico-philosophical framework entails an insistence on the inherence of the historical avant-garde praxis to its proper historical context:

> In a changed context, the resumption of avant-garde intentions with the means of avant-gardism can no longer even have the limited effectiveness the historical avant-gardes achieved. To the extent that the means by which the avant-gardistes hoped to bring about the sublation of art have attained the status of works of art, the claim that the praxis of life is to be renewed can no longer be legitimately connected with their employment. To formulate more pointedly: the neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the *avant-garde as art* and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste intentions. […] Neo-avant-gardiste art is autonomous art in the full sense of the term, which means that it negates the avant-gardiste intention of returning art to the praxis of life.[4]

1 Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde,* trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968) 37.
2 Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde,* 80; 107.
3 Also, one encounters this awareness of belatedness vis-à-vis Joyce everywhere in Joycean scholarship, which ever so often finds itself *already in the text*, coming not from the outside, but somehow generated from, solicited by, the Joyce text which always already includes, as it were, its own theory. Cf. David Vichnar, *Joyce Against Theory* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia Books, 2010), in view of whose overall argument, the criticism of Joyce appears as a discourse centred around a few governing notions and operations already "at work" in Joyce's text.
4 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1984) 58.

As will become clear, one of the three reasons for basing a "Joycean avant-garde" on his close alliance with the *transition* magazine is that of sidestepping the avant-garde vs. neo-avant-garde dichotomy in favour of a programme of writing which serves "cathartic and therapeutic" functions in respect to "the degeneration afflicting common language through conventional habits" (à la Poggioli's avant-garde) but at the same time remains "autonomous" in its insistence on "the disintegration of words and their subsequent reconstruction on other planes," and in its disparagement toward "the plain reader"[5] (à la Bürger's neo-avant-garde). The *transition* magazine, during the eleven years of its activity (1927-38), published not only seventeen instalments from Joyce's "Work in Progress" to become *Finnegans Wake* in 1939, as well as all the twelve essays that were to form the *Our Exagmination* collection, but also many theoretical analyses, polemics, proclamations and defences of the work against its detractors. Its guiding spirits were Elliot Paul and especially Eugène Jolas (1894-1952), an American raised in Alsace, whose trilingualism was reflected in his own writings as well as in the cosmopolitanism of the journal, arguably the last of the great vanguard vehicles of high modernism, and definitely the only one (at least of such scale and durability) explicitly devoted to the avant-garde. In retrospect, Jolas characterised *transition* as "a workshop of the intercontinental spirit, a proving ground of the new literature, a laboratory for poetic experiment."[6] Again, Jolas' avant-garde undertaking was marked by certain belatedness: by the publication of its first number in 1927, the historical avant-garde had been on the wane if not defunct, and so *transition* gained another, retrogressive dimension: that of the archive. Jolas himself conceived of *transition* as a "documentary organ" dedicated to presenting what he referred to later as "pan-romanticism."

More literally, the reception of *Finnegans Wake* was a belated one for reasons of historical contingency: its 1939 publication on the eve of World War II, and the reaction—for most of the 1950s—against experiment in favour of a socially oriented and politically engaged art production, effectively turned Joyce's last work into a symbolic end of an old era rather than an opening of a new one. As David Hayman puts it, "after its 1939 publication, the *Wake* fell seemingly into a black hole," hiding in wait for its (belated) revisitation, calling upon future writers

> to reshape the very tools of their craft, to say nothing of their means of perception. Not too many writers have answered the call, though a great many have responded and continue to respond to the less extreme challenge of *Ulysses*. Still, something else is now clear. The *Wake* belongs to a class (not a genre) of works which invite the reader to perpetuate creation.[7]

Thus, there is a second sense in which *transition* is a useful starting point for the genealogical lines charted in this thesis: its notion of functioning as a "documentary organ" of the historical avant-garde is applicable to those post-war avant-garde groups, schools, or movements that chose to "perpetuate Joyce's creation," themselves becoming "documentary organs" of the effects of his poetics. All three principal avant-garde groupings in the post-1960 British, American, and French fiction—centred around B.S. Johnson's experimentalism, the Surfictionist group around Raymond Federman, and the ensemble of literary theorists and practitioners around the *Tel Quel* magazine, respectively—have fulfilled this function. Last but not least, *transition*—in Jolas' conception of it—was not only "a workshop of the intercontinental spirit"—and it is its internationalism and threefold focus on America, Britain and France that the present work also re-enacts—but also "a laboratory for poetic experiment." Since Jolas himself uses a scientific metaphor (without however providing any sort of further conceptual rationale), it is not inopportune to anachronistically tie Jolas' stress on poetic experiment with what, ten years after, philosopher John Dewey identified as the chief principle of the development of modern science:

> In the history of man, the individual characteristics of mind were regarded as deviations from the normal, and as dangers against which society had to protect itself. Hence the long rule of custom, the rigid conservatism, and the still existing regime of conformity and intellectual standardisation. The development of modern science began when there was recognized in certain technical fields a power to utilize variations as the starting points of new observations, hypotheses and experiments. The

5 Eugene Jolas, "The Revolution of Language and James Joyce," *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress: A Symposium*, ed. Samuel Beckett (New York: New Directions, 1929) 79-80.
6 *Transition Workshop*, ed. Eugene Jolas (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1949) 13.
7 David Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," *In the Wake of the Wake*, eds. David Hayman & Elliott Anderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 3-4.

> growth of the experimental as distinct from the dogmatic habit of mind is due to increased ability to utilize variations for constructive ends instead of suppressing them.[8]

Replace the "modern science" in Dewey's argument with Jolas' "new literature" and you will arrive at *transition*'s conception of experimentalism, conditioned by "a power to utilize variations as the starting points of new observations" and the "ability to utilize variations for constructive ends instead of suppressing them." It is less a question of programme than a "habit of mind," a mode of experiencing. To say this is to commit an etymological pleonasm, as the word "experiment" comes from Old French *esperment* meaning "practical knowledge, cunning, enchantment" and consequently "trial, proof, example, lesson," derived from Latin *experimentum* "a trial, test, proof, experiment," a noun of action stemming from *experiri*, "to test, try." And it is out of this root verb that the word *experientia* grows, denoting "knowledge gained by repeated trials." In turn, the structure of the verb entails the prefix *ex-*, "out of," *peritus* "tested, passed over." Experiment, as experience, is the process of departing from what has been tested, of gaining knowledge by venturing beyond the known grounds, toward, as with *transition*, the "testing ground of new literature."

Although present in *transition* from its very start,[9] it was not until *transition* 11 (Feb 1928) that Joyce's work was drafted as part of Jolas' revolutionary programme. In "The Revolution of Language and James Joyce," Jolas presents the first sustained analysis of what needs to be accomplished for literature to be made genuinely "new":

> The Real metaphysical problem today is the word. The epoch when the writer photographed the life about him the mechanics of words redolent of the daguerreotype, is happily drawing to its close. The new artist of the word has recognized the autonomy of language and, aware of the twentieth century current towards universality, attempts to hammer out a verbal vision that destroys time and space.[10]

Jolas goes on to call for, among other things, "the disintegration of words and their subsequent reconstruction on other planes" which "constitute some of the most important acts of our epoch."[11] This disintegration is made all the more necessary by progress in psychology and psychoanalysis, whose "discoveries of the subconscious […] should have made it apparent that the instrument of language in its archaic condition could no longer be used."[12] And it is Joyce's "Work in Progress" on whose basis Jolas formulates the notion of aesthetic autonomy or the idea of the materiality of the word:

> Modern life, with its changed mythos and transmuted concepts of beauty makes it imperative that words be given new compositions and relationships. James Joyce, in his new work published serially in transition, has given a body blow to the traditionalists. As he subverts the orthodox meaning of words, the upholders of the norm are seized with panic, and all those who regard the English language as a static thing, sacrosanct in its position, and dogmatically defended by a crumbling hierarchy of philologists and pedagogues, are afraid.[13]

Jolas' reading of Joyce's "Work in Progress" emphasises the materiality of the word as an agent of historical change and the necessity for a new aesthetic of "decreation." Language, like history, is in a condition of continuous flux and yet potentially expressive of a mystical realm whose modern forms have been described in psychoanalysis, myth criticism and surrealist art. Axiomatic—and also quite in tune with Joyce's own beliefs—in Jolas' argument is the conviction that the revolution of the word is one where the new does not simply erase or replace the old, but where language is in a state of constant flow and blending of various sediments. Revolution takes place less by means of a total overthrow of one regime by another than through the process of the new order subsuming into itself an earlier one. Despite the necessity of linguistic change, Joyce's creative deformation makes it easier to recover what persists through time.[14] The concept of autonomy has its roots in Kantian ethical thought, tied with the modern idea of freedom, the

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8 John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958) xiv.
9 Stuart Gilbert would reminisce years later over "that spring afternoon in Rue de l'Odéon" when he read the opening lines of what was to become *Finnegans Wake* on the first page of *transition* 1 (*Transition Workshop*, 19).
10 Jolas, "The Revolution of Language and James Joyce," 79.
11 Jolas, "The Revolution of Language and James Joyce," 79-80.
12 Jolas, "The Revolution of Language and James Joyce," 80.
13 Jolas, "The Revolution of Language and James Joyce," 81.
14 Patricia Waugh has historicised Jolas' notion of linguistic autonomy as springing from the following sources: "the 'magic idealism' of Novalis, the work of Jung and Freud, Bergsonian vitalism, and late nineteenth-century symbolism and the French surrealists, abandonment of ordinary waking consciousness or of everyday language, of positivism and empiricism, as instruments of knowledge. […] Jolas' idea of the revolutionary artistic word is borrowed from the new sciences of the mind which in turn depend upon a Darwinian understanding of evolution (Waugh, "Introduction: Looking

capacity to follow self-determined, rationally formulated principles as opposed to irrationalism from within and tyrannical oppression from without.[15] Jolas' version of autonomy was specifically intended to ease into history the linguistic macaronics of Joyce's work as a monument to the new cosmos of the scientists and philosophers and the new self of psychoanalysis and anthropology – this concept of aesthetic autonomy, viewed by Jolas as the most radical effect of the revolution of the word, would soon become virtually definitive of cultural modernism.[16] However blatant in pursuing his own agenda at Joyce's expense, Jolas' theories were never disputed or opposed by Joyce[17] – to the contrary, in a few *Finnegans Wake* passages, Jolas is presented as Joyce's spokesman. Joyce fully embraced *transition*'s revolution of the word, a restoration of the word into a position of respectability that it had relinquished to the image. A year after Jolas' conceptualisation of Joyce's linguistic autonomy, the June 1929 double-issue of *transition* 16/17 featured Samuel Beckett's earliest work of criticism, his essay "Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce," which contains one of the most famous and often-quoted observations about the language of the *Wake* in the whole of Joyce criticism:

> Here is direct expression – pages and pages of it. And if you don't understand it, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is because you are too decadent to receive it. You are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read the other. […] Here form *is* content, content *is* form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*.[18]

Beckett's concept of "direct expression" and his instance on the conflation of content and form in Joyce's *Wake* was soon to become the guiding principles under which Joyce's materialist poetics came to be enlisted by so-called concrete writing. Thus, the Joycean avant-garde can be defined as emergent from his lifelong preoccupation with the materiality of language and partaking of the Jolasian "revolution of the word" through its linguistic poetics foregrounding the materiality of language. Joyce elevates this tendency of the modernist "attention to the medium" to a principle governing the development of his oeuvre, marked as it is, from the floating signifiers of "paralysis," "gnomon," and "simony" in the first paragraph of "The Sisters"—the first *Dubliners* story—to the possibly inexhaustible allusive potential of almost all "words" in *Finnegans Wake*, by a constant preoccupation with the materiality of language. The "scrupulous meanness" of *Dubliners*' seemingly naturalist prose is complexified by means of Joyce's etymological recalls or syntactical manipulations conveying the idiosyncratic rhythms of *Dubliners*' speech. The opening scene of *A Portrait*, with its multiple shifts in perspective, repetitiveness, and verbal deformation ("*O, the wild rose blossoms*" becoming "*O the geen wothe botheth*" [*P,* 7]), portrays the individual's entry into language as charged with socio-sexual tension. In various places throughout *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus perceives words "silently emptied of instantaneous sense," thereby forming "heaps of dead language" (*P* 150) – language as material foreign and mysterious to the human subjectivity, and yet affecting it profoundly: words like "suck" or "foetus" (described as "queer"), or, later on, *les jupes* or *mulier cantat*, evoke a bodily reaction of arousal and delirium.

Ulysses foregrounds linguistic materiality on the many various macro-levels: most obviously, by means of the famed mythological method, the constant superimposition of multiple layers of narrative and the imposition of the Homeric intertext on its encyclopaedic rendering of 16 June 1904 in the colonial city of Dublin. Then, through the multi-

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Back on the Modern Tradition," *Revolutions of the Word: Intellectual Contexts for the Study of Modern Literature*, ed. Patricia Waugh [London & New York: Arnold, 1997] 10-1).

15 Transferred to the realm of the aesthetic, "Kantian universalism involves the idea that art creates its own universe, one structured according to internal rules which are not subordinate to or interchangeable with the imperatives of other orders outside of the aesthetic. […] The kind of commitment to autonomy voiced by Jolas in his famous essay was as much an attempt to expand and problematize the relations of art to history as to close them down" (Waugh, "Introduction: Looking Back on the Modern Tradition," 11).

16 Patricia Waugh has contextualised this attention to the medium within the broad field of modernism: "What is common to science, philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology and art is a retreat from a common-sensical positivism, a recognition of the limits of ordinary perception, and an opening of vision to a sense of the profound strangeness of world and self discovered within these modern disciplines" (Waugh, "Introduction: Looking Back on the Modern Tradition," 13).

17 Even Michael Finney's article in Hayman's collection, devoted to unmasking incongruities in Jolas' linguistic theory and literary practice and to stressing their foreignness to Joyce's project, ends on a lenient note: "Joyce agreed with some of the things Jolas had to say about reconstructing language, and he was indulgent of any philosophy or approach which would justify his linguistic and literary experiment. But whatever the truth, the fact remains that until its publication as *Finnegans Wake* in 1939, 'Work in Progress' was intimately associated with the Revolution of the Word—physically and ideologically—in the pages of *transition*" (Michael Finney, "Eugene Jolas, *transition*, and the Revolution of the Word," *In the Wake of the Wake*, 52).

18 Samuel Beckett, "Dante… Bruno. Vico..Joyce," *Our Exagmination*, 25-6.

plicity of its styles and discourse parodies (e.g. the "Oxen of the Sun" episode at the maternity hospital, staging the evolution of the entire language), through the amount of "found" or "ready-made" linguistic material included (e.g. the "Eumaeus" chapter, stitched together from hundreds of recycled clichés, but also e.g. the famous "Plumtree's Potted Meat" advertisement [*U* 17.560]), through its exploration of the visual and graphic dimension of typography and textuality (the "Aeolus" chapter at the newspaper room, but also e.g. the incident in which the "POST NO BILLS" wall inscription wears off to form "POST 110 PILLS" [*U* 8.93]), but also on the level of the signifier. Examples abound: the very first sentence moves from "stately" to "crossed," from the "state" to the "cross" (symbolising the Church), but also alluding to the Biblical "stations of the cross" (*U* 1.1-3). Another notorious instance is Molly Bloom's translation of *metempsychosis* as "met him pikehoses" (*U* 4.343) whereby misheard Greek is turned into the speech of an Irish housewife, just as Joyce turns the Greek epic into an Anglo-Irish novel. A prime example is the opening of "The Sirens" episode, composed of 58 phrases (57 of which are repeated later on in the episode's text) which stage the interplay of letters and words as material which resists meaning-driven interpretation since meaning is context-based.

Finnegans Wake explores the materiality of language at the level of the signifier via the pun and the portmanteau, which together teach the lesson of the indivisibility of meaning from its material representation. Joyce's "whorld" (*FW* 100.29) order, so the theory goes, has the merit of being based on language—which is man-made—rather than on incomprehensible cosmic events. Joyce thus simultaneously desacralizes both religion and language by means of signifiers that no longer stand for something signified but are objects in their own right, the Beckettian "something *itself*," the subjects of multiple intentions inviting different interpretations. Their complexity makes meaning not something already accomplished, waiting to be expressed, but instead functions as a horizon, a perspective of semiotic production. Joyce elevates this tendency of the modernist "attention to the medium" to a principle governing the development of his oeuvre, marked as it is, from the floating signifiers of "paralysis," "gnomon," and "simony" in the first paragraph of "The Sisters"—the first *Dubliners* story—to the possibly inexhaustible allusive potential of almost all "words" in *Finnegans Wake*, by a constant preoccupation with the materiality of language. Joyce's use of the portmanteau word and multilingual punning in creating the *Wakean* language can be seen as variously destabilising identity – of language, history, nation, and last but not least, of its own existence as text, within the potentially infinite re-writings imposed upon it in the reading process. To speak of *indenting* where identity is concerned is most relevant with the *Wake*, a text in whose "scherzarade of one's thousand one nightinesses that sword of certainty which would *indentifide* the body never falls" (*FW* 51.4-6, my italics). To *indentifide* is to identify with an "indentation" – for fiction, just as history, functions and operates as a product of writing through the operation of reading. Furthermore, the very same sentence indents *indentifide* as *idendifine*, performing one instance of the sundry internal variations and differentiations that run the whole gamut of the Wakean "indentity of undiscernibles" (*FW* 49.36-50.1) where the only (s)word that never falls is that of certain and unambiguous identity. The reader's identity, too, undergoes destabilization in that every reading of the *Wake* becomes split between the eye that registers multiplicity and the voice which can sound only one text at a time. In other words, every one of the potentially inexhaustible readerly realizations *indents* the identity of the written: with the *Wake* more so than with any other text, to read is to re-write, to counter-sign. Every reading is a performance with a difference of the textual material. *Indenting* stretches out into legal discourse not only via the contractual relation of *indenture*, but also in that it denotes *forging*, *duplicating* – and the voice's duplication, the performance, of the written is nowhere more forcefully limiting than in the *Wake*.

Finnegans Wake ties these concerns with the understanding of linguistic autonomy as its signature, the mark of its singularity. This is foregrounded in the famous rhetorical question, "why, pray, sign anything as long as every word, letter, penstroke, paperspace is a perfect signature of its own?" (*FW* 115.6-8) In the first of its interpretive investigations into the "original" trespass of one HCE, or Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker (*FW* 30.2), or Here Comes Everybody (*FW* 32.18-9), one finds the following injunction: "Hesitency was clearly to be evitated. Execration as cleverly to be honnisoid" (*FW* 35.1-21). *Hesitency* as a mark of writing which over-means its own sound-realisation, is not only the

figure for all reading and interpretation forever re-realising its object, and not only for the writing functioning as the self's peculiarly alienated, original and thus always to be forged, signature. More specifically, Joyce uses it to refer to his own artistic *mark*, his own forgery of language in the *Wake* where so much revolves around a letter penned in order to wash away the blame sticking to HCE. When elsewhere in the *Wake* Joyce's altered writerly ego Shem mentions his "celebridging over the guilt of the gap in your hiscitendency" (*FW* 305.8-9), there is the unbridgeable "gap" out of which springs the notion of a "divided agency" behind any signature, behind all writing, but even more importantly, *hesitency* becomes *his-cite-tendency*, the tendency toward citing. Forgery for Joyce is also a metaphor for artistic creation. Forgery is a figure for literary writing, forged not only in the sense of writing as technology, as that which is "wrought out of crude matter," but also in the sense of literature as "discourse" founded upon appropriation and misappropriation of words-of-the-other, whether in the narrow sense of another writer's or in the widest sense of language itself. Asks Shem the penman, the letter-writer:

> Who can say how many pseudostylic shamiana, how few or how many of the most venerated public impostures, how very many piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first place by this morbid process from his pelagiarist pen? (*FW* 181.36-182.3)

Joyce's "pelagiarist pen" insists, throughout his whole oeuvre but especially in the *Wake*, that literary authenticity is impossible without forgery: of the letter, of the word, of diction, of style. However, for Shem's letter to be delivered, the figure of the postman, the letter-carrier, is required – and found in the character of Shem's brother Shaun. Here is an apostrophe directed to one of his variant incarnations:

> Mine bruder, able Shaun […], Winner of the gamings, primed at the studience, propredicted from the storybouts, the choice of ages wise! Spickspookspokesman of our specturesque silentiousness! (*FW* 427.17-33)

The epithet, "winner of the gamings," identifies Jolas as the Shaun figure here, via reference to his correct guess of the title (*Finnegans Wake*) of Joyce's book at the 1937 family Thanksgiving dinner. Jolas, who was "propredicted from the storybouts," predicted as the *Wake*'s propagator early on, a role fulfilled over the course of the ten-year friendship with Joyce, and who functioned as the "spickspookspokesman of our specturesque silentiousness," the spokesperson of Joyce's silence about his own work, with Joyce arguably "ghost/spook-writing" parts of some of Jolas' articles.[19]

Taken together, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* bring about a change in the conception of what writing can and should do, issuing forth from their sustained examination of language as material and their avant-garde conception of aesthetic autonomy. They launch a series of effects for which the post-war (neo-)avant-garde functions as a type of "documentary organ." These effects can be roughly divided into three groups:

1) concrete writing, the conception of words as traces disseminated in the materiality of the book; the typographical foregrounding of letters, signs and words as distinct objects; what has come to be termed "metatextuality" or "liberature"[20];
2) writing as plagiarism, the forgery of fiction, the word as always belonging to the other and in need of appropriation; writing as parodic subversion of established discourses and styles; the Joycean "True Sentence" as always embedded in an ascertainable voice, always bearing a signature;[21]

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19 Cf. McMillan, *Transition 1927-38: The History of a Literary Era*, 221-2.

20 Michael Kaufmann uses the term *metatextuality* for works that "'show' themselves and comment physically on their material existence in the way that metafictional works comment on their fictiveness" and whose printed form "becomes a part of the narrative," so that ultimately, "the narrative occurs not only on the 'other side' of the page but directly in front of the readers' eyes on the surface of the page itself" (Michael Kaufmann, *Textual Bodies: Modernism, Postmodernism, and Print* [London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1994] 14-5) ; Katarzyna Bazarnik has coined the term *liberature* pertaining to works where "the typography and shape of the book, or its bibliographic code, becomes a peculiar stylistic device deliberately used by authors […who] go beyond mere words, using typography, images, kind and colour of paper or other material they find more suitable for their purpose, sometimes even modifying the very form of the volume" (Katarzyna Bazarnik, *Joyce & Liberature* [Prague: Litteraria Pragensia Books, 2011] ii).

21 The conviction that reality "does not answer to the 'point of view,' the monocular vision, the single ascertainable tone. A tone, a voice, is somebody's, a person's, and people are confined to being themselves, are Evelines, are Croftons, are Stephens... The True Sentence, in Joyce's opinion, had best settle for being true to the voice that utters it, and moreover had best acknowledge that when voices commence listening to themselves they turn into styles" (Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* [London: Faber & Faber, 1978] 16).

3) destabilisation of the signifier as vehicle of established univocal meaning by means of multilingual punning and the technique of the portmanteau, a treatment of words as composite objects themselves, as machines generating polyvocal ever-shifting conglomerates of meanings; what Donald Theall terms a Joycean "techno-poetics."[22]

These would, then, constitute the Joycean avant-garde "signature" in solicitation of a counter-signature. As avant-gardists to the extent to which Joyce never quite fitted the bill, the writers dealt with here will be considered as both practitioners and theorists of fiction, as formulators of their own fiction programmes. Their critical work will therefore be examined as indicative of their attitude toward, and re-use of, the Joycean materialist poetics. Explicit commentary on Joyce's treatment of language or his technical and stylistic advances, will be taken as a starting point in evaluating the writers' position within the lineage issuing from his writing. The fiction will, then, be treated from two major viewpoints: the "textual" and the "conceptual." By "textual" is meant both an overt acknowledgement of Joyce's writing in passing, an allusion or quotation, oftentimes of parodic purpose, as well as the more subtle way of establishing a link through a type of similarity, whether stylistic or thematic. In the present context, symptomatic of a Joycean presence within the work of fiction under scrutiny will be the employment of a meta-narrative grid or scheme resultant in multiplication of styles (after *Ulysses*), and the enhancement of the expressive potential of language through verbal complexification, deformation, recreation (à la *Finnegans Wake*). Throughout, however, *influence* will be understood as no mere borrowing or passive imitation, but active transformation of the Joycean exploration of the materiality of language and the effects achieved through experimentation with the stylistic reservoir of language. A spectral Joycean presence will be found in what follows: a genealogy of post-war experimental writing countersigning Joyce's signature, of works that countersign *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* by taking account of what is singular about their materialist poetics, and re-imagining what that singularity could become in the new contexts of post-war literary production, creating wholly new singularities.[23]

The only major book-length treatise on literary response to *Finnegans Wake* and an attempt at conceptualising a tradition "in its wake," the only precursor to the present undertaking, is Hayman and Anderson's co-edited work *In the Wake of the Wake*, combining critical essays with interviews and excerpts from the works taken as representatives of this tradition. In Hayman's introduction, the post-*Wake* novel tradition is conceptualised as "growing out of tendencies central to the *Wake* rather than directly out of the *Wake* itself," and Hayman is careful to limit his case for both influence and impact to "writers who have actually read and studied Joyce" – hence his two excellent interviews with Maurice Roche and Philippe Sollers, as well as the inclusion of an essay by Haroldo de Campos on "The *Wake* in Brazil and Hispanic America," documenting Hayman's conviction that "to date, most of the work in this "tradition" has been done by writers in languages other than English."[24] Accordingly, his further examples include Hélène Cixous, Michel Butor, Raymond Queneau, the Brazilian Noigandres group of concrete poetry (Augusto and Haroldo de Campos), and the German experimentalist Arno Schmidt. Writers from the Anglo-American cultural space include Christine Brooke-Rose, Anthony Burgess, Raymond Federman and John Barth. Hayman's collection is a survey, and with the exception of the two interviews, he does not detail just how exactly these writers "have actually read and studied Joyce" – even though the degree of familiarity with Joyce's *Wake* varies greatly between, say, Burgess and Brooke-Rose or Butor

22 "Joyce wrote books that were pivotal for examining relationships between the body and poetic communication and for exploring aspects of such items on the contemporary intellectual agenda as orality and literacy; the importance of transverse communication in contemporary discourse; the role of transgression in communication; the role of practical consciousness in everyday life; and the relationship between the events of everyday life and their embodiment and materialization in the sensory nature of the contemporary interior monologue" (Donald F. Theall, *Beyond the Word: Reconstructing Sense in the Joyce Era of Technology, Culture and Communication* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995] 56).

23 In conversation with the Joyce scholar Derek Attridge, Jacques Derrida spoke of a "duel of singularities": of writing and reading, in the course of which a countersignature comes both to confirm, repeat and respect the signature of the other, of the "original" work, and to *lead it off* elsewhere, so running the risk of *betraying* it, having to betray it in a certain way so as to respect it, through the invention of another signature just as singular. Thus redefined, the concept of the countersignature gathers up the whole paradox: you have to give yourself over singularly to singularity, but singularity itself then does have to share itself out and so compromise itself" (Jacques Derrida, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida,*" Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge [New York: Routledge, 1992] 69).

24 Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," 4-5.

and Federman. Moreover, Michael Finney's essay on "Eugene Jolas, *Transition* and the Revolution of the Word," fails to bring forth the essential points of connection between Jolas' revolutionary project and Joyce's *Wake*an poetics, settling instead for a philological critique of some of the more controversial of *transition*'s linguistic theories. Despite these blind spots, Hayman's collection (and his introduction) is useful in systematising the possible modes of the *Wake*'s impact into four categories: the use of "language as a medium, the preoccupation with the process of saying as doing"; "the refusal of plot" in favour of approximating "a portable infinity" in which "meanings proliferate amid a welter of effects"; "the increased attention to universals, the generalizing or […] "epic" tendency"; and finally a tendency "to sublimate (not destroy) structure, harmony, and radiance in order to avoid the appearance, if not the fact, of aesthetic control."[25] But, failing to engage with the writers' own theory of fiction or pronouncements regarding the tradition that had come to inform their work, Hayman still remains faced with the question of impact "inevitably mingl[ing] with that of fashions, and one may ask, Would the same thing not have occurred without Joyce?"[26]

Three other works of extant literary scholarship will be haunting—just as Joyce does with the writing under focus—the individual readings that follow: Robert Martin Adams' *Afterjoyce: Studies in Fiction after Ulysses*, Craig Hansen Werner's *Paradoxical Resolutions: American Fiction since James Joyce*, and Morton P. Levitt's *Modernist Survivors: The Contemporary Novel in England, the United States, France, and Latin America*. Adams is a historian of literary *influence* – and his study serves to show how "Joyce's influence worked either directly or indirectly in combination with many other influences."[27] His account is spot-on when pointing out how Joyce's idiosyncratic refashioning of extant literary techniques and styles grew out of his equally personal take on literary history.[28] Useful are Adams' "three thematic interludes," highly useful means by which to eke out the peculiar traits of Joyce's literary heritage, treating it in terms of "the main devices-patterns-structures that he applied to prose fiction and that others applied after him."[29] These interludes deal, first, with "Paradigms and Grids" – Joyce's use of Homeric exoskeleton in *Ulysses* so highly influential among his contemporaries. Second, in "Surfaces, Holes, Blurs, Smears," Adams describes Joyce's transformation of surfaces "from declaratives to interrogatives," turning Joyce into a representative of "two wide-spread, multi-form trends that look more contradictory than they are": the rejection of representation in favour of overt artifice and the rejection of artifice in favour of vision.[30] Last but not least, Adams deals with the broad theme of "Language," and Joyce's chief operation performed thereon, its "disintegration." Authors dealt with in Adams' study are variegated and detailed,[31] and yet, despite the plethora of authors covered, Adams' approach remains restrictive and problematic in at least three respects. The *Wake*, for him, remains "a gigantic enigma, a labyrinth more inconceivably labyrinthine and in some ways more inelegant than anything seen in literature […], without transcending, in the minds of more than a small clique, the status of a curiosity"[32] – a scandalously gross simplification, especially given the broadly comparative approach and the time of publication of his study. Second, Adams remains preoccupied with documenting particular traces of Joyce's "influence" which he fails to define (insisting throughout on its "coincidental" nature) or document with meta-literary material – there is no recourse to the authors' works of criticism or public pronouncements, and thus no substantiation of an actual Joycean link. Third, and consequent to the previous two, there is no attempt on Adams' part to conceive of Joyce's experimental heritage as a genealogy running across national and linguistic borders: Adams' book is a series of readings, insightful and detailed, but ultimately isolated and discontinuous.

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25 Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," 35-6.
26 Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," 35.
27 Robert Martin Adams, *Afterjoyce: Studies in Fiction after Ulysses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) 3.
28 As Adams points out, although Joyce studied novelists, both modern and traditional, the authors who had the most profound effect on his imagination were not writers of prose fiction, and (with the notable exception of Shakespeare) not English. Joyce's one chief acknowledged precursor—and the only novelist—was Flaubert; then there were poets (Homer or Dante), dramatists (Shakespeare or Ibsen), both (Goethe) and non-literary artists/theorists (Vico, Wagner).
29 Adams, *Afterjoyce*, 36.
30 Adams, *Afterjoyce*, 57.
31 His readings range from Joyce's contemporaries—both Anglophone (Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and Samuel Beckett) and German (Herrmann Broch, Alfred Döblin)—to Joyce's followers across linguistic and national traditions: Anglo-American (Anthony Burgess, Lawrence Durrell, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon), Spanish (José Lezama Lima, Severo Sarduy) and Italian (Carlo Emilio Gadda, Italo Calvino).
32 Adams, *Afterjoyce*, 31.

The subtitle to Werner's work delineates a specific field which is charted out with precision and consistency, exploring "the diverse ways in which the current generation has created a post-Joycean tradition in American fiction."[33] Werner openly avows that his concern is "not so much to contribute to our understanding of Joyce as to study both the understandings and the misunderstandings which have helped shape the contemporary American novel."[34] Unlike Adams' carefully painted portrait of Joyce the stylistic innovator, Werner's Joyce is the momentous synthesiser between realist observance of detail and the romanticist elevation thereof onto the level of symbol, Joyce the liberator, not of language or literature, but of experience.[35] From this nebulous and anachronistic picture emerges an equally blurry-eyed notion of the Joycean influence within the U.S. post-war letters. Werner is certainly correct when claiming that "different writers read different Joyces—Dublin(er)'s Joyce, Stephen Joyce, Homer's Joyce, Humphrey Chimpden Joyce—and react accordingly," nor is he without a point when he argues that "Joyce had no one style, yet he has influenced nearly every stylistic development in contemporary fiction,"[36] even though the disjunctive "yet" seems out of place. But this "stylelessness" appears to give Werner the license to pronounce as "Joycean" every writer who supposedly shares with him however marginal a trait – personal, artistic, stylistic, aesthetic, ideological. In Werner's overview,[37] not only does Joyce become an equally relevant point of reference for writers as unlike as John Barth and Norman Mailer (who even appear coupled together as "writer-performers") or Saul Bellow and Gilbert Sorrentino, but questions remain why writers who "consolidate his advancement on traditional forms"—whatever that might entail—should matter equally to those who "extend Joyce's technical achievement," or indeed why writers who "participate directly in their works" (another vague notion)—which is something Joyce was extremely elusive about—should be as relevant to his heritage as those who "emulate Joyce's control of biographical distance." If unlike Adams and to his credit, Werner does strive to construe a Joycean tradition or genealogy—although only within the borders of one national literature—then, to his detriment, this is a tradition so inclusive and protean as to border on meaninglessness, the adjective "Joycean" emptied of any identifiable referent. Werner's concluding aquatic metaphor fits his impressionistic approach more than would be desirable.[38]

Levitt's work treats the subject of *Modernist Survivors* within the scope of and differs from both Adams and Werner in broaching, via the example of Joyce, the broader implications of the historical periodization of modernism, its "survival" well after its supposed demise (with WWII) and its influential presence in what is too simply referred to as "postmodernism." The generality of Levitt's treatment of Joyce is a self-acknowledged one[39]; unlike Adams, and to his credit, Levitt is unafraid to posit the centrality of Joyce for the modernist era – and for the era following in its wake. However, to his detriment, Levitt fails to detail the specificities of the "Joycean" character of the Modernist Age beyond the vague notions of Joyce's "mythopoesis"—the "recognition that in myth we may test out not only our ties with societies of the past but the present status of our own society"—and Joyce's supposed "humanism," defined as "the dimin-

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33 Craig Hansen Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions: American Fiction after James Joyce* (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1982) 5.

34 Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 6.

35 "Joyce battles to liberate *experience,* to admit the full range of human life into the work of art. Joyce's most important weapon in this battle is […] his "scrupulous meanness" of observation, his refusal either to raise or lower his eyes from the concrete experience, in both its real and its dream aspects" (Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 4).

36 Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 33.

37 "Diversity characterizes contemporary American fiction as it characterized Joyce's work. Some contemporary writers delight in Joyce's technical achievement. John Barth, Russell Banks, Ronald Sukenick, and Raymond Federman manipulate and extend Joyce's stylistic innovations, while Ernest Gaines, John Updike, and Ralph Ellison consolidate his advancement on traditional forms. Other writers reexamine Joyce's conception of the relationship between the artist and his work. Jack Kerouac and Norman Mailer participate directly in their works; James Baldwin and Saul Bellow emulate Joyce's control of biographical distance; Flannery O'Connor assumes the Joycean pose of "absent" controller of the epiphanies. Still other writers reexamine Joyce's thematic concerns. Toni Morrison, William Melvin Kelley, and William Burroughs perceive the political implications of Joyce's work, while Donald Barthelme and William Gaddis extend his aesthetic themes. Pynchon, like Joyce, encompasses a wide range of seemingly incompatible extremes. Only the arranger's ingenuity limits the permutations, possible arrangements of the writers" (Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 7-8).

38 "Joyce's shadow stipples the surface of the big two-hearted river, the mainstream of American fiction. The romantic and realistic currents flow on, whirling eddying, never quite merging, pulsing in a single rhythm" (Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 195).

39 "I have been speaking of Joyce as if his art could stand for all Modernist art. This is not to deny the very real differences—artistic, philosophic, and human differences—which exist between Joyce and Mann, or Joyce and Proust, or Joyce and Kafka. [… But] it seems indisputable to me that this is the great age of the novel. And Joyce, despite his individuality, is its eponymous hero, symbol (in part because of his individuality) of its artistic and human commitment: the Modernist Age might as tellingly be labeled the Age of Joyce" (Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 9-10).

ished yet central vision of man surviving, of man persisting, a revised yet still powerful humanist vision."[40] It follows that, yet again, Levitt's Joyce is not so much a source of a well-documented genealogy as a persona, a symbolic figure: "It is the aura of Joyce that attracts me, just as I believe it compels all those novelists who follow him."[41] What is more, Levitt's "humanist" outlook and his literary historical focus leads him to effectively disparage critical theory (so instrumental in disseminating Joyce's legacy, particularly in France) and also overlook several truly experimental, even if marginal writers.[42] Levitt's argument is thus replete with shocking misjudgements and blatant simplifications, as when he makes the prediction that "Robbe-Grillet, for example, will surely be remembered more as footnote than as source, more for the implications of his theory than for its elaboration in fiction, and as far less significant novelist than his compatriots Butor and Simon."[43] Levitt's is a narrow—and oftentimes reductive—focus on Joyce the mythmaker, delimiting Joyce's legacy to that of symbolical mythical structure imposed upon detailed realism/naturalism without any consistent attention to Joyce's manipulation with the linguistic medium, or indeed with that of his followers – shared with Adams (and to some extent Werner) is also his avoidance, if not outright omission, of engagement with the heritage of Joyce's *Wake*.

None of the conceptualisations of a post-Joycean writing deals with the obvious paradox entailed in positing the centrality of James Joyce for the literature of the post-war period: a challenge to, if not undermining, most conceptualisations of what came to be called literary "postmodernism," which, at least in its application as a period-marker, is ever so often characterised as replacement of, or successor to, modernism. This despite the fact that one of its inaugural formalisations, Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, is based within a "future/anterior" temporality not dissimilar to that of Bürger's conception of the post-ness of the neo-avant-garde, or the present construction of the Joycean avant-garde and its aftereffects:

> A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. […] *Post modern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*).[44]

The Conclusion will parallel the Introduction's construction of a Joycean avant-garde by formulating (and challenging) a Joycean postmodernity, uniting the "avant-" and the "post-" from the title.

Joyce, the originator of the genealogy mapped out in the present work, will be a writer whose continuous and ever-expanding examination of the materiality of language challenge most of the simplistic dichotomies, as medium and his sublimation of structure was, in the last phase of his career, drafted in service of a specific avant-garde theory and programme, which in turn begat the following genealogy. This is the only sort of genealogy worth mapping, the only one keeping Joyce's modernist/avant-gardist signature valid and relevant. It is also the Joyce whose after-life this thesis sets out to examine, the post-life of Joyce the avant-gardist, Joyce the avant-postman.

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40 Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 10.
41 Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 11.
42 Cf. Levitt's British chapter which takes extensive effort to deplore mainstream figures like Margaret Drabble or Kingsley Amis while completely omitting experimentalists such as Christine Brooke-Rose or Brigid Brophy.
43 Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 15.
44 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) 81.

"BUT HOW MANY HAVE FOLLOWED HIM?": JOYCE IN BRITAIN, 1960-80

One of the possible case studies by which to exemplify the turning of the tide between the cultural and literary climate of the 1950s and that of the mid- to late-1960s is the reception of James Joyce in the British fiction of the two decades. As is explicitly stated by the title of a highly influential study on the literature of the period, the 1950s in the English novel were marked by a reaction "against" experiment. Paralleling their contemporaries in poetry, novelists emerging in the 1950s re-visited the chief interests (class and society) and methods (realist novel sequence) of Victorian fiction. Shift in artistic ideology also evokes a change in "the canon" of the time, and homage is now paid to the social engagement and realistic style of H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, authors famously rejected by Virginia Woolf. Now, the tables are turned and it is Woolf who is literally the odd one out. Speaking with a virulence and hostility emblematic of the whole Zeitgeist was Kingsley Amis in 1955:

> The idea about experiment being the life-blood of the English novel is one that dies hard. "Experiment," in this context, boils down pretty regularly to "obtruded oddity," whether in construction—multiple viewpoints and such—or in style; it is not felt that adventurousness in subject matter or attitude or tone really counts. Shift from one scene to the next in midsentence, cut down on verbs or definite articles, and you are putting yourself right up in the forefront, at any rate in the eyes of those who were reared on Joyce and Virginia Woolf and take a jaundiced view of more recent developments.[1]

Never mind the grotesquely caricatured literary experiment narrowed down to "multiple viewpoints and such" – Joyce and Woolf are a literary disease of which the "more recent developments" are meant to cure the British tradition. Further examples of both novel-sequence writers and public detractors of Joyce (*ad hominem*) and experimentalism (*ad rem*) are C. P. Snow and William Cooper, respectively. There is, for instance, Snow's conclusion recorded in *Times Literary Supplement* on 15 August 1958 to the effect that "Joyce's way is at best a cul-de-sac."[2] Cooper is recorded to have stated that "the Experimental Novel" had to be "brushed out of the way before we could get a proper hearing."[3] Better still, Morton P. Levitt's *Modernist Survivors* quotes Cooper explicitly tying his generation's distaste for experiment with nationalist concerns – perhaps the hostility is directed not so much against Woolf or Joyce as toward the French *nouveaux romanciers* and American post-war experimentalists who readily embrace their heritage:

> Aren't the French wonderful! Who else in these days could present a literary *avant-garde* so irredeemably *derrière*? *Avant-garde*—and they're still trying to get something out of Experimental Writing, which was fading away here at the end of the thirties and finally got the push at the beginning of the fifties. What a *garde*! [...] The point not to miss is this: not only are these anxious, suspicious, despairing French writers nullifying the novel, but they are weakening the intellectual world as a whole, by bringing one part of it into disrepute.[4]

Speaking as late as 1963, John Wain, another of the Angry Young Men's ringleaders, still had reasons enough to plainly observe that the "experimental novel" had "died with Joyce" and that since *Ulysses*, "there has been little experimental writing that strikes one as serious, or motivated by anything more than faddishness or the irritable search for new gimmicks."[5]

Joyce's ghost haunts not only Angry Young Men's critical pronouncements, but also their fiction – and to only slightly lesser derogation. Stuart Laing's contribution to Alan Sinfield's edited *Society and Literature* quotes Garnet Bowen in Kingsley Amis' *I Like it Here* comparing two months abroad to "making a determined start on *Finnegan's* [sic] *Wake* – an experience bound in itself to be arduous and irritating, but one which could conceivably render available rich variety of further experiences."[6] The "lucky" Jim Dixon, too, is portrayed as a reader of Joyce, remembering a "sentence in a book he'd once read" which proves to be from the "Cyclops" episode of *Ulysses*. John Wain's parody of the *Wake* in *Hurry On Down* reaches almost poetic heights: "Clout bell, shout well, pell-mell about a tout, get the hell out. About nowt.'"[7] Even a writer of a decidedly more "experimental" ilk—at least when compared to the highly con-

1 Qtd. in Rubin Rabinovitz, *The Reaction against Experiment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967) 40-1.
2 Qtd. in Randall Stevenson, *The Last of England?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 406.
3 Qtd. in Rabinovitz, *The Reaction against Experiment*, 6.
4 Qtd. in Morton P. Levitt, *Modernist Survivors* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987) 37.
5 Qtd. in Rabinovitz, *The Reaction against Experiment*, 8.
6 Stuart Laing, "Novels and the Novel," *Society and Literature 1945-1970*, ed. Alan Sinfield (London: Methuen & Co., 1983) 251.
7 John Wain, *Hurry on Down* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1953) 53.

servative literary ambiance of the 1950s—like Doris Lessing in her most ambitious, polyphonic work, *The Golden Notebook* (1962), refers to the *Wake* as "one of the novels about the breakdown of language."[8] As Morton Levitt argues, hand in hand with this misconception in practice was a similar incomprehension on the part of theory and criticism:

> [The] misunderstanding about the intentions and results of the Modernists is so gross at points as to seem almost intentional: some quality in the fiction of Joyce and Woolf is evidently so threatening to the British sense of tradition that it must be denied regardless of logic or the evidence of their work. The Great English Tradition, opened by F. R. Leavis to the foreigners Conrad and James and to the radical Lawrence, is irrevocably shut against the far more alien Woolf and Joyce.[9]

Nevertheless, other more historically and empirically oriented accounts of the period have shown that 1950s had not fully succeeded in exorcising Joyce's ghost:

> In the sixties Joyce was allowed to come down from the bookshelves. The competition of visual media […], a new openness to European and, particularly, American influences, the sociological and literary rediscovery of the working class, the post-*Chatterley* trial atmosphere and a reawakened interest in novels' formal properties […] – all created space for active appropriation of Joycean techniques.[10]

In addition, 1959 was also the year in which John Calder published a complete English translation of Beckett's *Trilogy.* 1960 then saw a reprint, with MacGibbon & Kee, of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* as well as the Bodley Head re-edition of *Ulysses*. It was this (re-)entry of Irish experimental prose into the literary circulation and consciousness at the dawn of the 1960s that invigorated fictional innovation and would later on make it possible for B. S. Johnson to claim himself "besotted by Irish writers like Sam Beckett, James Joyce and Flann O'Brien,"[11] to begin his first novel with a reference to O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, preface his third novel with a motto from Beckett's *Unnameable* and devote his last critical text to pledging his allegiance to "the Einstein of the novel" – Joyce.

In Britain, the cultural dominance of the conservative, Victorian-realist narrative story-telling was by no means reserved to the 1950s decade of the Angry Young Men movement. In the introduction to his last work, the 1973 collection of shorter fiction *Aren't You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?*, B. S. Johnson tries to posit the centrality of Joyce for contemporary writing by comparing him to Einstein. Joyce is "the Einstein of the novel" in the plurality of the styles in *Ulysses* which relativizes any one attempt at a unified vision:

> For the style alone, *Ulysses* would have been a revolution. Or, rather, styles. For Joyce saw that such a huge range of subject matter could not be conveyed in one style, and accordingly used many. Just in this one innovation (and there are many others) lie a great advance and freedom offered to subsequent generations of writers. (*ARY,* 11)

However, when addressing the current British literary scene, Johnson avows that they are indeed "very few" writers who can be argued to have followed Joyce's revolution (that is, for Johnson, *Ulysses,* and not the *Wake*); their fewness is especially palpable in comparison with the legion of writers writing "as though the revolution that was *Ulysses* had never happened" and relying on "the crutch of storytelling" (*ARY*, 15). Still, Johnson concludes by providing the following list:

> Samuel Beckett (of course), John Berger, Christine Brooke-Rose, Brigid Brophy, Anthony Burgess, Alan Burns, Angela Carter, Eva Figes, Giles Gordon, Wilson Harris, Rayner Heppenstall, even hasty, muddled Robert Nye, Ann Quin, Penelope Shuttle, Alan Sillitoe (for his last book only, Raw Material indeed), Stefan Themerson, and (coming) John Wheway; (stand by): and if only Heathcote Williams would write a novel... (*ARY,* 28-9).

This rather over-inclusive list defines not so much a common poetics, programme, let alone a movement, but rather a vanguard of Johnson's fellow warriors-writers who are "writing as though it mattered," enlisted to stand beside Johnson in his struggle waged against the "anachronistic, invalid, irrelevant, and perverse" (*ARY*, 13) realist mode of the nineteenth-century novel.

There are quite a few writers whose inclusion within the experimental vein seems problematic at best. For instance, both Rayner Heppenstall's (1911-1981) and Stephan Themerson's (1910-1988) novelistic prime had occurred

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8 Qtd. in Laing, "Novels and the Novel," 251.
9 Morton Levitt, *Modernist Survivors* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987) 28.
10 Laing, "Novels and the Novel," 252.
11 Qtd. in Stevenson, *The Last of England?*, 410.

in the late 1930s to early 1950s. Heppenstall's *Blaze of Noon* (1939) was pompously revisited in the early sixties by such reputable critics as Hélène Cixous who hailed it as "the novel which had inaugurated the *nouveau roman*,"[12] and her point had a certain validity and influence. But neither *The Connecting Door* (1962) nor the later *Two Moons* (1972) attempted, let alone achieved, anything nearly as daring or innovative as even a "standard" French *nouveau roman*. Heppenstall himself felt "somewhat typecast"[13] by Johnson's inclusion of his name in the list and much of his criticism is written out of deeply traditionalist, anti-modernist convictions. Themerson's claim to fame or influence in the sixties is even more tenuous: apart from his publisher activity in his progressive Gaberbocchus Press, his major novel, *Professor Mmaa's Lecture* (written during the troubled 1940s and published in 1953), which portrays a termite world in order to expose and deride the various socio-political conventions and constraints of the human world is even older news: hardly any more experimental than a "standard" Jonathan Swift. John Berger and Angela Carter seem "radical" or "innovative" in their ideological intent rather than experimentation with style or method: Johnson wrote his list in the aftermath of the 1972 Booker Prize awarded to Berger's *G.* which, for all its sexual explicitness and modicum of narrative fragmentation traces a linear tale of the protagonist's journey into class consciousness; Carter's early novels, e.g. *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), did little by way of innovation beyond focusing on female sexuality and drawing on the currently fashionable South-American magic realism. Some authors are enlisted to even Johnson's own reluctance, e.g. Nye and Sillitoe, indeed unlikely representatives of the "experimental" species. Thus, one must pick cautiously and selectively from the list of Johnson's conscripts, for they are indeed legion.

In 1975 (two years after Johnson's memoirs), his last novel, *See the Old Lady Decently*, plus Christine Brooke-Rose's last piece of her tetralogy, *Thru*, plus a volume edited by Giles Gordon and entitled *Beyond the Words: Eleven Writers in Search of a New Fiction*, would see not only the light of day, but perhaps also the dawn of the period. With Johnson and Quin already dead, Brophy no longer active as novelist, Burns gone to Australia and then USA, Brooke-Rose already in France, Burgess firmly settled in Monaco, and all on their own, markedly different courses altogether, by 1975 the wave of English post-war experimentalism had reached both its fulfilment and vanishing point. The present chapter selects six authors from Johnson's list who can be considered as symptomatic of some of the strands of innovative writing of the period: four (Brophy, Burns, Johnson himself, and Quin) are generally regarded as forming the nucleus of the loose avant-garde 'grouping'; one (Brooke-Rose) was a rather solitary figure who, though affiliated, soon diverged on a highly personal trajectory; and one (Burgess) had entered the literary scene well before 1960, but it was in the fifteen years under focus that his writing took some new and most explicitly experimental departures.

"A WRITER FOR THE PEOPLE": ANTHONY BURGESS

Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) seems the oddest member of the grouping discussed here since, with the exception of Beckett, he stands out as arguably the only canonical author on Johnson's list, and definitely the only mainstream writer. Burgess' output is dazzlingly prolific and multifarious, comprising thirty-three novels, twenty-five works of non-fiction, two volumes of autobiography, three symphonies, more than a hundred-and-fifty other musical works, and scores of journalism and criticism. His work is surrounded by a solid body of exegetical, biographical and critical material, and his major novels are steadily in print, adorning school syllabi and reading lists. He is at the same time, and without exception or parallel, the one post-war British writer who programmatically conceived his literary career as based on Joyce's legacy. However, the Joycean legacy will be revealed as not only an enabling influence on Burgess' work and its canonical underpinning, but also a yardstick of its critical appreciation, frequently to Burgess' detriment.

Burgess' critical—or rather promotional—engagement with Joyce has suffered a no less contradictory reception, and this for sound reasons, since some its basic premises are highly dubious. The intention and overall tenor of his 1965 *Here Comes Everybody* (reedited and republished the following year as *ReJoyce*) is quite apparent from the opening gambit: due to "the amount of research that already fences them around," *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are

12 Hélène Cixous, "Langage et regard dans le roman experimental: Grand-Bretagne," *Le Monde*, 6959. viia (18 May 1967) 16.
13 For more, see G. J. Bucknell, *Rayner Heppenstall – A Critical Study* (London: Champaign, 2007) 77.

found "more and more regarded as mystical codices and less and less as masterly novels intended to entertain." Hence, the purpose of Burgess' book is to "rescue" Joyce from "the professors" and the initial premise of *ReJoyce* is that "the appearance of difficulty is part of Joyce's big joke; the profundities are always expressed in good round Dublin terms; Joyce's heroes are humble men," in short: "If ever there was a writer for the people, Joyce was that writer" (*RJ,* 9). However honourable the intention of bringing Joyce closer to the "common reader," Burgess' foray against Joyce scholarship is absurd and ultimately self-refuting – his next paragraph opens with the admission that "naturally, I could not have written [this book] without help from the scholars" (*RJ,* 9) after which comes a lengthy list of everybody who was somebody in the earliest Joyce criticism, and finally an attempt on Burgess' part to salvage himself and the present study from the enemy camp by calling it "commentary rather than criticism" (*RJ,* 10). Apart from this rather peculiar exposé, Burgess' pilot-commentary on Joyce's entire canon (though the main focus lies with *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*) is undertaken with wit and competence, even though especially the chapter-by-chapter summary of *Ulysses* is done in so much detail and lengthy textual quotation that its primary function seems almost that of a reading "substitute" rather than "stimulus" for critical engagement. Most interestingly perhaps, the part on *Finnegans Wake* opens with a quasi-genetic approach, where Burgess lays bare Joyce's method behind the construction of his text by showing the progressive complexification of a selected paragraph from the ALP chapter. Joyce, throughout the book, is the superb modernist, a master builder of structures, parallels, networks of references, an author invested in juxtaposing multiple orders of reality. He is also an author of an essentially Catholic outlook: given that "the fundamental purpose of any work of art is to impose order on the chaos of life as it comes to us," then Joyce's attempt to "build for himself an order" is to Burgess' mind "a substitute for the order he abandoned when he abandoned the church" (*RJ,* 83; 87). As for the moral of the mythical substructure, the following statement encapsulates Burgess' outlook on Joyce as a whole: "*Ulysses* is a story, and a simple story at that. It is a story about the need of people for each other, and Joyce regards this theme as so important that he has to borrow an epic form in which to tell it" (*RJ,* 87). To Burgess, Joyce is not at essence the high priest of difficulty, but a "democratic" and "humanist" writer cognizant of the fundamental and the essential.

Joysprick (1973) further elaborates on this conviction – its last chapter, "Language of the People," opens with the observation that "for the last time in literary history, the novels of Joyce celebrate the confluence of curious erudition and the language of the streets" (*J,* 162). Burgess' second Joyce book is structured far more loosely as a series of forays into the various Joycean themes and motifs – rather than structures and intertexts, the focus is now on language (chapters like "Signs on Paper," "The Joyce Sentence," or "The Language of Gestation"), style ("Musicalisation" or "Borrowed Style") and on topics peculiar to Joyce ("Onomastics" and "Oneiroparonomastics"). Burgess' own multilingualism and a writer/composer's outlook make this expedition into the seldom visited field between linguistics and stylistics a highly personalised undertaking. New is also his stress on phonetics, especially in "The Dublin Sound" chapter where Stephen's meditations on the difference between "his" English and the dean's language in the "tundish" episode of *A Portrait* are read purely in terms of differences in pronunciation between Hibernian and British English. The opening chapter makes a broader claim about positioning Joyce within the distinction between "class 1 novelist," for whom "language is a zero quality, transparent, unseductive, the overtones of connotation and ambiguity totally damped," and "class 2 novelist," for whom it is important that "the opacity of language be exploited, so that ambiguities, puns and centrifugal connotations are to be enjoyed rather than regretted" (*J,* 15). Even though some of Burgess' observations are not as original as he believes and there is a hefty (and unacknowledged) debt to newer Joyce criticism (particularly to Hugh Kenner's *Dublin's Joyce* and *Stoic Comedians*), the looser structure of individualized forays makes for a far more intriguing piece of "popularisation" than the slavish commentary of *ReJoyce*.

Various biographers have recorded the manner in which Burgess fashioned "his" Joyce (just as Stephen Dedalus did with Shakespeare) to most resemble his own life and artistic as well as ideological inclinations. Burgess' connection with Joyce emerges from his critical writings as chiefly twofold: one, an almost religious adoration for (and

almost sexual pleasure derived from) the miscegenation of languages in search of *le mot juste*, and two, the belief in the necessity of grander mythological frames of reference shaping his fictional narrative. It is not difficult to see how both would be predicated upon Burgess' life-long attachment to Catholicism – a fundamental trait he believed he shared with Joyce:

> But when I say I am a Catholic now, I mean solely that I have a Catholic background, that my emotions, my responses are Catholic, and that my intellectual convictions, such as they are, are very meager compared with the fundamental emotional convictions. Certainly, when I write, I tend to write from a Catholic point of view—either from the point of view of a believing Catholic, or a renegade Catholic, which is I think Joyce's position. Reading *Ulysses*, you are aware of this conflict within a man who knows the Church thoroughly and yet has totally rejected it with a blasphemous kind of vigor.[14]

In 1959, having spent the past decade in Malaysia and Brunei as an English teacher in the British Colonial Service, Burgess was diagnosed with brain tumour and given the (fortunately erroneous) prognosis of one year of life left, which compelled him to write five novels in the twelve months given by his doctors, a rare feat of literary productiveness: *Inside Mr. Enderby, The Wanting Seed, The Doctor is Sick, The Worm and the Ring* and *One Hand Clapping* (published between 1960-62), where the outlines of a Joycean comic-epic quest are conspicuously present. However, it was during the eight years of his British repatriation (1960-68) and in the immediate aftermath of his critical engagement with Joyce that Burgess wrote four of his most innovative works: *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), *Nothing Like the Sun* (1964), *M/F* (1971) and *Napoleon Symphony* (1974).

The first, particularly following the scandalous and controversial 1971 film version by Stanley Kubrick, gained Burgess a world-wide notoriety, which also obscured most of his other, equally challenging works. The indebtedness of the language of *A Clockwork Orange* to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is a refrain of much of the criticism of the Joyce/Burgess intertext,[15] though fewer critics seem to stress the obvious differences between Burgess' *Nadsat* and Joyce's *Wakean* project. There is, for instance, the far clearer location of the former between English and Russian, as opposed to Joyce's broader multilingualism. The ideological implications of these two linguistic experiments are also vastly different: Burgess' a Cold-War dystopian outlook on English "invaded" by the language of the enemy in subservience to the "moral" of his tale; Joyce's an ultimately humanist, anti-fascist, Babelian project with which to unmask and resist nationalist ideology. In fact, the most direct "Joycean moment" of *A Clockwork Orange* is the opening mock-heroic performative gesture of rejection:

> The chelloveck sitting next to me [...] was well away with his glazzies glazed and sort of burbling slovos like "Aristotle wishy washy works outing cyclamen get forficulate smartish." He was in the land all right, well away, in orbit, and I knew what it was like, having tried it like everybody else had done, but at this time I'd got to thinking it was a cowardly sort of a veshch, O my brothers. [...] I could feel the knives in the old moloko starting to prick, and now I was ready for a bit of twenty-to-one. So I yelped: "Out out out out!" like a doggie, and then I cracked this veck who was sitting next to me and well away and burbling a horroshow crack on the ooko or earhole, but he didn't feel it and went on with his "Telephonic hardware and when the far-farculule gets rubadubdub." He'd feel it all right when he came to, out of the land. (*CO*, 4-5)

The whole passage abounds in Joycean references. To name but a few: "forficulate" refers to *forficula auricularia*, Latin term for the common earwig, a *Wakean* leitmotif; "twenty-to-one" is a reference to the betting odds of the Throw-away horse in *Ulysses*; the description of the "chelloveck" brims with references to Joyce's bespectacled face ("glazzies glazed"), the seemingly meaningless string of words featuring "Aristotle" or "telephonic hardware," Joycean themes par excellence. Alex puts an abrupt end to this solipsistic performance, which has been (most recently by Carla Sassi) regarded as symptomatic of Burgess' "breaking away" from the "modernists' abstract deconstruction of language,"[16] however, it should be noted that the repudiation is rather symbolic and Burgess is careful to stage this scene as a parody of Stephen's skirmish with Private Carr from the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*. What is more, it has been suggested[17] that one of Burgess' most famous neologisms—"horrorshow" as the Anglicisation of the Russian *ha-*

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14 Qtd. in Geoffrey Adeler, *Anthony Burgess – The Artist as Novelist* (University of Alabama Press, 1979) 28.

15 See, e.g. Beryl Schlossman's recent article "Burgess/Kubrick/*A Clockwork Orange* (twenty-to-one)," *Anthony Burgess and Modernity*, ed. Alan R. Roughley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

16 Carla Sassi, "Lost in Babel: the search for the perfect language in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*," *Anthony Burgess and Modernity*, 257-8.

17 See David Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," *In the Wake of the Wake*, eds. David Hayman & Elliott Anderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 17.

rasho—can be traced back to the *Wake*'s "Horrasure" (*FW* 346.34). Joyce's influence, then, is not so much abnegated as transformed.

Of all Burgess' novels, it is in *M/F* that the modernist mythopoetic method is put to most effect by a most independent means. Already the acrostic in the title invites several readings: the protagonist's initials, male/female, mother/father, and via the novel's chief preoccupation with the topic of incest, *motherfucker*. The narrative is composed of motifs that are archetypical down to the last detail, featuring Miles Faber's quest for his mysterious origins that takes him to an island shrine in pursuit of ancient mystical scrolls. Burgess' conflation of the Biblical story of Jonah with Classical Greek Oedipal and Algonquin Indian myths surrounding the taboo of incest derives from Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Scope of Anthopology*. Burgess is recorded to have admired Lévi-Strauss' study, whose pioneering structuralist viewpoint he translated into his own Catholic terms: "Structuralism is the scientific confirmation of a certain theological conviction—that life is binary, that this is a duoverse […] The notion of essential opposition—not God/Devil but just x/y—is the fundamental one."[18] Lévi-Strauss proved useful to Burgess' purposes especially for the link drawn between riddling and incest, both being frustrations of natural expectation. One passage from *M/F* in particular stands out as both Burgess' nod to the *Wake* as well as his stance against exegesis:

> Don't try distilling a message from it, not even an expresso cupful of meaningful epitome or a sambuca glass of abridgement, *con la mosca*. Communication has been the whatness of the communication. For separable meanings go to the professors, whose job it is to make a meaning out of anything. Professor Keteki, for instance, with his *Volitional Solecisms in Melville*. (*MF*, 240-1)

Melville, here, alludes to the whale of Jonah, and the "whatness" of communication harks back to Beckett's notorious observation regarding the language of the *Wake* – the parodic Professor Keteki (Sanskrit for "riddle") to Joyce's "Brofèsor" from the *Wake.* However, behind the structure and the punning lies a moral impetus, in this particular instance refreshingly unusual.[19] Burgess, thus, elevates incest into a symptom of universal malaise, one also to do with perhaps the doom of the modern age: the pathologically racialised and nationalised human consciousness. *M/F* is certainly among Burgess' most serious works of experimentation.

Nothing Like the Sun, the fictionalised love-life of Shakespeare told by a tipsy Professor Burgess to his Malayan students, together with *Napoleon Symphony*, the musicalised epic of Napoleon's career patterned on Beethoven's *Eroica*, rank among Burgess' "most celebrated achievements" according to most commentators, this mainly due to "their Joycean intertext, their experimental form, their popular appeal balanced by their demanding aesthetics"[20] which has earned them pride of place and much critical attention in the Burgess canon. Burgess' craftsman's journal on the novel—published as the essay, "Genesis and Headache"—cites Stephen's Shakespeare theory from *Ulysses* as the source of the important plot element in which Shakespeare is cuckolded by his younger brother Richard.[21] Debt to Joyce is owed and paid both on the micro- and macro-levels: the novel's interior monologues bear the mark of the interior monologues of *Ulysses*, and Burgess' exploration of Shakespeare's sexual life derives to a considerable extent from the theory propounded in the Scylla and Charybdis episode.[22] Were one to stop here, *Nothing Like the Sun* would be yet another obvious, and rather unexciting, Joycean intertext in the Burgess canon. However, these neat identifications obscure the more subversive and interesting features of Burgess' doubly plagiarist undertaking: his play on his own real name, John Anthony Burgess Wilson. There are two distinct bearers of this name in *Nothing Like the Sun*,

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18 "Anthony Burgess – The Art of Fiction," *The Paris* Review 56 (Spring 1973); reprint in *Writers at Work: Paris Review Interviews*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1976) 354.

19 As Adeler points out: "The focus of *MF* is broader than art – much broader. The whole pattern of Western culture, as Burgess sees it, is incestuous. Race consciousness in particular, which has in no way diminished in recent years, is symptomatic of an incestuous pull. In Burgess' view, 'the time has come for the big miscegenation.' All of the races must overcome their morbid preoccupation with color identity and face the merger that is inevitable in any event" (Adeler, *The Artist as Novelist*, 221).

20 Aude Haffen, "Anthony Burgess's Fictional Biographies: Romantic Sympathy, Tradition-Oriented Modernism, Postmodern Vampirism?", *Anthony Burgess and Modernity*, 137.

21 Burgess, "Genesis and Headache," *Afterwords*, ed. Thomas McCormack (London: Harper & Row, 1968) 42.

22 John Stinson's careful exposé reveals practically all the major and minor traits of Stephen's theory (including, e.g., his "proof" that Shakespeare was a Jew) reflected in Burgess' novel – an all-inclusiveness which, "given the relative oddity of Stephen's theory [...], is all the more remarkable" (Stinson, "*Nothing Like the Sun*: Faces in Bella Cohen's Mirror," *Critical Essays on Anthony Burgess*, ed. Geoffrey Adeler [Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986] 93).

and both are relevant in their more and less veiled reference to "Will's son." In identifying himself with Will's son, Burgess claims his artistic paternity to descend from Shakespeare, rather than Joyce. Moreover, as Stinson notes, in a scene redolent of symbolic relevance, the first John Wilson character, a law clerk, records the birth of the twins Hamnet and Judith, and recording the name of the father, the "WS" initials blot the name actually transcribed, WILSON. Burgess, as son of Will, is thus identified with Hamnet the son. The other Wilson character, the actor John Wilson, in a scene alluding to the opening of *Ulysses*, baptizes the newly opened Globe theatre with the formula "Ego te baptizo, in nomine Kyddi et Marlovii et Shakespearii" (*NLS*, 206).[23] Thus, instead of dismissing Burgess' achievement in *Nothing Like the Sun* as a second-rate, hackneyed, popularised "Scylla and Charybdis" spoof, one can do better justice to Burgess' project by taking stock of its manifold subversive gestures, its subtle interplay between fiction and history, and the coming to terms with tradition.

In *Napoleon Symphony* (1974), perhaps more markedly than anywhere else, for Burgess to draw upon and follow Joyce means to challenge him, to think through and possibly beyond him. The textual references and plot motifs are, again, so obvious as to run the risk of functioning as nothing more than pastiche: from the breakfast kidneys, via the archaic villanelle in celebration of Napoleon's return from Egypt, down to the last word of the novel, "rejoice" – Burgess displays his familiarity with the trivia of his schooling in Joyce. However, quadrivia are equally numerous: as Burgess notes in his *Joysprick* (worked on simultaneously with *Napoleon Symphony*), Joyce's *siglum* for the ALP *Wake* character was the Greek letter delta. So, when Napoleon writes to his Josephine "Oh, how I [...] hunger [...] to munch your delta of silk in the valley of bliss," and elsewhere Josephine's lawyer reflects on Napoleon's Italian campaign, "And did not the way to the Alps lie […] between her legs?" (*NS*, 3, v), Burgess develops the *Wakean* scaffolding into a rich punning metaphor which combines the military with the erotic in the geography of Napoleon's exploits. Burgess is also careful to draw upon Joycean archetypes: Josephine and the feminine is water and fluidity, Napoleon and the male is earth. Consequently, his aquaphobia is sterile and the cause of his undoing both symbolic and historical – not only his naval defeats, but also his fiasco at the Berezina River, at Waterloo, and his imprisonment on St. Helena surrounded with the oppressive Atlantic. The art of *Napoleon Symphony* is music and the chief structuring intertext for Burgess' novel is Beethoven's *Eroica*, so much so that its four parts have been composed in such a way that there is a ratio observed throughout between the amount of text and the number of bars in the corresponding passage from Beethoven's score. Typical of Burgess' use of the acoustic properties of language tied to gender-ideology is represented in a song from Part II, the funeral march:

> There he lies
> Ensanguinated tyrant
> O bloody bloody tyrant
> See
> How the sin within
> Doth incarnadine
> His skin
> From the shin to the chin.
> (*NS*, 125)

The phallic "i" that marks Napoleon's song turns into the vaginal "o" in its female version: "Rowers row in rows. / Posied roses interpose / Twixt the rows and the rose" (*NS*, 142). The use of these vowels as physical, sexual/procreative symbols, in Joyce's *Wake* has been noted in Burgess' *Joysprick*: "The All-Father is I and his consort is O [...] Introduce the dart to the egg, or the phallus to the Elizabethan 'thing of nought,' and we have IO, symbol of creation" (*J,* 20). Accordingly, *Napoleon Symphony* offers precisely such union by printing these parallel motifs side by side

23 Stinson is spot-on when refining the *Ulysses-Nothing Like the Sun* intertext in the following, less straightforward terms: "With *Ulysses* serving *Nothing Like the Sun* something in the way that the *Odyssey* does *Ulysses* [...], it seems apparent that Burgess wants us to see himself, Bloom, and Stephen returning the gaze of Shakespeare on the other side of that mirror. Expecting, then, that his readers will see his WS refracted in the Joycean mirror, Burgess creates a hall-of-mirrors effect that is, like so much in *Ulysses* itself, either mock-ironic or serious, dependent upon one's precise angle of vision" (Stinson, "*Nothing Like the Sun*: Faces in Bella Cohen's Mirror," 96).

(*NS*, 152).[24] More explicitly *Wakean* is Burgess' use of typography, again departing from his *Joysprick* observations about the *Wake*'s use of italics to represent the "obliquity" of the artist (Shem) and capitalisation, the "loud uprightness" of the man of action (Shaun) – accordingly, Napoleon speaks in capitals, Josephine in lower-case romans, and Eugène and Hortense in italics, as e.g. in the following passage: "*oh you are breaking out* AND LOVE they wish to break all our AND A FAMILY OF LOVING *hearts* hearts HEARTS" (*NS*, 60). Even more so than in *Nothing Like the Sun*, Burgess' re-use of Joycean techniques (including the acrostic, anagram, onomatopoeia, etc.) in *Napoleon Symphony* achieves a considerable degree of independence.

The 1973 publication of *Joysprick* was by no means an end to Burgess' occupation with Joyce. In numerous interviews and articles, he went on to broach the issue of parallels and differences between himself and Joyce. In "Joyce Can't Really Be Imitated," he averred: "Unfortunately I've had to earn my living writing books – no priestly vocation like Hopkins, no munificent patroness like Harriet Shaw Weaver who helped to support Joyce. This means that I've had to compromise, avoiding overmuch word play and verbal oddity."[25] Passé and defunct together with Joyce though the institution of patronage might have been, Burgess never tired of stressing the liveliness of Joyce's heritage for the literature of his day: "We should all now be writing novels like *Finnegans Wake*, not necessarily so obscure or so large, but starting on the way Joyce has shown in exploring the resources of the language," he insisted in 1964.[26] Many years later, his view was quite the same: "We've got a hell of a long way to go with modernism. Some people think *Finnegans Wake* is the end of modernism [... but] I think we're still in a modernist phase."[27] However, it is one thing to programmatically conceive one's literary career as based on Joyce's legacy (to write about, and sometimes with, Joyce) and something wholly other to become an experimentalist and innovator in one's own right (to write *after*, but also *beyond* Joyce). Cases like *M/F, Nothing Like the Sun* and *Napoleon Symphony* succeed in the latter, but the vast majority of Burgess' fails to. Such is also the opinion of Morton Levitt,[28] R. M. Adams[29] and David Hayman.[30] However, comparisons with Joyce aside, Burgess' work is best viewed within the context of the early-to-mid 1960s restoration of the modernist heritage within English fiction – it is revealing that none of the three derogatory exposés of Burgess' supposed secondary superficiality vis-à-vis Joyce deals with *Nothing Like the Sun* or, for that matter, *Napoleon Symphony*, the two works where Burgess does indeed *use* rather than *imitate* Joyce. If most of the writers of his generation tended to blame their own reactionary conservatism and ideological constraints on what was widely regarded as an exhaustion of the possibilities of technical innovation (and Joyce's *Wake* its infamous summa), Burgess deserves credit and admiration for the vigour with which he insisted on the necessity of coming back to, and departing from, Joyce's stylistic techniques.

"THE EINSTEIN OF THE NOVEL": B. S. JOHNSON

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24 Of the overall musicality of the novel, Mowat is right in drawing an important division line between Joyce's approach in the "Sirens" episode of *Ulysses* and Burgess' in *Napoleon Symphony*: "On the whole, there is less direct mimicry of music than there is duplication and transformation of detail in an attempt at musical "musicalisation" in *Ulysses* but to the dreamlike multiplication of duplication in *Finnegans Wake* [...] Images split and coalesce or are superimposed as they enter into patterns of duplication, recurrence, and inversion [...] there is a mirror at the center of the dream which is history" (John Mowat, "Joyce's Contemporary: A Study of Anthony Burgess's *Napoleon Symphony*," *Critical Essays on Anthony Burgess*, 192-3).

25 Burgess, "Joyce Can't Really Be Imitated," *Books and Bookmen* 15 (July 1970): 9.

26 Burgess, "Speaking of Writing—VIII," *Times* (16 January, 1964): 13.

27 Samuel Coale, "An Interview with Anthony Burgess," *Modern Fiction Studies* 27 (Autumn, 1981): 444.

28 "The writer most commonly linked with the Modernists, and particularly with Joyce, is actually not very Joycean at all. […] "the misleading public image of Anthony Burgess […is] further proof of the rule that Modernist influence in Britain has been terribly tenuous and that fiction has suffered as a result." (Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 52).

29 When addressing *The Clockwork Orange* and *Tremor of Intent* as "Joycean" novels, R.M. Adams observes that the former, if stripped of its dialect, "would be not only a sparse but a muddled book, with its bare bones in evident disarray," and that the latter's sole curiosity lies in an "even more marked application of Joycean prose in pure entertainment." (Robert Martin Adams, *Afterjoyce* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1977] 166-8).

30 Hayman is less dismissive when describing Burgess as "a gifted, facile, witty novelist in the relatively unadventurous British vein." Still, he terms Burgess' Joyce-indebted works (focusing on *A Clockwork Orange* and the *Enderby* novels) as nothing more than "clever adaptations" which for him "should not stand as examples of what to do after the *Wake*, though they do obviously reflect one rather common sort of impact," and goes on to criticise Burgess' (mis)reading the *Wake* as "about guilt" (Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," 18).

Jonathan Coe opens his monumental biography of B.S. Johnson (1933-1973) with the following statement whose grandiosity the rest of *Like a Fiery Elephant* seeks to prove:

> B.S. Johnson was, if you like, Britain's one-man literary avant-garde of the 1960s. Yes, of course there were other avant-garde writers around at the time (Alan Burns, Eva Figes, Ann Quin, Christine Brooke-Rose spring immediately to mind). But they were not as famous as he was, they were not as good at putting their names about, they did not appear on television as often as he did, they did not argue their case as passionately or fight their corners as toughly as he did, and there is not […] the same stubborn residue of public interest in their lives and work, at the time of my writing this, some thirty or forty years after the event. B.S. Johnson was different. B.S. Johnson was special.[31]

As if to substantiate this claim, the dust jacket of the 2004 Picador *Omnibus* edition of B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo*, *Trawl* and *House Mother Normal* is adorned with Samuel Beckett's and Anthony Burgess' appraisals of Johnson as "a most gifted writer" (Beckett) and "the only British author with the guts to reassess the novel form, extend its scope and still work in a recognisable fictional tradition." Yet similar pronouncements, in the lifetime of the extremely sensitive and irascible Johnson, were few and far between. Upon their appearance, practically all of his novels met with critical responses that were lukewarm at best. If Burgess' fiction took Joyce's heritage as its starting point and constant nourishment, the critical comparisons of B.S. Johnson's styles and techniques to Joyce seem to have been largely detrimental to his reputation. The author of the first book-length study on Johnson's work, Philip Tew, has shown that most Johnson criticism is marked by "remarks upon similarities to Joyce, Samuel Beckett and John Fowles" which merely "cast doubt upon his originality." Tew's study, instead, shows that "if Johnson admits, uses and incorporates the lessons of Joyce, he does so without any desire to imitate or replicate slavishly."[32] An overview of Johnson's seven completed novels substantiates Tew's argument that Johnson's "use" of Joyce was one of "creative intuition" and "methodological uncertainty as development," and his criticism of literary historians (such as Levitt) who take Johnson's late expression of his admiration for Joyce's achievement as a sign of life-long artistic vassalage.

Travelling People (1963), a work whose mishmash of styles and facts and fiction Johnson came to regret later on (even refusing its republication), is a novel steeped in the Joycean stylistic experiments of *Ulysses*—each of its chapters is written in a different mode (first-person, third-person, film script, epistolary, stream of consciousness, etc.)—as well as in typographical innovation à la Sterne (cf. the advertisements seen on an escalator in the London Underground presented in a descending diagonal sequence or the imitation of the black pages in *Tristam Shandy* indicating death, the random-pattern grey dots signifying unconsciousness, or regular-pattern dots signifying sleep). Joyce's *Ulysses* even makes a cameo, when its mention is taken as a reference to the eponymous Hollywood epic. What lies underneath the formal extravagance, however, is a conventional *Bildungsroman* with a social realist dimension not unlike those of the shunned Angry Young Men. There is an imbalance in the book's structure due to the discrepancy between the over-attention to form and the thinness of the narrative material. The stylistic self-consciousness is overshadowed by the book's emotional centre, "a celebration of human warmth in the social journey on which we are all fellow travellers, and that has no obvious link with the formal playfulness" – in Dominic Head's judgment, Johnson's stylistic richness seems "an over-elaboration in what is in essence a conventional picaresque novel of self-discovery."[33]

Albert Angelo (1964) launches Johnson's doctrine encapsulated in the formulation that "telling stories is telling lies." A hundred-and-sixty out of its hundred-and-eighty pages trace, in a rather fragmentary and episodic manner (fusing, again, narration in the first, second, and third person singular, as well as first and third plural), a narrative

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31 Jonathan Coe, *Like a Fiery Elephant* (London: Picador, 2004) 3.

32 Tew offers a deeper reading of Johnson's Joyce/Einstein simile in the following terms: "To understand the comparison fully it is essential to recall that Einstein argued for intuitive leaps of understanding for scientific advance, and therefore Johnson uses Joyce to indicate the possibilities of a complex relationality of fiction, a mapping of life experience on to the adaptable and mobile features of language as communicative device. […] Einstein insisted famously on intuitive, sympathetic understanding where there exists an interplay between experience and […] "methodological uncertainty." I suggest that Johnson admires less the specificity of Joyce's adaptations of the novel form as if such adaptations were set in stone, but more convincingly he was inspired by Joyce as the literary exemplar of such methodological uncertainty as development" (Philip Tew, *B.S. Johnson: A Critical Reading* [Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2001] 134).

33 Dominic Head*, The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 228.

drawn from Johnson's experiences as a supply teacher in the early 1960s. New typographical oddities emerge as dictated by necessity. As he writes in the Introduction to *Aren't You Rather Young*, in *Albert Angelo*,

> I broke through the English disease of the objective correlative to speak truth directly if solipsistically in the novel form, and heard my own small voice. When Albert finds a fortuneteller's card in the street it is further from the truth to describe it than simply to reproduce it. And when a future event must be revealed, I could not (and can; can you?) think of no way nearer to the truth and more effective than to cut a section through those pages intervening so that the event may be read in its place but before the reader reaches that place. (*ARY,* 22-3)

These gimmicks aside, the real progress of *Albert Angelo*—contrary to the earliest reviews that praised its "realist" narrative at the expense of its "experimental oddity"—is in fact what Johnson does to "realistic" mimesis: e.g., the double-column passages are meant to represent the interplay between external dialogue and internal "thoughts," exposing the fact that there is nothing "natural" about the "realistic" mimesis that separates them through the use of quotation marks. The most notable instance is having over five pages filled with the full call of the register of Albert's class (*AA*, 34-9). As Johnson stressed in conversation with Alan Burns, "I like lists. It's a poetic thing. A list implies that you are including everything, it's an absolute, an attempt to impose pattern on the chaos, it's all sorts of things. […] A straightforward novelist would have written: He called the register."[34] The difference between realism and innovation, for Johnson, is that the latter is an instrument by which to expose the conventionality of the former. Moreover, as Nicolas Tredell has shown, the list possesses additional "meaningful" aspects, to do with wordplay and polyvalent reference.[35] The narrative is famously disrupted by the authorial aposiopesis of the fictional illusion: "OH, FUCK ALL THIS LYING!" (*AA* 163), at the beginning of the "Disintegration" section, written in an unpunctuated stream of consciousness – again, however, termed as "aposiopesis" and thus mediated as yet another convention. Moreover, in its stylistic similarity (its fragmentation, erratic capitalization and punctuation) to the pupils' discourse, as an attempt to break through the interplay of styles it is self-subverting: "Disintegration" itself disintegrates due to its own problems and contradictions, giving way to the final paragraph of the "Coda" that brings Albert's life to a ghastly end at the hands of his infuriated pupils – in a discourse which is markedly theirs. As will be the case of all his novels including the "directly autobiographical" *Trawl* (1966) and *The Unfortunates* (1969), the only "truth" Johnson's texts tell is the truth of "fiction," the one regarding how narrative and discourse construct the "true" reality.

Both Johnson's biographical novels abandon the stylistic plurality of *Albert Angelo* and pursue a motto taken from Beckett's *The Unnamable* – the imperative to write about "nothing else but what happens to me." However vastly different the modes employed by the two, both have been described as continuing in Johnson's experiments in form and deserve to be discussed. The title *Trawl* derives from the setting of the narrative on a fishing trawler and the protagonist's determination "to shoot the narrow trawl of my mind into the vast sea of my past" (*T,* 3). As Johnson characterized it, it is "a representation of the inside of my mind but at one stage removed; the closest one can come in writing" and as such, it comes rather as a disappointment that the remove, the mediation through writing, is nowhere foregrounded. The only real mimetic problem in this text, for Johnson, was the representation of "breaks in the mind's workings" – this is solved by a stylized scheme of 3-em, 6-em, 9-em spaces, punctuated by dots at decimal point level "in order not to have a break which ran-on at the end of a line looking like a paragraph, these spaces were."[36] This gadget, as all other Johnsonian typographical or formal innovations, fulfils strictly mimetic purposes. Still, for all its relative conventionality, *Trawl* ranks among aesthetically most accomplished texts in Johnson's whole oeuvre, its prose at his most lyrical and charged and, its concluding note of "I, always with I.....one always starts with I.....And ends with I" (*T*, 183), also pointing toward a Beckettian intertext.

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34 *Imagination on Trial*, eds. Alan Burns & Charles Sugnet (London: Allison & Busby, 1981) 92.

35 "The orderly, alphabetical progression of the class register—one model, perhaps, of the linear narrative, running from A to Z—is skewed by improper responses ("Yerp!" instead of "Yes, sir") and by the paradigmatic drift of certain names: James Day is not present, and Albert jokes: "James Day seems away"; John Nash, the name of a pupil, invokes some of the buildings designed by his namesake. The list of names constitutes, within the total field of *Albert Angelo*, a parody of naming as a means of giving an impression of a world beyond a text's words that is full, various, yet orderly" (Nicolas Tredell, "The Truths of Lying: *Albert Angelo*," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 5.2 [Summer 1985]: 65).

36 Johnson, *Aren't You Rather Young*, 23.

The Unfortunates is Johnson's most famous or notorious novel, presented and produced in 27 sections, unbound, in a small box, to be shuffled and read at random, with the exception of the first and last. The mimesis of randomness serves a twofold purpose: it enacts the rambling workings of the mind, where present perceptions (coverage of a football match from the time Johnson was employed as a soccer reporter for the *Observer*) evoke, are coloured by, and interact with memories of the past (in this case, of Tony Tillinghast, a close friend who died in 1964 at the young age of twenty-nine); and secondly, it refers to the random process of carcinogenic cell growth that caused Tony's death. Here, the "remove" of writing is more pronounced than in *Trawl*, and many passages read not as a written record of consciousness, but rather as a diary of a writer's dilemma of how to compose such a record. "Randomness" itself is a difficult concept to sustain – as many have pointed out, Johnson's decision to bind the 27 sections effectively undermined his resolution to do away with linearity; as it is, *The Unfortunates* presents a good many 12-page sections of perfectly linear narrative. This issue has been picked up also by Christine Brooke-Rose in her only, and rather dismissive, remark on B. S. Johnson in her vast body of criticism and literary theory: *The Unfortunates*, for all its experimental coating, is "still a realistic and dreary novel of a football player returning to his Midlands home-town."[37] Despite misremembering the plot details, Brooke-Rose raises an objection which cannot be dismissed quite easily. The ostensible simplicity and self-contradiction criticised by Brooke-Rose has only been challenged recently by Nicolas Tredell's appraisal of the novel, arguing

> *The Unfortunates* does in fact contain an ironic "portrait of the artist" on its first level of illusion, when it shows the narrator trying to write a report on the football match. This portrayal functions as a satirical commentary on representations of the "serious author" which it both resembles and departs from; this writer is, after all, concerned with applying the conventions of a field of discourse, with arranging sentences and paragraphs.[38]

In paying homage to his dead friend (to whom the promise, "I'll get it all down, mate," is regularly recalled), Johnson is consciously writing an "autobiography" and thus cannot escape textual play with his own subjectivity. This is brought home by the amusing piece of trivia recurrent throughout the text: Tony had been an academic authority on Boswell, the amanuensis of Samuel Johnson, whose combined initials yield – B.S. Johnson.[39] In a sense, the incongruity between typographical and textual experimentalism with "drearily realist" narrative strategies and content have proven self-defeating in terms of the impact of Johnson's most famous work. For realist and experimentalist detractors alike, it remains a dead end, a reified fetish of a novel-in-a-box, a singularity never to be repeated – an unenviable achievement for a writer aiming to wield the baton of innovation. In view of this, Coe's introduction to the 1999 re-issue of the text tries to rescue *The Unfortunates* by reclaiming it not as "a quirky offshoot of sixties experimentalism,"[40] but as a contribution to the enduring tradition of confession writing, which was to resurface in the 1990s (partly also in Coe's own fiction).

House Mother Normal abandons once more the Beckettian imperative of "truthfulness" – only at the beginning and end is there a reminder of the fictiveness of the presented material, and again the idiosyncratic narrative layout serves a peculiar mimetic purpose. The narrative centres around an evening in an old people's home, constructed so that the same sequence of events is perceived by eight minds of the inmates and that of their House Mother. Johnson explained that the text was typeset so that every single distinct moment in each of the 21-page monologues got allotted a specific page and line number, so that the final text was a music-score polyphony, to be read vertically, as well as horizontally. The sequence of the individual speakers is one in which their minds gradually deteriorate in their outward perceptions as well as their textual transmission, which is mimetically rendered by dwindling typography, disintegration of paragraphs, sentences, and even individual words, until the final monologue (of one Rosetta Stanton)

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37 Christine Brooke-Rose, *Rhetoric of the Unreal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 358.

38 Tredell goes on to insist that "we need to consider these devices, not in abstraction, but in the specific textual system of *The Unfortunates*; we then see that they perform a dual, contradictory function: they produce both verisimilitude and alienation […] in straining so hard for fidelity to the "truth of experience," they call into question the very possibility of such fidelity" (Tredell, "Telling Life, Telling Death: *The Unfortunates*," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 5.2 [Summer 1985]: 36).

39 For more, see John Sturrock, "Shake Well Before Use" – Rev. of B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, *Times Literary Supplement* 3495 (February 20, 1969): 175.

40 Coe, "Introduction," in Johnson, *The Unfortunates* (London: Picador, 1999) xiv-v.

breaks off five blank pages too early. The final, twenty-second extra page of the concluding monologue of House Mother, involves a similar "alienation effect" to that of *Albert Angelo* – House Mother is allowed to step out of character, addressing the reader directly: "Thus you see I too am the puppet or concoction of a writer (you always knew there was a writer behind it all? Ah there's no fooling you readers!)" (*HMN*, 203-4). A note of weariness, observes Coe, "the sound of a writer beginning to give up on his own art; becoming bored by it; ceasing to believe […] that it might somehow compensate him for the pain of living."[41]

Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry (1973) was the last novel Johnson saw published, and though not without its intriguing peculiarities, presents his most straightforward narrative with strong elements of social critique. The eponymous protagonist applies double-entry bookkeeping to grievances against him (debits) and favours in his benefit (credits) from the outside world. Several "Reckonings" interrupt the narrative, during which the dual columns are tallied. The Christian doctrine of apocalypse, final reckoning redemption and doom is thus parodied in a very down-to-earth fashion. Here, Johnson's belief in the chaos of lived experience and its prevalence over, if not incompatibility with, any rational or narrative ordering is voiced with an almost eschatological urgency:

> It seems that enough accidents happen for it to be a hope or even an expectation for most of us, the day of reckoning. But we shall die untidily, when we did not properly expect it, in a mess, most things unresolved, unreckoned, reflecting that it is all chaos. Even if we understand that all is chaos, the understanding itself represents a denial of chaos, and must be therefore an illusion" (*CM*, 30)

Later that year Johnson would—this time writing *in propria persona*—voice an almost identical conviction in his aforementioned "Introduction" to his memoirs: "What characterises our reality is the probability that chaos is the most likely explanation; while at the same time recognising that even to seek an explanation represents a denial of chaos." A new type of art form is sought which "will be of such a type that it admits the chaos, and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else [...] To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now" (*ARY,* 6-7).

However, Johnson's last project, despite the misgivings voiced in the preceding two novels, was to become his most ambitious work. *See the Old Lady Decently* (1975) is a novel-memorial for his deceased mother. It was written as the first volume of an envisaged trilogy, which was to include *See the Old Lady Decently, Buried Although*, *Among Those Left Are You*, with the titles running the length of the three volumes' spines to form a single sentence. Michael Bakewell's introduction to the novel implies that Johnson had a complex design in mind, aiming to combine the death of his mother with "the decay of the mother country" and "the renewal aspect of motherhood" (*ST*, 8). Thus, the project was simultaneously personal, socio-political, and spiritual: the first part was to cover the period from his mother's birth in 1908 until his own birth in 1933, the second was to carry the theme through until the end of World War II, with focus on evacuation he himself experienced and on his father's visit to Ypres where his wife's father was buried during World War I. Finally, the third was to address his mother's death in 1971, "paralleling the decline of Britain and the Empire/Commonwealth during this time, a third visit to Ypres by himself and his father" and the conclusion: "the inevitability of regeneration in all three themes" which was to bring the *Matrix Trilogy* full circle (*ST*, 8). Johnson, ever the moralist and categoriser, devised a system of textual markers to distinguish between fiction, half-fiction/half-truth, and All Truth – and also to demarcate the source/purpose/form of other material used. The fiction is marked V, set in a kitchen where his mother worked, dominated by a monstrous chef named Virrels:

> **V2**
> Now then. I have to invent some more Virrels scenes. (26) I shall eat now, the manuscript stained on purpose with the melting butter. What a pity it is not possible for you all to read the ms! Where was I again? (*ST*, 28)

Half-truth is marked by date and age of mother (e.g. "16 (8)" means "1916, mother 8 years old") and consists of material assembled from tape-recorded memories of those who knew her, letters and documents that were to hand; this material is introduced without amendment.

41 Coe, *Like a Fiery Elephant*, 25.

The section on Great Britain is written in the manner of a guided tour of Britain's growth across the centuries and its decay during the period of the 3 novels (which according to Johnson began at Ypres) – what is essentially a transcript of some extant historical discourse is estranged by the elision of actual names, Johnson's intention being "to give generality, if not universality"; the section is marked by the signs GB and BB (for Broader Britain):

GB1
When Sir was marching from Shrewsbury to relieve he stayed two nights at, for the other Sir was a stout. It was called in Domesday, being architecturally somewhat poor in character. It is partly old and partly. The ground it stands on was given by for advising the use of calthrops in the Battle of in. Hence the motto GANG WARRILY which appears upon the family. It is fitted up as an armoury at present and contains much of specimens of ancient and other.
(*ST*, 20)

BB7
The natives are very low down in the scale of humanity, and yet they use a which has puzzled the wisest mathematicians of. The is not such a mysterious engine as the, but the skill with which they use it is astonishing. The fix the butt-end of their into this, grasping the other which they thus give a great impetus to and can with astonishing accuracy as far as fifty.
(*ST*, 81)

The Mother Goddess section is composed of a series of quotations from Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother*, whose anthropology of the cult of the mother derives from the basic premise that every child experiences his/her mother as the Great Mother; these extracts are marked as N in the text. Then there are Poems which form essential part of the structure of the work; there is a concrete visual one (*ST,* 128) in which the shape of a female breast is textually achieved by means of the repeated single word "breast," with the intrusive letters of "n" and "c" gradually forming the word "cancer." Then there are other sequences: fictionalised ideas, personal statements about the novel itself, allocated smaller signs, seemingly random, but following a complex system. Finally, two more symbols: H for Field Marshal Lord Haig (whom Johnson passionately hated):

H1
holocaust atrocity injury grievance
(*ST*, 35)

H2
haemorrhage abort insane gore
(*ST*, 63)

H3
Here's a very little puzzle, then:
hatred anguish indescribable grieving
(*ST*, 95)

And O for birth, death and regeneration, the great round, which fuses the beginning and the end:

O[1]
O let me open as though there were a beginning, though all there can be is the Great Round, uroboros, container of opposites, within which we war, laugh, and are silent
(*ST*, 17)

O[2]
They gave her no drugs, just a whiff of chloroform towards the latter stages.
Which were over by about half past one in the morning.
So: it began with the Great Round, and everything had to follow:

from them
from Em
from
embryo
to embryan
from Em,
Me
(*ST*, 138-9)

One last time, then, does Johnson "write himself" into his text via a textual montage – not only by reversing "em" (short for Emily, his mother) into the concluding "Me," but also through fusing "em" with "bryan" in order to form "embryan."

Johnson's final project in *See the Old Lady Decently*, drawing upon a vast array of various material sources, presents his most sustained attempt at merging the individual and the social, truth and fiction, the particular and the archetypical, in what is his most overtly cyclical and linguistically complex text. The time of its creation coincided with Johnson's work on his declaration of dependence on Joyce's revolution, in whose introduction he defined the project of "writing as though it matters" as follows:

> It is not a question of influence, of writing like Joyce. It is a matter of realising that the novel is an evolving form, not a static one, of accepting that for practical purposes where Joyce left off should ever since have been regarded as the starting point. (*ARY,* 12)

Johnson's vastly variegated, innovative—if uneven and sometimes formulaic—oeuvre heeds well the necessity of not only following, but also departing, from the Joycean materialist revolution of language, particularly as far as the exploration of concrete writing and visual typography are concerned.

"MASTER OF ALL STYLES, ALL GENRES, ALL LANGUAGES, ALL CULTURES": ALAN BURNS

The writing career of barrister Alan Burns (*1929) began with a case in point of an epiphany:

> I saw a silver frame for sale [in a jeweller's window] and in the frame a photograph of a youngish couple kissing, embracing. It was a sweet photo, rather old-fashioned, [...] and it rang a bell because I'd seen a similar photo in the family album, of my father and mother kissing on their honeymoon in Monte Carlo [...] I had long wanted to write about my parents and the love between them and the not-love between them but I didn't know where to start. At that moment I realized I needn't tackle their psychology or their histories, I could start with a picture. [...] And that became the starting point of my first book, *Buster*.[42]

An epiphany, of course, with a difference: what for Joyce is the power of the word becomes the power of the image for Burns. *Buster* (1961) is still rather traditional, even in its "imagery," but *Europe after the Rain* (1965), taking its title from a Max Ernst painting, is a conscious attempt at taking fiction in the direction of a surrealist painting. Its complexity is rather conceptual and narrative than linguistic and mimetic. Also, Burns' method of composition is an early presage of his later formal experiments; in a piece included in the *Beyond the Words* collection, Burns confided that its basis derived from a journalist's report on life in Poland after the war:

> This last provided most of my background material. I had this badly-written guidebook on my desk and I typed from it in semi-trance. My eyes glazed and in the blur only the sharpest and strongest words, mainly nouns, emerged. I picked them out and wrote them down and made my own sense of them later. […] Perhaps some of *EAR*'s 'numbness' derives from this distanced technique of writing from the unconscious.[43]

Burns was to find the formal procedure underlying his most experimental works, *Babel* (1969) and *Dreamerika!* (1972), in the "cut-up" method of composition (invented by Brion Gysin and popularised by William Burroughs), in which odd fragments of material were cut, divided and reassembled in to new verbal arrangements. In a letter Burns describes his mosaic method through reference to Baudelaire's "Ragpicker" and to Schwitters' incorporation within his painting of e.g. tram tickets. Like the Dadaists and *poètes maudits* before them, however, he went beyond his sources of inspiration in working not only on the macro-level of narrative, but also on the micro-level of syntax. Burns' "Essay" explains: "The quality I wanted was that not only the narrative but also the sentences were fragmented. I used the cut-up method to join the subject from one sentence to the object from another, with the verb hovering uncertainly between."[44] The text, as is implied by its title, is formed of a melange of voices and characters, "all demanding their place in the narrative, struggling to enunciate their uniqueness, yet together overwhelming the reader and leading to a sense of cacophony and confusion."[45] Introducing the issue of *Review of Contemporary Fiction* dedicated to Burns, David W. Madden draws an intriguing parallel with Warhol's dictum that "each will have his or her fifteen minutes of significance."[46] To take an example of a typical *Babelian* sentence, here is one from early on in the text:

> THE FATHER RAPES HIS DAUGHTER, which is something she shouldn't see. The fellow is knuckling down and getting in further. It is hard behaviour from a man with religious grounding. And he expects his son to turn out really bad. [...] After a

42 *Imagination on Trial*, eds. Burns & Sugnet, 161-3.
43 Alan Burns, "Essay," *Beyond the Words*, ed. Giles Gordon (London: Hutchinson, 1975) 65.
44 Burns, "Essay," *Beyond the Words*, 66.
45 Burns, "Essay," *Beyond the Words*, 66.
46 David W. Madden, "Alan Burns: An Introduction," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 17.2 (Summer 1997): 110-11.

> time he knifed her in the kitchen, between the counter and the machine, as the fork water turned dreadful, the noise from the machine as from eight women, trays on dregs of purplish colour full of the whirring fan continually in fever. (*B,* 6-7)

Again, the radical formal disjuncture holds together by means of an underlying conceptual unity. Even though *Babel* itself speaks of "some sort of social and political fragmentation, some sort of dissolution sooner than you anticipate" in which "families are falling apart, falling away from the natural pattern, the intimate parental relationship" (*B,* 20), Burns' "Essay" in Gordon's collection is even more explicit:

> it was about the power of the State. How in every street, every room, every shop, every workplace, every school, every institution, and particularly in every family, the essential pattern of power relations is dictated by the underlying rules, assumptions and moral principles of the State. […] *Babel* described not the obvious apparatus of dictatorship but the hints nods assents implications agreements and conspiracies, the network of manipulations that envelops the citizens and makes them unaware accomplices in the theft of their liberty.[47]

Unlike in Burroughs' case, then, the aleatory for Burns is no purely mechanical randomness, and there is selection and further processing of material at work. In a 1982 article entitled "Writing by Chance," Burns differentiates himself from Burroughs and, in the opinion of his co-editor of *Imagination on Trial* Charles Sugnet, rightly so: "There's a bit of boundary-minding going on here, as Burroughs has received so much publicity for inventing the 'cut-up method,' and Burns has sometimes unfairly been seen as following him."[48] To the contrary, Burns believes that, rather than following Burroughs, he revisited the aleatory methods of Dadaists and Surrealists, and Sugnet concurs. Next to Burroughs' tape recorders and steamer trunks, Burns sets a much homier image of his own way of working: "Four of my own novels were written this way – I leave slivers of paper on my desk with the window open, or a cat or a three year old allowed in to further the random order."[49]

After *Babel* and *Dreamerika!*, in a sense a formal and conceptual sequel to *Babel*, Burns "gave up writing from the subconscious, making a mosaic of found pieces," since "[having] written four books that way," the excitement "had gone out of it."[50] Instead, he turned to the tape recorder, exploring the possibilities of creating a collage of multiple (semi-)fictional narrations in *The Angry Brigade* (1973). In 1975 Burns left England for Australia, then relocated to the USA, co-edited the *Imagination on Trial* collection and went on to revisit his earlier, less radical explorations of surrealist imagery and relation between fiction and history (in e.g. *The Day Daddy Died*, 1981). Even though Joyce's method is as far a cry as can possibly be from the aleatory, Burns has repeatedly acknowledged the importance of his precedence. And not only through the brief Joyce cameo in *Babel*:

> THE GENIUS THREW SCRIBBLES ACROSS A PAGE. Increasingly fragmentary construction is a solitary occupation. The accidental imagination passionately battles, the blind man guides the black ink on silk, the desperate man is a work of art. JAMES JOYCE IS A FAMILY BUSINESS. The people have heard of him. Ulysses takes a taxi back from where he was going. (*B,* 82)

Throughout the interviews Burns himself conducted in *Imagination on Trial* with both American and British writers, his questions keep returning to Joyce's writing as one which found its "way in," its own literary idiom, and "achieves the evocation of the past and present together," and to Joyce as an author who has become synonymous with a certain kind of "complexity."[51] In an interview with David W. Madden, editor of the *Review of Contemporary Fiction* issue, Burns was most explicit about the matter:

> Joyce changed everything, made everything possible. Master of all styles, all genres, all languages, all cultures . . . beyond that mere puffery, I'm wary of commenting on Joyce, overwhelmed not only by him as poet and novelist but by his mighty intellect. However, his influence on me was not intellectual but instinctive, which is to say, his achievement seemed to give me permission to follow my instinct wherever it led. Word-coinage is an obvious example, but it goes beyond that to, say, the structure of *Babel*, and much more.[52]

Burns seems on par with Johnson in terms of regarding Joyce as a liberator, as an author who "made new things possible" – even things at odds with his own methods and techniques. In Burns' case, this "instinctive" influence, however

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47 Burns, "Essay," *Beyond the Words*, 66-7.
48 Sugnet, "Burns' Aleatoric Celebrations: Smashing Hegemony at the Sentence Level," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 17.2 (Summer 1997): 194
49 Sugnet, "Burns' Aleatoric Celebrations,195.
50 Burns, "Essay," 66.
51 *Imagination on Trial*, eds. Burns & Sugnet, 33, 57, 154.
52 Madden, "An Interview with Alan Burns," 122.

difficult to pin down, allowed for a development of an idiosyncratic technique, different from the Joycean one in kind, though similarly radical in degree.

"THE COMEDI-CHAMELEON, THE OLD PUN GENT HIMSELF": BRIGID BROPHY

Writing just a few weeks after her death in a *Review of Contemporary Fiction* issue devoted to her, Steven Moore reviewed the reputation of Brigid Brophy (1929-1995) in very bleak terms: "[M]ost of her books are out of print on both sides of the Atlantic and few readers under forty recognize her name."[53] The reasons provided by Moore for this, however, had to do more with the vicissitudes of Brophy's life and idiosyncrasies of her fiction: her fifteen-year-long struggle with multiple sclerosis which drastically reduced her writing output after 1980, as well as her writing "too far ahead of her time" of topics and in styles that would only later gain broader social relevance – e.g. her 1953 juvenilia novel *Hackenfeller's Ape* dealt with animal rights, experiments and vivisection, well before the cause gained public attention. These reasons notwithstanding, Moore insists that

> any informed reckoning of twentieth-century literature must take Brophy's work into account: not only her nine books of fiction, but a career's worth of sharp, intelligent essays (most gathered into three collections), books on Mozart, Freud, and Beardsley, and a 600-page tour de force "defence of fiction in the form of a critical biography of Ronald Firbank," *Prancing Novelist*.[54]

Mozart and musical, particularly operatic, form is often used as a structuring device in her earlier output: Brophy's second novel, *The King of a Rainy Country* (1956) relies on Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, just as her fifth novel, *The Snow Ball* (1964), her satirical comedy of manners, borrows its plotline from *Don Giovanni*. Interspersed among her music novels were texts dealing with a variety of other topics: her non-fiction, *Black Ship to Hell* (1962), a Freudian analysis of the human proclivity to violence, her most elliptical fiction work, *The Finishing Touch* (1963), an important step in the history of lesbian and, more broadly, anti-homophobic literature, or indeed her purposefully provocative, co-authored *Fifty Works of English and American Literature We Could Do Without* (1967), into which she famously included *Hamlet*, *Alice in Wonderland* and works by Coleridge or Whitman. For Brophy, the 1960s were to culminate with a work widely regarded her masterpiece, *In Transit* (1969), "a riot of multilingual puns, parodies, opera allusions, typographical high jinks" which "should be a *locus classicus* for today's gender critics and advocates of experimental fiction." Together with the 1960s culminated also Brophy's career as novelist, as most of the decade leading up to the breakout of her incapacitating and ultimately terminal illness was spent on her massive and again pioneering biography of Firbank (1973) around whom she built a whole theory of creative fiction, critical assessment of the painter Aubrey Beardsley (1976) and her final, fairy-tale novel *Palace without Chairs*. Given the magnitude and the timely and timeless relevance of Brophy's career as writer and public activist, Moore's concluding note of exasperation seems apposite: "The neglect of this brilliant woman's work and contributions to contemporary aesthetics is scandalous."[55]

Fearless iconoclasm is what also marks Brophy's crucial text, "A Heroi-Cyclical Poem," *In Transit* (1969). In terms of critical classification and characterisation, *In Transit* is an oddity, which can be most lucidly demonstrated by the fact that a critic as perceptive and skilful as Frank Kermode, when describing the text, had to settle for the indeterminate metaphor of "a kit of symbols" that can be "fit together in an indeterminate number of ways."[56] His description echoed one of the text's many self-definitions as "less a book than a box of trick tools, its title DO IT YOURSELF KID" (*IT,* 14) – an instance of the text "reading itself" omnipresent in Joyce's fiction. The very first five sentences of the novel's opening offer a reflexion on the linguistic, or indeed textual, representation of consciousness and the issue of authorial authority and presence:

> Ce qui m'étonnait c'était qu'it was my French that disintegrated first.

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53 Steven Moore, "Brigid Brophy: An Introduction and Checklist," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15.3 (Fall 1995): 7.
54 Moore, "Brigid Brophy," 7.
55 Moore, "Brigid Brophy," 10.
56 Frank Kermode, "Sterne Measures – Review of *In Transit*," *The Listener* (25 September 1969): 414.

> Thus I expounded my affliction, an instant after I noticed its onset. My words went, of course, unvoiced. A comic-strippist would balloon them under the heading THINKS – a pretty convention, but a convention just the same. For instance, is the 'THINKS' part of the thought, implying the thinker is aware of thinking? (*IT,* 11)

Following shortly is a meditation on time and tense function in literature, as well as the distinction between history and fiction: "History is in the shit tense. You have left it behind you. Fiction is a piss: a stream of past events but not behind you, because they never really happened" (*IT,* 13). Conversing with Leslie Dock in 1976, Brophy herself stressed disintegration as the leitmotif of her novel: "*In Transit* is about a series of disintegrations of rulebooks, including the sexual stereotypes, ending with the question of whether Aristotelian logic might disintegrate [...] I mean that what is being questioned is, do [the rules of the logic] reflect any necessary truths, or are they entirely arbitrary?"[57]

The four-section narrative—set in an airport transit lounge and famously centred around the protagonist Evelyn Hilary "Pat" O'Rooley's plight of "no longer remember[ing] which sex I was"—can indeed be characterised as a concatenation of disintegrations of many of the central concerns of the 1960s: from language and communication (the very first sentence is also a first symptom of the "linguistic leprosy" that has beset the narrative subject) to sexuality and gender (the main plotline, but also the many quips like "we shall soon reach a point where the questionnaire item 'sex' gets filled as 'yes, thrice weekly'" [*IT,* 74]), from modernist artistic styles ("our century prefers function to style" [*IT,* 22]) to cosmopolitan internationalism ("no one is native. We're all transients" [*IT,* 29]), from history to the currently fashionable liberation movements (the two precepts of the female uprising being "WOMEN OF THE WORLD UNITE. / YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE / BUT YOUR LABOUR PAINS" and "WOMEN OF THE WORLD UNITE. / YOU HAVE EVERYTHING TO / GAIN – IN PARTICULAR, / YOUR DAISY CHAINS" [*IT,* 130]).[58]

The technique which the text itself terms "masophistication" (*IT,* 51)—one in which commonly held distinctions and binary oppositions are brought to interact with and collapse upon one another—is revealed as a direct corollary to what Brophy perceives as the aesthetic principle of her time:

> What's the nearest to a twentieth-century style? Why, that sort-of-pop-brutalistic tabbying, those curds of canned plum-juice declining to integrate with custard, bits of a jigsaw free-drifting weightless in space: an amateur method of do-it-yourself exterior house-painting, developed out of military camouflage, whose purpose is, precisely, camouflage: to disguise the silhouettes of Victwardian buildings, to break up the outlines of their structure or pseudo-structure [...] to pretend that the husk of the Great Exhibition of 1851 can be naturalized into today's breakfastfood. (*IT,* 23)

However, it is one of the transitory features of the text that Brophy not only preaches against the twentieth-century "pop-brutalistic tabbying," but also joins in the game: she has her "he/she-Pat" narrator take part in a TV show *What's My Kink?* ("devised by Brigid Brophy"), one of whose panellists is "the well-known Irish-German writer, Thomas Mahon" (*IT,* 131; 136); recasts parts of her narrative in the form of an opera libretto (called *Alitalia*, featuring male sopranos and female baritones); in one of her "Interlewds" (*IT,* 98), she spends vast portions of the text quoting from a fictitious pornographic novel *L'Histoire de la Langue d'Oc* (a parody of *The Story of O*); and finally has her whole narrative flip into a cliché thriller featuring Pat in the role of Slim O'Rooley, "dead-beat dick; weeper peeper, down-at-the-heel heel" (*IT,* 153).

The associative link connecting these overblown burlesque slapstick scenes is largely wordplay and pun: Pat's briefcase carried through the entire mock-quest gives rise to his/her detective reincarnation determined to make a "brief case" of the goings-on (*IT,* 163); the female transportation belt workers' uprising evokes a response from a mob organised around a bar counter – a counter-revolution (*IT,* 202). In fact, the protagonist's loss of awareness, or indeed visibility, of gender, is foreshadowed by an early mediation on its linguistic roots:

> They're sly, though, these romance languages, in this matter of sex. Sly rather than shy, I shurmise; for they sometimes do, sometimes won't, the girlish things. Sometimes the adjectives don't change. Vous êtes triste? Tick:— masc.□ fem.□. Strik(e) out whichever does not apsly. J'en suis content(e). And o that so demurely flirtatious mute *e* that may be appended to *ami*, where, dimpling, it can be seen but not heard. That's why my French is literary. I am so sex-obsessive *I must know*. They're

57 Leslie Dock, "An Interview with Brigid Brophy," *Contemporary Literature* 17 (Spring 1976): 166-7.
58 For more, see e.g. Brooke Horvath, "Brigid Brophy's It's-All-Right-I'm-Only-Dying Comedy of Modern Manners: Notes on *In Transit*," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15.3 (Fall 1995): 46.

> sexsessive, too, the languages: but unsophisticatedly. I shed them in sheer impatience at the infantility of their sexual curiosity. *I do not want to be told the sex of inanimate objects*. (*IT,* 41)

In a late "alienating interlude" Brophy makes it clear that "at least one of the hero(in)es immolated throughout these pages is language" and together with that, "the work's sub-title is: Or *The Autobiography of Sappho's Penis*" (*IT,* 214). Brophy's "misprinted mistranslated oversestimated sadomasturbatory pornofantasy-narrative" (*IT,* 143) is a "juicifixion" (*IT,* 217) that repeatedly (and deliberately) stages a failure to nail down the body in and through language; together with lapse in gender awareness the multilingual narrator is stricken with "linguistic leprosy": "My languages gave their first dowser's-twig twitch and I conceived they might be going to fall of" (*IT,* 12). Critic Karen Lawrence has noted how the narrative switching between gender identifications (and Pat switching back and forth between a *he* and a *she*), enables Brophy to launch "a fantastic, punning linguistic journey," a "wild ride of the signifier" through which Brophy "parodies the myth of the phallus as transcendental signifier, the myth that props up all the paradigms of the journey underwriting Western culture."[59] Brophy clearly aligns her experimentation, however mock-seriously, with what she recognises as Joyce's anti-imperialist, de-colonising linguistic project. In the conclusion, Pat is killed off twice in two textual columns, first as a she, then as a he, yet the final-page images of St. Theresa "expir[ing] in a smile of orgasmic ecstasy" and Aphrodite ("re-sea-born of the sperm and spume bubble-and-squeaking about her da's off-torn, projectiled, sea-crashed virile member") suggest a rebirth and rejuvenation. The text concludes with a fish-ideogram, the French word for end, FIN, written over its lower "fin," harking back to the "Ce qui m'étonnait" of the opening premise (*IT,* 230). Pat's final suicide suggests the painful position of Pat, the Irish orphan, who "feels both a kinship with her Joycean heritage and the sense of an ending, the possibility that that heritage no longer sustains her circulations."[60]

Most of the effects employed in the aesthetics of *In Transit* are largely derived from (multilingual) punning and put in the service of exploring the possibilities of linguistic expressivity, literary self-reference, and gender identification. *In Transit* is a fundamentally Joycean text. "How" *In Transit* is both Joycean and very much its own has been noted by critic Chris Hopkins.

> Here the model is clearly James Joyce […], but the text has games of its own to play, in particular with gender. For while *In Transit* is as interested as any Joyce text in multilingual punning, its most striking feature is that its first-person narrator has no idea of her own identity. The speaking "I" knows that it is in an airport […] and hence "in transit" and seems to have a capacity for generating language, but that is all. Thus the voice has a great consciousness of the culture embodied in language, but no knowledge of how it relates to the discourses it refers to so promiscuously.[61]

Hopkins is not entirely correct, here, for Pat O'Rooley's "I," though notoriously ephemeral, does have one explicit anchoring: its Irish heritage of an orphan whose two sets of parents (natural and foster) have been killed in plane crashes, a harsh contrast with some early idyllic reminiscences from a childhood spent in Dalkey. The theme of Irishness is, of course, functionally employed in service to Brophy's chief project of the "immolation of language": "We speak English as a foreign language, even when we have no other (This is my foster-mother-tongue, since when I have used no other)" (*IT,* 34). Irishness is also used as a backdrop for several irresistible puns, such as "what name shall we coin for the natives of Erin? Erinyes" or "we are all Greek heroes, we Irish – O'Dysseus (whom Joyce disguised under the vocative form You-Lysses), O'Edipus, and most cogently of all, with not a syllable displaced, O'Rion – […] O'Restes" (*IT,* 47, 56). More seriously, Irishness is presented both generally and specifically, i.e. as linked to other colonial groups and their experience of "transculturation" as "disculturation" but also as a special case of the colonial legacy – particularly inventive foster-children:

> We Irish had the right word on the tip of our tongue, but the imperialist got at that. […] What begins as endemic lapsus linguae we peddle as precious lapis, with which we illuminate our Book of Sells (an early Book of Ours). We are never knowingly underbold. We are in the grips of compunsion.
> Youlysses have fore-suffered all. Before the Jew wandered, jew did.
> Is that another of your dog-headed Irish slips?
> (Pardon me, ma'am, your mollibloomers is shewin'.)

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59 Karen Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1994) 233.
60 Lawrence, "*In Transit*: From James Joyce to Brigid Brophy," 42.
61 Chris Hopkins, "The Neglect of Brigid Brophy," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15.3 (Fall 1995): 16.

Cynoscephalae, ladies, sigh no tom-moore.
(We lost Thermopylae, the double pom-pom Bloom.) (*IT*, 35)

Indeed, it is the legacy of Joyce that Brophy most explicitly invokes as the precursor of the linguistic side of her experiment; a precursor fondly acknowledged, but later outgrown. Near the very end of the novel Pat apostrophises Joyce through Finnegan: "O, it's *thou*. Old Father Finnegan Go-and-don'tsinagain. Father Irefish Finn. Well, I saw through you, you old pro-façade, before I was out of my boyhood or girlhood. […] I can't hear you, ex-father. I've switched me deaf-aid off" (*IT*, 228). Despite the irreverent linkage between influence and "deaf-aid," it is clear that Brophy's imaginative "revolution of language" is based on that of Joyce. This is evident in how mentions of Joyce are tied with evocations of Odysseus, "the hero who can never accomplish the return of the native, because he isn't one" (*IT*, 35). At one point, the hero/heroine of *In Transit* identifies him/herself with "Oruleus (latinised as Ulrix and thence rather quaintly englished as Unruly)" (*IT,* 175). Early on in the text, the "I" admits that his/her "fantasy steps tiptoed up on that ever-tempting serpent, my compatriot, mike" and wonders should he/she "snatch it and announce to all In Transit my tribute to my great Triestine compalien, the comedi-chameleon, the old pun gent himself?" (*IT,* 36). A rhetorical question, of course, for the text itself *is* a tribute to Joyce, but if the novel names Joyce as a forefather, it nevertheless also treats him as father who must be outgrown. For the "Triestine compalien" blends together *compatriot* and *alien*. As Lawrence has shown, in her exploration of a postgendered position for her protagonist, Brophy suggests "that the Joycean revolution of the word works its disruptions still within a certain phallic framework" and through her central metaphors of circulation and transit, she attempts "to figure more radical indeterminacies of sexual identity, even as they pay homage to Joycean (and, by way of Joyce, Odyssean) exile."[62] In doing so, Brophy posits the narrative's own ancestry as a problematic one – even the metaphor of parentage, with its secure roles for male and female, does not suffice to represent the foster, mixed, and transcultural ancestry of the sex-changing narrative. Still, *In Transit* is one of the most explicit proofs that Joyce's voice, within the context of the British fiction writing of the 1960s, was not of one crying in the wilderness: "I could loose on the Lounge his obituary: I am the voyce of one crying in the wilderness; rejoice with me" (*IT,* 36).

"A DEATH WISH AND A SENSE OF SIN": ANN QUIN

Ann Quin (1937-1973)[63] emerged from her troubled childhood—marked by her father's abandonment of the family and the highly traumatic experience of the upbringing, despite her atheism, received at a Roman Catholic convent—with a severely impaired mental health which, following a series of nervous breakdowns from which she periodically suffered throughout her life, arguably also brought about her death by drowning at age thirty-six. She spoke of her catholic upbringing as of "a ritualistic culture that gave me a conscience. A death wish and a sense of sin. Also a great lust to find out, experience what evil really was."[64] In her fiction, Quin developed an idiomatic style blending non-linear narration, multiple viewpoints, stream of consciousness, marked by poetic lyricism, fantasy-embedded, at times hallucinogenic registration, to explore such topical themes as the search for identity, the influence of the past on the present, and intergenerational pressures.[65] Her oeuvre, comprising four novels and drafts and notes for a fifth one, is marked by a unique kind of development, an aesthetic progression of increasingly extreme experimentation with language and form – a progression paralleled with her fall from grace with its critical reception. Philip Stevick offered a fitting encapsulation of the poetics of Quin's fictional spaces by singling out their four cardinal points: first, "in all four of the novels, the

62 Lawrence, "*In Transit*: From James Joyce to Brigid Brophy," 40.
63 The most valuable sources in the otherwise highly scarce biographical material on Ann Quin, on which the present account largely draws, are Nicolas Tredell's article on Quin in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Volume 231: British Novelists Since 1960*, ed. Merritt Moseley (Farmington Hills: The Gale Group, 2000), 230-8; Giles Gordon, "Reading Ann Quin's *Berg*" reprinted in the 2001 Dalkey Archive re-edition of *Berg*; Brian Evenson, "Introduction," Ann Quin, *Three* (also with Dalkey, 2001); Lee Rourke, "Who cares about Ann Quin?," *The Guardian* (May 2007); and the excellent website dedicated to Quin, run by Nonia Williams: http://annquin.com/
64 Qtd. in Evenson, "Introduction," Ann Quin, *Three* (Chicago, Illinois: Dalkey Archive, 2001) vii-viii.
65 Nicholas Tredell painted a picture of Quin as a follower of the modernist project "of developing style and structure in an attempt to achieve a closer fidelity to the moment-by-moment texture of lived experience" (Tredell, "Ann Quin," 230).

characters are never at home [...], physical surroundings tend to be perceived in the way in which one sees them on a trip"; second, "the whole of experience in Quin's fiction tends to be eroticized […], the phenomenal world tends to appear as if charged with sexual energy"; third, "extending through the four novels, wholes, perhaps more properly gestalts, tend to be fragmented […], in a way related but roughly opposite, the whole of anything threatens always to erode, split, merge into another thing"; and finally, Quin's fiction "takes place at several levels of discourse simultaneously, alternately, contrapuntally."[66]

Unlike her first two texts, both of which were rejected by publishers (and never appeared in print), *Berg* (1964) was published by John Calder to a sweeping critical success, this despite its explicit indebtedness to the *nouveau roman* movement and the usual British distrust of unconventional fiction. The importance of publisher John Calder for 1960s British experimentalism is difficult to overstate in this context.[67] Set in Quin's native town of Brighton, *Berg*'s narrative is, in a monomaniacal fashion, determined by one sole intention stated already in the very first sentence: "A man called Berg, who changed his name to Greb, came to a seaside town intending to kill his father" (*B*, 1). However, the parricide never takes place. Instead of killing him, Alistair Berg (the protagonist) becomes entangled in a series of deferrals, substitutions and repetitions: he becomes involved with his father's mistress Judith, and goes on to kill her cat as well as his father's caged budgerigar, and strangles a vaudeville-act dummy made in his father's image. Berg later consciously misidentifies a body washed up on the beach as his father's and returns to Judith and takes his father's place. Instead of killing him, Berg gradually comes to resemble, even displace, his father. At the end of the novel, Berg has replaced his father in Judith's room, and a man much like his father has moved into the adjacent room. Quin's achievement lies in marrying this plotline based on cross-dressings, mixed gender-roles and blurred identity boundaries with a style generative of precisely this central narrative ambiguity:

> Window blurred by out of season spray. Above the sea, overlooking the town, a body rolls upon a creaking bed: fish without fins, flat-headed, white-scaled, bound by a corridor room—dimensions rarely touched by the sun—Alistair Berg, hair-restorer, curled by webbed toes, strung between heart and clock, nibbles in the half light, and laughter from the dance hall opposite. [...] A week spent in an alien town, yet no further progress—the old man not even approached, and after all these years, the promises, the plans, the imaginative pursuit as static as a dream of yesterday. The clean blade of a knife slicing up the partition that divides me from them. Oh yes I have seen you with her—she who shares your life now, fondles you, laughs or cries because of you. Meeting on the stairs, at first the hostile looks, third day: acknowledgement. A new lodger, let's show him the best side. Good morning, nice day. Good afternoon, cold today. His arm linked with hers. As they passed Berg nodded, vaguely smiled, cultivating that mysterious air of one pretending he wishes to remain detached, anonymous. [...] Rummaging under the mattress Berg pulled out the beer-stained piece of newspaper, peered at the small photograph.
>
> > Oh it's him, Aly, no mistaking your poor father. How my heart turned, fancy after all this time, and not a word, and there he is, as though risen from the dead. That Woman next to him, Aly, who do you suppose she is? (*B*,1)

Quin's narrative technique blends first-person and third-person descriptions of one character's (here, as usual, Berg's) experience with words or sensations uttered or registered by other speaking subjects and consciousnesses (and thus either experienced, remembered, or hallucinated by Berg himself) without being set off as dialogue by quotation marks or other means. In so doing, the style reinforces the key narrative theme: Berg's failure to develop an independent identity. Only the words of Berg's mother, indented and set in smaller type, are differentiated from Berg's –through these interpolations Quin manages to introduce into her narrative a style and sensibility markedly different from those of her protagonist's. But ambiguity persists: are these interpolations remembered and recited, read and reproduced (through letters), or ventriloquised and hallucinated? Quin's narrative methods create a highly unsettling, frighteningly volatile sense of identity: in this, Stevick argues, her interior monologue surpasses its modernist precursors:

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66 Phillip Stevick, "Voices in the Head: Style and Consciousness in the Fiction of Ann Quin," *Breaking the Sequence – Women's Experimental Fiction*, eds. Ellen Friedman & Miriam Fuchs (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) 234-6.

67 As Giles Gordon reminisced in his introduction to the novel's 2001 Dalkey Archive re-edition: "The British literary establishment was much turned on, after the Second World War and Churchillian patriotism, by the irreverence and anti-intellectualism of the Angry Young Men. [...] To those of us resenting this parochialism, the publications of John Calder were a breath of fresh air. He introduced us to Beckett, Burroughs, Creeley, Duras, Claude Mauriac, Henry Miller, Pinget, Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, and the important Scottish novelist, Alexander Trocchi. We felt fiction mattered again. Calder, and his partner Marion Boyars, published only a few British novelists, and thus when *Berg* was published it was something to be read. Here was a working-class voice from England quite unlike any other, which had absorbed the theatrical influences of John Osborne and employed the technical advances of the nouveau roman. *Berg,* to use shorthand, is a Graham Greene thriller as if reworked by a somewhat romantic Burroughs" (Gordon, "Reading Ann Quin's *Berg*," vii-ix).

> It is not the inner monologue of a character in Virginia Woolf, registering sensation, conflating past and present, musing on other people, all in a kind of watercolor voice. It is not the inner talk of Joyce, as Bloom or Stephen observe the phenomenal world and interrogate themselves. Bloom's talk scarcely seems "inner" at all, seems rather actual speech, acted out in the theater of the mind, and one imagines Bloom talking aloud to himself, at least shaping his words with his lips.[68]

Christine Brooke-Rose, in her evaluation of Quin's narrative strategies, did oppose Stevick's emphasis on originality by tying Quin's methods to Beckett – and Joyce:

> In fact Quin uses either straight narrative sentences [...] or, as more often in *Berg*, direct speech, straight from Beckett and ultimately from Molly Bloom's monologue in *Ulysses.* These are formal remarks, not intended to detract from Quin's originality in other ways.[69]

The book's warm reception inaugurated Quin's career[70] and won Quin two fellowships which took her on exotic travels from which her subsequent three novels were to draw inspiration.

Quin's second novel, *Three* (1966) was completed during time spent in America on an academic scholarship. *Three* moves a step further than *Berg* in presenting a triangulation of characters matched by a triple narrative mode. The character triangle is composed of Leonard and Ruth, a well-off middle-aged married couple, and "S," a temporary refugee seeking shelter at their house while recovering from an abortion, who disappears (at both the novel's beginning and end), leaving a note that suggests that she may have drowned herself. The three narrative modes (marked as variously typeset blocks) in *Three* are the following: accounts of Leonard and Ruth that detail their actions and conversations in the best camera-eye *nouveau roman* vein; transcripts of tape recordings by S, which are presented in discontinuous lines akin to free verse; and extracts from Leonard's, Ruth's and S's journals. The novel is presented as unveiling and yet the documents employed that claim to reveal the past end up raising as many questions as they resolve. From the very start ambiguities also arise concerning Leonard and Ruth's possible implication in S' disappearance:

> *A man fell to his death from a sixth-floor window of Peskett House, an office-block in Sellway Square today.*
> *He was a messenger employed by a soap manufacturing firm.*
>
> Ruth startled from the newspaper by Leonard framed in the doorway. Against the white-washed wall. A wicker arm-chair opposite the Japanese table. Screen. Sliding doors. Rush matting. A mirror extended the window. Gardens. A bronzed cockerel faced the house.
> What's the latest? Fellow thrown himself out of a window. Ghastly way to choose. But Leon hers wasn't like that—I mean we can't really be so sure could so easily have been an accident the note just a melodramatic touch. No one can be blamed Ruth we must understand that least of all ourselves. (*Th*, 1)

Here, Quin's clinical, objective narrative tone renders a reality perhaps less pathogenic than in *Berg* but one that is no less oppressive: the reality of a dysfunctional childless marriage replete with petty bickering, mutual estrangement and highly traumatic sexuality. An obsessive accumulation of detail pertains to descriptions both of physical surroundings and of character action: "The hotel. A room. Three beds. Cupboards that never close. Turn about. Green wallpaper. An old man bears hot chocolate on a silver tray" (*Th*, 22); "Leonard leaned forward, legs apart, body suspended in an enclosed area" (*Th*, 40). In both cases, the most common effect of Quin's camera-eye technique is defamiliarisation. S' diaries—deciphered by both Leonard and Ruth—are less about preserving facts than about asserting, even performing, a self, and providing a world to go with it. This world is, again, highly autobiographical, as reminiscences of childhood spent at a Catholic convent, often disguised as blasphemous (highly Joycean) punning, suggest:

> Corpus Christ processions.
> Wearing white. Petals thrown.
> Kneeling
> on hot tennis courts. Tarmac clinging. Hymns chanted.
> Hell Mary full of grapes. Our Father who farts in Heaven. (*Th*, 36)

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68 Stevick, "Voices in the Head," 232.
69 Christine Brooke-Rose, *Stories, Theories and Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 78.
70 The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer called Berg "a most impressive debut" and although not resisting the temptation to align Quin with "such French novelists as Nathalie Sarraute" and the "nouvelle vague (New Wave) movement in the cinema," the review did affirm that *Berg* was "something of a breakthrough in the sense that, for the first time, these techniques have been used to produce a novel that is both wholly English in atmosphere and quite unpretentious" (*Times Literary Supplement* 3252 [25 June 1964]: 552).

Three's prime interest lies in the tension between inner lives and the outer reality of the married couple and the disintegrating effect of the absence, from that reality, of the third, silenced member. As Brian Evenson notes, *Three* is a text "whose function is not primarily representational; instead, it is affective, and refuses to stay at a comfortable distance."[71] Quin resists any kind of resolution, preserving ambiguity to the end, which is the narrative's most intriguing, if also frustrating, feature, a frustration that was reflected in the novel's critical reception, far less enthusiastic than with *Berg*.

Passages (1969) is the third stage of Quin's gradual attenuation of the narrative conventions of plot, temporal continuity and characters, further exploring the merging of identity and the poetic properties of her prose style. Here, the plotline becomes extremely diffuse, featuring a man and a woman travelling in an unnamed, probably Mediterranean, country beset with political tension (commentators speculate that Quin's travels in Greece and the 1967 military coup might have formed the backdrop) bringing about the couple's suspicions of being under surveillance. The main driving force of the narrative is, again, established in the opening sentence and sequence; the woman is on the quest after her disappeared—and possibly dead—brother:

> Not that I've dismissed the possibility my brother is dead. We have discussed what is possible, and what is not. They say there's every chance. No chance at all. Over a thousand displaced persons in these parts, perhaps more. So we move on. Towards. Away. Claiming another to take his place, as I place him in profile. Shapes suiting my fancy. Rooms with or without connecting doors. He watches when she isn't around. A perverse protection he knows she needs. From this need
>
> he takes notes. For a book. Journal. Report in some hotel. I no longer question. Parts of him I want to know, others he tells me of. Trips he has made here before. The sea. […] Light in parts of skin. Movement so near, by stretching my hand into the open
>
> I heard cicadas, wind colliding with trees. Sounding an ocean in the long room. I opened the shutters. Town huddled above the sea. Thin shadows of cypresses. (*P*, 5)

Quin once again employs block form in the narrative, dividing the text into four sections; the first and third can be attributed to the woman, and the second and fourth to the man. As is clear from the quote above, the first and third parts consist of paragraphs separated by line spaces rather than the one line space employed in standard paragraph breaks, with paragraphs breaking off before a sentence is completed, and the opening words of the following paragraph completing the sentence, though every now and then the course of the sentence is diverted from its expected track. The second and fourth segments are composed of the man's notes, possibly for a book, journal or report, stylistically a pell-mell of aphorisms, gnomic remarks, lists, definitions of words, mythological allusions, bits of dialogue, notes on the woman's fantasies, descriptions of (or fantasies about) her, accounts of dreams, and "cut-up dreams" in which elements of two dream-accounts are spliced together. The use of parallel columns adds to the disorienting effect of these passages. The left-hand column includes entries in small type, whereas the entries in the right-hand column are in standard type. A note at the front of *Passages* describes the items written in the left column as the thoughts that provoked the entries in the right column, but the link between the two is open to arbitrary realisation differing from one reading to another. There are several mythical references in the man's text, especially to Greek mythology. As Nicolas Tredell has observed, many of the Greek references are slightly adapted brief extracts from Jane Harrison's 1903 *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, which examines Greek ritual as preliminary to a scientific understanding of Greek religion. Thus, *Passages* presents a first conscious deployment in Quin's fiction of intertextual linkages. More importantly, they also provide for disquieting points of connection between the seemingly separate man's/woman's passages, and these uncanny echoes of the mythical within the everyday suggest an emergence of the ancient and pristine in the drab contemporaneity. The novel's final passage, set in the diary-form, ends on a note unresolved to the point of offering a new beginning, a new opening, which resists the final full-stop:

Saturday

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71 Evenson, "Introduction," *Three*, xiii.

> So let us begin another journey. Change the setting. Everything is changing, the country, the climate. There is no compromise now. No country we can return to. She still has her obsession to follow through and her fantasies to live out. For myself there is less of an argument. I am for the moment committed to this moment. This train. The distance behind and ahead. And that soon perhaps we will cross
> (*P,* 111-2)

Despite both refining the style of Quin's previous novels and deploying hitherto unused techniques, *Passages* was met with an even more lukewarm critical response.[72]

Quin's last novel *Tripticks* (1972), which draws on her American experience, is her most scrambled text, with a graphic dimension provided by Carol Annand's pop-art style illustrations. The narrative is at its thinnest here, attributed to a male narrator who highlights, in the opening sentence of the novel, his own multiplicity: "I have many names. Many faces" (*Tr*, 7). The narrator is being pursued by his first "X-wife" and her lover (or possibly he is pursuing them) – a pursuit involving car chases, a sojourn in a motel room next to the room occupied by his former wife and her lover, a stay at a CENTRE FOR STUDIES OF THE BODY AND THE SOUL, and finally, a visit to an Indian reservation. Identities further dissolve and disseminate themselves as the chase becomes interspersed with monstrous, comic, and erotic images and anecdotes of the narrator's relationships with his many wives, his mother and stepfather, and with other relatives and prominent strangers. Sexual explicitness, graphic directness and the franticness of presentation of the concerns of Quin's earlier novels positions *Tripticks* vis-à-vis her oeuvre in the position assumed by the "Circe" episode in *Ulysses*. Familiar themes are magnified and carnivalised – the narrator resents and wants to kill his father and, at times, his first X-wife and her lover. Eavesdropping and voyeurism are also prominent: the narrator overhears and looks through a keyhole at the lovemaking between his first X-wife and her lover. Finally, he also witnesses the primal scene during which he suffers through "every move, every moan my mother made from my room next to theirs" (*Tr*, 57). *Tripticks* offers a variety of styles and images, operating according to principles of collage which continue to lessen the importance of narrative progression and plot. Linguistically, increasing portions of narrative are occupied with lists – here is the narrator's "statement of personality":

> smart, well-educated
> ambitious
> deep concern for social problems
> good values, character
> communicate
> independent thinker
> poised personality
> vocal, will speak up
> mature, prepared for life
> versatile, able
> intellectually curious
> well-groomed
> care about community
> (*Tr*, 16)
>
> Lack of respect for authority
> lack of spiritual and moral fibre
> lack of responsibility
> lack of manners
> lack of dialogue with elders
> values ill-defined
> lack of good study habits
> lack of love for fellow men
> lack of self-respect
> too impetuous
> too introspective
> too introspective
> nothing missing

A similar cataloguing impetus drives the novel's fetishist depiction of sexuality:

> Waitresses clad in bikini bottoms and pasties serve noon-time Bloody Marys and roast-beef sandwiches. We even dressed up for these scenes, and had all the necessary equipment:
>
> Prostitute — half-bra of shimmering satin the sensational lift supported the under bust urging her up and out and leaving her excitingly bare but fully supported.
>
> Lesbian — a penis-aid to assist, non-toxic, flesh-like material with LIFE-LIKE VEINS
>
> Nymphet — grease-resistant – easy to clean. Soft. Pliable.
>
> Flagellist — a raised clitoral stimulator. Comes in three colours.

72 The *TLS* reviewer, even though among the most positive, still complained that "a good deal" of the text was "irritatingly opaque and elliptical" and judged its sole merit to lie in exploring "the contrast between those passages which use words to elucidate and those which attempt to bypass language in search of some expressive manner more comprehensive and simpler than prose." *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 April 1969 (Qtd. in Tredell, "Ann Quin," 236).

EBONY. BROWN. FLESH-COLOUR.

(*Tr,* 40-1)

Quin's critique of the consumerism of contemporary American culture is manifest in her overuse of meaningless acronyms, commodities made of letters that serve a specific ideological purpose:

> don't forget to practise Enthusiasm daily APRPBWPRAA (Affirmative Prayers Release Powers By Which Positive Results Are Accomplished). (*Tr,* 35)
> Man's wanderlust conquering time. Who's helping to increase his mobility? The R. D. (Re-frocked Diplomat); the M.A. (Mythmaker Allies); D. Gs. (dependent Generals); the N.I.M.H. (National Institute of Mental Health); the D.S.I.A. (Diaper Service Industry Association); S.D.S.A. (State Department Security Agent); and HEW. (*Tr,* 45)

Having abandoned her own version of interior monologue and the polyphony of lyrical narrative voices, Quin's last text is a surprisingly ironic and parodic pastiche targeting some of America's most acute historical-social traumas, especially Vietnam. It is not only identities and selves which are in danger of collapsing into each other, it is the very possibility of articulating any self without immediately entangling it in the emptied language of systems of power, of ideology, of commodification. In the conclusion, the narrator symbolically—in view of Quin's own impending self-silencing—abjures this power by ceasing to speak: "I opened my mouth, but no words. Only the words of others I saw, like ads, texts, psalms, from those who had attempted to persuade me into their systems. A power I did not want to possess. The Inquisition" (*Tr*, 192).

While the back cover hailed it as a work "prefiguring the formal inventiveness of Kathy Acker" and *Books and Bookmen* praised its exploration of "a verbal continuum somewhere between ambidextrous punpricks, Joycean parody and sub-Burrovian cut-uppery," the reception of the British press was at its chilliest, the *TLS* deploring its "fatal attention to the powerful underlying humourlessness of the whole thing."[73] Soon after completing *Tripticks*, Quin suffered another serious mental breakdown and spent a month in a London hospital, unable to speak. While at work on her fifth novel, "The Unmapped Country," and compensating for her lack of formal education by enrolling in University of East Anglia to read English, in August 1973, Quin drowned in the sea off her native town of Brighton. Suicide is the unofficial but likely cause.

Quin's experimental novels do exhibit a profound sensitiveness to the workings of the mind and consciousness as always determined by language and perceptual processes. Stevick recounts an anecdote in which Quin's psychiatrist, treating her in 1970, requested for copies of her novels as therapeutic material. A request which might be viewed as naïve, yet appears "perceptive and compassionate," for in Stevick's conclusion,

> [Quin's] novels do give a record of a mind that is, at once, artful, distanced, dispassionate and raw, immediate, its tensions unresolved. And that is what makes those four novels so powerful and so unusual. They take the self and others, one's voice, the voice of the nonself into areas not quite occupied before. "I opened my mouth, but no words," reads the end of Quin's last novel, *Tripsticks*, with an accent that, even now, startles.[74]

Quin's unusual combination of themes and techniques gives rise to a style unique in its powerful energy and disorienting effects, gradually abandoning depiction of consciousness for the sake of exploring the workings of language and the possibilities of its typographic representation.

"WHO'S SHE WHEN SHE'S (NOT) AT HOME": CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE

To revert to the authority of Frank Kermode one more time and quote his evaluation of Brooke-Rose's *Thru* on the back cover of the 1986 Carcanet *Brooke-Rose Omnibus*, "if we are to experience in English the serious *practice* of narrative as the French have developed it over the last few years, we shall have to attend to Christine Brooke-Rose."[75] The late Brooke-Rose (1923-2012) escapes easy compartmentalisation on many levels – first and foremost, by standing in between the French *nouveau roman* and British experimental fiction of the 1960s/1970s and after.[76] Sarah Birch,

73 *Times Literary Supplement* (5 May 1972), qtd. in Tredell, "Ann Quin," 237.
74 Stevick, "Voices in the Head," 239.
75 Christine Brooke-Rose, *Omnibus: Out, Such, Between, Thru* (London: Carcanet, 1986).
76 Born in Geneva to a Swiss-American mother and a British father, Brooke-Rose (whose combined surnames attest to the double parentage) grew up speaking French, English and German. It was not until after the separation of her parents (in 1929) and the death of her father (in 1934) that she

author of the pioneering and highly useful critical study on Brooke-Rose's fiction, takes the following remark by the author herself as a key to understanding her fiction:

> I deal in discourses, in the discourses of the world, political, technological, scientific, psychoanalytical, philosophical, ideological, social, emotional, and all the rest, so that knowledge to me is not an extraneous element I can put in or withhold at will, it *is* discourse, it *is* language [...] the source of most of my comic effects is the grafting together, or onto each other, of all these different discourses [...] Discourse comes from Latin *discurrere, to run here and there*. It has today become whole sets of rigid uses, and I am trying to make it run here and there again.[77]

According to Birch, what this key opens is access to "the common denominator of all Brooke-Rose's fiction," which she identifies as "the prismatic effect of viewing one field of knowledge, one language, or one culture through the discursive lens of another, and the idea of crossing between cultural domains is manifest in her novels as a structural principle" and it is in this sense that paradoxically, "her novels are more realistic, if not more realist, than those of many of her contemporaries."[78]

Brooke-Rose's criticism constitutes in itself an admirable body of work, comprising *The Grammar of Metaphor* (1958), *A ZBC of Ezra Pound* (1971) and most notably, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure* (1981) and *Stories, Theories, and Things* (1991). Almost symbiotically, her critical work deals with the intellectual sources and theoretical preoccupations of her fiction: contemporary science, post-Saussurian theories of language and discourse (particularly Derridean, Lacanian, and Foucauldian), the technical achievements of Ezra Pound, Samuel Beckett, and the *nouveaux romanciers*, feminist and gender theory, and Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel. Brooke-Rose herself admits to "a passionate concern with language" which she claims to share with "Pound and Beckett."[79] In terms of his importance for Brooke-Rose as a writer, Joyce receives repeated mentions as a significant precursor to the anti-novelistic explorations of the present tense narrative sentence. In *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, Brooke-Rose writes:

> The use of the present tense throughout, first by Dujardin, then by Gertrude Stein, then by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, and later by Robbe-Grillet and others, clearly flattens out all such clear markings in a perpetual present. "A continuous present is a continuous present," wrote Gertrude Stein as if it were a rose. (*RU*, 313)

Ten years later, only the focus has shifted, but the viewpoint remains the same:

> Robbe-Grillet (1962) loudly dismissed the *passé simple* as the hallmark of the traditional novel, and adopted (after Dujardin and Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*) the present tense, which he used in a brilliantly unsettling manner (since time-shifts are necessarily unmarked), though this was soon more weakly imitated. (*STT*, 78)

With *Out*, a futuristic tale set in Africa, begins Brooke-Rose's lifelong exploration of one crucial literary constraint: the present-tense narrative sentence which in a lipogrammatic structure replaces traditional past tense narration, traced by Brooke-Rose herself in her essay "The Author is Dead: Long Live the Author" to the context of the French *nouveau roman*.[80] The narrative of *Out* microscopically depicts a sick and unemployed white male who spends most of his time looked after by his wife in their small shack, inhabiting a post-apocalyptic world which bears the effects of a radical reversal of black on white, "negative" on positive. Of crucial concern, then, are issues of racial inequality through a reversal in the values historically (i.e. colonially) attached to the white/black binary: "Through all the false identities that we build, the love-making, the trauma-seeking, the alchemising of anecdote to legend, of episode to myth, what really happened to us?" (*O,* 120)

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moved with her mother to Brussels, and two years later (in 1936) to Britain. Her polyglotism stood her in good stead during World War II and her work for Bletchley Park, assessing intercepted German communications. After the War, she pursued an academic career, gaining a PhD in Middle English from University College London in 1954. Having defended her dissertation on medieval French and English literature and already written a few early novels in the "traditional" vein (e.g. her first novel, *Languages of Love*, 1956), in 1962 she herself suffered a serious illness during which she was convinced she would die. After recovery she achieved a new level of consciousness which she has described as "a sense of being in touch with something else – death perhaps." In 1968, Brooke-Rose left her husband and accepted a post at the newly created Université de Paris VIII at Vincennes, where she taught for twenty years before retiring in 1988 to the south of France to concentrate on her novel-writing. Brooke-Rose died on 21 March, 2012, aged 89.

77 Brooke-Rose, "Ill wit and good humour: women's comedy and the canon," *Comparative Criticism,* Vol. 10, ed. E. S. Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 129.

78 Birch, *Christine Brooke-Rose,* 3.

79 Birch, *Christine Brooke-Rose*, 9-10.

80 Brooke-Rose, *Invisible Author: Last Essays* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002) 130-56.

Such uses a similar subversive strategy to deconstruct the psychoanalytic discourse by means of that of astrophysics. Featuring in its first half under the name of "Someone," psychiatrist Larry comes back in the second half from a state of clinical death, after a prolonged coma and a period of low level of psychic energy. His convalescence features an extended lecture on the principles of astrophysics, paired with an indirect critique of the discourse of psychoanalysis in which it becomes apparent, as Birch has observed, that "reconstruction or aetiology of a patient's illness is impossible," since the analytic process itself "would alter the unconscious memories and fantasies that constitute traces of the origin of an illness."[81] From the narratological viewpoint, *Such* is the beginning of a series of Brooke-Rose's novels exploring the expressive form in which the form conveys content: as she stages the death of the white male protagonist, she simultaneously stages the death of traditional realistic narrative. Or, more accurately, Brooke-Rose "stages the life and death of narrative in the fits and starts of the story."[82]

More interestingly still, *Such* is an early instance of Brooke-Rose's explicit departure from Joycean poetics, in particular, the aesthetics of phantasmagoria that informs the "Circe" chapter of *Ulysses*.[83] On page one, Larry's first ordeal in the otherworld is having a heavy woman squat on his chest, "her huge buttocks in my face" (*S*, 203), just as in Nighttown, Bella/Bello Cohen squats on Bloom's upturned face. Furthermore, Larry's otherworldly hallucination procreates five children (who are also planets) with the names of classic blues songs—Dippermouth Blues, Gut Bucket Blues, Potato Head Blues, Tin Roof Blues, Really the Blues; a motif bearing striking resemblance to Bloom's fantasy of giving birth to eight miraculous children (Nasodoro, Goldfinger, Chrysostomos, Maindorée, Silversmile, Silberselber, Vifargent, and Panargyros).[84] As far as possible experimental inspirations informing *Such* are concerned, the much less tenuous (and author-corroborated) link is the title's obvious reference to the *Tel Quel*, however much played down by Brooke-Rose herself: "I got it from *Tel Quel*, which I was reading. And it's not easy because I say once or twice, 'interested in things as such.'"[85]

While *Out* and *Such* explore discursive limitations and inherent or mutual incompatibilities—the science of fiction and fictionality of science—and their hybridity remains largely on the conceptual level, *Between* (1969) deals with a complexity of the multilingual and linguistic kind. The employment of the expressive form continues as *Between* presents both a narrative *of* and narrative *as* a journey. Brooke-Rose also continues experimenting with her new narrative sentence, this time with a female centre of consciousness and new logic of narrative journey. The narrative traces a nameless protagonist ("A woman of uncertain age uncertain loyalties" [*B,* 445]) whose life story locates her on the boundary between France (her French mother, dead), Germany (her German father, disappeared) and England (her husband, divorced). Her vocation cements and furthers her transitional state – a simultaneous translator (French to German) who is always "between conferences." The principle of narrative organisation, then, is formed in the verbal consciousness of the protagonist, as it traces two overlapping lines: the saga of the protagonist's marriage annulment and series of love-letters written in medieval French, eventually discovered to be from an ageing Frenchman and terminated after the first tryst and the realisation that "fornication by airmail" is more enjoyable than the real thing. The metaphoric networks that bind together thematic sequences are centred around two chief images: enclosure (her body afloat in the bellies of countless airplanes or huddled between the sheets in countless hotel rooms) and intercourse (her mind a crossroad where languages meet, a locus of multilingualism) – a sustained metaphor parallels the blending of linguistic and cultural codes with sexual act:

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81 Birch, *Christine Brooke-Rose*, 66.
82 Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 53.
83 Brian McHale, "'I draw the line as a rule between one solar system and another': The Postmodernism(s) of Christine Brooke-Rose," *Utterly Other Discourse: the Texts of Christine Brooke-Rose*, eds. Ellen G. Friedman & Richard Martin (Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995) 195.
84 According to McHale, the reason these and other examples cannot be straightforwardly treated as explicit references to Joyce, is that in November 1990, Brooke-Rose avowed to him in personal communication that she had been "a latecomer to Joyce" and denied having read *Ulysses* prior to the publication of *Such*. Here is McHale on the matter: "More to the point, perhaps, is the peculiar character of the "Circe" chapter itself, which makes it all but immune to postmodernist parody. For "Circe" is itself already a parody of modernism; it already stands in a parodic relation to the modernist poetics of the earlier chapters of *Ulysses*. "Circe," that is, is one of those chapters of Joyce's text […] in which Joyce seems already to have outstripped modernist poetics […] and to anticipate modernism" (McHale, "The Postmodernism(s) of Christine Brooke-Rose," 195).
85 Qtd. in Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 214.

> As if languages loved each other behind their own façades, despite alles was man denkt darüber davon dazu. As if words fraternised silently beneath the syntax, finding each other funny and delicious in a Misch-Masch of tender fornication, inside the bombed out hallowed structures and the rigid steel glass modern edifices of the brain. Du, do you love me? (*B,* 445)

Or later, at the disappointing tryst with her French *amour épistolaire*:

> E allora the languages fraternise a little as he sips his mineral water without the ice under the staring southern eyes that well yes burn. Why do you speak in English? To remind me of the old days and my youth as a simultaneous interpreter of ideas nobody ever acts upon? Vous n'aimez pas ma langue? La langue de mes lettres? La langue—and the tip of his tongue peers out, moves slowly round his open lips, then in, then slowly out again, and in, and out in a dumb show pour éveiller en vous tous les désirs mais si. (*B,* 548)

Besides the implications of linguistic intercourse (fraternisation) as essentially incestuous, Brooke-Rose's experiment in *Between* goes further than trivial macaronics. Destabilisation of signification occurs on both single-word and discursive levels. In sentences such as "the words prevent any true EXCHANGE caught in the late afternoon sun that stripes the airport hall between the slats of the venetian blinds on the vast wall of glass" (*B,* 399), one word starts operating performatively, changing the course of the sentence. In a passage like "Have you anything to declare such as love desire ambition or a glimpse that in this air-conditioning and other circumstantial emptiness freedom has its sudden attractions as the body floats in willing suspension of responsibility to anyone" (*B,* 422), customs declaration turns into a declaration of love. Apart from linguistic intercourse, Brooke-Rose also uses syntax to enhance the expressive form of her text, syntax which engages in transgression in that sentences often wander along unpredictable trajectories replete with metonymic slides that produce a sense of the random movement of the protagonist.

As critics (Birch) have noted, *Between* is "a verbal lipogram" in that it avoids the use of the verb "to be" in any of its forms, performing its insistence on the need to "be" "tween," i.e. "be two," a becoming that resists unity and identity by remaining twofold. Similarly to most uses of the technique in the Oulipo group to which Brooke-Rose hereby indirectly refers, this refusal is undertaken from a fundamentally democratic position. Just as the identity of meaning (which any one language imposes upon an object by calling it its name) disappears in confrontation with any other language and such identity, so should, Brooke-Rose implies, all other identities (mistakenly) believed to be non-linguistic: "We live in an age of transition wouldn't you agree and must cope as best we can" (*B,* 476). However, it would be an oversimplification to regard the narrative of *Between* as somehow devoid of distinct temporal/spatial/linguistic coordinates. Despite all the rush, mobility and in-betweenness of both the style and the traveller, Brooke-Rose does provide checkpoints in the fluid movement across boundaries; despite its use of the present tense and abandonment of temporal sequence, *Between* still does its "present" moment in relation to a specific European geography and history: particularly, the Germany in (the immediate aftermath of) World War II. This aspect presents *Between* at its most personal: Brooke-Rose herself characterised it as based on "two non-experiences of the author (simultaneous interpretation, woman as passive transmitter) fused with genuine experiences of worldviews (stories, etc.) to produce an imaginative experience that rang true, at least to the author" (*STT*, 7).

Unlike with *Tel Quel*, Brooke-Rose is rather sceptical as regards her own ties with the Oulipo group. The lipogrammatic technique in Brooke-Rose's use is primarily concerned with lexicon, grammar or syntax, and not letters as in the French "Workshop of potential literature." In a recent interview, Brooke-Rose dismisses Lawrence's parallel between her work and Georges Perec's by claiming that "one has to keep in control with the constraints. And some constraints, one doesn't really see the point. I've never understood the point of writing a novel without the letter *e*," and specifies her attitude to the technique:

> To me, a constraint must be a grammatical or a syntactical constraint, part of the syntax, not a letter. But that may be a prejudice, about form. Because that becomes going through dictionaries and looking for words. I mean, like him. But I don't see the point. [… Perec] announced it loud and long, so it was known. I didn't say anything about no verb 'to be' until much later. And then it did get repeated, but without further comment.[86]

86 Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 206-7.

Taking yet another direction in the last part of her tetralogy, Brooke-Rose's *Thru* carries the parodic tactics of *Between* a step further by turning from the discourse of culture in the wide sense to the discourse of the self-reflexive plane of metafiction, used here in reference to its definition in Patricia Waugh's work as

> not so much a sub-genre of the novel as a tendency *within* the novel which operates through exaggeration of the tensions and oppositions inherent in all novels: of frame and frame-break, of technique and counter-technique, of construction and deconstruction of illusion.[87]

It is perhaps this overt self-reflexivity and verbal innovativeness that links Brooke-Rose's text to Joyce's final opus, though to call it "an offshoot of *Finnegans Wake*"[88] would be an overstatement disregarding its individual concerns which are markedly different from those of the *Wake*. Departing from the opening reference to a rear-view mirror, Hanjo Berressem was perhaps closer to the mark in likening *Thru* to Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, showing how "the text immediately begins to reflect not only faces but other texts," largely from linguistics, literature as well as structuralist and post-structuralist theory, and links the opening question "Who speaks?" to Lacan's essay on desire in the Freudian Unconscious, rendered here as "Qui parle?" which is reflected in *Thru* by an otherwise unaccountable slide into French: "le rétro viseur [...] some languages more visible than others" (*T,* 579).[89] If individual parodies challenge specific theories and texts by Derrida, Lacan, and French poststructuralist feminists, *Thru* takes as its guiding narrative tool Propp's anatomy of folk-tales, its characters turned into variables with constant functions. The dynamics of reflection finds its morphological enactment in the names of principal characters, generated from within the text:

> I am in fact dead, Jacques. Oh, he's asleep. What a pity. Everything becoming clear at last. God! No! Yes! Quick, pen and paper.
> ARMEL SANTORES
> LARISSA TOREN
> Yes! It figures. So that's why she said about Armel not finding his ME in her and she not finding her I. Why the names are anagrams. Except for Me in hers and I in his. Am I going mad? Help!
> (*T,* 647)

The obsession on the part of Brooke-Rose's narrative subjects with decoding and unveiling is also manifest in one of the strategies that the text employs to, as it were, read itself – mesostics, the technique famously employed in John Cage's "Roaratorio," which follows the letters JAMESJOYCE through the text of the *Wake*. For example, the question on page 583, "Who's she when she's at home?" is answered on the next page as:

> fan**G**s
> c**R**uel
> bo**A**rish
> bea**M**
> **M**oat
> **E**tc
> alrea**D**y (all red eyes)
>
> na**I**ls
> **N**ails
>
> upon **T**hese
> eyes of t**H**ine I'll
> s**E**t
>
> the re **M**ote s**T**one
> **W**ide **E**yes w**E**t?
> p**A**rch **M**ent wa**X**
> ar**X**i st**O**ne **T**race
> d**R**y
> pap**Y**rus
> eye'**S**
> (*T,* 584)

87 Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1984) 14.
88 Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 24.
89 Berressem continues: "The shift into French facilitates the metamorphosis of an object (driving mirror) into a subject (le viseur). It links the spatial image of a subject caught between images originating from behind which are projected forward by the mirror to Lacan's notion of a decentered, barred subject which can recognize itself only by projecting its past into the future" (Hanjo Berressem, "*Thru* the Looking Glass: A Journey into the Universe of Discourse," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 9.3 [Fall 1989] 128).

While it would of course be reductive to claim an exclusively Joycean heritage for these and other textual effects, it is easy to see how they originated in the multifarious discourses of French poststructuralism, one which had been crafted, explicitly and consciously, within the sphere of Joyce's influence – see, e.g. the "Lacanian" pun that renders syntagmatics as "SIN TAG MA TICKS" (*T,* 581). Brooke-Rose herself praised this "novel about the theory of the novel, that is, a narrative about narrativity, a fiction about fictionality, a text about intertextuality" to be her "her best and most daring book in the self-reflexive genre," even though "the external harm this book did to her reputation as incomprehensible and pretentious was lasting and profound."[90] The charge of pretension seems more misguided than that of incomprehensibility – for issues of meaning, comprehension, their limits as well as limitations, are precisely what Brooke-Rose's exploration of the unconscious must necessarily address. Brooke-Rose's chief concern is, yet again, representation and representability.[91]

Significantly, Brooke-Rose avails herself of a strategy whose genealogy stretches as far back as Freud (even though, in *Thru*, Lacan is a far more pervasive presence) and whose potential for literature has been best exploited by Joyce's materialist poetics: the pun. As Brooke-Rose explicitly states in the text, "the pun is free, anarchic, a powerful instrument to explode the civilization of the sign and all its stable, reassuring definitions, to open up its static, monstrous logic of expectation into a different dialectic with the reader" (*T,* 607). Hence, again, the aims and uses of Brooke-Rose's employment of the technique are decidedly her own and not derivative from Joyce's. She is far more concerned with how the workings of the pun undermine scientific, theoretic discourse, or indeed the claims of univocity of discourse as such. While destabilising and dissolving the realist idea of "character," Brooke-Rose novelises the supposedly distanced and logical position of "theory" and shows it to be a function of desire, an endless, for circular, dissemination of meaning. *Thru* ends as it must do: within the dissemination of possible endings, the story finally "tells itself," and the final words of the narrator are written acrostically into the narration: "exeunt narrators with a swift switch of signifiers no more I superimposing" (*T,* 735). The final sentence, then, takes up the initial mirror image and shows again the subject gliding on its lonely night-ride journey. Despite its circularity, almost extreme self-reflexivity and deep immersion in the French theory of the 1960s to mid-70s, *Thru*'s final exhaustive list of literary borrowings includes no mention of Joyce – an explicitly Joycean, linguistically materialist and innovative, poetics will be developed in Brooke-Rose's second novel tetralogy written and published in the course of 1980s.

90 Brooke-Rose, *Stories, Theories and Things*, 8.
91 "How does one hold up a mirror to the unconscious? How adjust the mirror to represent that which is missing from view? And how to do so, particularly when the unnamed male driver at the beginning of the novel seems to control the 'intensity of illusion' in the driving mirror?" (Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 85).

"THE CENTENARIAN STILL SEEMS AVANT-GARDE": BRITISH FICTION IN 1980-2000, AND AFTER

Given the many inherent contradictions and ambiguities surrounding the term, "postmodernism" will be understood here in the broad, yet possibly only meaningful, conceptualisation, close to the one formulated by Christine Brooke-Rose's earliest critic, Sarah Birch: as a concatenation of certain thematic interests and stylistic strategies from the fiction of 1960s onward. Echoing Brooke-Rose's own repeatedly voiced scepticism regarding the usefulness, indeed tenability, of the term, Birch makes the following point: "At its best, postmodernism is a concept which enables us to reject the view of literature as so many national trees, each with its own main trunk and subsidiary branches, allowing us instead to see it as a network of overlapping groupings corresponding to areas of interest—technical, ideological, thematic, and so on."[1] Consequently, a writer like Brooke-Rose can be regarded as embodying the notion of so-called postmodernism as abandonment of nationalist-bound categorisation of literature, as conceptual grappling with the resistance to labelling and grouping: "[Brooke-Rose] has returned to the fold, so to speak, of British fiction, but the 'fold' to which she has returned is a composite of styles and approaches, and the term 'English,' or even 'British' is often inadequate to describe many of its members."[2]

Birch's "British Postmodernism" vis-à-vis Brooke-Rose is chiefly marked by two features: inter- and hetero-textuality on the one hand, and a persistent tendency toward the fantastic in its various guises (science-fiction, Gothic, magic realism, and so on), on the other. Despite this, Birch is careful to voice the following caveat against too simplistic a labelling: "Technically, British fiction in the last two decades has been reluctant to relinquish the conventions of realism and has been content instead to stretch them."[3] This point has been echoed in Randall Stevenson's authoritative account in *The Oxford English Literary History*, which distinguishes between the two options of "innovative techniques" versus "conventions modernism had never wholly displaced."[4] With recourse to Harry Levin's famous observation regarding the decade-by-decade alternation between "progress" and "regression" in literary history, Stevenson goes on to observe that whereas the 1960s were marked by "a renewed readiness for experiment in the 1960s, often drawing on the examples of modernism and its successors," what took place in the 1970s was "a return towards conservatism" and the combined heritage of these two periods contributed to the "eclectic" fashion in which "many authors in the 1980s and 1990s" were ready to choose from "stores of literary technique, and to recombine devices they found there, rather than favouring either of the major branches too exclusively."[5] As far as to choose from "stores of literary technique" was also to choose whether or not to draw upon the Joycean experimental heritage, in the course of the four decades that separate the present from Johnson's declaration of war on the "anachronistic, invalid, irrelevant, and perverse"[6] realist mode of the nineteenth-century novel, overt alliances with Joyce ceased to have the dissentious charge they had still held for the avant-garde circle around Johnson.

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1 Birch continues: "We can then talk about the tendency toward ludic manipulation of language in the work of some writers, gender-consciousness in the work of others, the recent trend in science fiction toward the use of metafictional techniques, as well as developments specific to a given culture, as so many "postmodernisms" which together comprise a loose coalition. According to this view of postmodernism, each individual writer could be seen as having a stake in a number of different postmodernist enterprises" (Sarah Birch, *Christine Brooke-Rose and Contemporary Fiction* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994] 217).

2 Nor is, in Birch's account, Brooke-Rose a "properly" French author: "Furthermore, it would be false to say that in moving away from what were seen as "French" modes Brooke-Rose has abandoned one tradition for another. The ideologically polarized and group-oriented literary atmosphere of France in the 1960s and 1970s has since given way to a more eclectic and individually minded set of writers who have little sense of common cause or method. As an increasing number of writers are like Brooke-Rose in that they resist placing and labelling, new ways of accommodating their fiction within intelligible frameworks must be sought. It is for this reason that the polymorphous concept of "postmodernism" has proved useful to many critics" (Birch, *Christine Brooke-Rose and Contemporary Fiction*, 225).

3 Birch, *Christine Brooke-Rose*, 218.

4 "For any English writers [...] at least two sets of possibilities were apparent by 1960. Innovative techniques and postmodernist "prophecy" offered themselves alongside conventions modernism had never wholly displaced—ones often surviving since the nineteenth century, and recently strongly revalued by Movement writing. Twentieth-century literature could even be seen as divided almost decade by decade in terms of allegiance to one or other set of priorities, with the revolutions dominating the 1920s followed by the formally conservative writing of the 1930s and 1950s" (Randall Stevenson, *The Last of England?* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004] 85).

5 Stevenson, *The Last of England?*, 86.

6 B.S. Johnson, *Aren't You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1973) 13.

Christine Brooke-Rose's criticism[7]—whose gist is contained in her two monumental essay collections, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* and *Stories, Theories and Things*—presents her diagnosis of her contemporaneity, out of which springs the ethical and moral imperatives underlying her fiction. The diagnosis is one of "a reality crisis" in which "what used to be called empirical reality, or the world, seems to have become more and more unreal, and what has long been regarded as unreal is more and more turned to or studied as the only 'true' or 'another and equally valid' reality" (*RU,* 3-4). This ontological shift is of crucial importance for literature since it has occurred chiefly as consequence of "the discourse upon discourse that man has always needed since writing began," which "has now expanded to a vast industry of unprecedented proportions" (*RU*, 11). The two works also introduce a loosely formed canon of fictional investigations into the unreality of the real, and thus point to acknowledged precursors or contemporaries to Brooke-Rose's own explorations. This thematically organised canon includes writers, movements and genres as diverse as Henry James (whose *Turn of the Screw* Brooke-Rose analyses in remarkable detail on the basis of its "surface structures"), magic realism, the new science fiction (Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph McElroy), American postmodernists (in particular, William H. Gass), and Brooke-Rose's favourite writers of the *nouveau roman* (Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute) and *Tel Quel* (Maurice Roche, Philippe Sollers) groups.

A whole section of *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* is devoted to addressing the question, "Postmodernism – what is it?", and presenting Brooke-Rose's view as largely dissident from the one prevalent within the academia. Both the terms, i.e. "modern" and "postmodern," are found "peculiarly unimaginative for a criticism that purports to deal with phenomena of which the most striking feature is imagination," this for three reasons: "They are purely historical, period words, and in that sense traditional," second, "they are self-cancelling terms, and this may be particularly apt for an art continually described as self-cancelling," and finally, "by way of corollary, the terms are simply lazy, inadequate." A consequent problem arises, then, with any attempt at defining the notions in terms of canon: "[If] we are going to put D.H. Lawrence [...] and Hemingway and Proust and Kafka and Pound and Yeats and Eliot and Faulkner and Mann and Gide and Musil and Stevens and Virginia Woolf and Joyce etc. into the same modernist ragbag, the term becomes meaningless except as a purely period term, itself obsolescent since modern by definition means now." Conversely, when Ihab Hassan includes within the group of "antecedents of postmodernism" writers as divergent and variegated as "Sterne, Sade, Blake, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Jarry, Tzara, Hoffmannstahl, Gertrude Stein, the later Joyce, the later Pound, Duchamp, Artaud, Roussel, Broch, Queneau and Kafka," he has, to Brooke-Rose's mind merely "reinvented our ancestors," as one "always shall" (*RU*, 344-5), yet it is precisely this "always" that makes Hassan's label too general for it to be applicable. Hassan is critiqued by Brooke-Rose as prone to sweeping generalisations even when focused on the postmodernity of one text – the *Wake*:

> Later Hassan does give us some more specific "modern forms" arising, directly or indirectly, out of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the structure of which is "both structurally over-determined and semantically under-determined," but with coincidence as structural principle (identity as accident, recurrence and divergence), as well as the gratuitousness of every creative act. (*RU*, 349)

In this context, it is useful to counterpoint Lodge's views as furthered in his *The Novelist at the Crossroads* with those of Brooke-Rose who emphasises the confusion, within British literary practice and criticism, of self-reflectiveness with experimentation; experimentation, which in the British fiction of the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by a tendency toward fantasy, perhaps in order to oppose the social-realist fiction. Of Bradbury's equivalence between the fantastic and fabulation in British science fiction, Brooke-Rose notes that if understood differently, not as fabulation but as the perpetuation of a radical uncertainty regarding the ontological status of the events described, the question of the relation between the real and the fictional in the British novel of the 1960s has rather a different history. Instead of Lodge's

7 Brooke-Rose's work as critic and theorist attests to her wide-ranging schooling, reaching back into late 1950s, when in 1958 she published *A Grammar of Metaphor*, an informed survey of poetry from Chaucer to Dylan Thomas in which metaphor is treated as form rather than content, followed in 1971 by *A ZBC of Ezra Pound*, a study of *The Cantos* as diachronic poetics, particularly through a study of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. Simultaneously with *Textermination* (1991), Brooke-Rose published a collection of essays entitled *Stories, Theories and Things*, which also included "A metastory, with metacharacters," her exposé of her own fictional practice. Finally, 2002 saw the collection of "last essays" called *Invisible Author*.

equivalence of experiment with self-reflexiveness, Brooke-Rose distinguishes between the "anti-novel" in the tradition of Cervantes and Sterne, which is overtly self-reflexive, and the "experimental novel," which seeks to extend the possibilities of fiction through the exploitation of new techniques. In Brooke-Rose's reading, works like Fowles' *French Lieutenant Woman* or Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*—which for Lodge exemplify the experimental British novel *par excellence*—appear at the crossroads, indeed, but one at which any claim of radicalness and innovation intersects with bizarre anachronism and conservatism. Lodge's writers of "problematic" novels in fact do little more than recast the contemporary equivalent of the material of the nineteenth-century novel in the trappings of self-conscious frames and other narrative devices that fragment, distort, or comment on it.[8] Not anymore the pledges of allegiance to Joyce à la Johnson or Burgess: the predominance of the realist sensibility from the 1980s onward is reflected in the dismissal of the relevance of Joyce and the modernist literary innovation across the literary field. Still, apart from the ongoing career of Christine Brooke-Rose, at least six other writers can be singled out as continuing in the avant-gardist project of the 1960s, and departing in their variegated trajectories from a shared interest in the Joycean materialist poetics.

"OF NARRATIVE STYLES, THE DISSOLUTION OF CHARACTER": CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE, 1984-2006

The two novel quartets Christine Brooke-Rose produced in the second half of 1980s and from mid-1990s to mid-2000s, respectively, offer in themselves a possible framework of classification and categorization of the various strands of so-called postmodernist writing. Her two post-1984 tetralogies present a panorama of techniques and styles that both continue and develop Brooke-Rose's earlier commitments to aesthetic experimentation (in particular, the technique of the Oulipian constraint in the case of *Between*), but also depart from it in radically divergent directions. Almost a decade had passed since *Thru* (1975) before Brooke-Rose launched the third tetralogical period of her career. The first volume of her "Intercom Quartet" was published shortly after her retirement from Paris-Vincennes and relocation to the south of France in order to concentrate fully on her fiction, a decade spent teaching and writing works of literary theory and criticism.

It is from the conclusions of *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (1981) that her "Intercom Quartet" departs.

Already the first part of Brooke-Rose's novelistic "Intercom Quartet" bears the marks of the *Wakean* influence well beyond anything discoverable in the preceding tetralogy. *Amalgamemnon* (1984) presents a striking departure from Brooke-Rose's trademark third-person narrative sentence in favour of a first-person narrative and the utilisation of a new constraint. The entire narrative is written in the future and conditional tenses, the subjunctive or imperative moods – i.e. in some "non-realising" form (tense or mood): future, conditional, hypothetical, etc., as opposed to the preterite which, as a distinctive mark of the discourse of official recorded history, is avoided in Brooke-Rose's poetics. The overall narrative setting and situation features a woman lying in bed next to her sleeping/snoring partner/lover, entertaining herself in her insomnia by impersonating several major prophetic voices in the history of Europe. The woman is Professor Mira Enketei, who, in view of the impending termination of her academic career in the classics, "mimages" herself as many other characters, reflecting on the possible futures of humanity. Thus, the constraint is in full service of mimesis and ideological thrust of the text. Brooke-Rose stages a prophecy, a mock-ancient oracle with which to divine the future on the basis of diagnosing the present:

> I shall soon be quite redundant at last despite of all, as redundant as you after queue and as totally predictable, information-content zero. […] Who will still want to read at night some utterly other discourse that will shimmer out of a minicircus of light upon a page of say Agamemnon returning to his murderous wife the glory-gobbler with his new slave Cassandra princess of fallen Troy who will exclaim alas, o earth, Apollo apocalyptic and so forth, Herodotus, the Phoenicians kidnapping Io and the Greeks plagiarizing the king of Tyre's daughter Europe, but then, shall we ever make Europe? Sport. Rugger. The Cardiff team will leave this afternoon for Montpellier where they will play Béziers in the first round of the European championship, listen to their captain, Joe Tenterten: we're gonna win. (*A*, 5)

8 Birch goes so far as to say: "Upon closer examination it becomes obvious that even the 'radical' philosophical concepts behind the novels on the extreme edges of Lodge's schema [...] rely heavily on a tradition of existentialist though associated with realist fiction and a pre-structuralist conception of ''reality' as a domain sealed off from the constitutive processes of language." (Birch, *Christine Brooke-Rose,* 200.)

Visibly, from the very start, Brooke-Rose engages in her favourite strategy – exposing scientific discourse to the effects of fictional practices, here the discourse of computer science. In the age of 0 and 1, Brooke-Rose's narrator suggests, "I" and "you" become as voided of information content as "u" after "q," or "you after queue." As a classics professor, Mira has much at stake in countering the impending hegemony of computerised technology, whose pre-programming threatens to replace the function of the oracle, ordering both the "foetus" and the "prophetus" into wholly predictable patterns (*A*, 82-3). As a woman and a classicist, her "prophersigh" (*A*, 53) assumes the voice of Cassandra (or, as she appears in the text, Sandra) and is meant to counter the "Father of History," Herodotus. In her discussion of *Amalgamemnon* in *Invisible Author*, Brooke-Rose points out that "the word plagiarize […] originally meant 'kidnap,' and this etymological connection provides 'an invisible pun' in the text" (*IA,* 50). As Karen Lawrence has observed, by "plagiarising" Herodotus Brooke-Rose demonstrates "the violence against women in classic history, not only physically, but psychically, with the loss of their voices."[9] This silencing takes place on both the macro-level of the history and mythology of plagiarism and kidnapping, as well as the micro-level of the narrator's household:

> Soon he will snore, in a stentorian sleep, a foreign body in bed. There will occur the blanket bodily transfer to the livingroom for a night of utterly other discourses that will crackle out of disturbances in the ionosphere into a minicircus of light upon a page of say Herodotus and generate endless stepping-stones into the dark, the Phoenicians kidnapping Io and the Greeks in Colchis carrying off the king's daughter Medea, creating in advance as yet another distance which I'll have carefully to deconstruct tomorrow by letting him abolish all those other discourses into an acceptance of his, although sooner or later the future will explode into the present despite the double standard at breaking points. We'll take that predge when we come to it. [...]
>
> Tomorrow at breakfast Willy will pleased as punch bring out as the fruit of deep reflection the non-creativity of women look at music painting sculpture in history and I shall put on my postface and mimagree, unless I put on my preface and go through the routine of certain social factors such as disparagement from birth the lack of expectation not to mention facilities a womb of one's own a womb with a view an enormous womb and he won't like the countertone at all, unless his eyes will be sexclaiming still what fun, it'll talk if you wind it up . . . (*A,* 16-7)

The two passages above are characteristic of *Amalgamemnon*'s style, marked by flippancy in tone and anacoluthon in syntax. References to Medeia and the kidnapped Io and the Woolfian "womb of one's own" as opposed to Willy's "sexclamations" over breakfast, are all part of Brooke-Rose's amalgamation of women's voices throughout the male-dominated history, mythology, and consequently imagination of the West. This amalgamation is staged in Brooke-Rose's text already on the level of the signifier. The prophetic protagonist, (Cas)Sandra, imagines herself as a determined counterculture "graphomaniac," who will be imprisoned for her "graffitism" (*A*, 20). Portmanteau amalgamations and subversive etymologies have already been exemplified, but there are more strategies employed – for instance, the numerous *détournements* of clichés, often polyglotic, and often to a satirical effect: "Che sera sera, you shall see what you shall see and may the beast man wane" (*A*, 30) or "On verra ce qu'on verra may the boast man whine" (*A*, 52), where the narrator's reversion of stock phrases about male competitiveness ("may the best man win") undermines the values of the male-dominated society that has designated her as redundant. The narrator's "prophersighs," having traversed areas as diverse and panoramic as Greek mythology, Britain's postcolonial situation, as well as (what amounts to a truly prophetic feature of Brooke-Rose's 1984 vision) Somali famine or the "budding" Arabian terrorism (*A*, 127), ultimately returns to the domestic gender policy and power politics:

> But Wally we'll have to have something in common surely, what shall we talk about when we'll stop talking about love? My love I'll never believe the day will come when we'll have nothing to say, why if we love each other we should never stop talking! Why pin it all on intellectual exchange?
>
> It'll be a very good question, but if there could at least be exchange it might be fun for a while providing he doesn't atomize not only my inquiries, which I'll have to stop, but my own lifelong passions multitudinous, from astronomy to Zeus from Borges to Yggdrasil from choreography to xylophones from Dante to the Wits from ethnology to Vitruvius from fiction to utopias from grammatology to theororism from heresies to sestinas from ideograms to rhetoric from jazz to quattrocento from Kierkegaard to Plotinus from Lear to Oedipus from mimesis to aporia to nihilism, he may dyscognize them all and all the others out of his epistemes. (*A,* 130)

9 Karen R. Lawrence, *Techniques for Living: Fiction and Theory in the Work of Christine Brooke-Rose* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010) 103.

As Elen G. Friedman and Miriam Fuchs have argued, although the stories running "through the madlanes of Sandra's memory" will not help her to find a job, "by inscribing her presence in language, she defies the deadening and ever-growing bureaucracy around her."[10] This inscription takes place by means of multilingual punning and the creation of a neologistic idiolect – a Joycean strategy whose importance goes well beyond character parallelism remarked upon by Lawrence.[11]

Following Brooke-Rose's outspokenly feminist *Amalgamemnon* is a relatively straightforward, dialogue-based novel of the sci-fi genre, *Xorandor* (1990). It is Brooke-Rose's first novel explicitly set in England (Cornwall, to be precise) and the Last but not least, the thrust of the narrative is presented in a dialogical form, presenting yet another departure from Brooke-Rose's staple narrative sentence. The narrative presents a transcript of the efforts of fraternal twins Jip and Zab to write the story of their discovery of Xorandor, a nuclear waste-eating rock that produces offspring with a similar ability, as they dictate contrapuntally into a pocket computer the story of their relationship with the ancient silicon life-form. Thus, the technological anxiety of *Amalgamemnon* is revisited here, however, Brooke-Rose turns computer science from a thematic concern into the very medium and mode of her narrative: as the two "whiz-kids" talk, the computer transcribes their speech onto their "Poccom 3" computer screen and then replies directly: the twins' "softalk" thus stands in opposition to the "softwary" Mira in *Amalgamemnon* (*X*, 9). The name of the rock-machine, then, derives from the operand XOR (exclusive OR) and ANDOR (nonexclusive OR). Just how mimetic are Brooke-Rose's narrative device and the consequent style can be shown at *Xorandor*'s very opening:

> **1 BEGIN**
> The first time we came across Xorandor we were sitting on him.
> Correction, Zab. Sitting True, came across False. We didn't come across Xorandor, he contacted us.
> True, Jip. We'd come to our usual haunt by the old carn and we were sitting on this large flat stone.
> It was the middle of our summer eprom and we'd taken Poccom 2 out with us to play on. (*X,* 9)
> Correction not accepted. You agreed to introduce the storytellers cos they're also characters. If the storytellers are characters THEN their confusion is part of their characters ENDIF. Inversely IF the characters are the storytellers THEN the confusion is part of the story ENDIF. REMark. (*X,* 11)

As Brooke-Rose herself admitted, one of the practical reasons for her construction of a children's slang out of electronics and physics jargon was that she "had no idea (generation gap + living abroad) how kids talk. The reason was practical, the result, again, a particular style" (*STT*, 10). The more philosophical significance of the dialogic form lies in its staging a dialogue between man and machine, out of which grows the plotline of a "nuclear disaster averted" story: in nourishing themselves on nuclear material, the computer's progeny promises to solve nuclear crisis. However, when one of Xorandor's offspring mistakes nuclear waste with nuclear material in a bomb, thereby neutralizing it and upsetting the fine balance of world power, the threat begins to loom that nuclear missiles will be randomly disarmed by this process, thus upsetting the balance of power in the theory of deterrence. The twins, like all storytellers, have privileged information, but it is so weighty that either revealing or concealing it would influence the course of history, and so, in the end, Jip and Zab decide not to "save" their computer file-story. As if, again, prescient of the 1990s "end of history" debates, Brooke-Rose has the twins reflect on their own status as narrators in a story without a hero, fiction without and beyond history:

> "Poor Us! We're storytellers without a hero. . . . We're not even autobiographers since we've dropped out of our own story. Nothing is happening, Zab."
> "Something is happening to us, Jip, we're growing up. Even story-tellers can change, during the story."
> "What on earth do modern historians do, Zab, when history seems to stop?"
> "They wait."
> "Until something happens?"
> "Until they discover that something has been happening all the time, away from their camera-eyes, unbeknown to them." (*X*, 159)

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10 Ellen G. Friedman & Miriam Fuchs, "Introduction – Contexts and Continuities: An Introduction to Women's Experimental Fiction in English," *Breaking The Sequence – Women's Experimental Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) 31.

11 "Like Joyce's Finnegan, Mira assumes historical, mythic, and astronomical proportions. Her mission, however, remains constant: to awaken those around her to the impending doom she sees on the horizon." (Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 101.)

Thus, although firmly embedded within the genre, it is chiefly through *Xorandor*'s combination of form and content, as well as its computerised style that Brooke-Rose performs her typical experimentation with the discursiveness of science.[12]

Verbivore (1990) represents a novelty in its status as a sequel both to *Amalgamemnon* and *Xorandor*, developing and enhancing their stylistic effects and thematic concerns. As McHale has noted, *Verbivore* presents their ontological "realisation," in so far as *Amalgamemnon* insisted on its "unrealised" verbal tense and mode and *Xorandor*'s narrative culminated in self-effacement. However, this realisation is problematised by Brooke-Rose on many levels, primarily because "the real," throughout *Verbivore*, is presented as "simulation" – if Xorandor reappears, it is with the hitherto unknown ability to "simulate a reality and decide when a different version was required" (*V*, 61). *Verbivore* creates a fictional world inhabited by an over-computerised race of beings who have lost control of their words and memories, life having been completely absorbed and distanced by screened writing, floppy disks and media. The driving narrative "incident," which again determines the peculiar style, consists in a reaction of a mysterious megacomputer (very likely Xorandor's offspring) to the overloading flow of information by sudden cuts in the flow, during which words disappear, writing gets erased. Just how different a world *Verbivore* presents can also be seen in how the revenant Mira Enketei is only left to perversely enjoy the classicist etymologies: "In fact the press soon named the whole phenomenon Verbivore. Some journalists tried Logophagoi—which pleased me more, as an ex-Greek scholar, and also recalled the Xorandor affair with its Alphaphagoi" (*V*, 28). The erasure of writing staged in *Verbivore* commences from the very outset:

> On the first day of Verbivore I was wordprocessing a difficult farewell letter to my wife and listening to the radio when it suddenly went phut. But this often happened, so I just waited patiently, erasing and retyping sentences and whole paras. It was only later that.
> When Verbivore began I was watching the last instalment, well, not *the* last I mean but it came to be the last instalment of.
> What was I doing when Logfag began? Why I was calling Jimmy, he's in Zambia you see, and as I got through I realised I had the telly on but then.
> I can't remember the beginning of Verbivore. It seems quite.
> I can't remember, I was coming-to after having me womb out.
> (*V,* 7)

However, if Brooke-Rose's previous two novels raised their admonishing fingers against the predatory computer technologies and discourses, here she demonstratively engages in computerised cannibalism by feeding upon the words, phrases and motifs of *Amalgamemnon* and *Xorandor*, as well as recasting their characters, cutting the former and reshuffling the latter, before concluding with: "Blank screen, black with millions of white dots, like a universe. Decibel dies" (*V*, 196). Moreover, Brooke-Rose accentuates the narrative obsession with simulation by displacing the narrative as a whole upon the level of simulation – shortly before the concluding blank screen, the whole "Verbivore affair" is revealed to have been a fiction within the fiction, part of a novel somebody is writing, maybe Perry Hupsos (original Greek title of *On the Sublime*), maybe a character in a radio-drama that written by Perry Hupsos and produced by Mira Enketei. In letting her own characters comment on their own displacement as fictions from "the real," while constantly undermining its "reality" as fictional and fictitious, Brooke-Rose is already paving way for the climax of her tetralogy.

Textermination (1991), despite reverting to the trademark of Brooke-Rose's narrative strategy, the third-person present-tense narrative sentence, takes intertextuality and fictionality to unprecedented heights. "A sequel to something like the entirety of world literature,"[13] *Textermination* features dozens of characters grafted from the classic texts of fiction of all periods and national literatures who gather at the San Francisco Hilton to petition the Reader (a divinity whose name is appropriately capitalised) to spare them from the oblivion of no longer being read. This grafting, needless to say, happens not only on the level of the character, but also of each and everyone's own life-world, which results in a collapse of the ontological demarcations among these respective worlds. But Brooke-Rose does not settle

12 Lawrence speaks of Brooke-Rose's "radical science fiction": "Eschewing traditional science fiction, which on numerous occasions she refers to as 'unimaginative' and, paradoxically, too reliant on the codes of realism, Brooke-Rose is clearly after some more radical kind of science or scientific fiction that derives its *techne*, rather than merely its content, from computer technology." (Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 125).
13 McHale, "The Postmodernism(s) of Christine Brooke-Rose," 205.

for having Humbert Humbert leer at an unsuspecting Maisie, or *Middlemarch*'s Casaubon realising that the paper on himself which he sets out to listen to deals in fact with the Casaubon from Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*. With evident relish she also stages the spectral presence of e.g. Calvino's Nonexistent Knight or the anonymous soldier from Robbe-Grillet's *In the Labyrinth*. Part of this procession is a caricature of Joyce's Leopold Bloom:

> On the excursion upcoast, Lotte looks as ever for Goethe but finds herself with a Dublin Jew called Leopold Bloom, who talks a great deal but of things quite beyond her ken, except when he describes the preparation and eating of fried kidneys. Ugh! […] Leopold Bloom is watching from a safe corner far away, talking to Ulrich about the Irish troubles while Ulrich listens politely and looks on, thinking of the empire. (*T*, 112; 115)

To further blur distinctions, thrown into this medley are the characters professional "interpreters" – both academics with careers based on their exegeses, as well as actors, the characters' cinematic re-embodiments (Lillian Gish-as-Hester Prynne meets her literary paradigm in what is bound to be an awkward encounter). The cultural dominance of television is enacted when the convention is overrun by an overweening crowd of "movie-star" characters from soap operas and TV series.

Brooke-Rose's exploration of these ontological compounds is a sociology of cultural oblivion, aiming to address its causes and effects. Lawrence has usefully categorised these into five groups which cover most of the *Texterminations* crowd: literary characters who are upstaged by popular culture icons, both television and film characters and the actors who play them; literary characters who are upstaged by the news, that is, the real has become unreal, sometimes beyond the wildest dreams of fiction; literary characters who have become irrelevant, no longer able to matter to readers; literary characters who are not memorable to readers; literary characters who are threatened by the deadening effect of academic critical practice, particularly, the narrow theoretical and political axes that critics grind.[14] Indeed, Brooke-Rose's is no "mere" experimentation for its own intertextual sake – hers is a call at the time of crisis and downfall of traditions, literary or other, to recognise both fiction's powers and its limits, particularly in terms of confusion between fiction and politics. *Textermination* contains the thriller-genre subplot in which Gibreel Farishta of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* is, just as his "real" life author, hounded by terrorists – a metonymy for the danger of literature as such when facing ideology, religious or political.[15] That Brooke-Rose is dead serious about the jeopardy of literature's obsolescence and irrelevance is the poignant *memento mori* she stages round the middle of the text; her own Mira Enketei, originally Brooke-Rose's fictional surrogate, finds her own name on the list of forgotten characters:

> Idly she lifts the zigzag scroll at an eighth or so of its thickness and her eye falls on a long list of forgotten names in alphabetical order. She can't resist, lifts another thickness, runs her finger down to EL, lifts another small thickness, finds EM, then EN, and moves down to ENK. Yes, she too figures in it: Enketei, Mira. She can't go on. She doesn't exist. (*T*, 105)

In the ultimate metafictional twist, Brooke-Rose "herself" takes the stage:

> If she can't go on, I suppose I'll have to. I am not Mira of course, though many readers think I am. For one thing I have little Latin and less Greek. Curious how one can invent knowledgeable people without possessing their knowledge. One cheats, quite simply. […] Be that as it may, I am the author, take it how you will, and I am still alive and well, if not in Texas, at least here, and for a little while yet. (*T*, 106-7)

Ironically, for Brooke-Rose, the author's survival manifests itself in her ability to "write off" the character. But, also conversely: after Farishta has been gunned down by his chasers, Brooke-Rose exercises the writer's rare numinous privilege of restoring her creations back to their "life." Despite ending *Textermination* with an ecpyrosis—commensurate with that of the Alexandrian library—during which the San Francisco Hilton is burned to the ground, burying all its temporary inhabitants, and thus the whole of literary history, Brooke-Rose was to "go on" – again, in surprisingly innovative and unforeseen directions.

Brooke-Rose's final, third experimental tetralogy comprises *Remake* (1996), *Next* (1998), *Subscript* (1999) and *Life, End Of* (2006). Of these, the first and last present her fictional autobiographies, grappling with "the paradoxical

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14 Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 144.

15 McHale makes a similar point when observing that for Brooke-Rose, "the character of Farishta has come to stand metonymically for literary fiction itself, which is similarly in mortal threat from ideologies intolerant of its speculativeness, pluralism, and ontological irresponsibility." (McHale, "The Postmodernism(s) of Christine Brooke-Rose," 207-8.)

task of looking back in the present tense."[16] However poignant and painfully candid in their depiction of mental and physical senescent deterioration, and apart from their (particularly the latter's) staging wordplay and punning as the aging writer's only diversion, these two texts are only truly novel in Brooke-Rose's canon by staging their author as their protagonist. On the other hand, with *Next* and *Subscript*, Brooke-Rose was still able to expand upon and depart from her best narrative experiments.

For *Next* is Brooke-Rose's at once most Oulipian as well as English (or, more precisely, London) novel. The cover-blurb advertisement covers most of the Oulipian devices: set amid the London homeless community (and an investigation of one of the homeless characters' violent death), this well-nigh sociological reportage of this underworld of dispossession painstakingly omits the verb "to have" and reserves the first-person pronouns only for direct speech, for the content is poverty and isolation. The voices representative of the community are legion – 26, to be precise, as there are letters on the keyboard; the initials of the characters living out on the street, thus forming an avant-garde of sorts, spell QWERTYUIOP. These conceits are combined with an ultra-realist description of the homeless reality – with typographical effects to that end reminiscent of B.S. Johnson, as for instance those opening the text:

> **The Story So Far:** Derica, long married to oil-man Brad, ran his ranch for years and reared the twins Rex and Regina, but could not ever conceal her strong love for Trix, born of an old affair with Jesse, business rival to Brad and later married to Tina, but now pursuing Gina. Doug, a new friend of Rex, brings Cindy, who now fascinates Brad, while Gina strongly attracts Doug, but is herself too powerfully involved with Rick who now helps Derica manage the estate. After a violent scene with Sal, Derica asks Dan to intervene with Bradley.
> (*N*, 1)

The alphabet, termed "alphabête" early on, serves as the acrostic grid for the 20th-century's worst atrocities:

> A for Auschwitz. B for Belsen. C for Cambodia.
> D for Dresden. For Deportation. E for Ethiopia, for Ethnic Cleansing… F for, what's F?
> Famine… Mao's Great Lep into, 1959. Stalin's ditto, Ukraine 1933.
> Fundamentalism. There's usually more than one horror for each letter. (*N*, 3)

These and similar never-ending alphabetical rounds from A to Z and back are interspersed within the text's ostensibly realist, quasi-documentary mapping of street-level London of the contemporary, millennial moment.[17] Equally remarkable is Brooke-Rose's inventory of the varieties of London Estuary English (termed "Estuarian"), ranging from educated RP and bureaucratese, via variously slanted standard, down to the thing itself:

> Craowded inni, can' even ear the telley.
> No response above the environmental clatter.
> No' tha' there's ever anythink on the telly, stiuw, ah lahk ter watch the world ah doow, can' see i' reely in the streey'.
> Wha' fooar? the sheepskin asks. Putty hair bristles like a Simpson.
> Ah lahk the ads, thy's ever sao machao.
> No take-up, no demand for examples.
> No' tha' thy knaows i', or cares if thy doow.
> No feedback.
> The putty boy says. Ah aonly watch the business neuws.
> An every tahm i' says NEXT, an wha' bi' of world's camin ap, yer ge's Bu' first wey'll tike a brike. (*N*, 10-11)

Whether the result of Brooke-Rose's powers of invention or registration, the spoken language as transcribed here allows not only for an entertaining readerly exercise in deciphering, but also, and more relevantly, enables a re-

16 Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 175.

17 So meticulous is Brooke-Rose's urban mapping that McHale's review hailed *Next* as "a London 'Wandering Rocks' for the nineties," mapping the city as it "track[s] the homeless on their rounds from doorway doss to homeless shelter to job centre and around again, placing Next firmly in the lineage of the great twentieth-century city novels." (Brian McHale, "Review of *Next* by Christine Brooke-Rose," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 19.2 [Summer 1999]: 127.

enactment, whether mental or vocal, of the spoken *as read*, an imaginative and imaginary identification and unification between the reader and the dispossessed voices of *Next*. For the ethics of *Next* is a lesson in pity and sympathy:

> (Is there a life before death?)
> under the lullaby of trucks
> as the snow, thickening fast, the now slanting snow,
> greypinkly eiderdowns him over,
> for hours,
> as he digests the nan and sausages,
> until he is invisible, unpickupable, perhaps,
> into deep sleep
> out of time,
> to be debriefed by eternity
> but with no next.
> We'll take a break now. Stay with them.
> (*N*, 210)

Subscript once more, for the last time, revisits the scientific, speakerless present tense, addressing the themes of encryption and legibility on the macro, biological scale of life evolution from the prokaryote cell 4500 million years ago to modern man at the end of the Magdalenian period 11,000 years ago. The title suggests "under-writing," and that which underwrites all biological evolution, of course, is the genetic "code," the record of millions of years of organic adaptation. As Brooke-Rose herself observed, all explicit mentions of "the code" disappear around chapter 9, together with the emergence of man as a conscious being. The theme, then, is evolution through and in language. Brooke-Rose's evolution, as she herself demonstrated in *Invisible Author* (lest it be lost on the future translators), is marked by the (non-)use of pronouns. As she reveals in her quasi-Joycean "schema," the pronouns, deliberately omitted from the first three chapters, before the appearance of reptiles 300 million years ago, gradually appear in sequences tied to cultural developments. The singular impersonal ("it") appears only in chapter 4 to denote a sentient entity. In the same chapter the plural impersonal pronoun ("they") surfaces to covey an inchoate sense of group differentiation, etc. The narrative schema, yet again, is keyed to evolutionary stages – hence, the novel opens at its most alienating and neologising, with the style increasingly coming to resemble what appears a "convention":

> Zing! zinging out through the glowsalties the pungent ammonia earthfarts in slithery clay and all the rest to make simple sweeties and sharpies and other stuffs. Dust out of vast crashes and currents now calmer as the crust thickens and all cools a bit.
> Over many many forevers.
> Waiting. Absorbing. Growing. Churning. Splitting.
> Over and Over.
> In the thrivering slimy heat. Absorbing and churning acid gas in the hot mud bubbling all around and above and out of the hole in the jutting rock. The acid gas hides inside the cracks around the spouting rock. Delicious. (*S,* 1)

Linearity is meticulously preserved, and yet its sheer evolutionary macro-scale renders it alien to comprehension – cf. the unfathomable "*Sixty-five million years later*" heading of chapter four. The manifest concern with survival, previously of Brooke-Rose's fiction, of literature, humanities, civilization and humanity, which runs the length of her later fiction, finally appears in as universal a proportion as possible, while still providing a backdrop for her favourite exercise – representing the unreal in different modes.[18] Almost inevitably for Brooke-Rose, her tracing of life evolution ends on an anticipatory, visionary note – only this time, not of doom or perdition, but of that which steadfastly resists it:

> The bisons pound across the plain, half men, half pounding animals. No, not half men, half women, with floating hair and bison bodies and bison legs. […] And more and more, hordes and hordes of wheat-rearers and animal-tamers invading the huge forestless plain, the entire landmass, growing grains and greens and fruits and lambs and pigs and horses and having endless offspring and living happily ever after. (*S,* 215)

Poignant and painfully candid in its depiction of mental and physical senescent deterioration, *Life, End Of* is also Brooke-Rose's reflection on post-2001 global politics, literature and culture. The physical decline, cardio-vascular troubles plaguing the nameless narrator, works its way into language as a process of linguistic punning variation on

18 Lawrence's conclusion is spot-on: "*Subscript* is the archive of the dead, the extinct, the vestigial (forms that continue but have lost their function); the disappeared (forms whose sudden disappearance is experienced as loss but whose fate is unknown); the monstrous (earlier forms preserved in storytelling as horror stories)." (Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 170.)

the name of Vasco da Gama: "Vasco de Harmer" (*LEO,* 11), "Qualmer" (20), "Charmer" (36), "Harmer" (59), "Balmer" (88), "Alarmer" (92), "Lamer" (103) and finally, "Cardio-vasco-de-gamma-totale" (111) and "Vasco da Drama" (118). Hand in hand with physical decay goes the narrator's binarisation of the humans around her into T.F.'s ("True Friends") and O.P.'s ("Other People"): "O.P. also means Old People. Over-sensitive People. Otiose, Obdurate, Obsolete People. Outrageous, obtuse, obstreprous [sic], ostracised. All of which bring one Person into line: Oxhead Person, Oxymoronic Person" (*LEO,* 43). O.P.'s are desensitised doctors as well as former True Friends alienated, over time and long-divergent paths: "Omega People that's what we are. O.P. or not O.P., that is the question. There is rarely any doubt. Real O.P.s are striking, whatever the efforts to drag the eyelids down over their insensitivity" (*LEO,* 48). However, together with the growing awareness of her own self-alienation comes the realisation that "everyone is someone's O.P. that's hardly news" (91). Interspersed within these are reflections on contemporary politics and state of society and thought, marked by scepticism toward American world supremacy ("The Unilateral States of America? So generous sixty years ago and so polite." [*LEO,* 50]) and suspicion of the current "post-" vogue:

> [T]he correct euphemism now is post-, new and therefore better: post-human for instance, heard the other day. But that will at once be confused with posthumous, as of course it should be, human becoming humus. [...]
> Is that the radio voice?
> But isn't the whole O.P. story the same? Who speaks?
> Ah, the twentieth century question. In fact, since you ask, nobody speaks.
> Don't be silly.
> (*LEO,* 64)

Brooke-Rose's narratological obsession drives her to deliver, from a character to an uninterested author, a last mock-technical lecture on free indirect discourse and the importance of narratorless present-tense sentence – accepting that experiments in narrative are like pain-killers—actively combating the smarting dullness of convention—and that, like life, they have no ultimate purpose beyond themselves. It is a resignation both saddening and ultimately at odds with Brooke-Rose's lifelong project, in which an experimental technique was always harnessed to broader ethical concerns: the experience of loss.[19] The experienced loss, here, is that of fitness for life, for writing, and ultimately, the impending loss of life and writing itself: "The typing, once touch-typing and swift, slows down to a beginner's speed. And even then produces five typos and three squashed intervals per line, costing each time two whole minutes to correct and creating another non-access: writing" (*LEO,* 111). The only comic relief—now that physical there is none—comes through language: the tragedy of losing veiled in the comedy of regaining, of redoing language anew by means of punning. Thus, narrator's polyneuritis requiring treatment on the basis of polyketone polymers becomes "Polly New Writis" and "Polly Kettleon" (88), the haemorrhage of her eyes, the ophthalmological "infarctus" ("How can the eye have a heart-attack? Because it loves, it loves" [117]) gives rise to the chilling farewell note: "Eye eye, bye bye, die die, eye. I? Why?" (*LEO,* 118). Despair is accentuated and poignancy escalated as the text draws to a close and life to its end:

> Those earth-plugged body bits seem less strong, as indeed body bit by body bit is slowly being killed off, except for the brain, and humour, so far an uplift out of that scrambled ego, because of the wholly captivating groundless ground, the extenuated earth the untrue world the ominous planet the hazy galaxy the lying universe. (*LEO,* 119)

However, then, remembering that Descartes deemed the pineal gland to be the seat of the soul, the "scrambled ego" uplifts itself through humour, adding the concluding comments: "Dehors before the cart, after all. A cruising mind, as against the mere word-play fun. Meanwhile: *Les jeux de maux sont faits*" (*LEO,* 119). A supremely ambiguous coda: Decartes putting dehors before de cart, Brooke-Rose pitting her "cruising mind" against the "mere world-play fun." As it was in the beginning, in the end there will also be the pun: the evil bets having been placed (cf. the French *les jeux sont faits*), and body bit by body bit killed off, Brooke-Rose adds her own *consummatum est*: her very last words, quite emblematically, a French pun: *les jeux de maux* implying *les jeux des mots*, wordplays. Multilingual punning and discursive amalgamation, then, remain up until the very last instance Brooke-Rose's means of inscribing her own pres-

19 As Lawrence has observed, for Brooke-Rose, "new fictional techniques are needed to represent the cultural narratives of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, narratives that must capture heightened constraint and loss." (Lawrence, *Techniques for Living*, 4.)

ence, her own signature, within language: a signature equally unique and idiosyncratic as it is—and must be—repeatable and recognisable.

Christine Brooke-Rose's variegated oeuvre presents the most sustained continuation of modernist experimentation with the many levels of fictional narrative discourse and the aesthetic-political implications of style. As opposed to her marginalisation within the canon of contemporary fiction, a careful reading of Brooke-Rose's work may suggest its potentially paradigmatic status in that virtually all of the chief thematic and stylistic concerns of the fiction of her age—technology, gender, history, the future, discursivity, subversion, hybridity, linguistic innovation, playfulness, the various "meta-"morphs—are present here in a blend at once indefinable and most intriguing. Brooke-Rose herself thought it "a good sign" that her fiction resists critical pigeonholes and eludes classification. Even though the price to be paid is obscurity and invisibility vis-à-vis the canon, the benefit is the power of Brooke-Rose's works to remain challenging, surprising, alive. Dealing with Brooke-Rose's signature (her presence as writer in language), it has largely been the recognisability of some of its features within certain aesthetic traditions and programmes on which mainstream criticism has preferred to focus. The time has come, now that the signer has passed away and presence has turned into absence, to recognise its uniqueness.

"WRITING ONESELF OUT OF SCIENCE FICTION": BRIAN W. ALDISS & J.G. BALLARD

When Charles Sugnet surveyed in his introduction to *Imagination on Trial* the bleak state of experiment in the stale, traditionalist British literature, he singled out science-fiction as possibly the only lasting British avant-garde of the era, in that it both has a cultic, cliqueish, and partisan mode of existence within the mainstream literary market, and fosters experimentation on the levels of form and ideology:

> At its worst, science fiction is as predictable as other pop genres, and a reader can take much for granted, but at its best it provides, in addition to all its other uses, a set of metaphors for alienation, and a perfect technique for expressing alienation. […] In this way, SF parallels the great project of the "serious" avant-garde, which was founded on its deliberate (but ambivalent) separation from bourgeois society. Certain serious texts by Beckett are both serious avant-garde writing *and* a kind of science fiction creation of the alien universe.[20]

To enlist Beckett as a science-fiction recruit might be stretching the boundaries of the genre beyond any meaningful delineation. But Sugnet is right in that around the time of his writing, science-fiction did enjoy a staunch support of a large partisan cult of followers as well as reputation for being stylistically daring and innovative, to an extent of which not even Johnson himself could have boasted.

The sci-fi avant-gardism entailed its publication and dissemination via journalistic platforms: most famously, the *New Worlds* magazine, active since 1946 and concentrating the first generation of British sci-fi classicists (John Wyndham, A. C. Clarke, among others), which, in the 1950s under the editorship of John Carnell and from 1964 onward under the editor leadership of Michael Moorcock, became the seedbed for the "New Wave" science fiction. Among its frequent contributors and its staunchest supporters were also two of the most prolific, influential and experimental science-fiction writers in Britain. If there ever was a British science-fiction avant-garde, its helmsmen were Brian Wilson Aldiss (*1925) and James Graham Ballard (1930-2009). Both their careers reached their most experimental heights in the 1960s (Aldiss') and early-to-mid 1970s (Ballard's), both enjoyed a cult status throughout the two decades – but with the advent of the 1980s, both gradually abandoned the sci-fi genre in favour of a more general mainstream. Consequently, even though it is largely to their credit that the science-fiction genre has been rescued from the exile in the realm of pop culture and reclaimed as an important element of post-war British fiction, both have ended up with a problematic status.[21]

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20 *The Imagination on Trial*, eds. Alan Burns & Charles Sugnet (Allison and Busby: London & New York, 1981) 11.

21 Aldiss' work, according to his critic Tom Henighan, "has been unfairly neglected," largely due to his "versatility" which is "dangerous in an era when writers are marketed by having their names associated with a single literary genre, subgenre, or series." (Tom Henighan, *Brian W. Aldiss* [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999] 8.) Ballard's ambiguous position "as a novelist writing across high and low, literary and popular paradigms," in Michel Delville's opinion, "has also had the more unfortunate effect of relegating his work to the margins of both the SF canon and the literary establishment." (Michel Delville, *J.G. Ballard* [Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers], 1998 2.)

Aldiss stood at the centre of the 1960s vanguard sci-fi rejuvenation. A terrifically prolific author, with almost a hundred published works only between 1956 and 1970, Aldiss regarded the drug culture and the new sexual freedom as part of the challenge to extend the boundaries of the genre. This innovation lay in reflecting contemporary reality, of taking science fiction inward. Hand in hand with that came the necessity of innovating the style.[22] Aldiss' alliance with Modernists, the Beats and, most outspokenly, with the French *nouveau roman*, can be understood as an effort to link the science fiction genre with serious literary traditions. A case in point of Aldiss' ties with the French developments is his project dating back from two weeks in January 1962 during which Aldiss wrote 46,000 words defying the orthodoxy of fiction in general and of science fiction in particular: an antinovel called "A Garden with Figures." As Aldiss remembers, he was

> much persuaded by the French *nouveau roman*, the anti-novel, as practiced by Michel Butor and Alain Robbe-Grillet […] I admired their scrapping of many literary clichés [...] I was stunned by the Robbe-Grillet-Resnais film, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, with its temporal confusions, mysterious agonies, and alien perspectives. It still embodies for me many of the things I set most store by in science fiction.[23]

A telling example of British resistance against imported French experiment, Aldiss' text was rejected by Faber and Faber, ranted against by C. P. Snow, and remained unpublished until 1968 as *Report on Probability A*, at a time when the resistance against the anti-novelistic chroniclers of disconnected particularities seems to have waned. Aldiss' experiments with fiction continued in a series of stories published in *New Worlds* and its companion magazine, *SF Impulse*, between 1967 and 1969, when the complete (extensively rewritten) sequence was published as *Barefoot in the Head: A European Fantasia*, his most linguistically experimental novel. Broaching many popular issues of the time, its narrative follows a displaced Yugoslavian on his travels through a Europe devastated by hallucinogenic bombs. The protagonist takes the name Colin Charteris and upon his arrival to England gets adopted as the rock'n'roll messiah by a band of young nomads, developing a doctrine of alternative realities and multiple time streams. He sets out back for the continent, leading what he believes to be a crusade of liberation, but his creed promotes only selfishness and chaos, turning him into a megalomaniac murderer and a schizoid opportunist. Charteris winds up incarcerated in a mental hospital run by a Herr Laundrei, a sadistic exaggeration of the misguided therapist sardonically implied in the writings of the famous sixties "anti-therapist" R. D. Laing. To present the disintegrating systems and ontological ambivalences of a psychedelic world, Aldiss used a complex and impacted style that fully exploited his skill at wordplay and lexical innovation – in the best modernist tradition of the expressive form, the language of *Barefoot in the Head* is at one with the tenor of the story, and markedly *Wakean*, as is evident from passages like this:

> All untold the fey atmosfuddle of selforiented libidoting wooze trixfixed the constabulary into poets longhaired boxers instrumentalists vocalists meditationers on a semi-syllable card trick-exponents voyeurs of the world box word-munchering follow-sphere semi-lovers of course with the greatest pretentions wrackonteurs charmers butchboys frenchmen twokissing mystics like-feathered nestlings vanvogtian autobiographers laughers chucklers starers strargazers villagers and simple heart-burlgars all seeing themselves in their hip-packet mirrors. (*BH*, 244)

Eventually, prose dissolves into verse, incorporates poems, songs, and word pictures – the novel does not truly end, it gradually peters out, blurring the boundaries between modes of writing as Aldiss had consistently overruled the distinctions between the genres of fiction. Asked about Joycean inspiration, however, Aldiss was evasive and ironic: "I never set Joyce up as a model, but you know if you write that sort of thing, then Joyce is there, just as Picasso is there if you paint a picture of a goat, or Shakespeare if you write English. I never did finish the *Wake*. And life's too shored to embark on it now."[24] Written during the throes of the hippie revolution, *Barefoot in the Head* remains Aldiss' boldest statement on the dilemma of the individual in history, and the need for love and social involvement to transcend the

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22 In Henighan's account: "They wanted to get away from technology and even from social extrapolation, to explore areas that were previously considered taboo areas. To take this step, however, they would need to extend their stylistics, they believed, in a way that would owe more to Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Burroughs, than to H.G. Wells, Heinlein, or Asimov." (Henighan, *Brian W. Aldiss*, 5.)

23 *Hell's Cartographers: Sounding Brass Tinkling Cymbal – My Affair with Science Fiction*, eds. Brian W. Aldiss & Harry Harrison (London: Orbit Books, 1976) 198-9.

24 Qtd. in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 14: British Novelists Since 1960*, ed. Jay L. Halio (A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book: Gale Research, 1982) 11.

restrictions of solipsism. It is, as well, Aldiss' most daring experiment, as is attested to by Henighan's contextualisation.[25]

Indeed, as Aldiss himself remarked, the novel "took me almost three years to write, and when I'd finished it, I felt I'd written myself out of science fiction."[26] Although flirting, in the first half of the 1970s, with a new form of short fiction—visual, spatial and imagistic rather than linear and narrative—called "enigma," often surreal and appearing under the poetic titles such as "The Eternal Theme of Exile" and "The Daffodil Returns the Smile," Aldiss was for most of the latter half of the seventies preoccupied with the genre of political dystopia à la Orwell (in e.g. *Enemies of the System* [1978] or *Life in the West* [1980]). The 1980s were to saw his full-blown return to traditional science-fiction civilisation epic à la Wells in the monumental *Helliconia* trilogy. However variegated his subsequent genre-blending and hybridisation, Aldiss' peak of stylistic innovation had come and gone in the 60s, a period whose immense potential and pitfalls Aldiss captured in his *European Fantasia*.

This might very well be the reason why in 1981, the representative, for Sugnet and Burns' interview collection, of experimental sci-fi was J.G. Ballard rather than Aldiss. Ballard's literary career began in early sixties with *The Wind from Nowhere* (1962), which launched his "catastrophe" quartet, but achieved its radical—and scandalous—reputation only with the 1970 publication of his fifth book, *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Sugnet's introduction makes considerable effort to draw affinities between Ballard's collection of "condensed novels" exploring a world of "second-hand things" with the modernist practice of intertextuality and textual collage, the pride of place granted to Joyce.[27] More relevant, perhaps, to Ballard's aesthetics than Joyce are Freud (the young Ballard flirted with the option of a vocation in psychiatry before turning to fiction) and William Burroughs, for Ballard's chief interest in *The Atrocity Exhibition* lies in subliminal messages, excavated by means of what Ballard calls "analytic techniques," a direct analogy to Burroughs' myth of Senders and Receivers in *Naked Lunch* and his and Brion Gysin's development of the cut-up and fold-in techniques. Nevertheless, broaching the issue of using as the building blocks of his material show-business trivia and celebrity gossip (especially the Kennedys, Marilyn Monroe, and Elizabeth Taylor) in the interview with Alan Burns, Ballard does recall Joyce as an example of creative appropriation of the mundane and ephemeral in "great" art:

> If one could look at the greatest: Shakespeare's plays are thick with topical allusions. The same is true of *Ulysses* – it's packed with local references which Joyce must have known would be meaningless to anyone who didn't know Dublin as well as he did.[28]

The Atrocity Exhibition's fifteen "chapters" are loosely connected with the central figure a psychiatrist suffering from a nervous breakdown, variously named Travis, Talbot, Traven, Trallis, Trabert, Talbert, and Travers – a portmanteau entity, Ballard is sure to alert the reader, which "appears in a succession of roles, ranging across a spectrum of possibilities available to each of us in our interior lives" (*AE,* 91). As Delville and others have noted, Ballard's experiment lies not so much in the omission of reduction of standard novelistic elements (plot, time and place continuum, or characterisation), but chiefly in that they are "literally organized in the mode of a scientific experiment" – Ballard's is a clinical approach to his subjects "as laboratory data to be analysed in the context of the author's investigation of 'the

25 "In this work Aldiss carries the Joyce-derived novel in the direction of postmodern trends such as indeterminacy, selflessness, unrepresentation, and carnivalization [...]. At the level of genre, it can be argued that *Barefoot in the Head* combines dystopia with fantasy, quest narrative with satire: and if this constitutes an unpalatable mixture for the common reader of science fiction, that is exactly what Aldiss expected and strove for." (Tom Henighan, *Brian W. Aldiss*, 72.)
26 *Hell's Cartographers*, eds. Aldiss & Harrison, 200.
27 "Joyce, in *Ulysses*, threw away the quotation marks and simply incorporated things (headlines, adverts, soft-core pornography, etc.) into his book without attributing any ownership beyond that which we all have in common. [...] One of the complaints made about Freud is that he was too interested in discovering pathology's origin in the particular stories of middle-class individuals. Joyce's nighttown, Genet's *Balcony* and Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* offer that "pathology" as norm rather than aberration, and find its origin in the shape of the whole culture, rather than in something exclusively personal. Poldy Bloom as Mayor of Dublin and Poldy Bloom as degraded execution victim map not only the fantasy limits of Poldy's psyche, but also the actual structure of the Irish polity." (Sugnet, "Introduction," *Imagination on Trial*, 7.)
28 Burns, "Interview with J.G. Ballard," *Imagination on Trial*, 28.

unique vocabulary and grammar of late 20th century life' (*AE,* 87)."[29] A typical psychopathological space depiction takes place in the following two-dimensional dehumanised mode:

> **Murder.** Tallis stood behind the door of the lounge, shielded from the sunlight on the balcony, and considered the white cube of the room. At intervals Karen Novotny moved across it, carrying out a sequence of apparently random acts. Already she was confusing the perspectives of the room, transforming it into a dislocated clock. She noticed Tallis behind the door and walked towards him. Tallis waited for her to leave. Her figure interrupted the junction between the walls in the corner on his right. After a few seconds her presence became an unbearable intrusion into the time geometry of the room. (*AE*, 43)

However, despite this abstract, geometrical outlook, *The Atrocity Exhibition* is steeped in the contemporary socio-historical examination of subliminal effects of media events (e.g., the Vietnam war or JFK's assassination) triggering unconscious drives essential to its pornographic, fetishist aesthetics, hand in hand with its anarchistic anti-establishmentarianism – episodes such as "The Facelift of Princess Margaret" and "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" are emblematic in this respect.

Ballard's 1973 novel *Crash* is a follow-up on one of the "condensed novels" of the previous book: the eroticised aesthetics of car crashes. A narrator named James Ballard reports on how his own automobile crash—in which a passenger from the other car is fatally injured—brings about in him a cluster of compelling obsessions, all of which are centred around the "perverse eroticism of the car-crash, as painful as the drawing of an exposed organ through the aperture of a surgical wound" (*C,* 17). These obsessions are further enhanced through his acquaintance with the deranged scientist Robert Vaughan, whose sole mission is the self-immolating car-crash union with movie star Elizabeth Taylor, an ultimate sex-death which holds the "keys to a new sexuality born from a perverse technology" (*C*, 13). The crash experience is understood as a breach of immediacy through the consumerist and media mediation of human existence ("The crash was the only real experience I had been through for years. For the first time I was in physical confrontation with my own body, an inexhaustible encyclopedia of pains and discharges" [*C*, 39]). Or, as Delville puts it, the car crash metaphor functions "as a means of investigating the latent and manifest meanings of our technological culture, as well as the relationship between violence and sexual fantasies." Just as in the case of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, violence and perversion seem to have become the only means through which Ballard's characters can "relate to each other or even achieve a sense of transcendence."[30]

Following the 1973 publication of *Crash*, Ballard enjoyed a decade of cult following, hailed as the British Burroughs, the high priest of proto-cyberpunk literature, the most outspoken critic of commodity fetishism and media sensationalism – becoming, ironically, a media sensation himself. His cult was cemented by further works of social critique, such as *Concrete Island* (1974), a nightmarish anti-*Robinson Crusoe*, account of a man in an emergency surrounded by disinterested bystanders, or *High Rise* (1975), an imaginary anti-*Utopia* in which the tenants of one apartment building choose to create their own closed society. As the seventies flowed into eighties, the 1981 *Hello America* presented a return to the more familiar and less controversial genre of speculative fiction, followed by *Empire of the Sun* (1984), a semi-autobiographical account of his childhood experience of Japanese-occupied wartime Shanghai. A great commercial and critical success (it received a Booker prize nomination), *Empire of the Sun* also presented the close of Ballard's partisan status and his entry into the mainstream. Though productive well into his last years, and occasionally reverting to the mode of scandalous social critique as espoused in his early-seventies output, Ballard's turn to the more familiar realms of the semi-autobiographical novel did secure him a mainstream status at the expense of his erstwhile ability to shock or challenge. Still, as the obituaries produced after his recent death have unanimously agreed, Ballard's was a singular vision, critical of the emergence of modern media technology within the domain of the aesthetic and remarkably prescient regarding society in the early twenty-first century, sensitively attuned to the cultures of consumption, image-driven power, and the entertainment industry.

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29 Delville, *J.G. Ballard*, 23.
30 Delville, *J.G. Ballard,* 35-6.

Recent accounts have attempted to revisit Sugnet's claims of sci-fi's avant-garde status in contemporary literature production stratification. For instance, when reviewing the "resurgence of 'lowly' genres in the 1990s," Roger Luckhurst relates these to the resistance against the "development of a new kind of cultural politics that has been called 'cultural governance.'"[31] In Luckhurst's knowledgeable account, this resistance has been strengthened by what he perceives as gradual dissolution, throughout the nineties, of the two chief cultural arenas of eighties resistance against the dominant culture – pop music and fine art, "the leading cultural phenomena that were incorporated into the cultural governance operated by New Labour in the late 1990s."[32] Consequently, it has been argued, science-fiction and genre writing in general have undergone a revitalisation because they could still find spaces outside the general "de-differentiation" or "mainstreaming" effect sought by the strategy of cultural governance. For Luckhurst, "the more literary editors dismissed the limitations of genre-writing or *Granta* magazine's stunt to nominate the twenty best young British writers, the more oppositional energy accrued to these genres."[33] However, hardly any of the three authors Luckhurst singles out as presenting this genre resistance in contemporary science fiction—James Lovegrove, Gwyneth Jones and Ken MacLeod—presents a writer whose style could be termed, in however broad terms approximating those attached to Aldiss and Ballard, experimental or avant-garde. In fact, theirs is a realist style and resistance takes place purely on the level of the subject: societal and political critique. Thus, the far less optimistic conclusion of Tom Henighan's study of Aldiss from 1999—vis-à-vis the oblivion to which Aldiss' work has fallen prey over the years—seems more to the point:

> Analysts of social trends suggest that the public has lost interest in the challenge of space and thus in science fiction. Were the Voyageur photographs of bleak planets and barren satellites just too daunting for a public accustomed to little green men and faces on Mars? Does science's beleaguered but still intact "objectivity" condemn it to irrelevance in an age of ideologies and irrational commitments? Has the science fiction genre been swallowed up by postmodernism? Are we ever to acquire a science fiction tradition that is consistent, well-defined, stable, and secure?[34]

"THE ULTIMATE REVENGE OF THE COLONIALISED": ANGELA CARTER & JEANETTE WINTERSON

Angela Carter's (1940-1992) involvement with Joyce took the form of participating in the centennial 1982 Dublin symposium, which resulted in her short but revealing article in homage to the author, "Envoi: Bloomsday." As a British writer, she approaches Joyce primarily as an Irish (post-)colonial writer, terming his "magisterial project" as "that of buggering the English language, the ultimate revenge of the colonialised" (*ED*, 208). Thus, the most momentous ramification of Joyce's position is his linguistic experiment, for "the history of the British Empire came to exercise a curious kind of brake upon our expression in the English language, as it became less and less the instrument of feeling and more and more that of propaganda." More relevantly for Carter in 1982,

> Something even odder has happened since Joyce's day, in these last years, when English, in the great world, has become synonymous with the language spoken in America, which, though it uses the same words, is an entirely other communications system. Indeed, Americans threatens to leave us entirely stranded, now, on a linguistic beach of history with English turning into a quaint dialect, another Old World survival, like Castilian Spanish, stiff outmoded, unapposite. And what shall we do then? Why, we shall be thrust back on Joyce, who never took English seriously and so he could continue, as we will do. (*ED,* 209)

Carter details how in *Ulysses*, Joyce "sheared away the phoney rhetoric that had been accreting over the centuries, transforming English "into something intimate, domestic, demotic, a language fit not for heroes but for husbands," then, in *Finnegans Wake*, "stripped it of its linguistic elements," producing "a polyglot babble that, perhaps, begins to approximate something like a symphonic Euro-language, in which English is no more than a dominant theme." In a word, Joyce "disestablished English" (*ED*, 209-10). More personally, had it not been for Joyce, Carter, as a writer in post-imperialist Britain "would not even have had the possibility of a language, for Joyce it was who showed how one could

31 Roger Luckhurst, "British science fiction in the 1990s: politics and genre," *British Fiction of the 1990s*, 79.
32 Luckhurst, "British science fiction in the 1990s," 81.
33 Luckhurst, "British science fiction in the 1990s," 83.
34 Tom Henighan, *Brian W. Aldiss*, 123-4.

tell the story of whatever it is that is going to happen next." That this liberating effect should come for the colonially oppressed is a paradox Carter is well aware of, but still, she cannot but insist on Joyce's far-reaching importance:

> Nevertheless, he carved out a once-and-future language, restoring both the simplicity it had lost and imparting a complexity. The language of the heart and the imagination and the daily round and the dream had been systematically deformed by a couple of centuries of use as the rhetorical top-dressing of crude power. Joyce Irished, he Europeanised, he decolonialised English: he tailored it to fit this century, he drove a giant wedge between English literature and literature in the English language and, in doing so, he made me (forgive this personal note) free. Free not to do as he did, but free to treat the Word not as if it were holy but in the knowledge that it is always profane. (*ED*, 210)

At the same time, Carter cannot but note that Joyce's profoundly anti-British (in the sense of the Great Tradition) example remains equally, even four decades after his death, unfinished and open-ended: You could also say, he detached fiction from one particular ideological base, and his work has still not yet begun to bear its true fruit. The centenarian still seems avant-garde" (*ED*, 210-11).

Of all authors addressed in this chapter, Carter is the only to have been included in B.S. Johnson's 1973 list of writers who "write as though it matters." The previous chapter has also argued that Carter's inclusion was perhaps prophetic on Johnson's part, as very little of her early (beginning in mid-sixties) output seems to warrant Johnson's championing of Carter. However, from early 1970s onwards, Carter went on to establish herself as one of the most inventive and prolific female writers of the next two decades. Before producing, in the opinion of critic Lorna Sage, "two of the most festive and disturbing novels of the last years of the century,"[35] i.e. *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *Wise Children* (1991), Carter wrote poetry, short fiction, children's books, drama, radio plays, television adaptations, innumerable newspaper articles and reviews (especially for *The Guardian, The Independent* and *New Statesman*), as well as the provocative contribution to feminist theory, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1978), a feminist reappraisal of the Marquis de Sade, whom she regarded as a "moral pornographer" putting pornography into the service of women.

Carter's first full-blown attack on the question of gender, a feminist book though at odds with the "madwoman in the attic" version of a woman's place in the house of fiction, came in her 1977 *The Passion of New Eve*, where woman is born out of a man's body again, as in the Genesis story – an image which can be regarded as referring to the "painful process by which the 1970s women's movement had to carve out its own identity from the unisex mould of 1960s radical politics."[36] Set in a dystopian, but palpably contemporary USA, its plot entails a picaresque quest of Evelyn, a male English professor on the run from his black lover Leilah (and her bloody abortion) westward, in pursuit of Tristessa, a divine figure of the Hollywood silent-era glamour. His quest takes him to the desert, where he encounters a subterranean female city of Beulah run by technological matriarchy which surgically transforms him into a centrefold Eve (removing his –lyn), then to a commune composed of a harem dominated by a certain Zero character, akin to Charles Manson's "family"; and lastly to the glass mausoleum of Tristessa, who turns out not a woman at all but a transvestite – a Tiresias with whom Eve becomes pregnant. In the concluding scene on the beach, having been symbolically reborn as a woman and renounced Evelyn's male past – Eve launches herself into the ocean on a skiff; that *The Passion of New Eve* is, apart from many other things, a *Bildungsroman* in the tradition established by Joyce's *A Portrait*, becomes clear in Carter's perhaps most evident intertextual nods to Joyce that ends the novel:

> We start from our conclusions.
> I arrived on that continent by air and I left it by water; earth and fire I leave behind me. And all this strange experience, as I remember it, confounds itself in a fugue. At night, dreaming, I go back again to Tristessa's house, that echoing mansion, that hall of mirrors in which my whole life was lived, the glass mausoleum that had been the world and now is smashed. He himself often comes to me in the night, serene in his marvellous plumage of white hair, with the fatal red hole in his breast; after many, many embraces, he vanishes when I open my eyes.
> The vengeance of the sex is love.
> Ocean, ocean, mother of mysteries, bear me to the place of birth.
> (*PNE,* 191)

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35 Lorna Sage, "Angela Carter," *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 207: British Novelists since 1960*, ed. Merritt Moseley (Farmington Hills: A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book, Gale Group, 1999) 72.
36 Sage, "Angela Carter," 77.

Here, Eve's "arrival by air" echoes Stephen Dedalus' departure by the same element, her dream of Tristessa's "marvellous plumage of white hair, with the fatal red hole in his breast," a gender-reversed image of "the breast of some darkplumaged dove" and the "long fair hair" (*P*, 171) of the birdgirl from Stephen's epiphany. Finally, the concluding invocation of Carter's novel inverts the "father, old artificer" from *A Portrait*'s ending into "ocean, ocean, mother of mysteries," replacing the futurity of Stephen's "stand me now and ever in good stead" (*P*, 253) with the circular return to the beginning.

In her last two novels, *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children,* Carter faithfully followed her creed formulated in her 1983 essay in *On Gender and Writing*. Exasperated at being typecast as a feminist "mythologist," Carter counters these claims by insisting that "I'm in the demythologising business. I'm interested in myths [...] just because they are extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree."[37] Both these novels follow along the genre lines already established in Carter's *New Eve*, and neither presents a stylistically innovative work – it is, thus, more appropriate to end this exposé with a brief mention of her short fiction from the late 1970s and early 1980s, collected in *Black Venus* (1985), where a Joycean reworking of myths seems precisely her chief concern. She inserts new episodes into ready-made myths, for example, into Charles Baudelaire's and Edgar Allan Poe's life stories (the former's rewritten from the perspective of Jeanne Duval, his "mistress of mistresses," the latter's from the viewpoint of his obsession with dying or dead women, originating with his mother) or into *Robinson Crusoe* rewritten from the standpoint of Friday. Last but not least, Carter's "Overture and Incidental Music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," first published in the science-fiction magazine *Interzone* in 1982, is an irreverent salute to England's national literary hero.

Even though cited above as sceptical regarding the usefulness of his example and influence and of a voice utterly unlike his, Jeanette Winterson (*1959) is still an author steeped in modernist sensibility. Her own project combining gender and queer fiction constitutes no break from modernism, but rather a constant redrawing of its lines of influence, as is evident from her 1995 collection of essays which forms a kind of her artistic credo, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. Here, Winterson aligns herself, with a radical sense of a clear-cut dichotomy between the two, with the heritage of experimental modernism as opposed to British realism. Winterson's dismissal of the "realist" impulse in British fiction is unrelenting:

> Realism is not a Movement or a Revolution, in its original incarnation it was a response to a movement, and as a response it was essentially anti-art […]; for myself, in the literature of my own language, I can find little to cheer me between the publication of *Four Quartets* (1944) and Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* (1967); […] Joyce is difficult. Woolf is difficult. Eliot is difficult. A poet's method, because it works towards exactness, is exacting on the reader. The nineteenth-century novel, and I include in there, 95 per cent of English novels written now, in the late twentieth century, is a loose overflowing slack-sided bag. Much can be stuffed into it and much of that without much thought. (*AO*, 30-1; 41; 82)

As regards Joyce, Winterson makes a few critical remarks, e.g. in charging him, alongside Milton, with having developed a "private" language which she, rather simplistically, pits against "the poet's" language.[38] Dubious boundaries aside, Winterson draws an interesting parallel between two great literary reformists of the English language, and her irony is one perhaps called-for given the grandiosity of their projects. Winterson is also careful to ally her critique of Joyce's with Woolf's (her literary champion) remarks on *Ulysses*.[39] Thus, even though she excludes Joyce from her canon of "those Modernists whose work I think is vital" and which includes "HD, Marianne Moore, Gertrude Stein, Vir-

37 Angela Carter, "Notes from the Front Line," *Gender and Writing,* ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983) 71.

38 Milton, though, like James Joyce, wanted to be the end-stop of the language. Both men hoped that their work would kill off any other means and any other method. The rest would be decoration merely. Joyce knew this about Milton but the irony seems to have been lost on him. While both men failed in their ambition but succeeded in their literature, the poet has to be wary of their wilful cul-de-sacing. It is often necessary to beat a retreat from the innovations of either man, not because their innovations are final, but because they are unhelpful. Both men carry their eccentricity to the point of a wholly private language. The poet has no use for a wholly private language; it is exactly what he is trying to avoid. (*AO*, 81)

39 Joyce's freemasonry of language delights scholars, because it gives them something to do, but there is a danger that it appeals only to the acrostic element in most readers. Fathoming Joyce is fun, if you have that kind of mind, but if you do not have that kind of mind, what is fathoming Joyce for? For itself. Of course. Modernism (in literature) was a poet's movement. Like Woolf, Joyce had a fine ear, and he is entranced by the rhythm of words; the shuffle of words, the march of words, the words that dance, the words that can be choreographed into battle. He is Irish and he lets the words lead him down to the sea, through the strange green waters, until he is returned, salt-washed to the streets of Dublin. His pocketfuls of words, that abrade and glitter, he scatters them, grinds them, and eventually reforms them into a great whale of words, a thousand pages long, that spouts and dives and terrifies and welcomes little men with picks. (*AO*, 81-2)

ginia Woolf, Sitwell, Mansfield, Barney, Radclyffe Hall, Eliot, Graves, Pound and Yeats" (*AO*, 126), Winterson's close alliance with modernist experiment and her endorsement of its continued relevance for the present is unwavering:

> To say that the experimental novel is dead is to say that literature is dead. Literature is experimental. Once the novel was *novel*; if we cannot continue to alter it, to expand its boundaries without dropping it into even greater formlessness than the shape tempts, then we can only museum it. [...] Modernism has happened and it was the mainstream. It is no use looking for the new George Eliot, and if she were to appear, what a ghastly creature she would be. We cannot look for the new Virginia Woolf either. We can only look for writers who know what tradition is, who understand Modernism within that tradition, and who are committed to a fresh development of language and to new forms of writing. (*AO*, 176-7)

Marked by their poetic, lyrical focus on word-repetition and set imagery, symbolic structures and one overriding theme—exploration of the emotion of love in its various facets and expressions—Winterson's seven novels from her debut, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), to her 2001 *The.Power.Book*, are very much of one piece, a fact which she herself showed as deliberate on her part: "They are only separate books because that's how they had to be written."[40] Crucial for their thematic concerns is Winterson's openly lesbian sexual orientation, and her apostasy from her parents' strict Pentecostal Evangelic faith.

Her first, semi-autobiographical novel bears testimony to her upbringing in a repressively religious family from a small-town England. Its fairly straightforward *Künstlerroman* plotline is enriched by interpolations of fairytale and mythical elements, with its eight chapters structured after the biblical Octateuch. As critic Lynn Pyket has noted, Winterson's first novel is "a portrait of the artist as a young working class lesbian who flees the nets of religion and community" in order to become "an artist/prophet." Like Joyce's *Portrait*, Winterson's novel is less a form of self-expression or self-representation than of self-invention.[41] Winterson's next novel, *Passion* from 1987, features a plotline composed of two parallel stories, both centered around two marginal witnesses to the Napoleonic wars: Henri, a French soldier who ends up as a chicken-neck wringer and personal cook to Napoleon, and Vilanelle, who worked at the casino as a croupier until she was sold by her husband as army prostitute. The wide-ranging intertextuality employed by Winterson, playful echoes of both *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* are evident throughout. During his long imprisonment, Henri resorts to diary-writing, in which he refers to himself as Dedalus, both the mythical builder and aviator as well as Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, who, like Henri, built his own textual labyrinth and begot himself (or so he believed) as an artist in the concluding passages of *A Portrait*.[42] Winterson's *Passion* posits Joyce's *A Portrait* as an intertext which holds the keys to an important interpretive possibility. *Written on the Body* (1992) features, in a nod to Brophy's *In Transit*, a narrator of unidentified gender whose bisexual orientation leaves him/her genderless throughout the text. Winterson's is not only a highly unreliable narrative voice who repeatedly insists on the fictionality of his/her account, but also one with a proclivity for obsessive parody – accordingly, the novel's key intertext is Dylan Thomas' *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, in itself a parody of Joyce. *Gut Symmetries* (1997) combines together the intertwined stories of three narrator-characters, Alice (Alluvia), Jove and Stella, it style described as one crazy, surreal force springing from the baroque effect of repetition and excess. Its narrative is divided up to eleven chapters entitled after Tarot cards, in imitation of Celtic Cross Spread symbol. The novel's symbolism, again drawing heavily from archetypal psychology, features mirror as a central unifying element. Stella, upon looking at herself reveals a compound mirror image of three juxtaposed faces: her own and those of an older woman and a younger shadow man. This reflected image of three-persons-in-one is an emblem both of the complex nature of each individual (in Jung, the ego, the shadow and the animus/anima) and of "The Eternal Triangle" from the climax of the novel, constituted by Alice, Stella and Jove, whose

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40 Margaret Reynolds, "Interview with Jeanette Winterson," *Jeanette Winterson: The Essential Guide*, eds. Margaret Reynolds & Jonathan Noakes (London: Vintage, 2003) 25.

41 "*Oranges* is not simply the story of the making of the artist, and of the artist's journey towards her position as exiled visionary […], but it is also, in its form, an embodiment of that artist's aesthetic." (Lynn Pyket, "A New Way with Words? Jeanette Winterson's Post-Modernism," *I'm Telling You Stories: Jeanette Winterston and the Politics of Reading*, eds. Helena Grice & Tim Woods [*Postmodern Studies 25*, Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998] 58.)

42 As Susana Onega has noted in her book-length study on Winterson, references go well beyond these obvious parallels: "Where Stephen Dedalus's contemplation of a 'bird-girl' gave him the inspiration to write a 'villanelle,' i.e. a short lyric poem of Italian-French origin, Henri falls in love with Villanelle, an Italian woman who works for the French. The logical implication of this intertextual relation is that Villanelle and by extension the fantasy world she represents are only figments of Henri's imagination, a reading that enhances the psychological interpretation of Villanelle as a projection of Henri's ideal woman/anima." (Susana Onega, *Jeanette Winterson* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006] 75.)

archetypal model is the Holy Trinity. Finally, *The.Power.Book* (2001), a text graphically engaging with the aesthetics of electronic computerised writing, features a series of narrative interpolations which together form a spatial organisation; storytelling, here, is ruled by the internet principle that "there is always a new beginning, a different end" (*PB*, 4). Consequently, the story the love-affair between two women referred to as Ali/x and Tulip, is arranged as a web of thematically related stories that can be accessed, interacted upon, abandoned and reopened at will by narrator and narrate, as if, notes Onega, "they were links in a hypertextual network."[43] The novel's intertexts are *A Thousand and One Nights*, and Jorge Luis Borges' short stories dealing with the labyrinthine (e.g. "The Garden of Forking Paths"). The embedded stories are each introduced by a computer command, such as OPEN HARD DRIVE (which presents a reworking of *Orlando*'s androgyny), SEARCH, VIEW AS ICON, or EMPTY TRASH. For all its narrative variegation, the concluding vision insists on the novel's (and, potentially, the entire Winterson canon's) single narrative line: "a single story of love: the true history of the world" (*PB*, 244).

"GREAT ART SHOULD NOT MOVE": ALASDAIR GRAY

Alasdair Gray's (*1938) *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981), the most imaginative reworking of Joyce's methods in *A Portrait* and early *Ulysses* of all works discussed here, came as a culmination of the development of the 1970s Glasgow Group (authors such as James Kelman, Tom Leonard, or Liz Lochhead), followed three years later, by *1982 Janine* (1984). Sharing common, highly idiosyncratic poetics, the two novels will be discussed here together. Their Joycean indebtedness has been acknowledged by the author himself on numerous occasions, most outspokenly, in a 1986 interview with Kathy Acker. Here is Gray on *Lanark*'s early beginnings:

> At an early age I wanted to write a Great Book, and kept starting, but each time I read what I'd written I saw my words were those of a child. […] But when I went to Glasgow Art School in 1952 I had read or was reading Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*, also Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, most of Kafka and Waley's translation of *Monkey*, the comic Chinese Buddhist epic.[44]

Written over a period of almost thirty years, *Lanark* merges a fictional rendering of contemporary Glasgow with a nightmarish account of its decadent future, featuring a stark and prophetic vision of a dystopian society in which the masses are governed by the elite who systematically perpetuates their gradual dehumanisation.[45] Gray's second published novel, *1982 Janine* (1984),[46] was written, according to its author's explicit statement, in a fashion contrary to his aesthetics:

> When I began writing it in 1982 […], the monologue swelled up by taking in matters I had never intended to use in a book, for I agree with James Joyce when he says that great art should not move, that only improper arts (propaganda and pornography) move us, but true art arrests us in the face of eternal beauty, or truth, or something like that. But this particular story started discoursing of improper things: sex fantasies I had meant to die without letting anybody know happen in this head sometimes, and political diatribes.[47]

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43 Onega, *Jeanette Winterson*, 182.
44 Kathy Acker, "Alasdair Gray interviewed," *Edinburgh Review* 74 (1986): 83.
45 The plotline can be summarised as follows: The first two books recount the life of Duncan Thaw, a narrative that in many ways follows Gray's own biography, whose very schematic nutshell would follow this outline: The protagonist is born into a working-class Scottish family before World War II, excels at art and literature, and lives a life divided between humdrum reality and vivid fantasy. Unlike Gray, Thaw fails at art school and eventually commits suicide by drowning. The third book begins with a protagonist arriving in a mysterious city by train, unable to recall his past or his identity. Under the assumed name Lanark, he enters a sinister world where people disappear, and those who remain are afflicted by mysterious diseases that distort and transform their bodies. Lanark meets Rima, a sullen young woman, with whom he develops not only romance but also shared symptoms of a disease called dragonhide, which transforms their skin into reptilian scales. They are cured of this disease while taking refuge in an underground hospital; while there, Lanark consults an oracle and learns of his previous existence as Duncan Thaw. He later leaves the hospital for the city of Unthank—a dark, dreamworld version of Glasgow—on a quest for sunlight. Upon meeting Nastler, the "author" of *Lanark*, Lanark learns about his position in the fictional world, as well as his impending death. Burdened by this foreknowledge, Lanark contemplates the city of Unthank decimated by flood.
46 *1982 Janine* presents the first-person narrative of Jock McLeish, an expert in security systems, who is staying the night in a small Scottish hotel. McLeish's drunken stream of consciousness constitutes the first half of the book as he indulges in sadomasochistic fantasies involving a cast of imaginary female characters, such as the titular Janine. His effort to wallow in his sexual daydreams is repeatedly interrupted by unpleasant memories of the real world. Driven to desperation by this inner conflict, he takes an overdose of barbiturates. The suicide attempt fails, and McLeish undergoes a spiritual rebirth that is formally represented by the text itself—as the barbiturates take effect, the text splits into multiple columns running in various directions to parallel the fracturing and multiplication of his internal monologue. After McLeish regurgitates the pills (his blackout is represented by a blank double-page), he resolves to tell the story of his life in chronological order. This narrative train of thought occupies the second half of the book, detailing the oppressive family and brutal schooling that drove him to prefer a life of erotic fantasy.
47 Acker, "Alasdair Gray interviewed," 84.

The plot summaries adduced in the footnotes should bring home the point that when stripped of their typographical and (inter)textual effects and with their *sujet* reduced to *fabula*, Gray's novels hardly promise the fulfilment of the dream of radical literary experimentation. However, they also teach another lesson, that as with most other such works, it is within the bathwater of typography, intertextuality, and playful handling of time sequence that Gray's baby of experimentation lies ensconced, and that to separate the two is violent and meaningless. *Lanark*'s four "books" are chronologically displaced and, in addition, interpolated with a prologue, an interlude, an epilogue, and a "tailpiece." Its narrative landscape is peopled with second-hand characters drawn from "existing literature" – so much so that its "Index of Plagiarisms" runs down the side-margin of a good 15 pages of its epilogue. In fact, a whole new categorisation of "literary theft" is required:

> BLOCK PLAGIARISM, where someone else's work is printed as a distinct typographical unit, IMBEDDED PLAGIARISM, where stolen words are concealed within the body of the narrative, and DIFFUSE PLAGIARISM, where scenery, characters, actions or novel ideas have been stolen without the original words describing them. To save space these will be referred to hereafter as Blockplag, Implag, and Difplag. (*L,* 485)

Couched between "Imperial Gazetteer of Scotland" and "Kafka, Franz" is "Joyce, James" whose *Portrait* is credited with having inspired "crude Difplag" in "Chap. 22, para. 5" (*L*, 490-1). That this device was meant as a timely deflection of criticism, making a virtue of necessity, and not, as some critics would have it, as his self-conscious alignment with the self-consciousness of "postmodernism," has been pinpointed by Gray himself on more than one occasion, as for instance in conversation with Mark Axelrod:

> I have never found a definition of postmodernism that gives me a distinct idea of it. If the main characteristic is an author who describes himself as a character in his work, then Dante, Chaucer, Langland, and Wordsworth are as postmodern as James Joyce, who is merely modern. [...] I use a variety of typefaces where this makes the story clearer. [...] In *1982 Janine*—an interior monologue novel—the speaker has a nervous breakdown conveyed by three columns of different typefaces on the same pages, each a stream of thought or feelings at war with the rest. I do not know how else I could have done it.[48]

Typography, graphic devices and illustrations are also essential to the meaning-conveyance in *Lanark*, as Glyn White's essay in his study devoted to *Reading the Graphic Surface* has shown. The already mentioned chronological displacement (also largely typological, advertised by the highly adorned full-page frontispieces preceding each of the books) serves the function of alienation – having the books appear in the sequence 3, 1, 2, 4 complicates the relationship between the central character(s), Duncan Thaw and Lanark, who would otherwise seem to develop, one into the other, in the numerical ordering of the books. The broken chronology, however, also suggests a possibility fully explored in Stephen Bernstein's criticism of *Lanark*, which takes its cue from the novel's subtitle, insisting on "a," i.e. "one" life, and argue for treating the two lives as one, or as conjoined, a possibility "leading most readers to look for ways in which these two lives might comment upon one another."[49]

The commentary is provided by the Prologue (*L*, 107-117) which occupies the crossover point or hinge between the Lanark and Thaw narratives, containing the auto-narration of the life of the oracle, a financier who fades out of existence to become a disembodied voice in order to resurface as the narrator of the story of Thaw comprising the gist of Books One and Two. Further connectivity is established by the typographic consistency of the text, applying equally to the fantasy and realistic narratives.[50] Idiosyncratic is Gray's use of italic as an indicator of handwriting, since, as he explains to Axelrod, for him, italic "is a type based on hand-writing rather than Roman chiselling."[51] Capitalised text, then, is most often used to suggest a fictional source by appearing to mimic it; or to represent (not, unlike with e.g. Johnson, reproduce) the display typefaces from adverts. Reproduced, and rather faithfully at that, are a fictional road sign (*L*, 385) and the recurrent "EMERGENCY EXIT" sign (*L*, 376, 378, 381). Another typographical convention are the

48 Mark Axelrod, "An Epistolary Interview, Mostly with Alasdair Gray," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15.2 (Summer 1995): 113.
49 Stephen Bernstein, *Alasdair Gray* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999) 36.
50 Thus, in White's account, "capitals are used, like italics, for emphasis of speech but with the added connotation of superficiality; the bold text is not representationally motivated and the use of this type clearly emphasises the borrowed status of these words; bold type is used in a second way to indicate something about volume." (Glyn White, *Reading the Graphic Surface* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005] 170-1.)
51 Axelrod, "An Epistolary Interview," 111.

variable running headers; e.g. the Prologue features the headers across each double page spread in sequence so that they make up a poem. Last but not least, testifying to Gray's primary vocation as a visual artist are illustrations, which cover five fully illustrated pages: a frontispiece and the title pages to each of the four books.

What is more, *Lanark*'s metatextual interplay applies not only to the larger units of the individual books or characters; it also involves units smaller than the sentence, bringing about what White has called "a situation in which *Lanark* is on occasions haunted by itself."[52] Early on, there are five fragments of "bodiless voices conversing against the clamour" (*L*, 64) recorded by Lanark, then an inmate to a correction institute, all of which are (like the textual bits that form the prelude to the "Sirens" episode) verbatim quotes from passages interspersed throughout the rest of the novel. Additionally, there are further, less obvious linkages: for instance, on page 181, convalescing at a hotel in rural Scotland, Thaw overhears a phrase which resurfaces two hundred pages later in a dialogue between Rima and Lanark. The point of this cross-referencing, as with typography or intertextuality, is an indication of "a fracturing of time, showing that moments in the lives of Thaw and Lanark are simultaneous [...], that *the whole book* is in some sense simultaneous."[53] *Lanark*'s aesthetic concern with achieving simultaneity through spatial distribution of fragments is a technique markedly modernist (and supremely Joycean).[54] The experimental use of typography in *Lanark* is one route for its investigation of textual power – this can also hark back to the "Index of Plagiarisms," running along the main body of text of the Epilogue, struggling for its space as much as striving to classify the various kinds of literary "thefts" and predations.[55]

Analogously to *Lanark*, *1982 Janine* also includes an "Epilogue for the discerning critic" which among the plethora of others credits "O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, and Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*" as models of "an elaborate fantasy within a plausible everyday fiction," and "night town scenes in Joyce's *Ulysses*" as contributing to the formation of "the rhythms and voices" (*J*, 333-4) of its eleventh, most troubled chapter. However, the economy of its temporal-spatial situatedness in one mind in one hotel room during one night's drink-induced phantasmagoria, as well as this mind's obsessive narrative, brimming with qualifications, self-interruptions and metacommentary, can be most fully attached to Beckett's trilogy or monological drama. Jock McLeish is unable to keep details of his own life safely disjunct from the story he tells and even at moments of highest entrancement by his "Superb" erotic heroine, he must needs pause to ask himself: "Why does this imaginary stuff seem familiar? IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUPERB AND MY FORMER WIFE [...] Superb is imaginary. Helen was real. Why can't I keep them apart? [...] I wanted to keep fantasy and reality firmly separate" (*J*, 33, 41). As an instance of interior monologue *par excellence*, it is not difficult for a critic like Stevenson, always eager to engage in labelling, to posit a postmodernist departure from *Janine*'s modernist heritage.[56] *Janine 1982*, apart from exploding the modest, almost puritan sexual coyness of *Lanark* into a full-blown pornography with sodomy or cunnilingus galore, also positions itself as

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52 White, *Reading the Graphic Surface*, 192.

53 White, *Reading the Graphic Surface*, 199.

54 Dominic Head develops this point by stressing the ideology of the plot's redoubling: "The novel's twin settings, Glasgow and the dystopian fantasy City of Unthank, suggest the two poles – realism and fantasy – between which Gray locates the impetus of his writing. The median position thus established represents a simultaneous challenge to the two fictional codes. The received history of the realist code is disrupted in a famous passage in which Glasgow is said to be neglected in artistic representations, and so unavailable for imaginative inhabitation. At the other extreme, the novel's fantastic elements suggest the dangers of the unfettered imagination, where escapism is in the ascendancy." (Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*, 149.)

55 In Randall Stevenson's acute analysis, *Lanark*'s playfulness ultimately serves a serious, anti-illusionary political message: "The real achievement of Lanark is not in seducing readers with illusion, but in allowing them to escape from it; in forcing them to consider conjuring and to examine and experience imagination as process rather than securely finished product. Since Lanark fails in his attempt to save the city, its redemption, if any, lies out with the text, in the continuing processes of imagination of readers, empowered by Gray's dystopian fantasy to recognise the destructive forces which prey upon the life of modern industrial cities, and on Glasgow's more than most." (Randall Stevenson, "Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern," *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, eds. Robert Crawford & Thom Nairn [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991] 61.)

56 "Modernism's epistemological concerns fretted over fissures between mind and reality, and a concomitant crisis in language was defined and fuelled by Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics [...] showing signifier and signified, word and world, related only arbitrarily. *Finnegans Wake* illustrates one extension of this thinking, its language, detached from a secure representative function, forming instead an autonomous world of its own. An extension of another sort appears in the growth of the genres of science fiction and fantasy throughout the twentieth century. If reality cannot be wholly known, nor language any longer conceived as tightly connected to it, why should not words be used to create other worlds?" (Stevenson, "Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern," 56-7.)

a far more outspokenly political text. Sometimes, these are combined, as in the dialogues between McLeish and Sontag, one of his imaginary lovers – here, broaching the subject of the police brutality and the sad fate of Ulrike Meinhof:

> "Are you aware that the Parisian police commissioner has publicly advised raped women not to take their complaint unaccompanied to a police station, since they are in danger of being raped again?" [...] "But you have read of the death by hanging of the Meinhof girl in that strangely insecure German max-security prison. Did you know that the official investigators found dry semen between her thighs? Did the warders fuck her then hang her, or hang her then fuck the corpse?" (*J*, 50-1)

The protagonist's escapism into (auto-)erotic fantasy and self-gratification—indeed, any kind of escapism from "ordinary life"—is shown by Gray to be of a political nature:

> But if I had told her the truth about my politics she would have spent hours trying to convert me and I was having a hard enough time protecting my fantasies from her. If she succeeded in connecting them to ordinary life she would make me feel responsible for every atrocity from Auschwitz and Nagasaki to Vietnam and the war in Ulster and I REFUSE TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT EVERYTHING. (*J*, 56)

Just as *Lanark* combined dull-realist Thaw/ Glasgow with the eerily surreal Lanark/Unthank, *1982 Janine*'s two different fictional accounts of the same "real" demonstrate the entanglement of erotic fantasies with the miserable political reality of colonial Scotland – what Will Self's preface terms Gray's "socialist unrealism" (*J*, xvii). The overall masturbatory obsession of *Janine* can be seen as a metaphorical re-enactment of the proverb (of Gray's own coinage) that ran the length of *Lanark*: "*Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself and the recipe is separation/hate* (*L* 62, 101, 411, 188). Gray's political message lies in rejecting the idea of individual recognition at the expense of others and advocating collaboration among rather than exploitation between individuals. In *Janine* Gray takes a step further in promoting the connection between the political and psycho-sexual.

By foregrounding, in Cairn Craig's colonial reading, typography as "the symbol of [Scottish] own culturally repressed condition" in which "to overthrow the rule of type is synonymous with overthrowing the type of rule under which the culture has struggled for self-expression,"[57] Gray's experimental texts have paved the way for a continuing tradition of textual and typographical experiment in recent Scottish writing. *Lanark* and *Janine* have, over the twenty years from their publication, become paradigm-defining texts for writers as different as Irvine Welsh, the layout of whose *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995) or *Filth* (1998) sways more toward the "merely" ludic and gratuitous, as well as Janice Galloway, whose *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989) uses various typographical devices in a more mimetic service to depiction of trauma; evidence as good as any, that the revival in Scottish literature inaugurated by Gray at the beginning of the 1980s is far from exhausted.

"GRAFTING, EDITING: QUOTATIONS, CORRESPONDENCES": IAIN SINCLAIR

Finally, a figure who represents—for most criticism as a solitary *flâneur,* in his own view as a vanguard of a group featuring poets J.H. Prynne, Douglas Oliver, or Peter Ackroyd—the continued line of influence from William Burroughs' eight-year London sojourn between 1966 and 1974. Born in Cardiff, educated at Trinity College, Dublin, but London-based throughout his writing career, Iain Sinclair (*1943) has drawn comparisons to William Burroughs especially for his early, dark and hallucinatory explorations of urban London, past and present, both in poetry (*Lud Heat*, 1975, and *Suicide Bridge*, 1979) and prose (*White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings*, 1987). His clearest alignment with the Beats took place as much on paper as in real life. He became the amanuensis of the Dialectics of Liberation Congress held at the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm in July 1967, whose participants included Allen Ginsberg, R.D. Laing, Gregory Bateson, Digger Emmet Grogan, Herbert Marcuse and Lucien Goldmann. The patchwork of Sinclair's own reminiscence and transcriptions from film and tape—transcribed interviews, poetry-readings, lectures and debate—came to form the gist of Sinclair's self-published *The Kodak Mantra Diaries: Allen Ginsberg in London* (1971). In Ben Watson's estimation, the importance of Sinclair's ties with the Beat movement cannot be overstated.[58] In his indebtedness to Burroughs,

57 Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999) 181.
58 "Modernism's epistemological concerns fretted over fissures between mind and reality, and a concomitant crisis in language was defined and fuelled by Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics [...] showing signifier and signified, word and world, related only arbitrarily. *Finnegans Wake* illustrates one extension of this thinking, its language, detached from a secure representative function, forming instead an autonomous world of its own. An

Sinclair seems on a par with Ballard (with whom he is often lumped together), another distinctly urban writer of the dark London, however, where Ballard's vision remains distinctly fantastic and only loosely based on the city's real geography, Sinclair takes a far more matter-of-fact approach to both the city's sacred and profane sites, its liminal passages, its underbellies and peripheries (in space), as well as its occult histories, its phantom pasts and past phantoms (in time). Whereas Ballard is the visionary of London's possible (dystopian) futures, Sinclair is the meticulous cartographer of its spaces excluded from traditional mapping and the recorder of its past repressed in official history. Thus, *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* introduces a group of rare book dealers in search for documentation of Jack the Ripper and other Victorian sadists all across London, and *Downriver; or, The Vessels of Wrath* (1991) takes the reader on a twelve-part roller-coaster ride through the depths of London and the dark souls of its denizens. Another story of an unusual Londoner, this time centred on a protagonist is the 1999 *Rodinsky's Room*, where Sinclair collaborated with Rachel Lichtenstein. The two authors used alternating chapters and their own voices to present the life of David Rodinsky, a reclusive inhabitant of the London synagogue attic, where he worked as caretaker and from which he mysteriously disappeared.

Thus, the general preoccupation with the fantastic resurfaces, yet again; however, in a highly individualised fashion, for Sinclair's psycho-geographical project is steeped in occultism, if not of his making, then of his choosing and adapting. Already in his 1975 poem *Lud Heat*, Sinclair launches the process of drawing divinatory lines on maps, which partly dictates his approach towards cultural formation and its poetics. The two axes delineating this mapping are the Sinclair's experiences as an assistant gardener with the Parks Department of an East London borough, and the "sacred landscape" delineated by the churches of Nicholas Hawksmoor. "The most notable thing that struck me as I walked across this landscape for the first time," Sinclair recalls in conversation with Kevin Jackson, "were these rundown churches, and I suddenly realised, there's this one here and that one there, and maybe there is some connection. And then I did have this very vivid dream of St Anne's, Limehouse…" (*V*, 98). One is struck, in turn: "a vivid dream"? "Maybe some connection"? More often than not, Sinclair's progression in his cognitive mapping is one of "that was my hunch: confirmation followed" (*LH*, 28). In this, as in much else, Sinclair consciously positions himself as heir to the ancient Celtic tradition of the poet as soothsayer, of the bard whose word has the power to alter reality. As he confided to Jackson:

> By nature and temperament I'm absolutely one of those mad Welsh preachers who believes that... deliver a speech and you'll change someone's life. Or kill them. I really believe all that, but I can't go around spouting that and survive, so I'll adapt equally to the Scottish side of me, which is cynical, rational and cynical, and I believe in that as well. [...] It's Stevenson, the classic Scottish Jekyll and Hyde thing. One is really deranged and manic, the other is looking at it being deranged and manic, and commenting on it. That's the tension. (*V*, 59)

Sinclair's walk around Hawksmoor's London churches in *Lud Heat* reveals a "web printed on the city and disguised with multiple superimpositions," a web "too complex to unravel here, the information too dense: we can only touch on a fraction of the possible relations. […] It is enough to sketch the possibilities" (*LH*, 16-7). Drawing upon Alfred Watkins' theory of the ley line, according to which the ancient sites in England and Wales are aligned with one another in a network of straight routes of communication, Sinclair creates willed ley lines across a chosen area (in *Lud Heat*, this produces a "hieratic map" of London), which generate in his texts a wealth of occult materials for Sinclair to carefully counterpoint with local, matter-of-fact accounts.

That the ley line is one of Sinclair's signature tropes has been amply demonstrated in the many prose works that followed *Lud Heat* and *Suicide Bridge*. Here, three examples will suffice. His 1997 *Lights Out for the Territory*, a collection of nine loosely collected perambulatory pieces, describing lighting out for various London nooks both familiar

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extension of another sort appears in the growth of the genres of science fiction and fantasy throughout the twentieth century. If reality cannot be wholly known, nor language any longer conceived as tightly connected to it, why should not words be used to create other worlds?" (Ben Watson, "*The Kodak Mantra Diaries*: The Politics of Sinclair's Poetics," *The Work of Iain Sinclair*, eds. Robert Bond & Jenny Bavidge [Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007] 83).

and unfamiliar, forgotten and re-remembered. As Sinclair himself reveals halfway through, the seemingly random extravagations actually serve a specific purpose – his project of map inscription:

> Each essay so far written for this book can be assigned one letter of the alphabet. Obviously, the first two pieces go together, the journey from Abney Park to Chingford Mount: V. The circling of the City: O. The history of Vale Royal, its poet and publisher: an X on the map: VOX. The unheard voice is always present in the darkness. (*LOT,* 156)

Revisiting this theory in the opening of his novel, *Landor's Tower* (2001)—where the story of a historical figure, Walter Savage Landor, is interwoven with Sinclair's frustrated attempts to write a book about Landor, along with a subplot about booksellers hunting for rare editions—Sinclair encapsulates Watkins' lesson in the following formula: "everything connects and, in making those connections, streams of energy are activated" (*LT*, 2). Later on, Sinclair makes it explicit that his use of Watkins' psycho-geographical concept is a means to an aesthetic end steeped in modernist poetics of juxtaposition and collage:

> All of it to be digested, absorbed, fed into the great work. Wasn't that the essence of the modernist contract? Multi-voiced lyric seizures countered by drifts of unadorned fact, naked source material spliced into domesticated trivia, anecdotes, borrowings, found footage. Redundant. As much use as a whale carved from margarine, unless there is intervention by that other; unless some unpredicted element takes control, overrides the pre-planned structure, tells you what you don't know. Willed possession. (*LT*, 31)

Two joint examples of Sinclair's use of pre-existent, commonplace modern ley lines are *London Orbital: A Walk around the M25* (2002) and *Dining on Stones; or, The Middle Ground* (2004) which feature two major London thoroughfares. *London Orbital* is Sinclair's spiritual travelogue of his walk around the M25, a road that forms the boundary of London, which provided a springboard for his free-form reflections on the most diverse subjects. In *Dining on Stones*, his real-life experience is recorded through the fictional writer Andrew Morton, who appears as Sinclair's fictional alter ego, tracing the trajectory of the A13 road near London.

A recent, and compelling example of semi-non-fictional accounts of Sinclair's voyages outside of London is his 2005 *Edge of the Orison* which, encompassing the genres of memoir, biography, art theory, and literary criticism, follows the journey of poet John Clare, who in 1841, having escaped from a lunatic asylum in Epping Forest, walked for three days to his home in Helpston, (then) Northamptonshire, some eighty miles away. In obeisance to his aesthetics of free association and imagist juxtaposition, Sinclair uses the fact that Clare spent his last years at the Northampton asylum, and the coincidence that his journey to Helpston took place in pursuit of his first love, a certain Mary Joyce, in order to draw a ley line between his central quest and the chronicling of Lucia Joyce's institutionalisation at the same institution, 110 years later. Enough material for Sinclair's mind to begin its connect-work:

> What happened to Lucia Joyce in Northampton? Can her silence be set against Clare's painful and garrulous exile? Visitors came to the hospital to pay their respects, to report on the poet's health. Biographers of Lucia cut out, abruptly, after she steps into the car at Ruislip and drives north, never to return. (*EO*, 233)

According to this logic, Joyce surfaces in Sinclair's musings at the most unexpected instances. For instance, upon pondering the river Lea, Sinclair's mind makes the sudden imagist switch to:

> Djuna Barnes, profiling James Joyce, zoomed in on his "spoilt and appropriate" teeth. And that is this stretch of the Lea, precisely: spoilt and appropriate. Hissing trains. Occasional apologetic herons (all spindle and no heft) tipping out of dead trees like faultily assembled kites. Nothing spectacular, nothing to stop your advance on Broxbourne. "Writers," Joyce told Barnes, "should never write about the extraordinary, that is for the journalist." But already, she was nodding off. "He drifts from one subject to the other, making no definite division." (*EO*, 141-2)

At a Northampton hotel, Joyce even enters into Sinclair's dream in what is an obvious parody of Stephen's dream of the wraith of his dead mother:

> In the Northampton ibis, I dreamt; re-remembered. The drowning. Weaving back, no licence required, on my motor scooter: to Sandycove, the flat beside Joyce's Martello tower. Wet night. A tinker woman had been pulled from the canal. Drunk. The smell of her. My first and only attempt at artificial resuscitation, meddling with fate. Met with: green mouth-weed, slime, bile, vomit. Incoherent pain. Language returns, curses. Better left in water was the consensus of other night-wanderers: "Leave her be." World of its own. Woodfire on wasteground within sight of a busy yellow road. Bring someone back from death and you're landed with them. (*EO*, 234)

Sinclair's Joycean re-remembering is complete with its Martello tower setting, its textual echoes, its linguistic (woodfire on wasteground) as well as narrative (interior monologue) markers. However, that this, again, is not entirely fortuitous textual play is shown only later when Sinclair reveals that his first meeting with his wife Anna in 1962 took place in Sandymount – dreaming, here, is re-remembering. The "drowning" in which Sinclair is primarily interested here, however, is Lucia's – which brings up another tangent, another ley line, pointing toward Beckett:

> James Joyce (always) and Beckett (at the beginning) constructed their works by a process of grafting, editing: quotations, submerged whispers. Correspondences. Joyce read other men's books only to discover material useful to his current project. Libraries were oracles accessed by long hours of labour: at the cost of sight. The half-blind Beckett, aged twenty-two, reading to a man in dark glasses (waiting for the next operation). A theatrical image reprised in Beckett's play *Endgame*. Which would be revived in London, 2004, to run alongside Michael Hasting's *Calico*. A drama about Lucia Joyce: the high-bourgeois family, her relationship with the callow Beckett. (*EO*, 234-5)

Memories of Joyce's photographs become submerged in Sinclair's reveries about his male ancestors: the memory of "magnifying glass over etymological dictionary: blood-globe, headache. More wrappings around Joyce's head than a mummy. Bandages under grey Homburg, smoked glasses. Stub of period moustache, just like my father" segues into memories of footage of his soon-to-die grandfather: "This man, a doctor, is very tired. He performs a reflex ritual, perhaps for the last time: remembering how to lift an arm. A moment that parallels Gisele Freund's 1938 photograph of Joyce in a deckchair. More dead than alive. Moving image showing to a still: bleaching to nothing." The seemingly random ramblings of memory take a sudden autobiographical turn:

> When this clip, recycled as a memory induced by motorway travel, was logged for the script of the film of *London Orbital*, the young woman doing the job wrote: "James Joyce in garden." Thereby confirming my fantasy of a physical resemblance between two dandified grandfathers: Henry Sinclair and James Joyce. (*EO*, 236)

"Drowning" is the metaphorical ground for the ensuing flights of Sinclair's metaphorising fancy. Having already observed earlier that "One of Lucia's cabal of expensive doctors, Henri Vignes, prescribed injections of sea water. To no evident effect" (*EO*, 235), Sinclair establishes the following line: "In mid-England, mid-journey, flying and drowning become confused. Drowning and writing. Dreaming and walking. *Finnegans Wake*: Lucia searching out words for her father, the book for which she is the inspiration. The problem."[59] Again, what follows is a turn to reminiscences (re-invention, Sinclair calls them) of his own family, adding to the already numerously superimposed plains of linkages yet another layer: remembering his aunt in Ballsbridge, Sinclair recalls that she had a connection with Beckett, whose lectures in Trinity she attended. Then, Sinclair pulls the final chef-d'oeuvre rabbit out of his magician's hat of magical correspondences: "When Beckett arrived in Paris, he carried a letter of introduction to Joyce, written by Harry Sinclair. His Aunt Cissie (mother's sister) married William 'Boss' Sinclair" (*EO*, 241). Bloodline, as all other lines of connection, calls for reflection: "If there is common blood with Beckett, however diluted, so much the better. I won't investigate it. I salute him as a great walker, out alone in all weathers, or with his father, tramping the Wicklow Hills."[60] Toward the end of the journey, Sinclair pays his respects to Lucia when passing Kingsthorpe Cemetery. Ever on the lookout for the aleatory epiphany, before making the turn, "up the slope to where Lucia is buried, I find a nice marker, the grave of a certain Finnegan" (*EO*, 347).

A writer concentrating many diverse lines of influence, combining and transgressing genre and form boundaries, Iain Sinclair's lifelong project, devoted to charting the maps of London City and Environs present and past, real and surreal, so meticulously as to secure their reproducibility if some dystopic future should wipe them off the face of the

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59 Sinclair continues: "Joyce asks Lucia to look at the song 'Dublin Bay,' to change it: the young couple must not be drowned. The man will bide his time at the bottom of the sea, then rise to the surface. Joyce, fond father, continued to believe that Lucia, dosed on sea-water, would swim back to him, to health. Hospitals taught her to breathe underwater. […] She visited Jung. He couldn't help. There was an unresolved argument with the author of *Ulysses*: a book that dared to trespass on his territory. […] 'If Joyce was diving into a river,' Jung said, 'Lucia was falling.' Voluntary or involuntary immersion: it depends on who is telling the tale." (*EO*, 238)

60 Sinclair continues: "Elective affinities: I acknowledge Beckett, from the period of *Murphy*, as a notable London psychogeographer. James Knowlson tells us how the frustrated novelist trudged for hours through streets and parks, making a narrative of the city. […] Reading the Beckett biography, I came to understand how relationships are based on shared topography, not mere accidents of blood. Beckett had preceded us to the asylums of London's orbital fringe. Samuel Beckett was ahead of us, every step on the way: his silence, his eagle stare (the poster portrait, in the alcove outside the bathroom, that terrified my children)." (*EO*, 242-3)

Earth, presents a unique literary, endeavour that is at once most idiosyncratic and original, while also profoundly and self-consciously experimental in its pursuit of the material of memory as construed from the materiality of language.

JOYCE EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

Despite the palpable lapse of literary experiment following the disintegration of B. S. Johnson's literary circle, certain genre-writing (Aldiss, Ballard), feminist fiction (Winterson, Carter), but also a few mavericks devoted to their own idiosyncratic textual/thematic literary enterprises (Brooke-Rose, Gray, Sinclair) have kept the linguistic poetics of Joyce (as well as his contemporaries, Woolf or Pound) alive if not exactly kicking. In systematising Joyce's importance for the British fiction of the last two decades of the twentieth century, the present account hopes to have challenged Morton Levitt's blanket assertion from his *Modernist Survivors*, according to which

> with Johnson's death Britain has lost its sole significant novelist who had been influenced by Joyce from the start and had proudly proclaimed and demonstrated that influence from the start, the one serious novelist of his generation who had been fearless of "experiment" and of being linked with the Modernists, the creator of a developing canon who almost alone in the land had shown promise of further and challenging development. [...] Albert Angelo is dead, and his creator is dead, victims, in a sense, of their hostile surroundings. But the Neo-Victorian novel of Britain, in the third decade now of its dominance, appears to live on, its critics, practitioners and audience still unaware, it would seem, that it was stillborn.[61]

Levitt's generalisation that the "stillborn" Neo-Victorian realist mode has presented the most relevant, or indeed the only, path to be taken by the British novel since the 1980s till the present, is widely off the mark. For that, its orientation, ideological agenda, stylistics, typographical innovation and linguistic poetics are too broad-ranging, their range of returns to—and departures from—the modernist Joycean tradition of treating language as material, too diverse. However, to merely demonstrate Levitt's summary as a simplistic and reductive one is easy and not enough. It is not enough because, for all its reductive and simplifying package, there is a grain of truth to Levitt's argument: British innovative fiction from 1980s onward very seldom—as was Johnson's case—defined itself against the narrative conventions of the 19th-century realist novel. Following the vast literary synthesis and eclectic miscegenation of the stylistic techniques and narrative strategies of the previous decades, Joyce's presence within the British fiction of the 1980s and 1990s has become virtually all-pervasive, yet together with it also neutralised, dispersed, sometimes well-nigh invisible.

61 Morton P. Levitt, *Modernist Survivors* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987) 72.

"PART OF THE LANDSCAPE": THE U.S., 1953-1973: FROM *JUNKIE* TO *GRAVITY'S RAINBOW* AND BEYOND

The American fiction of the conservative 1950s has been aptly evaluated by Ronald Sukenick, one of the key writers of the 1970s to oppose literary conservatism, as follows:

> Fiction in the fifties was august and self-confident, not for any good reason, it just was. The novel was still the great symphonic form in the world of letters. There was the tradition of the "great novel." […] The important thing about *Ulysses* was not that it called into question the very fictive tradition it epitomized, but that it was a "great novel," one in a series. Only that could explain the awe in which it was held and the totality with which it was ignored by fiction in the fifties. Fiction at that time paid a great deal of lip service to Joyce, Kafka, Lawrence, Proust, Faulkner and literary modernism, but somehow all that had very little to do with us, with fiction in America.[1]

Although a rough generalisation about the 1950s—whose conservatism and reactionism also produced the Beats, Burroughs and Gaddis—Sukenick's chief point is valid: two very different lessons are learned if *Ulysses* is taken as yet another "great novel" whose cultural status is to be capitalised upon, or as a subversive text rethinking the very possibility of literary tradition. These two lessons also yield a very different kind of knowledge and creative practice. Donald Barthelme's observation recorded by Jerome Klinkowitz to the effect that Joyce should be "taken as part of the landscape, around which the reader's life could be slowly appreciated, like one's home or neighborhood"[2] is particularly noteworthy in that a short-story writer acknowledges the importance of Joyce *not* as the writer of *Dubliners*, but of *Finnegans Wake*. Although part of the landscape, Joyce was by no means the sole landmark or centre toward which the scene would gravitate. Apart from his Modernist co-pioneers (Kafka and Proust), as well as his American colleagues and Paris acquaintances, there were at least two other writers whose influence was almost universal in the American fiction of the 1960s: the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges and the Russian émigré Vladimir Nabokov. Both acknowledged Joyce as a shaping influence, both conducted a lifelong "infinite conversation"[3] with Joyce. Borges' stretched from his early admiration for and support of *Ulysses* in mid-1920s to his attendance of the centennial 1982 Dublin Joyce Symposium, Nabokov's took place in his lectures on Joyce's *Ulysses* he gave at Harvard in 1951-52 and throughout his two-decade academic tenure at Wellesley and Cornell Universities. Both Borges' and Nabokov's lifelong preoccupations with Joyce have been subject of much critical work, which highlights their ill-ease with specific phases or facets of his work (particularly, the *Wake*), their own artistic programmes and other influences – in a word, their profound *dissimilarity* from Joyce.[4]

Given the shared engagement, on the part of many American writers, in multinational, cross-cultural redefining of contemporary literature, it is legitimate to raise questions about their specificity – what could be called their "Americanness." In the introduction to his epochal *City of Words – American Fiction 1950-1970*, Tony Tanner juxtaposes the dream and nightmare of American literature: the dream that "an unpatterned, unconditioned life is possible, in which your movements and stillnesses, choices and repudiations are all your own" and the dread that "someone else is patterning your life, that there all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous."[5] Tanner traces this dialectics all the way back to the great American romantics, e.g. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and E. A. Poe, making a case for conceiving of this bipolarity as an American cultural constant by engaging, in the three Appendices to his volume, with the discourses of social anthropology, behavioural

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1 Ronald Sukenick, "Fiction in the Seventies," *In Form: Digressions on the Act of Fiction* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985) 35.
2 *The New Fiction – Interviews with Innovative American Writers*, ed. Joe David Bellamy (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1974) 45.
3 Cf. Patricia Novillo-Corvalán, *Borges and Joyce – An Infinite Conversation* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2011) for a detailed discussion of the Borges-Joyce relationship.
4 For more see the overviews of Borges' and Nabokov's relationships with Joyce in César Augusto Salgado's "Barroco Joyce: Jorge Luis Borges' and José Lezama Lima's Antagonistic Readings," *Transcultural Joyce*, ed. Karen Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 63-93, as well as to the above-mentioned study by Patricia Novillo-Corvalán, and to Julian Moynahan's article, "Nabokov and Joyce," *Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, ed. Vladimir Alexandrov (New York: Routledge, 1995) 433-44.
5 Tony Tanner, *City of Words – American Fiction 1950-1970* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971) 15.

psychology, and linguistics. According to Tanner, the paradox peculiar to the post-war writer is of a distinctly linguistic nature:

> If he wants to write in any communicable form he must traffic in a language which may at every turn be limiting, directing and perhaps controlling his responses and formulations. If he feels that the given structuring of reality of the available language is imprisoning or iniquitous, he may abandon language altogether; or he may seek to use the existing language in such a way that he demonstrates to himself and other people that he does not accept nor wholly conform to the structures built into the common tongue, that he has the power to resist and perhaps disturb the particular "rubricizing" tendency of the language he has inherited. […]Any writer has to struggle with existing language which is perpetually tending to rigidify in old formulations, and he must constantly assert his own patterning powers without at the same time becoming imprisoned in *them*.[6]

To this can be added the existing language of the writer's predecessors: As the paradigms of Borges and Nabokov show, Joyce's influence—and still less the influence of the *Wake*—was hardly ever unanimously accepted in post-war U.S. literature, especially as regards the related questions of the usefulness and (in)imitability of his example, or indeed the possibility of going beyond it. To capture this by way of comparison with the UK: there were no Kingsley Amises or C. P. Snows in the U.S. to react against modernist experiment and consider Joyce a "cul-de-sac"; however, nor was there an Anthony Burgess or a B.S. Johnson to argue for Joyce's indisputable centrality to their writing.

"MAKING PEOPLE AWARE OF WHAT THEY KNOW AND DON'T KNOW THAT THEY KNOW": WILLIAM BURROUGHS

As many of his biographers record, William Seward Burroughs (1914-1997), an early promoter of psychedelic drugs, had to flee the States for Mexico in 1949 in order to escape the impending detention at the Angola state prison. He would later recall the accidental killing, in 1951, of his wife Joan Vollmer as an event which "has motivated and formulated my writing" since "the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and maneuvered me into a life long struggle, in which I have had no choice except to write my way out" (*Q*, xxiii). As has been documented by many—most authoritatively, by Barry Miles' seminal biography—*el hombre invisible* was a nickname Burroughs earned with Spanish street kids in Tangiers in the late 1950s, complimenting his skill at slipping untraceably through narrow alleys to score a drug fix.[7] Burroughs' tortuous life has turned him into a figure notoriously ambiguous and difficult to pin down: American by origin and nationality and an exile during his formative years as a writer; a Harvard English literature graduate from a well-to-do family, yet for most of his life an underdog and never-to-do-well; both an associate and close friend of many of the Beatniks, yet always apart and different from them; a husband and father turned into an open and misogynist homosexual; both a lifelong drug user and a staunch instigator against addiction of any kind; both an outcast and outlaw, as well as a pop-cultural icon. More pertinently still, Burroughs' textual existence is as dubious and open to critical conjecture as Joyce's: so many of his works are presently in an indefinite, non-definitive, "flawed" or otherwise doubtful state, or exist in multiple editions and variants, this from his earliest novel *Junkie/Junky* with a variation in its very title to the late re-editions and re-writes of many of his juvenilia. This is largely due to Burroughs' practice of constant revision of even published material, as well as to his reliance on outside advice concerning the final organisation of his material.

As has been recently shown, this invisibility has also given Burroughs a spectral omnipresence as character, dedicatee, or honorary mention in much of the work of his contemporaries, particularly of the Beat generation whose *éminence grise* he had become. Oliver Harris' study presents a list of the Beatnik's works marked by Burroughs' presence, with Kerouac's *The Town and the City* (1950), John Clellon Holmes' *Go* (1952), Ginsberg's dedication of "Howl" (1956) to Burroughs (with the promise of the forthcoming *Naked Lunch* as the "endless novel which will drive everybody mad"), Kerouac's *On the Road*—where "Old Bull Lee" is endowed with "phenomenal fires and mysteries"—and Gregory Corso's *The American Express* standing out as works where Burroughs' presence is particularly palpable. While conceding that Burroughs "has always been tangential to the movement – its elder statesman, godfather, men-

6 Tanner, *City of Words*, 16.
7 Barry Miles, *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible* (New York: Hyperion, 1994).

tor, or tutelary spook," Harris insists that "those who think that Burroughs' early texts can now be read outside the Beat context, taken out like a picture from an old frame, should think again" since all four of his 1950s texts comes "framed in some way by Beat reference, none of which actually dates from that decade," most markedly in the case of *Junky,* which features Allen Ginsberg's 1977 introduction. What this "intrusion of such an array of accessory texts" ultimately means for Harris is that "Burroughs remains bound by and to the Beats"[8] and conversely, for the Beats, Burroughs' invisibility exercises a spectral presence and an effect of haunting reminiscent of Joyce's vis-à-vis the Modernists.

Joyce runs the length of Burroughs' collected interviews, talks and discussions. When in early 1963, publisher John Calder, by way of introducing Burroughs' work to England, published *Dead Finger Talk* (an amalgam of *Naked Lunch*, *The Soft Machine* and *The Ticket that Exploded*), the book received a long hostile review in *Times Literary Supplement*, sparking off a 14-week heated correspondence often running up to four pages per issue. Burroughs' defense was actively taken by Eric Mottram, professor of English at London University. Mottram quotes Burroughs' account of the interior logic of his experimental quartet, according to which "in *Naked Lunch* and *The Soft Machine* I have diagnosed an illness, and in *The Ticket that Exploded* and *Nova Express* suggested remedy. In this work I am attempting to create a new mythology for the space age. I feel that the old mythologies are definitely broken down and not adequate at the present time."[9] Burroughs goes on to ally himself with the tradition of the "verbal innovators and experimenters" of the 1920s—Gertrude Stein and James Joyce—but his verbal investigations are directed toward discovering "what words actually are, and exactly what is the relationship to the human nervous system."[10] Burroughs repeatedly credits Joyce as an important precursor in chiefly two respects. One, Joyce as an expander of awareness;[11] and two, Joyce as an explicitly sexual, "erotic" and "pornographic" writer.[12] However, apart from acknowledging him, Burroughs also repeatedly distances himself from Joyce's radical linguistic experimentation in the *Wake*. His argument, again rehearsed in multiple variations in different places and at different times, was most eloquently put forth in a 1973 London interview with Daniel Odier, where the *Wake* represents "a trap into which experimental writing can fall when it becomes purely experimental."[13] And in Paris, 1978, Burroughs explicitly tied his turn toward more traditional and straightforward narrative with rejection of experimentation à la the *Wake* and the need to "make a living."[14] So, for Burroughs, the Joyce to admire is the Joyce of "The Dead," whose famous ending he memorised, oftentimes quoted and praised once as "one of the famous scenes in English prose."[15] It is also this passage that Burroughs cuts up into his own prose in various places.

In the tetralogy of novels which follows after *Junkie*—from *Naked Lunch* to *Nova Express*—Burroughs finds the form in which to convey his drug experiences in the celebrated method of the cut-up, for whose discovery Burroughs always credited the American painter Brion Gysin, whom he had befriended during his Beat Hotel years in Paris. Published in Paris in 1959 (and in 1962 in an American edition), *Naked Lunch* was assembled from the thousand-odd pages of notes taken during Burroughs' worst period of addiction in Tangier. In a 1968 postscript to his surrealist novella *The Beat Hotel*, Harold Norse presents his eye-witness account of the discovery and earliest stages of the meth-

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8 Oliver Harris, *William Burroughs and the Secret of Fascination* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003) 3-4.
9 "The Algebra of Need," ed. Eric Mottram, *Burroughs Live: The Collected Interviews of William S. Burroughs 1960-1997* (Los Angeles & New York: Semiotext(e), 2001) 55.
10 Mottram, "Algebra of Need," 55-6.
11 As in a 1986 interview: "One very important aspect of art is that it makes people aware of what they know and don't know that they know […] Joyce made people aware of their stream of consciousness, at least on a verbal level. He was at first accused of being unintelligible. So the artist then expands awareness." ("Writing in the Future," ed. Jürgen Ploog, *Burroughs Live*, 621).
12 "I'd simply refer to writers who've written more or less explicitly or frankly about sexual matters. […] Certainly Joyce, Miller, and D. H. Lawrence were very important as pioneers and made some very important breakthroughs, so that now virtually anything can be published." ("A New Frog," *The Job – Interviews with William Burroughs*, ed. Daniel Odier [4th edition; London & New York: Penguin, 2008] 55.)
13 Burroughs continues: "I would go so far with any given experiment and then come back; that is, I am coming back now to write purely conventional straightforward narrative. But applying what I have learned from the cut-up and the other techniques to the problem of conventional writing. It's simply if you go too far in one direction, you can never get back, and you're out there in complete isolation." ("From Eden to Watergate," *The Job*, 55).
14 "If your objective is to have people read your books, then there has to be at least a line of narrative they can follow. Take the case of Joyce who spent 20 or 30 years writing *Finnegans Wake*, a book no one can really read. I can't let that happen. For one thing, I have to make a living." ("Terrorism, Utopia and Fiction," ed. Gérard-Georges Lemaire, *Burroughs Live*, 420).
15 "No Future," ed. Alan Bold, *Burroughs Live*, 582.

od's development: "In the Beat Hotel, 9 rue Gît-le-Coeur (Heart's-Ease Street, or Street Where The Heart Lies), an event occurred in 1959 which was destined to set the tone of a movement not only in writing but also in the visual arts, coinciding with the first psychedelic drug experiences as a life-style for a new generation." The first cut-ups appeared when "Brion Gysin took several articles from *The Paris Herald Tribune, The London Observer, The London Daily Mail* and *Life Magazine* advertisements, sliced them down the middle and re-assorted them in collage form, about forty years after Tristan Tzara had picked out single words, also at random, snipped from newspapers, to form Dadaist poems."[16] As Gysin himself has done on numerous occasions, Norse conceives of the method as a mode of literary "catching-up" with other art forms; moreover, he stresses the importance of "exceptions" like Joyce for the hope and belief shared by the experimentalist circle around Burroughs that "Victorian standards" can be done away with.[17]

Gysin himself more explicitly tied his cut-up method with the Dada and surrealist avant-garde: "The cut up method brings to writers the collage which has been used by painters for fifty years. And used by the moving and still camera. . . You cannot will spontaneity. But you can introduce the unpredictable spontaneous factor with a pair of scissors. . ."[18] In a 1964 BBC broadcast, Burroughs described the cut-up as a process in which "pages of text are cut and rearranged to form new combinations of word and image, that is the page is actually cut with scissors, usually into four sections, and the order rearranged." To this, Burroughs added his own contribution, a second step of sorts, what he referred to as the "fold-in":

> A page of text, my own or someone else's, is folded down the middle and placed on another page, the composite text is then read across, half one text and half the other. The fold-in method extends to writing the flashback used in films, enabling the writer to move backwards and forwards on the time track by repetition and rearrangements of musical themes . . . […] What I would like to emphasize is that this is a technique […] and in any case it is a matter of experimentation, not argument.[19]

As critic Lydenberg points out, one should think of the Gysin-Burroughs relation less as one of influence than confluence of independent energies: Burroughs did not encounter Gysin's *Minutes To Go* until 1959, by which time "he had already served an unconscious cut-up apprenticeship in editing and rearranging the voluminous material that finally yielded the published version of *Naked Lunch*." He has also noted how the modernist heritage present in Eliot's phrase, "Who is the third who walks always beside you?," was adopted by Burroughs and Gysin "to designate the collaborative consciousness which could be generated by the cut-up method: a third mind free of the restrictions of context, culture, and subjectivity."[20]

Naked Lunch can be read as a novelisation of the documentary material presented in *Junkie*, a series of sketches arranged in random order. Tanner describes the text's structure as having "no narrative continuity, and no sustained point of view; the separate episodes are not interrelated, they coexist in a particular field of force brought together by the mind of Burroughs which then abandons them."[21] For all its disorienting effect, the texture consists of straightforward narrative, surrealist collage, and random ordering of sections to intensify actuality. The prose is a tissue of hospital, political and other jingoistic jargons fused, as Mottram has put it, into "the spluttering language of nationalism and diplomatic hypocrisy, a mixture which finally blows the state control panel."[22] It is easy enough to see how Burroughs' aesthetic method is in full service to the overriding ideology of his writing. As long as the cure for the human historical urge to addiction is anarchist self-regulation, an act of individuality, then in writing, it can begin with cut-up methods developed explicitly as a revolutionary gesture against mass togetherness and the deterioration of language. The point is to create texts whose reading will replicate the writing process, texts which will lend themselves to cutting up by means of reading, so that every reading is an act of asserting every reader's individuality. Cut-ups are

16 Harold Norse, *The Beat Hotel* (San Diego: Atticus Press, 1983) 65.
17 "Painters and composers were 50 years ahead of writers. The blank canvass and silence have already preceded the blank page. The English language, in the face of increasing absurdity, persisted in its Victorian standards, with exceptions such as James Joyce and Gertrude Stein, adhering to the false pretense that, somehow, in the face of all evidence to the contrary, life still made sense, in spite of alienation and state-controlled double-talk on both sides of the Iron Curtain" (Norse, *The Beat Hotel*, 68).
18 Eric Mottram, *William Burroughs – The Algebra of Need* (London: Marion Boyars Ltd, 1977) 37.
19 Qtd. in Mottram, *The Algebra of Need*, 39.
20 Lyndenberg, *Word Cultures*, 44-5.
21 Tanner, *City of Words*, 111.
22 Mottram, *Wiliam Burroughs*, 52.

ultimately meant to serve as new connections between extant images and texts, thus resisting the control exerted by the previously extant ones. As Burroughs stated himself,

> you can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point . . . *Naked Lunch* is a blue-print, a How-To Book. . . How-To extend levels of experience by opening the door at the end of a long hall . . . Doors that only open in Silence . . . *Naked Lunch* demands Silence from The Reader. Otherwise he is taking his own pulse . . .[23]

It is this exploration of randomness and (self-)destruction, as well as anarchic de-hierarchisation of text-value, that marks off, in Tanner's perceptive estimation, Burroughs' cut-up texts as markedly non-modernist.[24] Still, as is so often the case with modernist writing, the perceived difficulty of Burroughs' texts stems from the method and style rather than from theme or content.[25] *The Soft Machine*[26] presents Burroughs' first attempt to incorporate the technique in a full-length narrative, constructing a literary mythology through which to show the destruction of love and individuality by power and corrupt sexual energy. Also for the first time, Burroughs ventures into the sci-fi genre and in addition to Gysin's cut-up method, Burroughs also uses a fragmentation of continuous images. The title indicates the innate biological device which allows the virus entry into the human body, and a thematic unity connecting the disparate scenes is need and its transmutations: the need for sex, drugs, and power to dominate and/or kill. Cut-ups usually follow after the use of drugs, or are produced as effects of the confusion of drug withdrawal, or the more natural blurred and jumbled workings of memory, or the utmost natural perception of motion. Lyndenberg records Burroughs arguing that "any film of a street scene, any moving film of *anything* is a cut-up."[27]

The Ticket that Exploded was originally published in 1962, but its final version appeared only in 1967, during which five years Burroughs enhanced the cut-up method to include experiments with tapes and film. As a consequence of these advances, the cut-up effects here seem more controlled and less hallucinatory or psychedelic. Burroughs continues his exploration of the interface between the inhuman machine and the vulnerable human. The focus, here, is on how the victims of vampirism themselves become addicts in a chain or organised predatory lust and loss of identity. The characters of Burroughs' mythology reappear as science fiction mutants and beings from other planets than the Earth. As his stock character, inspector Lee, explains:

> The basic nova technique is very simple: Always create as many insoluble conflicts as possible and always aggravate existing conflicts—This is done by dumping on the same planet life forms with incompatible conditions of existence—Their conditions of life are basically incompatible in present time form and it is precisely the work of the mob to see that they remain in present time form, to create and aggravate the conflicts that lead to the explosion of a planet, that is to nova— (*TTE*, 54-5)

One word-effect explored in particular in *The Ticket that Exploded* is the effect of simultaneity, or the "*déjà vu* phenomenon," as Burroughs called it, which can be "produced to order" by folding page one into page one hundred and then inserting the composite in the text as page ten.[28] The ticket is to be exploded and reassembled – the total resistance called for in Burroughs' text demands more violent methods than artistic alienation or estrangement: the word must be not only released from the predetermined patterns set by habit and routine, but more thoroughly obliterated. However, insists Burroughs—implying the limits of his indebtedness to e.g. Joyce's radical aesthetics—this obliteration

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23 Qtd. in Mottram, *Algebra of Need*, 64.

24 Not only does Burroughs "cut up anything and everything – great writing and junk writing," cutting up and folding in "Shakespeare, Conrad, Rimbaud, Eliot, Joyce, Paul Bowles and many others," but he goes further than Eliot or Pound and rather than juxtapose fragments, he "scrambles" them – "his predecessors are really Tristan Tzara and the Surrealists, whose play with arbitrary sequences of words was more clearly anarchic" (Tanner, *City of Words*, 127).

25 Timothy Murphy has explicitly connected Burroughs' and Joyce's innovations when he observed: "Once its fundamental strategies are understood, the *Nova* trilogy is no more difficult to read than Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* or Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, two "unreadable" works which have experienced popular and scholarly revivals of interest in recent years. Like the pun that serves as the basis of *Finnegans Wake*, the basic cut-up technique is very simple: one takes at least one printed text, physically cuts it up into fragments, and reassembles the fragments in random order" (Murphy, *Wising Up the Marks*, 104).

26 Published in 1961 in Paris by Olympia Press, and in a revised form in 1966 in the U.S. (with Grove Press) and in 1968 in England (at Calder and Boyars).

27 Lyndenberg, *Word Cultures*, 61.

28 Thus, Robin Lyndenberg observes, "even a first reading of *The Ticket that Exploded* will have the haunting quality of a rereading, of a return to mysteriously familiar terrain," a quality akin to the reading experience of Joyce's *Wake*: "An initial reading of this fragmented narrative is disorienting, frustrating, almost physically unpleasant. Each chapter promises a particular focus, but it is rarely maintained" (Lyndeberg, *Word Cultures,* 72-3).

must not surpass the level of conventional communication and communicability: “I don’t believe in being obscure; I feel that a writer should be comprehensible to any intelligent reader.”[29]

Burroughs’ conservatism vis-à-vis Joyce is best manifest in *Nova Express* (1964, 1966), the last part of his cut-up series. It opens with a “Foreward [sic] Note,” stating that “an extension of Brion Gysin’s cut-up method which I call the fold-in method has been used in this book which is consequently a composite of many writers living and dead” (*NE*, 7). The open didacticism of *Nova Express*, springing from Burroughs’ understanding of his earlier work and its rejection at the hands of the public, marks it off as different from the preceding cut-ups. In fact, the incipit section, entitled “Last Words,” takes the form of a direct address to the reader from Burroughs’ alter ego, here signed as “Inspector J. Lee, Nova Police.” Its reader apostrophe runs as follows:

> What scared you all into time? Into body? Into shit? I will tell you: “*the word*.” Alien Word “*the*.” “*The*” *word* of Alien Enemy imprisons “*thee*” in Time. In Body. In Shit. Prisoner, come out. The great skies are open. I Hassan i Sabbah *rub out the word forever*. If you I cancel all your words forever. And the words of Hassan i Sabbah as also cancel. Cross all your skies see the silent writing of Brion Gysin Hassan i Sabbah: drew September 17, 1899 over New York. (*NE,* 10)

The ultimate purpose of *Nova Express*, Lee reveals, is

> to expose and arrest Nova Criminals. In *Naked Lunch, The Soft Machine* and *Nova Express* I show who they are and what they are doing and what they will do if they are not arrested. Minutes to go. Souls rotten from their orgasm drugs, flesh sundering from their nova ovens, prisoners of the earth to *come out*. With your help we can occupy The Reality Studio and retake their universe of Fear Death and Monopoly—” (*NE,* 12)

Fold-ins from earlier works appear. For example, here is a passage already quoted from *The Ticket*:

> The basic nova mechanism is very simple: Always create as many insoluble conflicts as possible and always aggravate existing conflicts – This is done by dumping life forms with incompatible conditions of existence on the same planet – There is of course nothing “wrong” about any given life form since “wrong” only has reference to conflicts with other life forms – The point is these forms should not be on the same planet (*NE*, 50)

Clearly, Burroughs’ repetition is one with a difference: while previously presenting a simple description of a status quo, now he engages in ethical discourse, pointing out the “wrong” and suggesting a remedy. Cut-up passages, such as the one below, seem still more structured and compact, usually revolving around a series of associations and image parallelisms:

> The grey smoke drifted the grey that stops shift cut tangle they breathe medi-
> um the word cut shift patterns words cut the insecttangle cut shift
> that coats word cut breath silence shift
> abdominal cut tangle stop word holes. (*NE,* 57)

Burroughs’ relationship to his writing is highly ambivalent throughout *Nova Express*, and what takes centre stage is the crucial ambiguity of Burroughs’ “message,” of waging a war on the word by means of the word, where the same medium by which the writer transcends his own solitude and solipsism is in danger of becoming a need, an addiction, which restricts his freedom. The problem, for Burroughs, is how to make contact and communication work without giving up the freedom from restraint achieved by the cut-up and fold-in methods – and his solution is an increase in the incorporation of found texts into his narratives: there are quotations from *Newsweek*, e.g. on the theory of “supernova or exploding star,” there is an extended citation from Kafka’s *Trial*, but Burroughs goes further. In the “Smorbrot” section, he explores the interdependence and intersection between footnote and main text – his footnotes deal, in a quasi-scholarly discourse, with the theories and experiments of Wilhelm Reich, crucial for Burroughs’ own purposes. Burroughs’ own suggested antidote for the word-addiction is, simply and not so simply, silence:

> So leave the recorders running and get your heavy metal ass in a space ship – Did it – Nothing there now but the recordings – Shut the whole thing off – *Silence* – When you answer the machine you provide it with more recordings to be played back to your “enemies” keep the whole nova machine running – The Chinese character for “enemy” means to be similar to or to answer – Don’t answer the machine – Shut it off (*NE,* 155)

The final paragraph from “The Dead” becomes palpably present in the final paragraph of *Nova Express* itself:

> The great wind revolving turrets towers palaces – Insubstantial sound and image flakes fall – Through all the streets time for him to forbear – Blest be he on walls and windows people and sky – On every part of your dust falling softly – falling in the

29 Qtd. in Mottram, *Algebra of Need*, 98.

> dark mutinous "No more" [...] Melted into air – You are yourself "Mr. Bradly Mr. Martin –" all the living and the dead – You are yourself – There be – (*NE*, 156)

With the hindsight knowledge of this passage, one might be tempted to trace the motif of "flakes falling" throughout the rest of *Nova Express* and to identify it as Burroughs' cut-ups of Joyce, as e.g. here:

> Now hazard flakes fall – A huge wave rolled treatment "pay back the red you stole" [...] Dreams are made of might be just what I am look: Prerecorded warning in a woman's voice – Scio is pulling a figure out of logos – A huge wave bowled a married couple off what you could have [...] Hurry up please its accounts – Empty thing police they fading out – Dusk through narrow streets, toilet paper, and there is no light in the window – April wind revolving illness of dead sun – Woman with red hair is a handful of dust (*NE,* 143)

But the point, precisely, is that the sources of cut-ups should be by and large unidentifiable unless intended otherwise, only thus will the addiction of authorship as proprietorship over words be overcome. Norse quotes Gysin to the effect that "words belong to everybody," that "nobody owns words," that "there's nothing sacred about words," and so "let's break the word habit."[30] As Lyndenberg has noted, for Burroughs the verb "to write" carries "the connotation it has in junky's jargon—to write a prescription for drugs," and so when Burroughs announces that "his writing arm is paralyzed this is no failure of creativity or imagination but rather a reflection of the author's courage to kick the habit, the refusal to feed the monkey that straddles his back and that of his reader."[31] It is despite his deep distrust of language that Burroughs continued to write, publish, and even perform his work.

The 1980s trilogy *Cities of the Red Night*, *The Place of Dead Roads*, and *The Western Lands* (1981-87) continues the destructive task of disassembling and reassembling the word (on the syntactical level, at least), but it also offers affirmative ways to reorganise society in order to avoid the powerful dialectics of social and linguistic control. The last part of the trilogy, *The Western Lands*, has been read as Burroughs' elegy for Gysin (to whose memory it is dedicated) and also his farewell to the writer's medium: "He had reached the end of words, the end of what can be done with words. And then?" (*WL*, 258) Here, Burroughs seems to suggest that the labour of eliminating language, capital, and the human subject must transpose the writer's medium into different realms. Accordingly, Burroughs goes on to extend his literary project into film and recording. However, as has already been argued, Burroughs now forsakes his project of disassembling words, and equally conservative is his treatment of quotation. There is the trademark self-repetition with a difference, e.g. when he sets the tone of the final section of the novel, "The Wishing Machine," with a paraphrase of the opening sequence:

> The old writer lived in a boxcar by the river. This was fill land that had once been a dump heap, but it was not used anymore: five acres along the river which he had inherited from his father, who had been a wrecker and scrap metal dealer. (*WL*, 1)

> The old writer lived in a converted boxcar in a junk heap on the river. The junk heap was owned by a wrecking company, and he was the caretaker. Commander of a junk heap. Sometimes he sported a yachting cap. The writer didn't write anymore. Blocked. It happens. (*WL*, 246)

However, Burroughs' favourite Joyce passage appears no longer as scrambled part of a complexly woven texture, but as conventionally as can be: "Snow was coming down in great soft flakes, falling like the descent of their last end on all the living and the dead, the writer remembered" (*WL*, 246-7). Burroughs' renunciation of his cut-up method entails acceptance of the favourite Joycean passage in its intact form into his writing. And, as Ward records, it was ultimately less the cut-up method than his personal status that proved Burroughs' most lasting influence. While "most writers of fiction have found the cut-ups [...] hard going," their influence on poets "has been immense."[32] As J.G. Ballard put it in his obituary notice for *The Guardian* from 4 August 1997, "now that William Burroughs has gone, all we are left with are the career novelists."[33]

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30 Norse, *Beat Hotel*, 62.
31 Lyndenberg, *Word Culture*, 115.
32 Ward, "The Mutations of William Burroughs," 120.
33 Although the post-1970 period was not as innovative or radical as "that in which early novels like *Naked Lunch* were written," it was still the period in which "they passed beyond their initial shock-value and became influential." Among "the novelists who have pushed further into territories first explored by Burroughs," Ward mentions "cyberpunk maestro William Gibson, Angela Carter, Kathy Acker, Iain Sinclair, Irvine Welsh and Alan Warner" (Ward, "The Mutations of William Burroughs," 122).

"ANYONE SEEKING JOYCE FINDS JOYCE": WILLIAM GADDIS

It is a curious coincidence that a version of William Gaddis' (1922-1998) first novel, *The Recognitions*, was begun in Mexico City in 1947, only a few years before another Harvard English literature ex-student, William Burroughs, was to reside there and launch his very different writerly career. This version was temporarily abandoned as Gaddis continued on his journeys across Panama, the Caribbean, North Africa, and back and forth between Madrid and Paris, and finished after his return to New York in 1953.[34]

Curiously enough, the history the critical reception of Gaddis' work had until recently (1990s) taken place in the shadow of one particularly detailed—and, Gaddis would insist, particularly misleading—comparative reading of *The Recognitions* alongside Joyce's work. Bernard Benstock's "On William Gaddis: In Recognition of James Joyce" was a pioneering essay in two respects: as the first critical piece on Gaddis' novel (to appear ten years after its publication!) and as an early attempt to chart Joyce's legacy for subsequent writers from an established Joyce scholar. Benstock traces the development of the currently fashionable expressive tendency of "metafiction"—understood rather simply as "the pattern containing the character who is the author creating the novel"—to Gide's *Counterfeiters* whose character Edouard is writing a work of the same name and to Joyce's *Wake*. Benstock notes: "It is essentially the basic theme of "the counterfeit" in contemporary life which most impresses us in Gaddis' debt to both Gide's book and the Joyce canon, particularly *Finnegans Wake*."[35]

Benstock's examination of the Joyce/Gaddis intertext emerges here as one based on loosely conceived conceptual and thematic affinities rather than on empirical textual evidence. Or, rather, some highly nebulous and tangential textual evidence from within Gaddis' text is used to make very bold claims as regards direct influence.[36] The parallels between *The Recognitions* and *A Portrait* listed by Benstock are numerous, and it is on their basis that Benstock begins to draw parallels with Joyce's novelistic project of similar magnitude, *Ulysses*, noting how Wyatt's "wanderings, gropings and demon-driven fantasies relate essentially to the all-important search for the transsubstantial father which underlies *Ulysses*," even if Gaddis' approach here is "more parody than parallel." Benstock catalogues possible references to *Ulysses*, from the more obvious—if still rather ambiguous—such as Wyatt's description of his Spanish sojourn: "In this country, without ever leaving Spain, a whole Odyssey within its boundaries, a whole Odyssey without Ulysses" (*TR*, 816) to the most obscure ones, such as the motif of Molly Bloom's habit of drying her handkerchiefs over a mirror, echoed in one of the characters' similar custom. Finally, Benstock draws attention to a mention of the Viconian theory of the origin of religion and civilisation (*TR*, 417), suggesting its use toward a formulation of "a definitive theory of imitation and conscious borrowing, even though such a theory is never spelled out."[37] There are, Benstock concedes, significant differences between Gaddis' novel and Joyce's writings: except for one single scene (*TR*, 391-5), Gaddis "generally avoids using the interior monologue so often associated with Joyce," yet the speculative reasons against its use are traced back to Joyce with whom "such a device as the interior monologue may have run its course." Despite these differences, Benstock conclusion emphasises Gaddis' indebtedness to Joyce, and the

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34 The (essentially unparaphrasable) plot of the novel centres around Wyatt Gwyon, the aspiring painter who forsakes the religious vocation of his father in favour the pursuit of his visual art, however, instead of becoming an original artist, he turns into a forger of old masters. The figure of Wyatt looms over the intertwining stories of four other characters: Basil Valentine, a spoiled priest become an art critic who is engaged in forgery schemes with Wyatt, while aspiring to protect the world's rare and beautiful things from the vulgar masses; Esme, Wyatt's model and mistress, who is a schizophrenic, heroin-addicted poetess; Otto, a young playwright who parodies his hero, Wyatt; and Stanley, a simple, intensely devout Catholic placed, in seriously comic touch, somewhere between the tortured Wyatt and the ridiculous Otto. The plot, essentially, concerns an escape from, and gradual coming to terms with and acceptance of, one's guilt, whether personal/criminal or artistic/aesthetic – Wyatt's attempted killing of his accomplice as well as renunciation of his fraudulent art. Gaddis' aesthetics, in a loosely Joycean fashion, is one of progressive knotting together and connecting – eventually each of the characters encounters or unknowingly crosses paths with most of the others, and chance and necessity seem interchangeable notions. Civilization, for Gaddis (as for Joyce), is composed of trivia, and the ordinary is rendered mysterious by juxtaposition of the triviality of with the great insights and extraordinary events from the past. The ultimate purpose of these is that all the coincidences and resemblances can result in recognitions, a word repeated endlessly, with every possible denotation and connotation, along with variants.

35 Bernard Benstock, "On William Gaddis – in Recognition of James Joyce," *Wisconsin Studies in Comparative Literature* 6.2 (Summer 1965): 177.

36 For instance, when dealing with Mr. Sinisterra's apostrophy of a dead artist as "a real craftsman, like Johnny, or Jim the Penman" (*TR*, 519), Benstock at first concedes that "it is the fictional character, the facsimile, that Gaddis uses," but then goes on to state that "it is to Joyce that the real allusion refers," a statement for which no further evidence is adduced.

37 Benstock, "On William Gaddis," 182-3.

consequent retrospective, rather than prospective, quality of his novel: although crediting Gaddis with "having created a rare and unusual book," it nonetheless remains one which "still pays respectful homage to James Joyce."[38]

Benstock's article has since become the laughing stock of Gaddis criticism and Gaddis himself. Still, so convincing was Benstock's Joycean reading and so pervasive the critical impression of a Joycean Gaddis that ten years after, in a letter to Grace Eckley dated 3 June 1975, Gaddis wrote desperately and exasperatedly:

> I appreciate your interest in *The Recognitions* & have to tell you I've reached the end of the line on questions about what I did or didn't read of Joyce's 30 years ago. All I read of *Ulysses* was Molly Bloom at the end which was being circulated for salacious rather than literary merits; No I did not read *Finnegans Wake* though I think a phrase about "psychoanaloosing" one's self from it is in *The Recognitions*; Yes I read some of *Dubliners* but don't recall how many & remember only a story called "Counterparts"; Yes I read a play called *Exiles* which at the time I found highly unsuccessful; Yes I believe I read *A Portrait* but also think I may not have finished it; No I did not read commentary on Joyce's work & absorb details without reading the original. I also read, & believe with a good deal more absorption, Eliot, Dostoevski, Forster, Rolfe, Waugh, why bother to go on, anyone seeking Joyce finds Joyce even if both Joyce & the victim found the item in Shakespeare, read right past whole lines lifted bodily from Eliot & c, all of which will probably go on so long as Joyce remains an academic cottage industry.[39]

However, the fact remains that Gaddis was a Harvard drop-out in English literature and his erudition on even the most abstruse subjects (such as alchemy or the Kabala) has become the stuff of many critical legends, and that, however sweeping and perhaps inaccurate and ultimately irrelevant Benstock's Joycean parallels, his was a pioneering piece breaking the silence and neglect surrounding Gaddis' work at the time. Despite Gaddis' insistence to the contrary, Moore's guide to *The Recognitions* discovers a few more parallels with *Ulysses*, and drawing on the evidence from an even earlier Gaddis aficionado, Jack Green, Moore also sets straight Gaddis' pronouncements about never having read Joyce.[40]

Actually, only with the publication of his second novel, *J R*—twenty years after his first book—did the critical public begin to take notice of Gaddis.[41] The surge in critical interest prodded by Gaddis' second novel *J R* (1975) and the three novels that followed, did yield occasional applications of Benstock's comparative reading to other of Gaddis' novels. In *J R* the long meandering sentences, so typical of *The Recognitions*, are no more – in fact, all the usual narrative scaffolding is gone. Gaddis' self-elimination from the picture is consummated: there is virtually no narrator, no one to indicate the saying and the doing of the characters. Narrating the story of the eponymous 11-year-old boy who obscures his identity through payphone calls and postal money orders in order to parlay penny stockholdings into a fortune on paper, the novel broadly satirises what Gaddis called, in a rare 1987 interview for the *Paris Review*, "the American dream turned inside out."[42] The novel's form is almost entirely conversational or dialogical, sometimes with little indication—other than conversational context—of which character is speaking – a narrative conceit which Gaddis, in the same interview, tied to the purpose of rendering the reader a collaborator in the process of creating the characters. Despite the fragmentary and discontinuous narration, the text appears a continuous flow with no chapter or section breaks, transitions between scenes occurring through shifts in focalisation reminiscent of the panning or tracking shot in cinema. The disorientation effect is further enhanced by Gaddis' substitution of quotation marks with em-dashes as signposts for direct speech. Characters constantly interrupt each other or themselves or are besieged by relentless distractions, speaking in sentences that mutilate grammar and syntax, and are full of clichés, euphemisms, insults, and mangled fragments of high and popular culture. Language in the service of money, education, and art becomes garbage. *J R* is a compost heap of fragmented dialogues that are really monologues. These speeches are

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38 Benstock, "On William Gaddis," 188-9.

39 Qtd. in Stephen Moore, *William Gaddis* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1989) 7.

40 "He notes how Gaddis went on to specify his 1975 statements by claiming never to have read *Ulysses* apart from the "Penelope" episode, and even this comes to be challenged when tracing the apostrophe of the sea as "the mother, last lover" (*TR*, 845) to *Ulysses* – here, Moore recalls Gaddis' surprising avowal to Green of having "indeed read the first forty pages of Joyce's *Ulysses*" and so toys with the possibility that "he may have remembered Buck Mulligan's query in the first chapter on Algy and grey sweet mother" (Moore, *A Reader's Guide,* 275).

41 Reasons for this "invisibility" have been aptly summarised in John Aldridge's review of *J R*: "As is usually the case with abrasively original work, there had to be a certain passage of time before an audience could begin to be educated to accept *The Recognitions*. […] even the sophisticated reading public of the mid-Fifties was not yet accustomed to the kind of fiction it represented. Curiously enough, even though the most radical experimentation had by then been made respectable by the great modernist masters, there was still a resistance to it when attempted by living novelists" (John Aldridge, "The Ongoing Situation [A Review of *JR*]," *Saturday Review* [4 October 1975]: 27).

42 William Gaddis, "The Art of Fiction," *The Paris Review Interviews II* (London: Picador, 2007) 287.

verbal versions of the many kinds of pollution in American civilization - *J R* is "what America's all about, waste disposal and all" (*J R*, 27). Entropy is omnipresent and frequently thematised in its various guises – most markedly, in the form of the "paper empire" built on one single muffled pay-phone transaction through which the child manages to build up a financial empire which turns out no more substantive than the junk bonds that get things rolling. Although not exactly linguistically innovative or materialist, even *J R* has exhibited the use of some Joycean motifs (if not techniques or styles).[43] In the wake of *J R*, which despite its immense length and readerly demands won its author the National Book Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship (1981), a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1982), election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Gaddis' reputation was on the mend.

Following two of Gaddis' less ambitious and complex books, *Agapē Agape* (2002) a posthumously published manuscript found in Gaddis' bequest, is composed of a 96-page stream of prose uninterrupted by paragraph-breaks, which thematically traces the "secret history of the player piano," a history to which Gaddis devoted a substantial part of his life and efforts. At the same time, it is also about an artist who is mindful of his impending death and strives to put his art and his life in some semblance of order. *Agapē Agape* assumes from the very start the semblance of a free-flowing discourse reminiscent of *J R*:

> No but you see I've got to explain all this because I don't, we don't know how much time there is left and I have to work on the, to finish this work of mine while I, why I've brought in this whole pile of books notes pages clippings and God knows what, get it all sorted and organized when I get this property divided up and the business and worries that go with it while they keep me here to be cut up and scraped and stapled and cut up again my damn leg look at it… (*AA,* 1)

That the parallel with Joyce (Gaddis opens his monologue with a "No" just as Joyce opened and closed Molly Bloom's with a "Yes") is not just a critical associative imposition is brought home very early on by a direct reference to Joyce:

> O God, O God, O God, Chi m'a tolto a me stesso that's Michelangelo, that's from my book, Ch'a me fusse più presso O più me potessi that's in my book, who has taken from me that self who could do more, and what is your book about Mister Joyce? It's not about something Madam, it is something and goodbye to that hidden talent, those ghostly fingers hard as petrified wood look at mine. (*AA,* 17-8)

Although pertaining rather to Beckett's famous statement about the *Wake* rather than to Joyce proper, the reference appears in a particularly important context of a quote from Michelangelo, "The self who could do more," a phrase which appears in every one of Gaddis' books and recurs throughout *Agapē Agape*, also forming its haunting conclusion. Gaddis organises his thoughts on the subject of the history of the player piano into a series of imaginary conversations—Walter Benjamin (through his influential essay on the aura vis-à-vis technological reproduction) in dialogue with Johan Huizinga, Nietzsche communing with himself in his final mad days spent mostly improvising on the piano, and the man on the bed—undisguised as anyone else but Gaddis himself—in direct conversation with various characters from fiction: Svengali (from *Trilby*), Hoffmann (from Offenbach's posthumously published *Tales*), or Pózdnyshev (from *The Kreutzer Sonata*).[44] However, it would be simple-minded of Gaddis to suggest a simple binary opposition between art and technology; instead of opposing an artistic individualism against an impersonal, collectivist technology, Gaddis lays bare their common historical roots as creative collaborations. From Vaucanson's mechanical loom for figured silks to Jacquard to the drum roll on the player piano to the punched data card in the first computers: in part, the digital age owes its existence to the arts. What they also share is a creation of "detachable selves." Just as technology produces the McLuhanesque extensions of man, then so does fictional creation of voices, subjectivities, personae and characters give rise to the "self who can do more":

> Finally yes that, where it's all been going from the start, that cry from Michelangelo, O Dio, o Dio, o Dio, Chi m'a tolto a me stesso Ch'a me fusse più presso O più di me potessi, che poss'io? O Dio, o Dio, who has taken the one closest to me who

43 Joyce scholar Tim Conley has so drawn parallels between *J R* and *A Portrait* beyond their generic affiliation as *Bildungsromans*. There are similarities in their conclusions, where "both monologues exude raw, even rapturous ambition at the same time that they register the isolation of the speaker: no one but the reader is 'listening' to J R, no other character has access to Stephen's diary." But even though "both want to write a book," functioning as would-be artists, there are ultimately more differences than similarities: "Stephen craves independence, flight, and the power to create; J R wants none of these things" (Tim Conley, "This Little Prodigy Went to Market: The Education of *J R*," *William Gaddis, "The Last of Something": Critical Essays*, eds. Crystal Alberts, Christopher Leise & Birger Vanwesenbeeck [London: McFarland & Co., 2010] 127).

44 In the neat formulation of Joseph Tabbi's "Afterword" to the novel, Gaddis' last work details how "*Agapē*—the community of brotherly love celebrated by early Christian writers—has come apart (agape) through mechanization and a technological democracy that reduces art to the level of light entertainment, a spectacle for the gaze of the masses" (*AA*, 108).

> could do more than no, no it's not that pedestrian it's fifteenth, sixteenth century Italian nearer poetry […] O Dio, o Dio, odious, repugnant, from odium, hatred, odisse to hate God the bedmaker […] That was youth with its reckless exuberance when all things were possible pursued by Age where we are now, looking back at what we destroyed, what we tore away from that self who could do more, and its work that's become my enemy because that's what I can tell you about, that Youth who could do anything. (*AA,* 95-6)

As Tabbi observes, "everything depends on the language, on the living author's struggle with a past artist's words and on the future reader's ability to hold in mind two opposed meanings—*O Dio* and odium, repugnance" (*AA,* 109). And so, against all forgeries, simulations, and wastes of the world, Gaddis' oeuvre, marked by a peremptory refusal of the Joyce example, ends with a text at once most personal and consoling as well as most modernist in technique and its cultural "message."

"THAT STYLE WHICH DELIBERATELY EXHAUSTS ITS POSSIBILITIES": JOHN BARTH

Few essays have left a larger impact upon the literary thought and theory of the U.S. 1960s and 1970s, and few have continued to cause more controversy, than John Barth's (*1930) essays, "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967) and "The Literature of Replenishment" (1980). In a 1984 preface to the essay in his *Friday Book*, Barth reminisces over the particular historical situation originary for the inception of his essay, as well as over the perceived misunderstanding it has met with ever since.[45]

Barth opens his essay by pitting, against "a good many current novelists write turn-of-the-century-type novels, only in more or less mid-twentieth-century language and about contemporary people and topics" the more interesting group of the "excellent writers who are also technically contemporary: Joyce and Kafka, for instance, in their time, and in ours, Samuel Beckett and Jorge Luis Borges" (*FB*, 66). Borges' example serves Barth to illustrate "the difference between a technically old-fashioned artist, a technically up-to-date non-artist, and a technically up-to-date artist." In the first category are located all those novelists who write "not as if the twentieth century didn't exist, but as if the great writers of the last sixty years or so hadn't existed." Given that at the time of the writing, the twentieth century is "more than two-thirds done," it is for Barth "dismaying to see so many of our writers following Dostoevsky or Tolstoy or Balzac, when the question seems to me to be how to succeed not even Joyce and Kafka, but those who *succeeded* Joyce and Kafka and are now in the evenings of their own careers." In the third category—and clearly the category of Barth's preference—belong "the few people whose artistic thinking is as *au courant* as any French New Novelist's, but who manage nonetheless to speak eloquently and memorably to our human hearts and conditions, as the great artists have always done" (*FB*, 67-8). One of the clearest signs that Barth's essay is no "death-of-the-novel" elegy is its positive treatment of even as extreme as experimentation as Joyce's *Wake* – what is "modern" about Beckett or Borges is that "in an age of ultimacies and 'final solutions,'" their work in separate ways "reflects and deals with ultimacy, both technically and thematically, as for example *Finnegans Wake* does in its different manner." A "contamination of reality by dream," as he himself calls it, is found to be one of Borges' "pet themes," and again Barth resorts to Joyce as his example when noting that "like many of the best such devices," this theme "turns the artist's mode or form into a metaphor for his concerns, as does the diary-ending of *A Portrait* or the cyclical construction of *Finnegans Wake*." Borges' work, ultimately, illustrates Barth's subject: the question of "how an artist may paradoxically turn the felt ultimacies of our time into material and means for his work" – *paradoxically* because "by doing so he transcends what had appeared to be his refutation." One of Barth's exemplary ultimacies is the feeling that "the novel, if not narrative literature generally, if not the printed word altogether, has by this hour of the world just about shot its bolt" (*FB*, 70-1). Barth's own response to this ultimacy were "*The Sot-Weed Factor* or *Giles Goat-Boy*: novels which imitate the form of the Novel,

45 "The Literature of Exhaustion" arose in mid-sixties, a period leading up to, as Barth recollects, "the American High Sixties: The Vietnam War was in overdrive through most of the period; the U.S. economy was fat and bloody; academic imperialism was as popular as the political kind" In 1967, Barth took a sabbatical from teaching and—after the long novels *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960) and *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966)—a break from long novels in order to write *Lost in the Funhouse*, a text of hybrid genre describable as a *Bildungsroman* narrated in the form of a loose short-story collection. Coinciding with Barth's work on *Lost in the Funhouse* was the writing of the essay, in which, Barth remembers, "I set down my mixed feelings about the avant-gardism of the time," a piece which "has been frequently reprinted and as frequently misread as one more Death of the Novel or Swan-Song of Literature piece" (*FB,* 62-4).

by an author who imitates the role of Author." The sort of fiction that slowly emerges from Barth's account as the preferred species, is what has subsequently come to be referred to as "metafiction," only here Barth conceives of its different nature as one of "engagement in imitation":

> This is the difference between a proper, "naïve" novel and a deliberate imitation of a novel, or a novel imitative of other kinds of documents. The first sort attempts […] to imitate actions more or less directly, and its conventional devices […] have been objected to as obsolete notions, or metaphors for obsolete notions. (*FB*, 72)

What is "exhaustive" about this kind of literature championed by Barth is not some kind of death-of-the-novel eschatology, but, with reference to Borges' definition of the Baroque, as "that style which deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its possibilities and borders upon its own caricature." Borges' image of "the infinite library," then, is the resource to be exhausted, and "the labyrinth" presents a place in which, ideally, "all the possibilities of choice (or direction, in this case) are embodied, and […] must be exhausted before one reaches the heart" (*FB*, 75). The 1980 essay, "Literature of Replenishment," was written as "a companion and corrective" to the 1967 piece. Its most striking difference is its engagement with critical theorisations of so-called postmodernism, a term which Barth, just as so many of his fellow novelists, finds useless and subjects to mockery:

> while some of the writers labeled as postmodernists, myself included, may happen to take the label with some seriousness, a principal activity of postmodernist critics [...], writing in postmodernist journal or speaking at postmodernist symposia, consists in disagreeing about what postmodernism is or ought to be, and thus about who should be admitted to the club—or clubbed into admission. (*FB,* 194)

The term itself is found by Barth "awkward and faintly epigonic", suggestive, "like 'post-impressionism,'" less of "vigorous or even interesting new direction in the old art of storytelling" than of "something anticlimactic, feebly following a very hard act to follow." Barth approaches the modernist/postmodernist relation via a consciously Joycean simile.[46] This inferiority of postmodernism vis-à-vis modernism, in turn, calls for a (re)definition of modernism itself, for the "post-"ness implies that modernism is over and consummated and, as such, estimable. On the one hand, Barth agrees that the "adversary reaction called modernist art," aimed against "the rigidities and other limitations of nineteenth-century bourgeois realism," is one which nowadays has nothing to react against as "these nineteenth-century rigidities are virtually no more." However, Barth adds a peremptory "but":

> BUT I deplore the artistic and critical cast of mind that repudiates the whole modernist enterprise as an aberration and sets to work as if it hadn't happened […] It *did* happen: Freud and Einstein and two world wars and the Russian and sexual revolutions and automobiles and airplanes […] and except as readers there's no going back to Tolstoy and Dickens. (*FB*, 202)

What would a worthy programme for fiction thus conceived look like? Barth claims that its programme should lie in "the synthesis or transcension of these antitheses, which may be summed up as predmodernist and modernist modes of writing" and that the ideal postmodernist should "neither merely repudiate nor merely imitate either his twentieth-century modernist parents or his nineteenth-century premodernist grandparents." The examples he quotes are two quite different works: Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics* (1965) and Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). The "exhaustion" of present-day literature, Barth repeats, is neither one of language nor one of literature, but of "the aesthetic of high modernism: that admirable, not-to-be-repudiated, but essentially completed 'program' of what Hugh Kenner has dubbed 'the Pound era.'" In this context, Barth concludes, the first post-war generation of American writers should be seen as "working out, not of the next-best thing after modernism, but of the *best next* thing: what is gropingly now called postmodernist fiction" and what Barth proposes to call "a literature of replenishment" (*FB*, 206).

How, then, does Barth's own fiction answer this call for replenishment in view of the exhaustion of modernism? To adopt Barth's terms, his earliest output was a reaction against modernism of a distinctly premodernist nature, a return to the well-crafted nineteenth-century plot. After his juvenilia, *Floating Opera* (1956) and *The End of the Road* (1958), both of which nested securely within the then-mainstream of realistic novels with contemporary settings, came

46 "One is reminded," Barth writes, "of the early James Joyce's fascination with the word *gnomon* in its negative geometric sense: the figure that remains when a parallelogram has been removed from a similar but larger parallelogram with which it shares a common corner" (*FB*, 196).

a first decisive break with the contemporaneity of the novelistic setting—which was to influence a few of his novels—as Barth wrote *The Sot-Weed* Factor (1960). As he observed of his early period crowned with *The Sot-Weed Factor*, in an interview with J. D. Bellamy:

> [T]he possibility of constructing a fantastically baroque plot appealed to me most: the idea of turning vigorously against the modernist notion that plot is an anachronistic element in contemporary fiction. I've never found that a congenial notion; it seemed to me that there were ways to be quite contemporary and yet go at the art in a fashion that would allow you to tell complicated stories simply for the aesthetic pleasure of complexity, of complication and unravelment, suspense, and the rest.[47]

Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) uses the structure of the heroic myth as the organizational principle for his picaresque comic novel, producing a book that is as much about literature and literary analysis, and its own status as a literary text as it is about the extra-textual "real." There are two fictitious prefatory quasi-documents in which Barth undermines his own authority: a "Publisher's Disclaimer" by "The Editor-in-Chief," composed of four editors' reports on the novel (two vote against publishing the book, one in favour, and the fourth resigns his position as a result of having read the manuscript) and a "Cover-Letter to the Editors and Publishers," signed "J. B.," in which a struggling academic writer explains how Giles Stoker's book, *The Revised New Syllabus*, was delivered to him by a mysterious young man. The book invites readings at multiple levels, of a dizzying array of topics: from a political allegory of the Cold War and a mystical allegory of spiritual enlightenment to its admonitory foregrounding of the role of computers in society; from its preoccupation with the mythology surrounding contemporary American popular culture to its elaborate and sustained parody of world myths, especially the Bible and medieval saints' lives. Talking to Bellamy, Barth pointed out the subversive element to his treatment of myth as structure. However important the Joycean heritage in this parodic undertaking, Barth was also careful to distance himself from Joyce's treatment of myth:

> Much as one may admire those novels (Updike's *Centaur*, Joyce's *Ulysses*), their authors have hold of the wrong end of the mythopoetic stick. The myths themselves are produced by the collective narrative imagination (or whatever), partly to point down at our daily reality; and so to write about our daily experiences in order to point up to the myths seems to me mythopoetically retrograde. I think it's a more interesting thing to do, if you find yourself preoccupied with mythic archetypes of what have you, to address them directly.[48]

Despite his apparent dismissal of Joyce as an "already-succeeded" writer (a dismissal he seems to have come to regret and revise later on), it is in *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) that the Joyce canon is explicitly drawn upon and referred to.[49] The opening micro-story, "Frame-Tale," consists of the phrase "ONCE UPON A TIME THERE" on the right-hand margin of the recto of one leaf and the phrase "WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN" on the left-hand margin of the verso of the same leaf, the idea being for the top of the leaf to be cut out, twisted, and the ends glued together to form a Möbius strip that would read "Once upon a time there was a story that began once upon a time . . ." *ad infinitum*. In a 1988 foreword to the paperback edition, Barth explicitly ties this circularity to Joyce's *Wake*, describing *Lost in the Funhouse* as

> a book of short stories: a sequence or series rather than a mere assortment [...] strung [...] together on a few echoed and developed themes and [...] circl[ing] back upon itself: not to close a simple circuit like that of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, emblematic of Viconian eternal return, but to make a circuit with a twist to it, like a Möbius strip. (*LF*, vii)

Critics have taken this piece as a figure for many aspects of the book, including its emphasis on paradox, self-reflexive content, and circular structure. The title story provides another unifying metaphor for the book, that of literature as a maze of distorting mirrors and echo chambers, an alternate reality constructed by writers within which readers can find themselves by temporarily—and productively—disorienting themselves. At times, Barth takes the mode of self-conscious fiction to another level, letting his fiction make the case against itself: "Another story about writing a story! Another *regressus in infinitum*! Who doesn't prefer art that at least overtly imitates something other than its own pro-

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47 *The New Fiction*, ed. Bellamy, 7.
48 *The New Fiction*, ed. Bellamy, 13.
49 Critic Michael Hinden has even gone so far as to argue that "in an attempt to exhaust the possibilities of its own tradition, *Lost in the Funhouse* begins as an elaborate parody, revival and refutation of Joyce's masterpiece, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" (Michael Hinden, "*Lost in the Funhouse*: Barth's Use of the Recent Past," *Twentieth Century Literature* [April 1973]: 108).

cesses? That doesn't continually proclaim 'Don't forget I'm an artifice!'?" (*LF*, 112) The protagonist of the title story is Ambrose, a boy who is literally lost in a funhouse but knows that he will become a writer. The third-person narrator, who sometimes seems to be Ambrose writing as an adult, underscores the parallel between constructing fun houses and fiction, parodying Dedalus the labyrinth-builder:

> He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has. Then he wishes he were dead. But he's not. Therefore he will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator--though he would rather be among the lovers for whom funhouses are designed. (*LF*, 94)

He also indulges in the use of such metafictional techniques as reproducing a drawing of Freitag's Triangle (*LF*, 91), a diagram traditionally used to represent the narrative stages of development, climax, and resolution, as he attempts to figure out how to construct his own narrative. Also, at another point, Ambrose recalls that "the Irish author James Joyce, in his unusual novel entitled *Ulysses*, now available in this country, uses the adjectives *snot-green* and *scrotum-tightening* to describe the sea. Visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory" (*LF*, 71). The penultimate story in the collection, "Menelaiad," finds a form to represent both the Mobius strip and the funhouse in its intricate embedding of eight narrative levels, each paralleling and intersecting with the others and reaching a formal climax when the word """"""Love!""""""" (*LF*, 150) is spoken simultaneously by all eight narrators. Two sections, "Autobiography: A Self-Recorded Fiction" and "Title," end in mid-sentence without a comma. The "Glossolalia" section features six rhythmical parodies of the Lord's Prayer, spoken by six different characters. The blasphemous parody technique of the sacred is, of course, an essentially Joycean trait (below are first two lines of each):

> Still breathless from fending Phoebus, suddenly I see all—and all in vain. A horse excreting Greeks will devour my city. [...]
> Dear Procne: your wretched sister--she it is weaves this robe. Regard it well: it hides her painful tale in its pointless patterns. [...]
> I, Crispus, a man of Corinth, yesterday looked on God. Today I rave. What things my eyes have seen can't be scribed or spoken. [...]
> Sweet Sheba, beloved highness: Solomon craves your throne! Beware his craft; he mistranslates my pain into cunning counsel. [...]
> Ed' pélut, kondó nedóde, ímba imbá imbá. Singé erú. Orúmo ímbo ímpe ruté sceléte. [...]
> Ill fortune, constraint and terror, generate guileful art; despair inspires. The laureled clairvoyants tell our doom in riddles. [...] (*LF*, 111-2)

Barth followed his first venture outside the form of the novel with its "twin," *Chimera* (1972), a collection of three related novellas (the tripartite mythical beast had the head of a lion, body of a goat, and tail of a serpent) that continues the rewriting of classical stories through the parodic language and formal devices that Barth used with "Menelaiad" and "Anonymiad" in *Lost in the Funhouse*, but it was in his seven work of fiction, *LETTERS* (1979), that Barth took another step further in going backward. He revisited his six previous books and recast them within the framework of a seventh, in which he fused the epistolary novel form *à la* Richardson with the full-blown metafictional, discursive and narrative play *à la* Joyce. Barth composed his seventh novel out of letters from seven correspondents writing in seven different styles, six of whom were drawn from his first six books: Todd Andrews from *The Floating Opera*; Jacob Horner from *The End of The Road*; Andrew Burlingame Cook VI, a descendant of Ebenezer Cooke of *The Sot-Weed Factor*; Jerome Bray from *Giles Goat-Boy*; Ambrose Mensch, featured in three of the stories (of which, it turns out, he was really the author) in *Lost in the Funhouse*; and John Barth, who made an appearance (albeit unnamed) in the "Dunyazadiad" section of *Chimera* and who has published under his own name the works that were really written by his "characters" – interestingly enough, despite his earlier rejection of modernism, he now refers to his fictional alter ego as the "last-ditch provincial Modernist" (*L*, 767). Each writer continues with his original story more or less where it left off and extends it forward and backward into complex interrelationships with the stories of all the other writers. The novel's self-reflexiveness reaches its climax in a late epistolary exchange between "The Author" and Ambrose Mensch of *The Funhouse*. In his final "Letter to the Author," Ambrose outlines for his friend and writing mentor a projected "old-time epistolary novel by seven fictitious drolls & dreamers" (*L*, 769), an epistolary recapitulation of the novel "The Author" has just completed *by that novel*. In a precise numerological touch, Ambrose's letter consists of seven paragraph clus-

ters, with each cluster summarising the "traditional letter-symbolism" of one of the first seven letters of the alphabet (*L*, 768).

As Werner and others have noted, *LETTERS* brims with references to Joyce, most having to do with the only "new" character, Lady Amherst, a middle-aged British academic, who represents the strong modernist version of the delicate damsel in distress by becoming romantically involved with most of the other characters (and impregnated—in the allegorical union of the experimental and the traditional—by Ambrose Mensch). To name but a few: Lady Amherst's first letter ends with an invocation of the reader to "like Molly Bloom at the close of *her* great soliloquy (whose author was, yes, a friend of your friend's friend—say to us *yes*, to the Litt. D. *yes*, to MSU *yes,* and *yes* Dorchester, *yes* Tidewater, Maryland *yes yes yes*!" (*L*, 11-2); her friendly terms with Joyce are further elaborated as "my rebellious adolescent enthusiasm for the author of *Ulysses* and *Work in Progress*, to sit at whose feet […] I went to Paris" (*L,* 72). On a more abstract level, emphasis is laid on how "James Joyce was terribly interested in cinema, and had a hand in opening the first movie-house in Dublin" (*L*, 40), later rephrased as "blind Joyce's interest in the cinema" (*L,* 354). Letter "S," the only one missing from "the standard typewriter-testing sentence stripped of its redundant characters—THE QUICK BROWN FX JMPD V LAZY G—is referred to as "the one hallowed by […] James Joyce as the first in the scandalous novel he'd just begun serializing in *The Little Review*" (*L,* 418). Sometimes, Joycean allusions have an amusingly parodic effect, e.g. Jacob Horner's "list of cuckolds" parodying the list of Molly's suitors in "Ithaca":

Cuckold	**Wife**	**Lover(s)**	**Remarks**
Mensch, Hector	King, Andrea	a. Erdmann, Willy (?) b. Mensch, Karl (?) c. Mensch, Konrad (?)	issue: Mensch, Peter (?) &/or Ambrose (?)
[...]			
Mensch, Peter	Guilianova, Magda	Mensch, Ambrose	a. May 12, 1947 b. 1967-69 no issue

(*L*, 428)

At one point, even the opening of *Finnegans Wake* is quoted (*L*, 68). Joyce is present in spirit if not in letter, again, by means of blasphemous parody, as in Jerome Bray's last epistle in *LETTERS*, with an incipit containing an incantation to his "Grandama":

> O see, kin, "G. III's" bottled dumps--oily shite!--which he squalidly hauled from his toilet's last gleanings, 5 broads stripped and, bride-starred, screwed their pearly ass right on our rampart! You watched? Heard our growls and their screamings? Now Bea Golden ("G's" heir)'s Honey-Dusted 4-square: grave food for her bright hatch of maggots next year! Our females are all seeded: our enemies are not alive: so, dear Grandama, take me to the hum of your hive! (*L,* 755)

But Werner is right in pointing out that more importantly Joycean than these allusions—witty and clever though they are—is Barth's preoccupation with "generational patterns," as when Jerome Bray, descendant of the Harold Bray of *Giles Goat-Boy*, concludes a letter with an invocation directed to his "Lost Mother, articifrix" (*L* 427). Also of note as a Joycean strategy is how Barth writes his name/initials into the text, an acrostic technique adapted from the *Wake*: Barth reminds us of the continual presence of John Barth by repeating the initials J. B. in the names of Jerome Bray, Jean Blanque (*L,* 110), Joseph Brant (*L,* 135), Jerome Bonaparte (*L,* 240), Joseph Bacri (*L,* 288), and many others.[50] *LETTERS* presents the summa of Barth's development over the previous two decades, and is a work of marvellous, and essentially Joycean, innovation.

With *Sabbatical: A Romance* (1982) Barth circles back toward the realistic mode (and more modest length) of his first two novels. Within this relatively realistic narrative framework, Barth continues his trademark experimentation with point of view and inclusion of metafictional commentary and speculation. *Sabbatical* also marks the beginning of a new cycle of narratives, where e.g. Barth's eleventh book, *Once upon a Time: A Floating Opera* (1994) is another self-retrospective, now revisiting all of the ten books that have gone before it, *The Book of Ten Nights and Night* (2004) uses gadgets similar to those utilised in *Lost in the Funhouse*, and the following work, *Where the Roads Meet* (2005), presents three interlinked novellas, very much in the fashion of *Chimera*. The gist of Barth's contribution to American

50 For more see Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 153.

novelistic experimentation, however, lies fully expressed in the first seven novels written from mid-fifties to late-seventies.

"AS IF THE WORLD HAD BEEN PLANNED THAT WAY": WILLIAM H. GASS

The only writer whose influence as a literary thinker and theorist can be said to surpass Barth's is William Gass (*1924). In fact, so prolific has he been as a theorist that the number of his non-fiction works far outnumbers the five volumes of fiction he has produced since 1966. From *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1971) via *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry* (1976), *The World Within the Word* (1978) and *Finding a Form* (1997) to the recent *A Temple of Texts* (2006) and *Life Sentences* (2012), Gass has produced a significant body of literary theory and criticism important far beyond its coinage of the term metafiction. Although much sparser, Gass' fictional output—especially *Willie Master's Lonesome Wife* (1968) and his opus magnum *The Tunnel* (1995)—has formed a remarkably holistic canon of stylistically innovative fiction indebted, if not explicitly to Joyce, then to his modernist companions and antipodes, Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound.

Gass' philosophical training took place at Cornell, where he took his degree in 1947 and went on to complete a PhD in philosophy in 1954 while teaching at the College of Wooster (Ohio). Despite his life-long academic career in philosophy, it was not without reason that Theodore Ammon, editor of his interviews, called Gass

> a rarity: a philosopher who has never pretended to be a philosopher, nor even to do philosophy. So, on the one hand, perhaps Gass is not a philosopher, at least not by the current standards of the profession, and thus not a second-rate philosopher at all. He is, however, one of the finest essayists, fiction writers, and literary critics in English.[51]

To call Gass' opinion on fiction a "theory" is perhaps to overstep the bounds of his intentions, for he repeatedly insists that he is not interested in trying to write according to a doctrine, stressing that fictions should constitute their own worlds of words and not necessarily attempt to represent some external reality, but rather generate and maximise their own linguistic existence. Joyce references are scattered through many of Gass' essays and interviews – and although he devotes to Joyce none of the sustained attention he pays to Stein, Lowry, Pound, or Proust, Gass does exhibit an idiosyncratic understanding of Joyce's work, which is of a distinctive importance to him. Already the opening piece of his groundbreaking 1971 essay collection, *Fiction and the Figures of Life,* "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction," aims to emphasise the fictionality of the philosophical discourse by juxtaposing it with—and linking it to—the *Wake*:

> So much of philosophy is fiction. Dreams, doubts, fears, ambitions, ecstasies . . . if ph were a stream, they would stock it like fishes. […] And how thin and unlaced the forms of *Finnegans Wake* are beside any of the *Critiques*; how sunlit Joyce's darkness, how few his parallels, how loose his correspondences. With what emotion do we watch the flight of the Alone to the Alone, or discover that "*der Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*." (*FFL*, 3)

The parallel between fiction and philosophy, for Gass, is their obsession with language, their conceptual self-makeup, their creation of worlds: "Worlds? But the worlds of the novelist, I hear you say, do not exist. Indeed. As for that—they exist more often than the philosopher's" (*FFL*, 4). The following statement has been taken as an encapsulation of Gass' aesthetic creed:

> The esthetic aim of any fiction is the creation of a verbal world, or a significant part of such world, alive through every order of its Being. […] The artist's task is therefore twofold. He must show or exhibit his world, and to do this he must actually make something, not merely describe something that might be made. (*FFL*, 3-5)

Hence, any philosophical analysis of fiction should not concern itself with teasing out any over-riding thesis or argument—should not, in other words, focus on the content—but should examine their status *as fictions*, not as "ways of viewing reality," but as "additions to it" (*FFL*, 24-25). Gass coins the term "metafiction" for those literary texts "in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms may be imposed," whose fictionality is foregrounded within themselves (*FFL*, 25). Literature is, first and foremost, language and "stories and the places and the people in them are merely made of words as chairs are made of smoothed sticks and sometimes of cloth or metal tubes" (*FFL,* 27). Gass' point is that their use in literature is different:

51 *Conversations with William H. Gass*, ed. Theodore G. Ammon (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003) vii.

> But the use of language in fiction only mimics its use in life. A sign like GENTS, for instance, tells me where to pee. It conveys information; it produces feelings of glad relief. I use the sign, but I dare not dawdle under it. It might have read MEN or borne a moustache. This kind of sign passes out of consciousness, is extinguished by its use. In literature, however, the sign remains; it sings; and we return to it again and again. (*FFL*, 30-1)

Turning to the novel, Gass accords Joyce's two final works special places in the tradition of the genre as *Ulysses*, for him, is an example of a book of "all trivialities, items which could never find their way into any serious history" (*FFL*, 56), whereas the *Wake* is "a work of learning. It can be penetrated by stages. It can be elucidated by degrees. It is a complex, but familiar, compound. One can hear at any distance the teeth of the dogs as they feed on its limbs" (*FFL*, 87).

In the last two essays of *The World Within the Word* (1978), Gass linked this tendency toward inclusion and recycling to the method of the modernist collage and its undermining of the notion of metadiscourse:

> Half of the novels we encounter are made from diaries and journals, left-over lifetimes and stale aperçus. A theory of fiction looms large in the *Counterfeiters*; every third hop in *Hopscotch* finds your shoe coming down in a pile of it; […] Rilke threw into *Malte* huge chunks of his Paris letters—what the hell—and *Finnegans Wake* contains all its explanations. Let nothing be lost. Waste not even waste. Thus collage is the blessed method: never cut when you can paste. (*WWW*, 282)

Metadiscourse is to be rejected for the sake of an engagement with the text's fictionality – this includes the biographical one. Thus, with due reference to Aquinas, Gass observes of Joyce's final text that "the causes of the composition of *Finnegans Wake* might mount into the millions, matching the misprints, but only its own inner constitution (its radiance, wholeness, clarity) will guarantee its right to be read, to be repeated, praised, and pondered" (*WWW,* 302). In the final essay, "The Ontology of the Sentence, or How to Make a World of Words," Gass revisits, after Bruno and Vico, the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* in a lyrical meditation.[52] Joyce's next step from these considerations, for Gass, was the decision that "these metahistorical transformations were consequently circular," that

> the minimum of one contrary takes its motion from the maximum of another; that we die by living; that corruption is generation, that the Upward and Downward Paths (if we remember our Heraclitus) are the same; that the concave creates the convex, sin the saved, etcetera the series etcetera continues by concluding? (*WWW,* 310-1)

It is Joyce's ultimate achievement, in Gass' opinion, to have conflated his literary method with the structure and purpose of the world as such, the word capturing the world: "The River Liffey swiftly overflows its banks to become Woman (i.e. History, i.e. Time), and shortly the cycle of evaporation, cloud formation, rain and run-off, is serving Vico's system of historical renewal and decay as if the world, and not the *Wake*, had been planned that way" (*WWW,* 312).

Gass' central points about the relationship between fiction, history and reality have perhaps most clearly and systematically been expressed in his interviews. The summative *Conversations with William H. Gass* volume, edited by Theodore G. Ammon, provides insight into Gass' thinking on the subject.[53] Combined with this emphasis on self-sufficiency of the text is Gass' conviction as to the nature of the writer's vocation. In a 1976 interview for *The Iowa Review*, Gass insisted that "as a writer I have only one responsibility, and that's to the language I'm using and to the thing I'm trying to make. Now as a person I have a lot of other responsibilities."[54] Joyce figures in Gass' meditations chiefly as the originator of a profound change in the author-reader relationship.[55] For Gass, words do not principally serve as vehicles transporting the reading subject to some external reality, but rather constitute a reality themselves –

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52 Vico concluded from these arcane observations that not only were the maxima and minima of particular contraries identical, the maxima had to be identical as well. Which is unquestionably the long and the short of it, inasmuch as God, for Bruno, is both the ultimate minimum (since everything is external to Him), and the ultimate maximum (since all things are contained in Him). […] External to Him but contained . . . Is your fancy in fine fettle? God is a bubble of soap then—infinitely thin, infinitely large, infinitely hued. The outer rim of reality—its rubberous skin—is all that's real. (*WWW,* 310)

53 In a *Contemporary Literature* interview, Gass agrees with the view that "Huckleberry Finn is more 'real' than, say, Alexander the Great because he is more fully realized in language," and in an interview with the *Chicago Review*, he develops this by saying that "a sentence can contain more being than a town" where "more being" is rhetorical and designed to set the idea in motion against the opposition, and where the division that is commonly made "between life on the one hand and literature on the other isn't tenable." Ammon comments upon this saying that for Gass, "the war for reality is a war of texts, and some texts turn out more interesting, more important, more influential, and more real than many people and also true than historical events" (*Conversations with William H. Gass*, ed. Ammon, xii).

54 *Conversations with William H. Gass*, ed. Ammon, ix.

55 "The myth is that Joyce tried to indicate that the speed passages in *Finnegans Wake* should be taken by variously spacing the words. In the novel I'm working on now, I want, for instance, a certain word to sound like a bell the whole time the reader is reading certain lines. I want this bong going bong all the bonging time." But ultimately, Gass is not a specific reader-group oriented writer: "I don't think much about the reader. Ways of reading are adversaries—those theoretical ways. As far as writing something is concerned, the reader really doesn't exist" (*Conversations with William H. Gass*, ed. Ammon, 25).

a "world within the word," a version of the Jolasian tenet of Joyce's linguistic autonomy. Analogously, fiction is not merely to be understood as a depiction of experience but as a competitive addition to experience, another new thing that stands in a peculiar relation to the world – and included within this process is also Gass' fiction.

Gass' first novel, *Omensetter's Luck* (1966) and the novella/short story collection *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* (1968), both fairly conventional in terms of their typographic presentation and narrative strategies, Gass produced his most formally experimental work, *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*. Its formal experiment lies in the typographical interaction of various types of fonts that complement or clash with one another – there is a recto page typeset as a mirror version of the preceding verso, there are signs of physical damage to the page, including coffee-cup rings that blot out or encircle the most disparate textual segments. A collage of divergent elements arises in which the narrative is consistently broken up until it vanishes completely, giving rise to an almost abstract textual object. Also, the text is constantly in dialogue with images: photographs, usually of a naked female body in provocative postures, as e.g. on the very first page which has the first letter "S" magnified—in a manner reminiscent of the 1922 *Ulysses* edition—and actually embedded in an image of a woman's hand carrying the letter to her open mouth. In terms of argument, as long as there is one to be extracted, the text is a monologue of one Babs Masters, the wife, a former stripper and whore, which takes place while she is having sex with her lover Phil Gelvin. So explicit is the text's sexual content and so contagious its generic promiscuousness that, as Ammon records, "Gass wanted a condom included with his novel […] so that one could enter the text properly and safely."[56] Although an amusing little gadget, it expresses Gass' deeper concern, in *Willie Master's Lonesome Wife*, with the theme of the textual femininity and, conversely, in conceptualising language and textuality as a form of *jouissance*, sexual pleasure. Molly Bloomian discourse, peppered with Joycean neologisms, is to be found in many places, as for example in a passage in bold type on the second page of the (unpaged) text: "**Suppose, for instance, a stranger were to—oh, say you're laughing uproariously, and that's the occasion for it—spit in your mouth, god forbid. […] You don't go hithering and thithering, do you? moaning, do you? God, my god, my head is leaking, lord, my head is leaking through my mouth**" (*WMLF*, unpaged). The acknowledged predecessor is Flaubert: "I dream like Madame Bovary. Only I don't die during endings. I never die. They fall asleep on me and shrivel up. I write the *finis* for them, close the covers, shelf the book." The physicality of the abject bodily excretions contemplated by Gass' heroine goes well beyond Molly's flow or wind:

> **It's called the wine of love because, when drunk, it signifies acceptance. That's my theory. There's no woman who's not, deep inside her, theoretical. That's why we love, in men, not them, but place and reputation—money, honor, age, effects, and aura—radiation; not them, but their love, we love—our idea and transubstantiating notion of them. That's my theory. Most people are distressed, honestly enough, by their own dirt. Imagine the shit of a lifetime packed in tubs. It would be small comfort knowing it was yours. Still, the dirt of others is even more distressing. Pick another's nose, for instance. Proof enough? Well, that's my theory.** (*WMLF*, unpaged)

Like D.H. Lawrence, Gass also struggles with terminology, in the effort to evade words that are either obscene or clinical; like Joyce, he oftentimes resorts to punning and innuendoes: screwing becomes "oomfy whoozis on the sofa," a skinny girl is called an "udder disappointment" by her beau, to which she comes back retorting "I pricktickily don't like you either" (*WMLF*, unpaged).

Appropriately enough for Gass' more serious concerns, central among Babs' many aliases in the book is that of "language" or "text" Herself, a sinuous, sensuous mistress: "I'm only a string of noises, after all—nothing more really—an arrangement, a column of air moving up and down, a queer growth like a gall on a tree, a mimic of movement in silent readers maybe, a brief beating of wings and cooing of a peaceful kind, an empty swing still warm from young bloomers" (*WMLF*, unpaged). However, this view is not consistent: at times, Gass seems to be stressing the medium, the remove, of language/print/paper, claiming that

> The muddy circle you see just before you and below you represents the ring left on a leaf of the manuscript by my coffee cup. Represents, I say, because, as you must surely realize, this book is many removes from anything I've set pen, hand, or cup

56 *Conversations with William H. Gass*, ed. Ammon, 10.

> to. For example, suppose there were imprinted here, as in letters of love, a pair of lips; could you, by kissing them, let the paper pander between us? (*WMLF*, unpaged)

At other times, Gass insists that the book is a woman – toward the end, the narrative subject observes that "I am that lady language chose to make her playhouse of, and if you do not like me, if you find me dewlapped, scabby, wrinkled, old (and I've admittedly as many pages as my age), well sir, I'm not, like you, a loud rude noise and fart upon the town" – and surely enough, there are thirty sheets of paper within which the thirty-year-old female textual consciousness is constructed. Ultimately, however, the emphasis falls on the distance in linguistic mediation, and in the last coffee-cup ring there is the concluding message: YOU HAVE / FALLEN / INTO ART / —RETURN TO / LIFE. Recognised by critics as the crucial work of what Gass would term "metafiction," *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* examines the nature of fiction-making and of the reading process, endowing such commonplace, indeed invisible, entities as pagination, typographical setup, paragraph, sentence, and the word with unusual density, intensity, and strangeness.

After 1968, Gass as fiction writer fell silent for another two-and-a-half decades, turning to philosophy, essays and criticism, but also to writing his opus magnum, *The Tunnel* (1995). He began the novel in 1966, publishing portions of it in a number of literary journals such as the *Review of Contemporary Fiction*. Almost thirty years in the making, *The Tunnel*'s pre-publication history created the type of anxious anticipation among critics and Gass' readership similar to the one that preceded *Finnegans Wake*. Its critical reception was no less divided: on the one hand, there were critics agreeing with Robert Alter's complaint in *The New Republic* (27 March 1995) that the work exhibits "sheer adipose verbosity and an unremitting condition of moral and intellectual flatulence," and what is more, that the work reduces "the enormity of genocide [...] into the nickel-and-dime nastiness that people perpetrate in everyday life." In other words, as Robert Kelly concluded in *The New York Times Book Review*, to say that one has known "bedrooms bad as Belsen,"[57] shows alliteration running away with proportion. On the other hand, many reviewers side with Steven Moore's assessment in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* that Gass has produced "truly one of the great books of our time," in which "rhetorical energy and excess redeem personal failure and emptiness,"[58] or Michael Dirda's in *Washington Post Book World* (February 1995), according to which "for 650 pages one of the consummate magicians of English prose pulls rabbits out of sentences and creates shimmering metaphors before your very eyes."[59] However divided, the critical reaction of the time agrees on one point: that *The Tunnel*, again similarly to the *Wake*, is a belated aftermath of the era of its conception in mid-1960s, the high point of the American post-war epic, on par with Gaddis' *The Recognitions* or Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* as the post-war novelistic epic.

As is evident from the reviews above, *The Tunnel*'s thematic challenge (its style follows the typographical eccentricities of *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* without however furthering them in any relevant new direction) lies in Gass' exercising of his rhythmic brilliance in the context, or at the expense, of the greatest trauma of modern history, the Holocaust. William Frederick Kohler, the dominant consciousness of the novel, an historian teaching at a Midwestern university during the 1960s, is nearly finished with his academic masterpiece, *Guilt and Innocence in Hitler's Germany*, and while in the process of devising the introduction, he becomes derailed into relating all manner of incendiary personal confession about his colleagues, his unavailing family relationships, his starved childhood, his squalid affairs, and his aesthetic and philosophical reflections, until the added pages, which he keeps secreting within the pages of the project proper, overwhelm his original intention. As Gass himself observed, the challenge was "to bring grandeur to a shit," and it is doubtlessly true that Kohler stands out as the most outrageous in Gass' line of solitary, driven, misanthropic world-haters, whose tunnel—both metaphorical, the one he digs through the mass of historical data and through his own history of his private grudges, evil thoughts and deeds, as well as literal, the tunnel he digs in the basement of his house--is the most elaborately conceived withdrawal of all. A recurring theme is his idea to found the Party of Disappointed People—the PdP; Gass has Kohler doodle designs for the PdP logo throughout the text, includ-

57 Robert Kelly, "A Repulsively Lonely Man," *The New York Times Book Review* (26 February 1995): 17.
58 Stephen Moore, "A Review of *The Tunnel*," *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring, 1995): 159.
59 Michael Dirda, "In the Dark Chambers of the Soul," *Washington Post Book World* (12 March 1995): 10.

ing proposed flags, insignias, banners, and a "Medal for ingratitude." The last page of the book is a picture of the PdP logo. Two of Gass' lifelong concerns—with history and language, or with history *as* language—are foregrounded in ways informed by his demonstrated knowledge of Joyce. For example, Gass repeatedly uses the *Wake*an metaphor of history as a midden heap:

> The study of history is essentially the study of symbols and markers, of verbal remains—symbol middens, shall we say?—and tombs. Our study, gentlemen, the study of history, is really a study of language. Only words speak past the present; only words have any kind of honest constant visual life. (*TT*, 5)

There is the occasional punning obscenity, like the following limerick:

> I once went to bed with a nun,
> who had screwed every nation but one.
> I don't want to Russia,
> but your Pole feels like Prussia—
> far too Chile—to Finnish the pun
> (*TT*, 157)

And every now and then, he has Kohler meditate on the (r)usefulness of language vis-à-vis reality:

> Language is always honest. Language does not lie, only its users. I think barrel suckers say that about guns. Notice how 'lover' is mostly spelled by 'over' and 'sex' is two-thirds 'ex'. If fucking were pretty it would have a pretty name, like 'meadow', like 'gazelle, or 'paramour'. If fucking were so fundamental, then it would bind us more dearly and devotedly together, as its gestures pretend, instead of driving us away from one another, into our own close satisfactions or the sullen distance of our discontents. (*TT*, 560)

Whether *The Tunnel* garners rhetorical capital out of the death camps and trivialises the Holocaust by reducing it through antics or not ultimately depends on whether the reader grants Gass his enduring prioritization of language in its materiality, its rhythm, its evocative powers over its referential function. Gass' life-creed is that

> the artist's fundamental loyalty must be to form, and his energy employed in the activity of making. Every other diddly desire can find expression; every crackpot idea or local obsession, every bias and graciousness and mark of malice, may have an hour; but it must never be allowed to carry the day (*FF,* 35).

That his stories "are malevolently anti-narrative," that his "essays are maliciously anti-expository," is all due to his "ideology of opposition" springing from his belief he arrived at early on: "that life was meaningless, since life was not a sign; that novels were meaningful, because signs were the very materials of their composition" (*FF,* 46). *The Tunnel* remains a late masterpiece in the 1960s-70s tradition of the great American novel, a book that has the increasingly scarce ability to shock, provoke and affront.

"A MOVEMENT SO RADICAL THAT ITS CONSEQUENCES HAVE YET TO BE ASSIMILATED": DONALD BARTHELME

Donald Barthelme (1931-1989) is an author who more than any other major American writer of the 1960s took to heart Borges' dedication to short fiction and his suspicion of grand fictional narratives, a dedication rare given the short story's rather conservative nature.[60] However, at the beginning of Barthelme's career there was a critical engagement with, not Borges, but his antipode and nemesis: Joyce. In an essay entitled "After Joyce" from 1964—and collected in the posthumously published collection *Not-Knowing*—Barthelme takes issue with Kenneth Burke's view of the writers of the *transition* school as political recluses and aesthetic deserters. Barthelme notes that such a view raises "the sticky question of what art is 'about' and the mysterious shift that takes place as soon as one says that art is not about something but *is* something" (*N-K,* 3). With Joyce, argues Barthelme, "fiction altered its placement in the world in a movement so radical that its consequences have yet to be assimilated." Departing from the well-known dictum of Beckett's essay on the "Work in Progress," Barthelme notes that the consequences of creating literary "objects" as

60 As Morris Dickstein's "Fiction at the Crossroads" observes, "the short story, even in the hands of Chekhov and Joyce, had always been the most conservative of all literary genres, the most tied to nineteenth-century conventions of incident and character, the least given to formal or technical innovation" (Morris Dickstein, "Fiction at the Crossroads," *Critical Essays on Donald Barthelme*, ed. Richard F. Patteson [New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1992] 59).

"worlds" in themselves present a "stunning strategic gain for the writer. He has in fact removed himself from the work, just as Joyce instructed him to do." What is further characteristic of the object is

> that it does not declare itself at once, in a rush of pleasant naiveté. Joyce enforces the way in which *Finnegans Wake* is to be read. He conceived the reading to be a lifetime project, the book remaining always *there*, like the landscape surrounding the reader's home or the buildings bounding the reader's apartment. The book remains problematic, unexhausted. (*N-K,* 4)

However, for all the excitement of Joyce's linguistic surfaces, Barthelme notes that "the writers who have taken advantage of this particular strategy are few," this for the following reasons:

> Not only have there been highly visible failures, but even the successes have been intimidating. *Finnegans Wake* is not a work which encourages emulation. […] Writers borrow Joyce's myth-patterning or stream-of-consciousness and regard the *Wake* as a monument or an obsession, in any case something that does not have to be repeated. […] *Transition* becomes a neglected battlefield littered with the empty cartridge boxes and dead horses of the Revolution of the Word. (*N-K,* 6)

Still, Barthelme is far from arguing for a return to fiction's traditional modes and instead singles out a number of Joycean writers, of a chiefly twofold tendency. The first group is called the "aggression" group, including Burroughs, Mailer, James Purdy, Terry Southern, and Hubert Selby, Jr. These writers, for Barthelme, "respond to the world by adding to it constructs which are hostile to life, and Burroughs, most in debt to Joyce, makes the deepest wounds" (*N-K,* 8). The other group is marked by "playfulness" and represented by Beckett, Nabokov, Kenneth Koch, J. P. Donleavy, and Henry Green – all of whom, "in their elaborate mystifications, partake of this tendency, demonstrating a consciousness of the word as object, of the medium as message" (*N-K,* 9). Against these writers of interest, Barthelme rather indiscriminatingly pits French new novelists (Butor, Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet, Simon and Sollers) who

> have on the other hand succeeded in making objects of their books without reaping any of the strategic benefits of the maneuver – a triumph of misplaced intelligence. Their work seems leaden, self-conscious in the wrong way. Painfully slow-paced, with no leaps of the imagination, concentrating on the minutiae of consciousness, these novels scrupulously, in deadly earnest, parse out what can safely be said. […] they arrive at inconsequence, carrying on that traditional French war against the bourgeois which ends by flattering him: what a monster! (*N-K*, 10)

Linguistic playfulness is, ultimately, what emerges as the most valuable—if also vague—part of the legacy of the Joycean textual objects in Barthelme's critical estimation. And wicked humour, blending the haphazard, the grotesque and the absurd, is a marker of much of Barthelme's fiction. Although perhaps the most prolific North American proponent of Borgesian *ficciones*, Barthelme's early engagement with the *Wake* rendered him particularly susceptible to the *Wake*an punning, as particularly manifest in *The Dead Father*; as a short-story writer, he was of course familiar with *Dubliners*, as his various allusions to "The Dead" attest. Michael Hudgens perceptively described his relation to Joyce when he said that "Barthelme was no Joycean scholar, but he knew the work and viewed it as an obstacle course to be crossed."[61]

Barthelme's familiarity with the *Wake* came to fruition in his novels. For his first novel, *Snow White* (1967), Barthelme turned to a familiar myth rather than to "reality" to provide a basic framework for his tale, although the "material" which he places into the framework is drawn from a wide range of literary and cultural sources. Larry McCaffery observed that its fragmented character owes to its reworking of modernist legacy.[62] The novel, doing without the benefit of plot, characters, mainly limits itself to fragmentary take-offs on a huge variety of rhetorical styles and verbal trash. Barthelme's satire revolves around the friction of diverse languages—e.g. in "The Report" section contrasting the jargons of a hardware man and a software man, technician and humanist—and the disjunctive tension between narcotised consciousness and the explosive object. Jane's letter to Mr. Quistgaard in *Snow White*—a name she has picked at random from the telephone book, is an epitome of Barthelme's relationship to his reader: Jane's letter opens with a description of a "theatening situation":

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61 Michael Thomas Hudgens, *Donald Barthelme – Postmodernist American Writer* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001) 48.

62 "As in *Ulysses* and works by other writers of encyclopedic tendencies […] *Snow White* presents us with a profusion of bits and pieces drawn from books and other literary storehouses such as folktales, movies, newspapers, advertisements and scholarly journals. […] Even more often, however, these fragments are drawn from clichés of learning and literature. We find, for instance, parodies of specific literary styles and conventions, pseudo-learned digressions about history, sociology, and psychology, mock presentations of Freudian and existentialist patterns, and inane concrete poems" (McCaffery, *The Metafictional Muse*, 138).

> You and I, Mr. Quistgaard, are not in the same universe of discourse. You may not have been aware of it previously, but the fact of the matter is, that we are not. We exist in different universes of discourse. […] You may have, in a commonsense way, regarded your own u. of d. as a plenum, filled to the brim with discourse. You may have felt that what already existed was a sufficiency. People like you often do. That is certainly one way of regarding it, if fat self-satisfied complacency is your aim. But I say unto you, Mr. Quistgaard, that even a plenum can leak. (*SW*, 44-5)

Passages such as this one suggest that for Barthelme, analytic literary vocabulary itself can become as stale as any other language unexposed to discursive variety and rigidified in its use.

The myth tackled in Barthelme's second novel *The Dead Father* is the Oedipal dynamics. It abandons the satiric language of *Snow White* for the gusto of Rabelaisian catalogues and word-heaps. The opening lines of the prologue begin a detailed description of the father, a colossus toppled to earth, who is being pulled by nineteen men to a trench where he will be covered by bulldozers. Curiously enough, the title protagonist is alive and kicking throughout the text – in fact, assuming increasingly abstract properties, the Dead Father can ultimately be said to represent any hegemonic belief system: at one time or another he comes to embody all the systems of authority that Western culture has enshrined: God, King, Reason, History, State. In his lifetime the Dead Father has fathered multitudes, but he's equally destructive. In anger over being excluded from sex with Julie—the central female of the novel—he escapes to a grove where he slays a large number of musicians. Thomas, the filial character, sets out on a quest to inter the Dead Father and also to bring about a transfer of authority. Upon meeting, the couple tell each other stories – high among these, for reasons obvious in due course, is the story of The Great Father Serpent narrated by Thomas: "a serpent of huge bigness which held in its mouth a sheet of tin on which something was written, the roars rattled the tin and I was unable to make out the message" (*DF,* 44). The Great Father Serpent is described as dressed in "fine smallclothes of softwhispering blushcolored changeable taffeta," his "upper or more headward length" covered with "a light jacket of white silk embroidered with a thread nutmeg in color and a thread goose-turd in color, these intertwined, and trimmed with fine whipped lace." After another whole page devoted to the details of the serpent's a tire the description arrives at "a doublet, a great cloak, a girdle, and a French hat" (*DL*, 44-5) – the Great Father Serpent is dressed in an emblematically Joycean attire. The Serpent's riddle posed to Thomas is "*What do you really feel?*" (*DF,* 45-6) and Thomas' answer is "Like murderinging." What this incident reveals is that behind the façade of an obedient son, Thomas is driven by murderous wishes. The Serpent then gives Thomas a book, "A Manual for Sons," a section so self-sufficient as to have been published independently. It is here that fatherhood is exposed as the source of the grand narratives which make men so unhappy, and a solution is proposed:

> Your true task, as a son, is to reproduce every one of the enormities touched upon in this manual, but in an attenuated form. You must become your father, but a paler, weaker version of him [...] Fatherhood can be, if not conquered, at least 'turned down' in this generation – by the combined efforts of all of us together. (*DF*, 145)

The Serpent's Joycean lesson is that parricide—just as Bloom's slaying of the suitors toward the end of *Ulysses*—should be performed mentally and spiritually, that fatherhood should be conquered on the inside, repudiated from within, put to bed. And, just when the Dead Father is to be put to rest by his son, the famous *Wake*an interior monologue spells out his own uncertainties, his own filial dependence:

> AndI. EndI. Great endifarce teeterteeterteetertottering. Willit urt. I reiterate. Don't be cenacle. Conscientia mille testes. And having made them, where now? what now? […] Thegreatestgoodofthegreatestnumber was a Princeapple of mine. I was compassionate, insofarasitwaspossleto-beso. Best I cud I did! Absolutely! No dubitation about it! Don't like! Don't want! Pitterpatter oh please pitterpatter (*DF,* 171-3)

Here, the monologue ends, without a period, an obvious *Wake*an parallel which did not elude Werner.[63] However, as Richard Walsh has observed, parody is a notion whose applicability—to Barthelme's text and in general—is fraught with inherent inconsistencies, arguing that the Dead Father's monologue is "not exactly parody, since it does not func-

63 Werner reads *The Dead Father* as an (unsuccessful) parody of Joyce: "Whatever its intent, the passage lacks the diverse frames of reference of even the most crystalline *Wake* passages. It degenerates into a dictionary game for the glossing of collapsing cardboard characters, leaving the reader with the feeling that he has confronted a very un-Barthelmean allegorical failure or a parody which has failed to find its target" (Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 101).

tion as an implicit critique of the manner or author parodied."[64] Furthermore, one of Barthelme's departures from the modernist Joycean structure is his deflation of numerological and conceptual symbolism, his parallels and correspondences existing without eventually adding up to anything. Carl Malmgren's examples of "signifiers that float freely or cancel each other out" are instructive.[65]

Whether a parody or not, *The Dead Father* is a markedly Joycean text, featuring an allegorical impersonation of his very person and an adaptation and reuse of his *Wake*an portmanteau technique. The last novel Barthelme saw into being during his lifetime, *Paradise* (1986)—again rather a scattering of his shorter fiction into a textual collage rather than a well-wrought novel form—features a rather straightforward plot advancing in short chapters, concerning a *ménage à quatre* of protagonist Simon and three women, Dore, Veronica and Anne (during his rather short life, Barthelme went through four marriages). Its progression is a collision of brilliant moments which defy summary, perhaps the only unusual—and essentially Joycean—ingredient to the narrative being its circularity – *Paradise*, like the *Wake*, begins where it ends, its narrative revealed to be an endless loop in the protagonist's mind. A short-story writer turned novelist, Barthelme was an author whose writing, although perfectly original and self-sufficient, took Joyce as a source for some of its most experimental moments.

"DEEPER AND MORE SHARED LEVELS OF THE LIFE WE ALL REALLY LIVE": THOMAS PYNCHON

In the introduction to his 1984 reprinting of his early stories under the title of *Slow Learner* (1984), Thomas Pynchon (*1937) repudiates his younger self that has created *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), all results of his "notion that one's personal life had nothing to do with fiction, when the truth, as everyone knows, is nearly the direct opposite" (*SL*, 23). His early work had ignored what he had already known, that the fiction "that moved and pleased me then as now was precisely that which had been made luminous, undeniably authentic by having been found and taken up, always at a cost, from deeper and more shared levels of the life we all really live" (*SL,* 23). The developments of Burroughs, Barth, even Gaddis and Barthelme, all reached the peak of their linguistic experimentalism sometime between mid-1960s and mid-1970s, with a turn in the early 1980s toward a more traditionally narrative prose; but nowhere did this turn entail an effective renunciation of the previous development to nearly the same extent as in Pynchon's case.

Pynchon is a Joycean writer chiefly through his foregrounding of complexity, his conflation of a multitude of symbolical systems of signification which he imposes upon and through which he shapes the fictional reality of his narratives. No other writer after Joyce is as interested in encoding and decoding, in interpreting, in construing fictional reality as a concatenation of ciphers, symbols and signs, as Pynchon. This complexity has also bred an equally complex and sizeable critical material that surrounds Pynchon's fiction: again, no author after Joyce can boast of quite as many reader's guides or books devoted to mere plot summaries and basic sense-making as Pynchon. Also, one can, together with Robert Newman, note the biographical parallel between Joyce and Pynchon, the latter living the former's dictum of the artist's refinement out of existence.[66]

The more relevant affinities between the two include their encyclopaedism, which was recognised in one of the first critical responses to *Gravity's Rainbow*. In his 1976 essay included in a collection on Pynchon entitled *Mindful*

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64 Walsh goes on to ask: "But what exactly would a "real parody" of Joyce consist of? With language already so self-conscious and ironic, the self-critical function of parodic language has been largely preempted. This is more mimicry than parody, an appropriation of style to a different end, the nature and rationale of which is the burden of the novel's argument. Barthelme's formal innovation is not an irresponsible aestheticism, but the means to a more sophisticated engagement with life" (Richard Walsh, *Novel Arguments – Reading Innovative American Fiction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995] 45).

65 "A case in point in *The Dead Father* is the signifier 23. There are twenty-three characters in the troupe, twenty-three chapters in the novel, twenty-three sections in "The Manual for Sons," twenty-three types of fathers (including the dead father). The number seems loaded with significance but finally fails to signify; it is simply a prime number, indivisible, without factors. Similarly the reader is invited to see Emma (M-A) as a mother figure but cannot really make anything of the equation" (Carl D. Malmgren, "Exhumation: *The Dead Father*," *Narrative Turns and Minor Genres in Postmodernism*, eds. Theo D'haen & Hans Bertens [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995] 35).

66 James Joyce's dictum that the artist should be refined out of existence seems to have been taken literally by Pynchon: only one photograph of him exists; his dossier at Cornell has mysteriously vanished; and records of his service in the navy were burned in a fire at the records office in St. Louis. (Robert D. Newman, *Understanding Thomas Pynchon* [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986] 4).

Pleasures, Edward Mendelson included Pynchon's novel in a genre composed of "only a few books in the Western tradition," that of the "encyclopaedic narrative," in which it joined not only *Moby Dick* but also "Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Goethe, and Joyce's *Ulysses*."[67] Connected to the first, another trace shared by Pynchon with Joyce is their interest in science and technology vis-à-vis culture and art – in his dauntlessness as regards science and technology, critic David Cowart has sensed Pynchon's belonging to the "apostolic succesion from James Joyce."[68] At the same time, however, the difference in purpose which these parallel efforts serve is as marked and cannot be overstated – "myth," in Pynchon, is treated encyclopaedically in that mythic referents—in *Gravity's Rainbow* but also elsewhere—are derived not merely from the customary sources (as the *Nibelungenlied*, for example), but also from literature (Dante, Borges, Grass, as well as Joyce), and also from science and psychopathology (Newton and Einstein, Sacher-Masoch and Pavlov), from history itself. As Levitt notes, this diversified, encyclopaedic basis of myth is ultimately used as a refusal of the Modernist mythopoesis in favour of the injunction that "we must invent myths today, often outrageously, precisely because we can no longer experience them, that we have lost our mythological heritage."[69]

Linked with their shared encyclopaedism is Pynchon's and Joyce's common "difficulty" with the reader. Richard Poirier's meditation on "The Importance of Thomas Pynchon" is instructive, in this respect:

> We can't with Pynchon—any more than with Joyce or with the Eliot of the loveably pretentious notes to *The Waste Land*—possibly claim to be as conversant as he wants us to be with the various forms of contemporary culture. He may be as theatrically enlivening and entertaining as Dickens, but a reader needs to know relatively little to appreciate Dickens. Really to read Pynchon properly you would have to be astonishingly learned not only about literature but about a vast number of other subjects belonging to the disciplines and to popular culture, learned to the point where learning is almost a sensuous pleasure, something to play around with, to feel totally relaxed about, so that you can take in stride every dizzying transition from one allusive mode to another.[70]

There is, then, to Poirier's mind, a dilemma for those fond of Pynchon's work: "We don't want to stop the game, we don't want to get out of the rhythm, but what are we to do if we simply don't know enough to play the game, to move with the rhythm?" Poirier links this to Burgess' popularisation efforts vis-à-vis Joyce, of which he is quite harshly critical.[71] Bypassing the issue of accessibility, always ultimately subjective and thus hardly useful, Sara Soldberg focuses instead on the different uses, in Joyce and in Pynchon, of encyclopaedism, and goes so far as to speak of apples and oranges.[72]

Pynchon's first work, mysteriously entitled *V.* and awarded the William Faulkner Foundation award for the best debut novel of the year, invites parallels with Joyce's *Ulysses* on a number of levels. It features two parallel narrative strands, taking turn in a chapter-by-chapter alternation—one set in the New York of 1956, the other a generation-spanning plot taking place at various different moments of historical crises—following two protagonists, Benny Profane and Herbert Stencil, respectively.[73] The two eventually meet in the final chapter as Profane joins Stencil on his quest

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67 Edward Mendelson, "Gravity's Encyclopaedia," *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, eds. George Levine & David Leverenz (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976) 161.

68 "Pynchon lies in the apostolic succession from James Joyce, who felt compelled to master in lucid prose not only the process by which thermal energy from the sun, stored for millennia as fossilized vegetable matter, eventually came to heat Leopold Bloom's shaving water, but also the process by which the water itself got from Dublin's reservoir to Bloom's tap. Joyce once described his mania for detail by saying that he had the mind of an assistant greengrocer. With a similarly all-embracing mind, Pynchon joins the staff of Joyce's implied word-grocery, with an even more formidable determination not to leave the higher or more remote shelves uninventoried" (David Cowart, *Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion* [Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980] 1).

69 Cowart, *Thomas Pynchon,* 86.

70 Richard Poirier, "The Importance of Thomas Pynchon," *Thomas Pynchon,* ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003) 47-8.

71 "We can't, above all, pretend that such a writer is a regular fellow, the way Anthony Burgess does with Joyce. Burgess' *ReJoyce* is both quite a bad book and an amusing object lesson. With totally false casualness, Burgess has to lay before us an immense amount of requisite learning in the effort to prove that Joyce can be read by Everyman. Burgess makes an obvious, glaring but nonetheless persistent error: he confuses Joyce's material (much of which is indeed quite ordinary and common) with what Joyce does to it (which is totally uncommon, unordinary, and elitist). Another way of answering Burgess, or anyone who says that a writer like Joyce or Pynchon is just a "good read," is to say that nobody in Joyce, and very few in Pynchon, could read the novels that have been written about them" (Poirier, "The Importance of Thomas Pynchon," 48).

72 "Of the major modernists, it is probably Joyce whose degree of connection with Pynchon stands most in danger of overstatement. Although *Gravity's Rainbow* accepts the Joycean demand that would-be great, important books be committed to the practice of an omnibus informal erudition, a great deal of sophisticated stylistic experimentation, and an extremely large thematic purview, these are profoundly different kinds of encyclopedists" (Sara M. Solberg, "On Comparing Apples and Oranges: James Joyce and Thomas Pynchon," *Comparative Literature Studies* 26 [March 1979]: 33).

73 Levitt parallels between the protagonist couple and Joyce's Bloom and Stephen, where Benny Profane becomes "a type of Everyman-Pilgrim, echoing ironically both old allegorical quest heroes and new," like Bloom he is "Part-Catholic, part-Jew" and also "cut-off from conventional family ties" (Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 77).

after a mysterious entity known to him only under the initial V.[74] The single letter "V" gradually takes on a function akin to that of the acrostic structures of the *Wake* – operating as a sign locus for multiple intersecting meanings. As Levitt has noted, the connotations of "V" include

> various women (Vera Meroving, Hedvig Vogelsang and Veronica Manganese, among others) and places (Valletta, Vesuvius, Venezuela, and the perhaps apocryphal Vheissu), forms human and inhuman (a recurring V-shaped stain on a dish, the delta of Venus), concrete objects and abstract concepts (volcanoes, the viola da gamba, vision, venality, a sewer rat named Veronica, the Machiavellian virtú).[75]

Throughout, Pynchon toys with the possibility that the pattern might yield some overriding meaning and signification, Stencil dreaming "perhaps once a week that it had all been a dream, and that now he'd awakened to discover the pursuit of V. was merely a scholarly quest after all, an adventure of the mind, in the tradition of *The Golden Bough* or *The White Goddess*" (*V*., 50). There is a repeated intimation that "things [seem] all at once to fall into a pattern" (*V*., 280), but ultimately, at a later point in the novel, the narrative concedes that "V. by this time was a remarkably scattered concept" (*V.,* 364), and the novel performs a 'retreat to a diametric opposite rather than any reasonable search for a golden mean' (*V.,* 103) envisaged earlier. One of the patterning *V.* follows meticulously is the heritage of the pre-war avant-garde art and literature of the subsequent periods.[76] Parallels notwithstanding, differences are equally palpable: not only does the V-structure ultimately yield no insight, but also the meeting between Stencil and Profane toward which the narrative has gravitated throughout—this coincidence of contraries—fails to offer any reconciliation or affirmation. However busy and active a text peopled with an immense cast of characters and swarming with activity—and in that sense, reminiscent of *Ulysses*—as Adams has noted, "all the hurry and scurry in the novel […] lead nowhere. For one tale that is tied up in pink ribbon […], there are dozens that the author leaves hanging in mid-air."[77]

Similar parallelism in method and difference in purpose have been found in Pynchon's undisputed masterpiece and opus magnum, *Gravity's Rainbow*, including the vicissitudes of its reception, the rejections of the novel by the Pulitzer Advisory Board and by other members of the literary establishment as an affront to good taste. The plot of the novel is so complex as to warrant a whole library of exegetic critical material; it contains over 400 characters and involves many different threads of narrative which intersect and weave around one another. The recurring themes feature the V-2 rocket, the interplay between free will and Calvinist predestination, the breach in the cycle of nature, behavioural psychology, perverse sexuality, paranoia and conspiracy theories such as the Phoebus cartel and the Illuminati. Here, Joycean presence is so palpable that Joyce is actually referred to in the text of *Gravity's Rainbow* as a historical inhabitant of the 1916 Dadaist Zurich and a frequenter of the local Odeon Café, together with Lenin, Trotsky, Einstein and Tzara (*GR*, 266). Among the most markedly *Ulyssean* techniques employed by Pynchon for the sake of discontinuity is his use of headings separating textual items in chapters 69 and 73, as e.g. in a mythical reference introduced by the heading "Orpheus Puts Down Harp," which when translated from journalese reads "Orpheus Theatre Management Denounces the Harmonica" (*GR,* 754) – a disorienting strategy reminiscent of Joyce's "Aeolus." Pynchon, again, plays with visual typographical marks; the novel is composed of four parts, each of these consisting of a number of episodes whose divisions are marked by a graphical depiction of a series of squares. It has been suggested that these represent sprocket holes as in a reel of film, although their connection to the engineer's graph paper on which the first draft of the novel was written cannot be disproved. Pynchon also peppers his text with the occasional verbal conglomerate smacking of Joycean verbal amalgamations, as in his imagist coinage of "Swirling-

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74 David Seed, *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* (London: Macmillan, 1988) 84-5.
75 Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 79.
76 "There are parallels, for example, between the scandals of Cubism and the *Sacré* and the scandals of Abstract Expressionism and free jazz. There are anticipations, of absurdist literature in Conrad and Kafka, of the absurdist universe in early Wittgenstein. There are direct links: Henry Miller is the acknowledged forerunner of Kerouac and the Beats, Sartre uses Rilke's *Notebooks* as a model for *La Nausée*; Beckett is Joyce's protégé; the "old Dadaists" reappear as new Dadaists like Oldenburg and Rauschenberg; the Theatre of the Absurd is a development of Surrealism" (John Dugdale, *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power* [London: MacMillan, 1990] 102-3).
77 Unlike Bloom's and Stephen's respective quests for a spiritual son and father, in *V.*, notes Adams, "what is important to the book takes place outside the realm of the characters' actions, and to a large extent outside their comprehension; and it's only indirectly, semi-allegorically connected with Stencil's search for V. That is more in the nature of a private anxiety, since the woman in whom the principle of V was momentarily embodied, insofar as she was an individual at all, was dead well before the action of the novel starts" (Adams, *Afterjoyce,* 171-2).

grainoftreeslikefrozensmoke" (*GR*, 76). In passages focusing on *Gravity's* protagonist, Tyrone Slothrop, Pynchon employs the narrative techniques of interior monologue and stream of consciousness – and again, the immense panorama of the narrative can be reduced to two parallel and opposing tendencies: the assembly of the Rocket, and the disassembly of Tyrone Slothtrop. Last but not least, critics such as Brian Stonehill have argued for the circularity of *Gravity's Rainbow* as narrative, its incomplete last line—in which supposedly the explosion of the Rocket takes place—harking back to the novel's opening "cry coming across the sky."[78]

However, the list of parallels is as long as the list of differences: mythological parallelism goes only so far. Robert Newman's *Understanding Thomas Pynchon* succeeds in drawing and disproving further lines of connection. First and foremost, against Joyce's stylistic plurality stands the relative uniformity of Pynchon's style.[79] As in *V.*, Pynchon's point is pointlessness, and his obsessive problem-solving results in the concluding irresolution.[80] Pynchon's is a parody that exceeds the shadow of its paradigm. So, according to Newman, if Joyce pushed parody to the point of literary self-parody to demonstrate how "the available styles and forms of literature were insufficient constraints in which to ossify the flow of life," Pynchon "extends this perception from literature to all systems, whether in science, pop-culture, politics, or history, to show that any attempt at recording life is a form of rigidification and repression."[81]

It should be apparent by now that most criticism pitting Pynchon against Joyce on the basis of their treatment of myth and discursive parody reduces Joyce unfavourably to a mythmaker akin to the one portrayed in Eliot's 1923 *Ulysses* review. However, Eliot's is a problematic and limiting reading that in no way does justice to Joyce's destabilisation, if not debunking of the Homeric parallels, the fashion in which Homer is brought into contact with the Shakespearean intertext and, last but not least, how the later *Ulysses* chapters take as targets of their satire all sorts of discursive systems, whether that of nationalist propaganda ("Cyclops"), popular women magazines ("Nausicaa"), or science ("Ithaca").

Vineland (1990), Pynchon's first novel after his professed breakup with his earlier fictional output, features yet again as many parallels with as differences from his earlier work. Again, the main plot of *Vineland* is built around a diagrammatic story of personal and political obsession that has little to do with lives that anyone has ever lived. But as Edward Mendelson has observed, "the relations between parents and children in the book, relations often tangential to the main plot, intermittently make Vineland 'luminous, undeniably authentic,' and give it a warmth that the intellectual exoticism of his earlier work excluded."[82] The plot involves, again, a quest, but this time one for the secrets of a parent's past, centring on a private sexual obsession set against the U.S. politics of the twenty-five years between 1965 and the time of the novel's publication. After this personally rendered detour, Pynchon's production took yet another unforeseen turn in *Mason & Dixon* (1997), an 18th-century historical novel detailing the travels of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon in search of a solution to the border dispute between British colonies, resulting in the eponymous line which was, a hundred years later, to divide the anti-slavery North from the pro-slavery South. Their story, in a perfectly 18th-century fashion, is a framed narrative, mediated by a certain Reverend Wicks Cherrycoke as he attempts to divert his large family on a cold December evening. In a yet more perfectly 18th-century fashion, Pynchon tailors his language as mimicry of the novelese of the period. Here is the opening sentence:

> Snow-Balls have flown their Arcs, starr'd the Sides of Outbuildings, as of Cousins, carried Hats away into the brisk Wind off Delaware,—the Sleds are brought in and their Runners carefully dried and greased, shoes deposited in the back Hall, a

78 "The incomplete last line shows the novel resisting its own termination, engaging in yet another struggle of opposites between entropy and energy. […] In the last line, a rocket is about to explode over "our" heads. The novel's first line describes the sound of a rocket rushing in, *after* the supersonic missile has already exploded. […] So the novel's conclusion leads us back to its beginning: its ends are joined. The annular structure of *Gravity's Rainbow* refutes the entropic curtailment of its own narrative energy" (Stonehill, *The Self-Conscious Novel,* 154).

79 "Joyce, a stylistic chameleon, imitates and parodies every stylistic tradition while ultimately subscribing to none. Pynchon uses Laurence Sterne and Joyce as his models for parody, deflating all norms, offering multiplicity and randomness so that patterns may be discovered only in redundancy" (Newman, *Understanding Thomas Pynchon,* 96).

80 "Again, *Ulysses* is a signpost on this twentieth-century track, for the Blooms never resolve their marital problems in the time frame of the novel and, like Slothrop, Stephen Dedalus disappears from the novel, his destiny unknown. However, the meeting of Stephen and Bloom and the favorable shift toward Bloom that occurs in Molly's soliloquy offer the reader an implicit sense of completion and hope. Completion and hope are neither implicit nor explicit in *Gravity's Rainbow*" (Newman, *Understanding Thomas Pynchon,* 96).

81 Newman, *Understanding Thomas Pynchon*, 95.

82 Mendelson, "Levity's Rainbow," *The New Republic* 203.2&3 (July 9&16, 1990): 41.

> stocking'd-foot Descent made upon the great Kitchen, in a purposeful Dither since Morning, punctuated by the ringing Lids of various Boilers and Stewing-Pots, fragrant with Pie-Spices, peel'd Fruits, Suet, heated Sugar,—the Children, having all upon the Fly, among rhythmic slaps of Batter and Spoon, coax'd and stolen what they might, proceed, as upon each afternoon all this snowy Advent, to a comfortable Room at the rear of the House, years since given over to their carefree Assaults. (*M&D*, 1)

This clamorous opening sentence, dense with the chaotic rush of new sensation, brims with the novel's animating themes – the ascents and descents of lives beneath those of the stars. As William Logan's review of the novel shows, the opening sentence belongs to the tradition of well-wrought openers synecdochically encapsulating and presaging some of the whole novel's concerns.[83] Pynchon's linguistic mimicry chiefly consists of a loosened syntax and word-spelling, particularly through the comic irritation of the capitalisation of nouns for emphasis sake. The effect of Pynchon's technique of concatenating these topical metaphors and images can be viewed as an ultimately poetic technique – Pynchon moves from detail to design, an inherently poetic method. Pynchon's viewpoint, again, is an encyclopaedic one, involving snippets of lectures and obscure information on themes as abstruse as the Mithraic origins of ley lines, lamination, switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, marine chronometer, and Pynchon's vintage conspiracy theory involving Jesuits and their Chinese converts. This layering of designs and schemata has, again, called up the spectre of Joyce – Logan has a point in showing how Pynchon's is "a curious way of disabling the anxiety of influence—by placing his own style so deep in history, he seems Joyce's ancestor, not his descendent."[84] Like Joyce, Pynchon exhibits a penchant for linguistic exuberance, for bad jokes and worse puns, as well as cheap anachronistic references to contemporary phenomena – again, with a notable metaphoric link to science: "Pynchon's invention in language mimics the inventions of science, where one explosion is always fuse of the next."[85] The novel's episodic structure allows for an infinite deferral and postponement of any consummation (including the sexual one), and finally it is as if the sheer fact of narration became its own sole goal, an aversion to any conflict or resolution. In *Mason & Dixon*, Pynchon creates an essentially atelic narrative, whose episodes collapse without consequence, characters part ways, and ultimately it is as if the author himself lost interest, no longer bothering to even pare his fingernails – the Joycean aesthetics of detachment consummated to their extreme.

"THE NOVEL AS THE *MAKING* OF LIFE"

William Buford's introduction to the first (Spring 1979) issue of the *Granta* magazine—which he co-edited with Pete de Bolla—on "New American Writing" brings the advances in the American fiction of the 1960s and 1970s into dialogue with the British scene of that period. His dissatisfaction with the "neither remarkable nor remarkably interesting" contemporary British novel that "appears as a monotonously protracted, realistically rendered monologue" which "lacks excitement, wants drive, provides comforts not challenges" is juxtaposed with the "literary renaissance" in the States, producing "some of the most challenging, diversified, and adventurous writing today."[86] He criticises the perceived lack of recognition—all through England—of the "new voice," the "new kind of dialogue in fiction" which has developed in the 1960s and 1970s U.S. This lack is manifest in the UK publishing policies.[87] If Jolas' *transition* strove for a "transat-

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83 "Jeremiah Dixon is a journeyman surveyor, Charles Mason an assistant to the Astronomer Royal at Greenwich. The arcs and stars of those hurled snowballs are the heraldic signs of their professions: in the comedy of their lives, cutting arcs across oceans, sitting stars, these characters make order from the anarchic motions the children in their hurtling suggest. The heated sugar is the earliest intimation of the trade that drove colonial expansion (its sweetness cost the lives of slaves): the lively microcosm (the whole novel might be said to be upon the fly, the characters ever in purposeful dither) serves a macrocosm yet unknown, a universe whose existence, whose author, is adumbrated by fond jokes—of punctuation called up by punctuated, of beginnings (and religious awakenings) summoned by Advent" (William Logan, "Pynchon in the Poetic," *Southwest Review* 83.4 [1998]: 430).
84 Logan, "Pynchon in the Poetic," 437.
85 Logan, "Pynchon in the Poetic," 439.
86 William Buford, "Introduction" to *Granta* 1 (Spring 1979): 3.
87 "A new voice has developed, a new kind of dialogue in fiction. But has England even recognized that it exists? Who are the current American writers current in England today? Bellow, Updike, Pynchon, or Mailer? Pop stars like Jong, Robbins, or Brautigan? The less conventional authors, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, Philip Roth, John Hawkes, Rovert Coover, Grace Paley? Less conventional and less known. Barthelme, probably the most influential American author? A name. […] John Barth has barely survived the British Press. Stanley Elkin's last novel, already three years old, still does not have a British publisher; and the same applies to the last work of Leonard Michaels or Barry Hannah or Walter Abish, Tillie Olsen, or Ronald Sukenick. William Gass has only one book in print in England; Coover has only two; Gaddis, one; Percy, one; McMurty, one; Purdy, one. […] American fiction is still not recognized in England; or if recognized, that recognition is not acknowledged" (Buford, "Introduction," 4).

lantic" dialogue, it would appear that in Buford's estimation, such a dialogue was not taking place in the two decades under focus, Burroughs' sojourn in London and the cult following of the Beats notwithstanding.

Paraphrasing Tanner's argument, Buford and de Bola posit "a paradox central to many American writers, the paradox of being unable to believe in the objective validity of meanings but unable to do without them." As examples of authors whose work represents one kind of writing which presupposes the inadequacies of linear logic, liner relationships, linear reality and projects a kind of art that exists almost as pure possibility, no longer enthralled by an empirical or normative order or even necessity itself, Buford adduces Barthelme, Pynchon, Gass, Barth and Coover. However, he points out in the same breath that these writers can represent "*only* one kind and their narrative *only* one kind of rejection of the conventional."[88] Pitted against their work is what Bufford terms "non-fiction fiction" (represented by such names as Norman Mailer, Truman Capote or Hunter S. Thompson). Although inherently in favour of experimentalism as opposed to the perceived British conservatism, Buford's preference lies elsewhere than with the "cold, passionless study—gleeful and gratuitous experimentation as regularly insensitive as the America depicted" of the experimental fiction. "Something else is demanded," he insists, "and the demand is obvious as an increasing dissatisfaction elicited by fiction which demonstrates its ultimacies and nothing more; an irritation with the non-linear story that gets nowhere and takes forever not getting there."[89] So, despite his conciliatory conclusion, in which American fiction is praised for the "discord" of its "many voices" that is "the source of the literary development, the energy, the achievement," Buford's alliances clearly do not lie with Pynchon, Gass or Barth.[90]

Buford's introduction and most of the essays collected in the *Granta* magazine issue attest to how the aesthetic tide in the aftermath of works like *Gravity's Rainbow*, *J R* or *LETTERS* was on the turn away from the post-war mutations of the great American novel in the wake of Gaddis' *Recognitions*. What Buford fails to make explicit, however, is that some if not most of the "newer" writers—i.e. writers of the second post-war generation—he champions, e.g. Kathy Acker or Ronald Sukenick, took up the other pole of 1950s-1960s experimentation and, rather than dealing with conceptual and narrative complexity à la Gaddis, preferred to deal with linguistic experimentation and anarchic verbal and discursive practices springing from Burroughs. So, while from 1980 onward, writers as diverse as Gaddis, Barth or Pynchon tended toward increasingly conventional, mimetic modes of fiction, the experimental torch was handed over to writers revisiting their earlier work of the 1960s.

88 Buford, "Introduction," 7.
89 Buford, "Introduction," 8.
90 Buford, "Introduction," 10.

"THE FUNNYMENTAL NOVEL OF OUR ERROR": THE U.S., 1973-1997

The long post-war period of literary production mapped in the previous chapter was one whose protagonists were solitary creators. It was in the mid-1970s that this picture of the literary landscape was to change dramatically. For both fiction and poetry, this was a time of group radicalization and political commitment, in reaction to what had been the nation's most socio-politically turbulent decade in the history, which critic Kenneth Millard has summed up neatly as follows:

> The years of the Nixon administration, 1969-74, was perhaps the crucial period in recent American history, years that saw the culmination of an extraordinary period of social upheaval which had included the assassinations of John F. Kennedy in 1963, Malcolm X in 1965, Martin Luther King in 1968, and Robert Kennedy in 1969, and which also saw the Apollo moon landing of 1969, the Kent State University shootings in 1970, and the unique disgrace of the resignation of President Nixon in 1974.[1]

The protracted and ultimately disastrous war in Vietnam (1965-75), then, was a mere pinnacle of what historian Paul Kennedy has characterised as "the massive transformation in the nation's self-understanding which took place during those same years," Vietnam functioning as its practical and symbolic consummation:

> In so many ways, symbolic as well as practical, it would be difficult to exaggerate the impact of the lengthy campaign in Vietnam upon the national psyche of the American people. [… It] helped to cause the fissuring of consensus in American society about the nation's goals and priorities, was attended by inflation, unprecedented student protests and inner city disturbances, and was followed in turn by the Watergate crisis, which discredited the presidency itself for a time. [... The effects] were interpreted as a crisis in American civilisation.[2]

For many, including writers Raymond Federman and Don DeLillo, the turning point in the post-war development of both society and literature had occurred even before the war broke out. As Federman has argued, if the 1950s writers were known as "the silent generation" because they "expressed in their work a silent agreement with the official political, moral, and social attitudes of the State," then the writers working in the aftermath of November 22, 1963, found themselves in a markedly different social environment:

> This is why the assassination of JFK (public and televised) had such a traumatic impact on the American consciousness. Suddenly things were not as good as they appeared. Suddenly American people were doubting the very reality of the events they were witnessing, especially on television. It took certain blunders of the Johnson administration, and subsequently the manipulations and lies of the Nixon admin, and of course the Vietnam War, and the Watergate debacle to awaken Americans from its mass media state of illusion and optimism. (*SF,* 24-5)

In a famous interview, DeLillo went so far as to call the JFK assassination "the seven seconds that broke the back of the American century":

> Perhaps it's a matter of other parts of the world beginning to catch up with us, but the assassination seemed to slow down our growth as the dominant world power. And it had an effect on Americans that we'll probably never recover from. The fact that it could happen. The fact that it was on film. The fact that two days later the assassin himself was killed on live television. All of these were psychological shock waves that are still rolling.[3]

Fiction found itself in the aftermath of the turn-of-the-decades situation, termed "The Death of the Death of the Novel"[4] by critic Jerome Klinkowitz, where reaction to John Barth's seminal "Literature of Exhaustion" essay took place in chiefly two forms. First, in the so-called "New Journalist" movement led by Tom Wolfe and including writers like Norman Mailer or Truman Capote. Second, in the kind of experimental writing that moved on to a new aesthetic for fiction, beyond Barth's precepts, including writers like Richard Brautigan, Steven Katz, Robert Coover, Kurt Vonnegut, or Ronald Sukenick. For both, Klinkowitz argues, a disruption in the "tradition of the great American novel" was necessary if they were to develop or even survive:

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1 Kenneth Millard, *Contemporary American Fiction: Introduction to American Fiction since 1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 6.
2 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987) 404-5.
3 *Conversations with Don DeLillo*, ed. Thomas dePietro (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005) 41.
4 Jerome Klinkowitz, *Literary Disruptions: The Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction* (2nd edition, Urbana Chicago London: University of Illinois Press, 1980) 1.

> Without a radical disruption in its tradition, the novel might have sustained grievous injury in the late 1960s, a universe away from the times in which fiction was first conceived and the rules for it set. Yet despite all the cultural and historical innovations in topic, it was the old-fashioned *form* for its content—in the guise of a mimetic pretense at life—which was the most debilitating thing of all. […] To John Barth's valid case for the exhaustion of old narrative forms Robert Coover, Steve Katz, and Richard Brautigan added a new aesthetic for the novel: not just the reporting of the world, but the imaginative transformation of it.[5]

This disruption took place as much in prose as in poetry, as is evident from perhaps the most vivid rejuvenation of the Jolasian *transition* avant-garde project in the late-1970s/early-1980s American literary production – the language poetry movement. The movement was organised around and channelled through the *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* magazine, which ran thirteen issues from 1978 to 1981 under the co-editorship of Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, and included poets as diverse as Ron Silliman and Lydia Davis, Clark Coolidge and Douglas Messerli, Lyn Hejinian and Tom Raworth. In retrospect, the two defined the *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* magazine in terms similar to those of Jolas' *transition* as "a forum for discussion and interchange; for writing that places its attention primarily on language and ways of making meaning, that takes for granted neither vocabulary, grammar, process, shape, syntax, program, nor subject matter" (*LB*, ix). *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, just as *transition*, aimed at blending poetic theory and thereby challenging generic conventions and possibly intervening into the socio-political by means of "exploring the numerous ways that meanings and values can be (&are) realized—revealed—produced in writing" (*LB*, ix). The primary concern, again as with *transition*, is primarily an aesthetic one – with "repossessing the word," restoring to verbal expression its extra-referential properties. Similar were the two projects' social goals—the creation of a community, of a shared space for articulation, and the control of the means of production—as well as the extent to which they were circumscribed by their socio-historical circumstances: Jolas' *transition* dissolved together with the disintegration of the Parisian inter-bellum literary scene and political regime, and together with the erasure of the Cold War political configuration in the early 1990s receded also the Language group awareness.

However, similarities stop here and differences proliferate. Revisiting *transition,* it was not so much in the footsteps of the Jolasian/Joycean project of "the revolution of language" that the language poets chose to follow, but what seems its counterpart if not opposite: Gertrude Stein's experiments with syntax, repetition and verbal minimalism. Ron Silliman's "Disappearance of the Word, Appearance of the World" describes the logic of late-capitalist commodity fetishism when applied to conventional descriptive and narrative forms as one in which "words cease to be valued for what they are themselves but only for their properties as instrumentalities leading us to a world outside or beyond them." Language under capitalist stage of development undergoes "an anaesthetic transformation of the perceived tangibility of the word," to the benefit of "its descriptive and narrative capacities," regarded as "preconditions for the invention of 'realism,' the optical illusion of reality in capitalist thought." What language poetry seeks to combat is the commoditised tie between "reference" and its deformation in "referentiality" (*LB*, 125), by posing as a "philosophy of practice in language" and "searching out the preconditions of post-referential language within the existing social fact" (*LB*, 131). Although Stein and Joyce are mentioned in the same breath, it is clear that Stein's undermining of the "assumption that the free evolution of a narrative art, as such, is possible" by means of her "continuous present" is preferred to Joyce's "reintegration of the novel into language," whose usefulness, for Silliman, is questioned by Joyce's arguably "pre-Saussurian linguistics, that of etymologies" (*LB*, 128-9).

The question remains, as critic Marjorie Perloff, has put it, "whether the calling into question of 'normal' language rules, or received discourses […] is a meaningful critique of capitalism,"[6] or indeed whether resistance against the commodification of language by means of "post-referential" can aspire to the same goal. In "The New Sentence," Silliman voices his belief that the historical failure of linguistics to consider the sentence is related to the general ten-

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5 Klinkowitz, *Literary Disruptions*, 32.
6 Marjorie Perloff, "The Word as Such: L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry in the Eighties," *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985) 234.

dency under late capitalism to ignore the materiality of language and writing. Silliman pushes the analysis further by claiming that the control exercised at the level of the sentence participates in the restrictive organization of society as a whole. The ideology of the sentence is such that "the sentence, hypotactic and complete, was and still is an index of class in society" (*IAT*, 569). Silliman's opposition to such control consists in the effort to maintain the sentence as the focus of attention. In place of hypotaxis, he places parataxis. This mode is not new in itself: Silliman cites as precursors the "fragmented" sentences of Stein's *Tender Buttons*. What is newer or at least reaches beyond the oftentimes reductive accusation of "anti-referentiality" is Silliman's "increased sensitivity to syllogistic movement" which enables works of the new sentence "a much greater capacity to incorporate ordinary sentences of the material world, because here form moves from the totality downward and the disjunction of a quoted sentence from a newspaper puts its referential content (a) into play with its own diction; (b) into play with the preceding and succeeding sentences […]; and (c) into play with the paragraph as a whole" (*IAT*, 573). If "language writing" means anything, Silliman concludes, it is "writing which does focus the reader onto the level of the sentence and below, as well as those units above." The new sentence is ultimately designed to oppose what Silliman views as the "deliberate" late capitalist exclusion—from linguistic as well as literary analysis—of "certain elements of signification, such as reference and syntax." This opposition takes place by means of incorporating "all the elements of language, from below the sentence level *and* above" (*IAT,* 575) – an incorporation of multitude on the level of discursive segments not unlike the Jolasian construction of multilingualism within one language. Still, it is precisely its explicit indebtedness to Stein's exploration of repetition and syntactic minimalism that stands at the root of the crucial difference between the two poetic programmes, marking off the Language poetry movement most clearly as different from Jolas' revolution of the word. If Jolas' *transition* chose to combat the rise of nationalism and fascism by positing artistic cosmopolitanism and the Joycean multilingual word, then the group of poets around the *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* magazine resisted the commodity logic of late capitalism—whose chief effect upon language has been described by Ron Silliman as the "Disappearance of the Word"—by revisiting the legacy of Stein's syntactic innovations and positing a "New Sentence."

Still, there are a number of writers whose work suggests that the role of the avant-garde heritage of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* did play a pivotal role in the various conceptualisations of the roles and tasks of fiction in the period in question. The "disruption in tradition" observed by Klinkowitz did not cease once the 1960s dust had settled, but kept taking place in the course of the 1970s and well into the 1980s. Nor did it fully supplant the metafictional experimentation dominating the U.S. fiction prior to 1968. It follows from the previous chapter that many of the 1960s pioneers of American experimental fiction were actively publishing well into the 1980s and 90s. Unlike in Britain, where the sense of disconnect between the "avant-garde" generation of the 1960s and 70s (i.e. the B.S. Johnson "circle," brought to its end with B.S. Johnson's and Ann Quin's 1973 suicides) and the second-generation experimentalists (such as Angela Carter, Alasdair Gray, or Iain Sinclair) is a tangible one, in the U.S. there is no clear sense of generation sequence, and even less so of a gap or disparity. Nonetheless,1973 saw Raymond Federman's coinage of the term "surfiction," followed the next year by the founding of the Fiction Collective (including, among others, Ronald Sukenick), which formed the first American not-for-profit publishing collective run by and for innovative authors, and will present a convenient starting point in the following chronological arrangement.[7]

"ALL GOOD STORY TELLERS GO TO BETHICKETT": RAYMOND FEDERMAN

7 FC has been aptly characterised by critic Brian McHale as follows: "The Fiction Collective is not now, and never has been, an aesthetic school or movement on the model of the historical avant-gardes of the first half of this century. It was founded, rather, to serve as an alternative network of distribution and promotion, and so has more in common with current online discussion lists and linked Web-pages than it does with more recognizably school-like phenomena such as Language poetry or 1980s Cyberpunk" (Brian McHale, "Sukenick in Space, or, the Other Truth of the Page," *Musing the Mosaic: Approaches to Ronald Sukenick*, ed. Matthew Roberson [New York: SUNY Press, 2003] 139).

Raymond Federman's (1928-2009) work, in language, style and subject matter, presents the clearest link between 1970s U.S. fiction and developments in French post-war literary avant-garde, especially the *nouveau roman*.[8] Experimental in nature, but ultimately humanist in theme, Federman's fiction deals with the experience of death and survival, and a very concrete one.[9] In his essay "Before Postmodernism," Federman would not only tie his own writing career with a treatment of his Holocaust trauma, but would go even further:

> Postmodernism as a literary notion was invented to deal with the Holocaust. The prewar split between form and content was incapable of dealing with the moral crisis provoked by the Holocaust, and therefore writers like Beckett, Walter Abish, Ronald Sukenick, Primo Levi, Raymond Federman, Jerzy Kosinski, and many others, invented Postmodernism to search among the dead, to dig into the communal grave, in order to reanimate wasted blood and wasted tears [...] or perhaps simply in order to create something more interesting than death. (*C*, 122)

In 1947, Federman moved to the U.S. – English was a language he only learned as an adult. In America, Federman embarked on an academic career,[10] gradually coupled with his essayist work. His introduction to the seminal collection of essays entitled *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow* (1975) can be read as a critical/theoretical programme accompanying Federman's works of fiction. Federman opens by yet another, then-fashionable (perhaps necessary) denunciation of the "death of the novel" proclamation, arguing that, in its traditional form, this type of novel "is very *healthy* today" – and yet traditional fiction is not of his primary interest, which lies in "that fiction which the leaders of the literary establishment brush aside because it does not conform to *their* notions of what fiction should be; that fiction which supposedly has no value […] for the common reader" (*S*, 6-7). Like Johnson in Britain or Robbe-Grillet in France, Federman is adamantly opposed to the notion of "experimental fiction," arguing that the label serves as an umbrella term for "what is difficult, strange, provocative, and even original," and yet it is misleading in that "true experiments (as in science) never reach, or at least should never reach, the printed page." Hence:

> Fiction is called experimental out of despair. Samuel Beckett's novels are not experimental—no! it is the only way Beckett can write; Jorge Louis Borges's stories are not experimental; Joyce's fiction is not experimental (even though it was called that for some 30 or 40 years). All these are successful finished works. (*S*, 7)

Instead, for the kind of fiction that "tries to explore the possibilities of fiction," that "challenges the tradition that governs it," that "constantly renews our faith in man's imagination and not in man's distorted vision of reality," Federman proposes the name SURFICTION, based on the avant-garde notion of sur-reality: "Just as the Surrealists called that level of man's experience that functions in the subconscious SURREALITY, I call that level of man's activity that reveals life as fiction SURFICTION" (*S,* 7). Federman's coinage, most of all, seeks to abolish the mimetic, fiction-as-reality's-mirror duality: fiction is no longer to be regarded "as a pseudorealistic document that informs us about life," but should instead be judged "on the basis of what it is and what it does as an autonomous art form in its own right" (*S*, 8).

Having established a new notion, it now remains for Federman to determine its functioning and applicability, this by means of four propositions, addressing the four related issues of its reception, shape, material and meaning. Since the "very act of reading a book," to Federman's mind, has become "*boring* and *restrictive*," he calls for a questioning, challenging, and ultimate "demolishment" of the traditional method of reading, this in order "to give the reader an element of choice (active choice) in the ordering of the discourse and the discover of its meaning" (*S*, 9). Hence, what is called for is concrete prose, a text of distinct visual and spatial properties:

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8 Federman's biographer has summed up the roots of his fiction as follows: "Building on the work of (James) Joyce, (Louis-Ferdinand) Celine, (Samuel) Beckett, and other twentieth-century masters, his fictions are fascinating constructs that combine a brilliant style, unorthodox typography, and a masterful new approach to the development of characters and literary structure. […] Unlike the traditional novel, these works are not intended to be representations of events; they are events in their own right, language events that reflect on their own mode of becoming and that, in effect, critique themselves. [...] Federman questions the very nature of fiction, the fiction writer, and the reality that the writer's language is supposed to represent" (Welch D. Everman, "Raymond Federman," *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook: 1980* [Farmington Hills: Gale Group, 1981] 201).

9 Born in the Parisian suburb of Montrouge of a Jewish ancestry, Federman underwent a traumatic encounter with the Nazi Holocaust when in the summer of 1942, the Gestapo entered his family's apartment, taking his parents and his two sisters to the death camps. The 14-year-old Raymond, whom his mother had hidden in a closet, was the only survivor.

10 Federman earned his PhD at U.C.L.A. in 1963, his dissertation published in book-form in 1965 as *Journey into Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction*. This dissertation marked only the beginning of Federman's life-long fascination with Beckett, followed by no fewer than four other scholarly works in the course of the next fifteen years.

> That space, the page (and the book made of pages), must acquire new dimensions, new shapes, new relations in order to accommodate the new writing. And it is within this transformed topography of writing, from this new paginal (rather than grammatical) syntax that the reader will discover his freedom in relation to the process of reading a book, in relation to language and fiction. (*S,* 9-10)

Given that, in surfiction, life and fiction should become indistinguishable, the linear shape of narrative "is no longer possible," to be supplanted by a "digressive shape of fiction" whose elements will now "occur simultaneously and offer multiple possibilities of rearrangement in the process of reading" and the discourse will "circle around itself, create new and unexpected movements and figures in the unfolding of the narration," projecting itself backward and forward "along the curves of the writing" – and the extra-literary parallel/paradigm here is the cinema of Jean-Luc Godard (*S*, 11). Following from this is proposition number three: Federman posits "no limits to the material of fiction—no limits beyond the writer's power of imagination and beyond the possibilities of language." Hence, fiction should not be hampered by the necessity of producing "the well-made-personage who carried with him the burden of a name, a social role, a nationality, parental ties, and sometimes an age and a physical appearance," which should be replaced by "a fictitious creature who will function outside any predetermined condition," who "will be, in a sense, present to its own making" (*S,* 13). Last but not least, what becomes clear from the previous three propositions is that the meaning of the new fiction "will not create a semblance of order," but instead "offer itself for order and ordering," involving the active participation of the reader who "will be the one who extracts, invents, creates a meaning and an order for the people in the fiction," rather than "having simply received, passively, a neatly prearranged meaning" (*S,* 14).

What is striking about Federman's four propositions for the supposedly new "surfiction" is that all of them could be quite easily and aptly applied to *Finnegans Wake*. Federman chooses not to draw any genealogy or ally his project with any possible predecessor; instead, he identifies the following companionship of his contemporaries, according the pride of place to Beckett.[11] Why Joyce should not have figured in Federman's "surfictionist" manifesto (despite receiving a few honorary mentions elsewhere in the collection) would become clear in his early-90s essay collection entitled *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays*. In the opening essay, "Fiction Today or the Pursuit of Non-Knowledge," Federman opposes the Sartrian notions of literature involved with "the crisis of conscience" and the "crisis of consciousness" by arguing that instead, "the literature of the last 45 years concerned itself with itself, with literature, with the crisis of literature, with the crisis of language and of communication, with the crisis of knowledge, and not with social and political problems" (*C*, 5). This crisis of literature results in literature becoming "the explanation of why the writer cannot write, why he constantly confronts the failure of expression and communication, why he can no longer represent the world faithfully and truthfully," a dilemma encountered by "many writers throughout the first half of the twentieth century, especially those who were considered avant-garde: James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, André Gide, Thomas Mann, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, and Jean-Paul Sartre himself" (*C*, 6). To these are opposed Proust and Beckett who share "a feeling that something is wrong with literature, something is wrong with the act of expressing" (*C,* 7). Federman's crisis of literature turns out a crisis of knowledge.[12] Today's New Fiction, the plot emerges, seeks to "avoid knowledge deliberately, particularly the kind of knowledge that is received, approved, determined by conventions" (*C,* 9). It is here that Federman acknowledges predecessors other than Beckett – in the visual arts the "epistemological crisis" began in painting which "through Impressionism, Cubism, and Constructivism blurred the lines of the real, and eventually reached total abstraction, that is to say the total erasing of reality." In fiction, the

11 I am not alone in these wild imaginings. Many contemporary writers, each in his own personal "mad" way, have already successfully created the kind of fiction I tried to define in the preceding pages: Samuel Beckett, of course, in French and in English, Jorge Louis Borges and Julio Cortazar in Spanish, Italo Calvino in Italian, Robert Pinget, Claude Simon, Philippe Sollers, Jean Ricardou, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, and many others, in France, and in their own individual manner, a number of American writers such as John Barth, John Hawkes, Ronald Sukenick, William Burroughs, Donald Barthelme, Richard Kostelanetz, Jerzy Kosinski. (*S*, 14)

12 Since the Greeks, literature has constituted itself as the vehicle of knowledge in the form of apologies, commentaries, amplifications on other texts, decorations or explanations of knowledge. In other words, literature was an affirmation of faith, of certitude in knowledge. […] Beckett's novels seem to progress in exactly the opposite direction, retracting knowledge, canceling knowledge, dragging us slowly and painfully toward chaos and meaninglessness. […] This is also the case with most works of contemporary fiction known as avant-garde or experimental. The more pages we accumulate to the left as we read a novel, let's say by Alain Robbe-Grillet or Walter Abish, the less we seem to know. (*C*, 8-9)

process was slower since "realism (the great imposture of illusionism) held fiction captive" – with the important exception of "James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* which outrageously blurred meaning by dislocating words and syntax to become a gigantic verbal edifice of unreadability" (*C,* 12). This point is repeated and further solidified in the next essay, "Self-Reflexive Fiction and How to Get Rid of It" – where the self-reflexive novel is portrayed as a "troublesome, irritating, exasperating form of narrative" that is now finished, the question being, "What have we learned from it?" (*C,* 17) Federman traces the development of post-war US fiction through the conservative, "silent" 50s through the period of self-reflexivity in the 1960s and down to the New Fiction of the 1970s. Of the 1960s self-reflexive novel, he notes that although "the syntax remains normative, discursive, and even linear, and the narrative metonymic," still some of "the novels written during that period are audacious in terms of their subject matter," what Federman terms their "*irrealism*."[13]

However, one writer does stand out as sounding the knell of "the terms that define modernist fiction – that is to say, the element of description and representation of social reality and its language, and the formalism (stream of consciousness, interior monologue, psychological depth, syncopated syntax) associated with the inscribing of the subject into a fictional text" (*C,* 21) – William Burroughs and his cut-up technique. It is in his footsteps that the New Fiction writers emerging after 1968 follow, writing what Federman terms *critifiction*:

> Their fiction may not be as political as his, but nonetheless is subversive, for these writers are less interested in parodying the world or mocking history than transforming the language through which the world and history are represented. […] Many novels written in the 1970s read more like essays than pure fiction, or what I call **critifiction**: a kind of narrative that contains its own theory and even its own criticism. (*C,* 31)

Prominent among these are Ronald Sukenick, Walter Abish or Gilbert Sorrentino (of the writers considered here), as well as Steve Katz, George Chambers or Clarence Major. These writers, Federman suggests, enter into a ludic relationship with their readers, constantly questioning "the very act of using lang to write fiction, even at the risk of alienating the reader" (*C,* 32). Again, the spectre of the *Wake* looms in the background, to be dismissed:

> The New Novelists abandon the search for stable points of reference in reality and in history, abandon also the purely formalistic temptation that dominated literature before WWII and ultimately led to James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, certainly the greatest unreadable linguistic tour de force ever written. […] Gradually the stable syntax and the readable irony of the early parody-novels of the 1960s are disintegrated into a form of deliberate unreadability not unlike that of *Finnegans Wake*, not simply for aesthetic reason, however, but for subversive reasons. (*C*, 33)

Federman's binary opposition of "aestheticism" versus "subversion" is highly dubious, as the "revolutionary" Jolasian project alone clearly shows. Especially since the "subversiveness" of texts such as Abish's *Alphabetical Africa*, Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew,* Sukenick's *Long Talking Bad Condition Blues*, or Federman's own *The Voice in the Closet* lies in "their extreme self-reflexivity and their typographical 'exuberance'" which raise "fundamental questions about the role of fiction today" by exposing "the fixation of desires in language" (*C*, 34).

Federman's first novel, *Double or Nothing* (1971, 1976), is a "typographically exuberant" text *par excellence,* described variously as a multi-layered, bleakly comic work whose plot focuses on a young French immigrant who, having lost his family in the concentration camps, emigrates to America and is gradually initiated into a strange new world, simultaneously with the inventor's creation of these "events." The narrative is construed as taking place by means of multiple mediations and removes: the immigrant's story is told by a would-be author who imbricates his narration with narrative interferences from his own life, as well as intertwining the narrative with comments on the writing process itself. At least two additional voices are added to the layering, producing a potentially infinite regression of narrators. There are four primary ones: "the recorder" (designated by the first-person pronoun), "the protagonist" (third person), "the inventor" (second person) and "the author" ("that is to say, the *fourth* person"). Curiously enough, the

13 In the novel of the 1960s, where official history is mixed with the picaresque and burlesque adventures of the individual, where characters have no other substance than their fictitious personalities since they exist only as verbal beings, the author denounces the symbolic strata that shape history and the individual. Most of these novels propose nothing, they only illustrate the fact that reality is but a fraudulent verbal network, for to replace one reality with another is a senseless undertaking, because one merely substitutes one symbolic system for another. (*C,* 26)

rationale behind these *dramatis personae* arrangement was only divulged in Federman's next novel, *Take It or Leave It*:

> [T]his first novel [...] juggles four "voices": first, a rather stubborn and determined middle-aged man who decides to record word for word the story of another (second) man, rather paranoid and confused, who decides to lock himself up for a year (365 days, more or less), subsisting entirely on noodles (that's right), in order to write the story of yet another (third) young man, shy and naive, who comes from Europe (perhaps from France) to America and who (if the second voice can pull itself together sufficiently to write and be recorded by the first voice) will experience various adventures and so on but who must for the time being wait until he is charactered – all of which implies a fourth voice managing the glorious, sacred, gimmicky confusion craftily jumbled. (*TILI*, 361)

As critic Jerzy Kutnik, author of the first book-length study on Federman's and Sukenick's "surfiction," has observed, all these narrative gimmicks are "eventually reduced to one general problem, which is not so much how to tell this multilayered story convincingly and truthfully, but how to begin telling it at all."[14] The narrative layering becomes gradually so thick that the first person's presence in the "story" is not detectable since he exists exclusively through what the second person thinks, says, or does and what he then records "to the best of his ability and as objectively as possible" (*DN,* 00). Federman advertises the fact that within the fictional realm, the protagonist is nothing without its inventor and recorder:

> As for the second person, the one who suffers of paranoia, the gambler, the one who has decided to lock himself in the room for 365 days, his task is much more difficult than that of the first person […]. The [hero] is nothing in the double setup, the interplay between the first and the second person; as a matter of fact, unless the second person invents him, and the first person records him, he will never become anything. (*DN* 000, 00000)

The theme, as will become Federman's trademark, is the erasure of history and memory on both mass and individual scale perpetrated through the Holocaust.[15] Typography stages this regression by presenting each page as a complete visual unit. The book is presented as two hundred and two pages of concrete typescript, without even its margins typographically "justified," hence presenting the book as "its own becoming."[16] Federman's solution to the task of coping with the "unreal reality" of so much of American life, is in his technique of making a reality more real: that of the book itself. His "real fictitious discourse" (the book's subtitle) is not a sham illusion of some other life but rather just what it says, so many words on so many pages, bound together as a book the reader holds and process of narration as the reader sees it unfold. What critic Marcel Cornis-Pope has termed Federman's "use of the second person as a self-problematizing technique"[17] can be clearly sensed in passages such as the following (and throughout the text):

> You've got to invent something more credible more reliable. Even potatoes would not work. And then when you get the guy convinced but you start mentioning the toilet paper for sure the guy will throw you out of his place […] You can't take a chance and run out. That would really be/ a hell of a note (*DN,* 105-06)

> you? crazy/or irresponsible Rooms and suitcases that/? fine but a tenor saxophone that? too/ much Rooms and suitcases it ? living/in one place and traveling sometimes/A whole life ? contained between/rooms and suitcases The room ? you ? in one place The suitcases that you ?/from one place to another That ? the way to ? movement Movement in/time The time element ? important/too Space and time in other words. (*DN,* 198)

Klinkowitz notes that Federman's division of the authorial fictional voice into thirds runs counter to the New Novelistic "degradation" thereof "back to this zero point," as well as counter to its preoccupation with the phenomenology of perception: "Phenomenologists, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and many critics of the French structuralists as well have regretted that we must deal with a second-order language, divorced from the thing signified but living only insomuch as it points back to that thing."[18]

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14 Jerzy Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance: The Fiction of Ronald Sukenick and Raymond Federman* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986) 182.

15 In Kutnik's words, "the recorder is able to render concretely the unspeakable truth of the past which both memory (the protagonist) and imagination (the inventor) fail to articulate simply by means of typographical symbols: the parenthetical '(XXXX)' which, more powerfully than any words, conveys the reality of the young survivor's erased past" (Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance*, 184-5).

16 Klinkowitz speaks of a "uniquely personal claim to legitimacy" in which "Federman is covered: no shoddy tricks or trumped-up illusion of reality, just so much writing" (Klinkowitz, *Literary Disruptions*, 177).

17 Marcel Cornis-Pope, "From Cultural Provocation to Narrative Cooperation: Innovative Uses of the Second-Person in Raymond Federman's Fiction," *Style* 28.3 (Fall 1994): 414.

18 Klinkowitz ties this phenomenological concern on Federman's part to his Beckettian interests: "From his studies of Samuel Beckett, Federman knows that literature fails when it claims to represent the other, so in his own novel he simply lets it represent itself. As such it is a system, an esthetic one, but by claiming to be nothing else it becomes a real entity" (Klinkowitz, *Literary Disruptions*, 178).

Take It or Leave It (1976), Federman's second novel in English, is an extended reworking of his French novel *Amer Eldorado*. A note on the title page calls it an "exaggerated second-hand tale," whose plot concerns a young French immigrant in the U. S. Army (Frenchy), who has thirty days to travel from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to a ship that will take him to Korea, but who must set out north to upstate New York to retrieve some crucial army papers. The nameless narrator's narrative is constantly interrupted by faceless audience members and literary critics (the "tellers"), providing the text with Federman's staple meta-critical commentary. The underlying theme, again, is the Holocaust and the experience of the exile and the notion of their unrelatability – as one of the comments has it, "all fiction is digression" and "a biography is something one invents afterwards" (*TILI,* 97), particularly in a case like Federman's where the imperative is retranslate continually his life story into new narrative patterns and languages. Both autobiographically and symbolically, the narrative persona projected by Federman is a "schizotype" who "rides two languages (-/-) who humps (x/x) two languages at the same time" (*TILI,* 186). The situation of Federman's exile also underwrites the text's preoccupation with America – here portrayed as land of (largely wasted) opportunity:

> [N]o idea what America was about (who does?), geographically speaking (that is), no idea particularly of the size. Yes! Endless spaces and tremendous colors. Wow! Unbelievable the colors and the spaces […]. You've got to see that to believe it […] ENORMOUS distances – between places! Between people too! Between words also And all these people (all these words) all of them Americans who look (what a way to start!) at you, who scare you shitless who scare the hell out of you. (*TILI,* 19)

By means of his "tellers," Federman puts his narrative experiments in dialogue with similar and contemporaneous advances in e.g. the *Tel Quel* group: as he explains, this novel pits "the singled narrator's voice (varied and disguised, to be sure)" against "those of various unnamed but easily identifiable others (the TEL QUEL boys, some odd strangers, plus everyone else Hombre has even known or imagined)" (*TILI,* 361). The traditional triumvirate narrator-hero-reader is redefined here as main teller, character-teller, listener, to suit the economy of a "recitation," a term borrowed from Beckett that designates a self-conscious, histrionic activity of combining memorization with invention, oral production with the rewriting of preexisting scripts. Indeed, Federman's most pronounced indebtedness in his narrative experiments to Beckett's dramatic monologues is acknowledged in a passage where his own version of narrative purgatory is (with a word borrowed from *Finnegans Wake*), a "Bethickett," a Beckett-made thicket: "all good story tellers go to BETHICKETT on the way to Heaven and that is why perhaps they are so long in reaching their destination" (*TILI*, 176).

Federman's *The Voice in the Closet* (1979), published in a bilingual English-French (*La voix dans le cabinet*) edition together with "Echoes" by *Tel Quel*'s Maurice Roche, is the most voluble testimony to both Federman's bilingualism and to the biographical and deeply personal basis of his writing. It ranks among Federman's staple book-objects: a visual art-book without pagination consisting of twenty pages with eighteen lines per page and sixty-eight characters per line. From this constricted form—which parallels the physical constriction of a closet—emerges the voice of a boy hiding in a closet while the Nazis take away his family. The voice speaks to a writer named "federman," who has repeatedly tried and failed to tell the boy's story. *The Voice in the Closet* is Federman's fictional re-living and re-enactment of his personal war trauma – a textual flow, unpaginated, without punctuation or capitalisation, which opens as follows:

> here now again selectricstud makes me speak with its balls all balls foutaise sam says in his closet upstairs but this time it's going to be serious no more masturbating on the third floor escaping into the trees no the trees were cut down liar it's winter now delays no more false starts yesterday a rock flew through the windowpane voices and all I see him from the corner of my eye (*VC,* unpaged)

"Foutaise" is French for "bullshit" or "garbage" – idle talk, and Federman's childhood memory is saturated with the occasional leaps from English into French as he recalls what he terms his "symbolic rebirth":

> my life began in a closet a symbolic rebirth in retrospect as he shoves me in his stories whines his radical laughter up and down pulverized pages with his balls mad fizzling punctuation question of changing one's perspective view the self from the inside from the point of view of its capacity […] they pushed me into the closet among empty skins and dusty hats my mother my father the soldiers they cut little boys' hands old wife's tale send him into his life cut me now from your voice (*VC*, unpaged)

The existential plight and the static, well-nigh paralysed situation of the speaking subject (referring to himself in the third person) resembles Beckett's dramatic monologues ("Sam" is recalled in the very first line), but *The Voice in the Closet* as a text toying with and problematizing its status as recorded speech is also in the lineage of textual streams of consciousness, in passages such as

> how I crouched like a sphinx falling for his wordshit moinous but where were you tell me dancing when it all started where were you when the door closed on me shouting I ask you when I needed you the most letting me be erased in the dark at random in his words scattered nakedly telling me where to go (*VC*, unpaged)

The "wordshit" and "moinous" compounds ("moinous" combining the French *moi* and *nous*, a partly successful synthesis of voices and pronominal persons, but also functioning as an anagram for *ominous*) also bear a Joycean imprint, as does Federman's playful variation on his surname, "featherman." The wordshit image is further strengthened in scatological passages emphasising the parallels between writing and excreting:

> I am not ready for my summation nor do I wish to participate any longer willy nilly in the fiasco of his fabrication failed account of my survival abandoned in the dark with nothing but my own excrement to play with now neatly packaged on the roof to become the symbol of my origin in the wordshit of his fabulation that futile act of creating images of birth into death backward into the cunt of reality regressing toward my expulsion there must be a better way to manifest myself to assert my presence in his exercise-book speak my first words on the margins of verbal authenticity (*VC,* unpaged)

As critic Davis Schneiderman has noted, the scatological dimension is a constant in Federman, rendering him part of a tradition including, quite prominently, Joyce.[19] *The Voice in the Closet* is thematically most concerned with the paradox of narrating the trauma of, even though second and merely "symbolic" – birth, an experience usually unavailable and inaccessible to the (already speaking and writing) subject. The tone is one of sheer exuberance, a cadenced, repetitive incantation:

> already said already seen foolish pleasures to proliferate in verbal mud to build come back upon retrace already traced lines inscribed a course of action only certitude here in closet alone outside mystery to be found helplessness of an elsewhere beginning veiled fingers of plagiarism who speaks to whom with neutral voice (*VC*, unpaged)

There are, to be sure metafictional passages in which the text comments on itself, its structure and procedure, such as "questions affirmations texture designs negations speculations double or nothing where sun and other stars still burn neither symbols of a beginning nor metaphors microcosm reality gigantic mythocosm edifice of words integrating space figures inside rhetorical perfection," and finally, *Wake*-like, it comes to its own beginning in the concluding passage:

> [his life] begins again closet confirmed as selectricstud resumes movement among empty skins images crumble through distortions spins out lies into a false version leapfrogs infinite stories falling silently into abyss to be replaced retold confusion foretelling subsequent enlightenment
>
> but to commit transgression for those above those below negates survival time now then to be serious upstairs in his closet foutaise to speak no more my truth to say from fingers federman here now again at last (*VC,* unpaged)

Not only is "again at last" an echo of the *Wake*'s own ending ("a way a lone a last a loved a long the" [*FW* 628.15-6]), but just as there was no capitalised letter at the beginning, nor is there a full stop at the end, the concluding "again" a mirror image or a direct echo of the opening one.

Of Federman's later, typographically and formally less innovative work, one deserves special mention by way of conclusion: *To Whom It May Concern* (1990), his most heavily Beckett-indebted work which uses the "pla(y)giaristic" talent of its protagonist to rewrite personal and collective history.[20] It begins in a familiar dialogic mode with an apos-

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19 Federman's narratives […] map a postmodern scatology of misdirection, a topos of the excremental. […] His excreted words, layered like mortar over traditionally communicative prose, become in his works (and certainly in Sterne, Swift, Cervantes, Diderot, as well as the endless host of moderns including Stein and Joyce) a non-apprehensible sludge surrounding and swallowing the communicative literal language of "plot" in order to expose the impossibility of second-degree fidelity" (Davis Schneidermann, Surfiction, Not Sure Fiction: RF's Second-Degree Textual Manipulations," *Federman's Fictions – Innovation, Theory, Holocaust*, ed. Jeffrey R. DiLeo (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011) 115.

20 Following Beckett's example, "Federman's fiction has struggled with versions of the 'unnamable,' replacing 'plot' with a conditional 'story' that allows for rupture but also for some development, at least of the circular kind" (Marcel Cornis-Pope, *Narrative Innovation and Cultural Rewriting in the Cold War and After* [New York: Palgrave, 2001] 197-8).

trophe to a narratee who is most probably a friend and fellow writer: "Listen […] suppose the story were to begin with Sarah's cousin delayed for a few hours in the middle of his journey […] stranded in the city where he and Sarah were born" (*WMC,* 9). Against the background of this personal post-Holocaust story of separation and reunion is set also the dramatic history of the last fifty years that has impacted it. However, in a perfectly Beckettian fashion, this narratee appears at times to be little more than a figment of the narrator's imagination, the second person actually indicating a form of self-address, again stimulated by the momentous, or well-nigh impossible, nature of the task for a single narrator – the burden of history must be shared even through a spectral splitting of the speaking subject into two, an act of ventriloquism. The narrator's ambition is to create "a stereophonic effect" in the linear discourse of history: "If only one could inscribe simultaneously in the same sentence different moments of the story [...]. That's how it feels right now inside my skull. Voices within voices entangled within their own fleeting garrulousness" (*WMC,* 76-77).

Federman's surfictionist project of creating fiction not as a representation or imitation of a "reality," but as literature's rhetorical/narratological embrace of its own particular "reality" within the technological space of the book, works to create a new sort of referential link between writing and the world. Even though not explicitly Joycean and more clearly indebted to Beckett, Federman's project follows in the footsteps of the Jolasian "revolution of the word" and parallels the contemporary advances of the likes of B.S. Johnson or Maurice Roche.

HAVING "FUNNAGAIN" WITH WORDS: RONALD SUKENICK

As was the case with Federman, Ronald Sukenick's (1932-2004) debut as novelist was preceded by his scholarly work—on Wallace Stevens—although unlike Federman, by mid-70s and the time of the *Surfiction* essay collection, Sukenick had published no fewer than four works of fiction.

His contribution to the volume, "The New Tradition in Fiction," provides a useful insight into his own practice of fiction – and an appreciation for Joyce far deeper than Federman's. Sukenick opens with a reflection on tradition and "progress" in fiction, unmasking both as conceptual inventions rather than empirical entities.[21] Consequently, this "new tradition of fiction" makes itself felt "as a presence rather than a development" and instead of "a linear sequence of historical influences," it resembles "a network of interconnections revealed to our particular point of view." Still, there is a distinct beginning to it, and a traditional one at that: François Rabelais, from whom "might go almost anywhere—to encyclopedic multiplicity unified by wordplay in *Finnegans Wake*, or to Sterne via a joke borrowed from Rabelais in *Tristram Shandy*" (*S,* 37). Part of this new tradition is what Sukenick terms "spatialized writing" – with an appropriate tip of a hat to Hugh Kenner's "technological reality" of the book: "A novel is both a concrete structure and an imaginative structure—pages, print, binding containing a record of the movements of a mind. The form is technological, the content is imaginative. The old novel tends to deny its technological reality" (*S,* 38). Instead, a change in consciousness is to take place:

> We have to learn to think about a novel as a concrete structure rather than an allegory, existing in the realm of experience rather than of discursive meaning and available to multiple interpretation on none, depending on how you feel about it. […] One slogan that might be drawn from Sterne's anti-art technique is that, instead of reproducing the form of previous diction, the form of the novel should seek to approximate the shape of our experience. (*S,* 40)

There are, however, predecessors far more recent than Sterne, and Sukenick is quick to recognise them, identifying "two important types of fiction that disappeared almost completely during the literary depression of the forties and fifties," both stemming from "the revolution of the word, […] probably still the critical element in a renewed fiction, and the one least reckoned with by contemporary novelists." The reason it is crucial is that it "deals with the nature of lan-

21 Obviously there's no progress in art. Progress toward what? The a-g is a convenient propaganda device, but when it wins the war everything is a-g, which leaves us just about where we were before. […] Traditions, also, are after the fact. Traditions are inventions—a decision accumulates about which part of the museum is most useful to us in the ongoing present. Now and then a reorganization seems in order. […] But suppose fiction is something other than what we tend to think it is? I would like to propose the invention of a new tradition for fiction. (*S,* 35-6)

guage itself, and any art […] is fundamentally about its medium," and the two types of this fiction are, indeed, the already identified Joycean and the Steinian modes:

> Both the impossibly overloaded punning in *Finnegans Wake*, and the impossibly opaque wordplay in Stein's *Tender Buttons*, raise the question of whether it is really the pragmatic, discursive, rationally intelligible side of language that best puts us in touch with our experience of the world and of ourselves. […] John Ashbery wrote recently that there are two ways of going about things: one is to put everything in and the other is to leave everything out. Joyce tends to put everything in and Gertrude Stein tends to leave everything out, and they both arrive at an enigma. The only way to confront an enigma is to leave behind what you know in the hope of discovering something that you don't—understanding requires a release from understanding. (*S,* 42)

There are, to be sure, other possible predecessors (e.g., the "sexual" iconoclasts, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Anaïs Nin) and many different lines of development – there is the "revitalization of narrative in the exuberant inventions of writers like John Barth and Gabriel Garcia Márquez," or the work of "the mythmakers and fairytalers like William Gass and Robert Coover," but the new style derived from "the revolution of the word" and the Joyce/Stein duality is distinct from these. Sukenick calls it "the Bossa Nova" style and provides the following negative definition: "no plot, no story, no character, no chronological sequence, no verisimilitude, no imitation, no allegory, no symbolism, no subject matter, no 'meaning'" (*S,* 43). It is this style that Sukenick chooses to approximate in his own work.

Joyce makes similarly important appearances in Sukenick's crucial book-length work on the theory of fiction, his *In Form: Digressions on the Act of Fiction* (1985). What can be gleaned from the essay collection as a whole is theme central to Sukenick theorist and writer: the immediacy of experience as the greatest value of the novel medium, whose uniqueness is in that, like no other medium, it "can so well deal with our strongest and often most immediate responses to the large and small facts of our daily lives" (*IF,* 242). This immediacy of experience, something inherently disorganised and inchoate, is reflected in what Sukenick posits as three compositional principles for the novel: the embrace of the arbitrary, improvisation, and collage linkage, which together work on equating the sense-meaning within experience to that of reading.[22] Another key notion, for Sukenick, is the "truth of the page," which does not refer narrowly to the arrangement of print against black space but to the acknowledgement of the autonomic nature of the medium of fiction in general, whose meaning is really a matter of the experience of writing and reading the text. This poetics of "fiction-as-composition" is a holistic and processual theory based on the conception of the imagination as "the means of uniting the self with reality" (*IF,* 26). It is also expressive of the writer's general aesthetic views, according to which "the successful work of art is a discrete energy system that takes its place among the other things of our world" (*IF,* 29). It is as part of these general concerns that Joyce's work receives its due in Sukenick's theory of fiction.

In a digression "against expression," Sukenick moves from the opening maxim, "Art is not imitation; it is example" (*IF*, 25) toward a consideration of how 20th-century fiction moved beyond expression and imitation, and argues that this moved occurred between Joyce and Beckett.[23] Elsewhere, meditating on the notion of "holy book," relevant in the sense that "narrative fiction, unlike history or journalism, is about what hasn't happened" and "like religion, though in a different way, it deals in faith," Sukenick again draws on the example of Joyce's *Wake* as a mode of authenticating narrative fiction:

> The narrative might once more authenticate fiction as having some urgency other than the commercial. This is certainly one of the directions indicated in Joyce, especially in *Finnegans Wake*. But along with the repetitions of tradition in Joyce goes a corresponding iconoclasm, a profanation and dismemberment of tradition through collage. (*IF,* 81)

Sukenick's most sustained reflection on Joyce and the *Wake* comes in his four-page "Finnegan Digression," a typographically complex text combining, in the right-hand column, a series of questions and answers on the subject of

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22 "As critic Jerzy Kutnik has put it: "Just as the meaning of experience comes, or is perceived, "after the fact," so the meaning of a novel is a product generated in the creative act and not something preexisting it and only reproduced in, or transmitted by, a literary form" (Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance,* 64).

23 "Watt's cryptic word games that treat language as detached, autonomous, hermetic, and that can be read as a parody of Joyce, indicate a literary difference between the friends. For Beckett, however autonomous language may be, it is finally the last sign of the presence of identity and, if only through the act of composition, of a vestigial, irreducible, and perhaps undesirable connection with experience. In his hermeticism, Joyce is modern; Beckett is the beginning of something else" (*IF,* 26).

Finnegans Wake with—in the left-hand column—a quasi-fictional narrative in the stream-of-consciousness method. The questions surrounding the *Wake*, "the funnymental novel of our error," or the fundamental novel of our era, are six in total and concern the text's genre, meaning, its "verysimilitude," its treatment of time, its "newness" and language. Regarding the *Wake*'s genre, Sukenick makes the following fusion between myth, dream, vision and art:

> The content of multiple myth (including the private myth of James Joyce in person). The techniques of dream. The omniscience of vision. The tone of a joke. A sacreligious [sic] joke. *The Bible*, starring James Joyce as God the Father paring his fingers on the chamberpot while he makes. Makes what? His mock-epic of creation in one movement, bowel, macrocosm through Mickrocosm. A dirty joke? It always is. Is the novel out of ordure? Dream, vision, joke? All of these? None of these? Art is finally art, not secondhand life. A record of creation (and all of creation) is a bible. And a bible is a book. And a book is just a book. An edition to creation. Break down restrictive ideas of fiction: suggest concrete reality of book as artifact. (*IF,* 99)

As for the possibility of explicating the *Wake*, Sukenick considers it "an enigma" given to a "constipated rational mind," a "statement so total it becomes totally ambiguous: Babel-babble" in which the following takes place:

> Order becomes ordure – it stinks. Drop it. Play around with it. Play becomes serious – a new order. Life is no joke. You can't win. Winagains Fake. The best you can do is enigma, puzzle, indeterminacy. That's life. Back to enigma means back to life. Winagainst Fate. (*IF,* 99-100)

The question of "verysimilitude" brings forth the question of reality, both of and within the *Wake* – the basic question of "what is it?":

> It's not imitation. It's life in process, thought in process, process in process. But not real life – it's static: the more it changes the more it stays the same. If it moves it's alive, if it stays still it's art. If it does both it's *Finnegans Wake*. It's a fake. But it inCORPorates. A symbol indicates, a pun inCORPorates. Some business. Is this corpse dead? Wake up. Similitude? Very. (*IF,* 100)

After further punning on the subjects of character ("From the cul du sac of life to the sac du cul of the Wake") or compositional principles ("Synthesize, don't anal lies" [*IF,* 100]), Sukenick finally tackles the question of the *Wake*'s language, the question of "what's it made of?":

> Words. Not narrative. Not description. Not observation. Not characterization. Not comment. Not detail. Words. The river rather than its containing banks, the water rather than its course, which is in any case circular. The medium itself, language, words as concrete objects. A cure for schizophrenia: no more division between abstraction and sensation, thinking and feeling. Word as magic. Language is a thing to be seen and heard, is real, not facsimile. Back to expressive utterance and immediate apprehension in metaphor – that's real too, as real as the news. Wake language is totally particularized in a given context, totally itself, yet it enlarges reality, discovers reality, maybe creates reality. New language connections = new reality connections. The Word gives us life. (*IF*, 100-1)

Thus, Sukenick's approach is a variation on the Beckettian "whatness"-of-language observation, with the Wittgensteinian paraphrase that the "connections of my language and the connections of reality." The coda to Sukenick's meditation on the nature and achievement of the *Wake* is a question without a ready answer – one concerning language as historical/social process versus language as bodily product:

> (How about a Wake language whose frame of reference is not fundament ally historical but open to common experience not committed to the black hole of the dead end of the closed circle of simultaneity but part of the endless unpredictable river of sequence: concretion over abstraction/ contemplation over information / esthetic over utilitarian […] as immediate as babytalk that expresses not only the reality of the head but that of the whole body its feeling energies needs sensations. Language is speech, speech is voice, voice is of the body. A wake is all about a body)? (*IF,* 100)

Written as a parody/homage to Joyce's modernist icon, "The Finnegan Digression" comes to view the *Wake* as what Sukenick claims all written art must be: both theory and performance, or what Sukenick later on has called narralogue, narrative as "a mode of understanding that uniquely is quick enough, mutable enough, and flexible enough to catch the stream of experience, including our experience of the arts" (*N*, 1). Strategically placed after *In Form*'s discussion of the use of typographic play and the breakdown of genres, "The Finnegan Digression" functions as a pivotal point between Sukenick's theory and practice.[24]

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24 As Steve Tomasula has noted, "immediately we see the resistance to convention that is so central to Sukenick; it is there on a sentence-by-sentence level, embodied by this passage's resistance to be controlled, that is, quoted in the traditional academic style. As in much of Sukenick's work, any quote that doesn't include the white space is a misquote; to quote only the words […] is to separate the dance from dancer, to paint a still life in the original sense of the word" (Steve Tomasula, "Taking The Line For A Walk: *In Form* To *Narralogues*, A History *In Medias Res*," *Musing The Mosaic*, 16).

Through spatial play, Sukenick's four-page text takes on the polysemous density of poetry, simultaneously asking: What is *Finnegans Wake*; what is fundamental about the novel?; what is novel about our mistaken ideas of the novel?; what is experimental writing? It implies that *Finnegans Wake* is the fundamental novel of our times, seeing how it "went on trucking," spawning a tradition, including the "me" writing "Finnegan Digression," which is an error, for this path, especially with the commercialization of literature and the exhaustion of the avant-garde, leads nowhere but down. Still, in its formal properties partaking of those of Sukenick's fiction, the "Finnegan Digression" solicits the same sort of interactive reader approach called for in both Sukenick's theory and practice of literature.[25] The question, eventually, becomes one of "What would you do with it?" The answer: "Play with it. Joyce did" (*IF,* 101). And if that were to be redone, "what would you have then?" The answer: "Funnagain" (*IF,* 102). And fun again with Joyce was, indeed, had – in Sukenick's fiction.

Throughout his prolific output, Sukenick advances what would become a staple aesthetic principle of surfiction, "the truth of the page" as derived from the Burroughs quote in *In Form*: "The writer shouldn't be writing anything except what's in his mind at the moment of writing" (*IF,* 25). There are, as Brian McHale has pointed out, two alternative "truths" of the page. In an earlier manifesto, the "Thirteen Digressions" of 1973, Sukenick speaks of "the two realities behind literature: the reality of the spoken word and the reality of the written word" (*IF*, 30).[26] In this context, Sukenick's "directional" titles—*Up* (1968), *Out* (1973)*, Down and In* (1987)—seem to acquire a different connotation: "they come to sound like directional arrows on a keyboard, allowing us to maneuver around the two-dimensional space of the (virtual) page."[27]

Sukenick's debut novel *Up* was published in 1968, a year in which, Charles B. Harris reminds us, the conventions "most closely associated with postmodern fiction are defined and, in many respects, exhausted" as there are "few 'pure' examples of metafiction" appearing "after the late 1960s, Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* (1979) and the 1970s 'surfiction' of Raymond Federman being significant exceptions."[28] Contrasting Sukenick's novel with two of the other great 1968 experimental texts, Gass' *Willie Masters Lonesome Wife* and Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* brings home the point of Sukenick's novelty in insisting on "experience beyond language" and using autobiographical elements out of the conviction that "experience begins with the self."[29] *Up* presents time as measured by page numbers, time reduced to mere present, for each page records only the presence of a thought in the writer's mind at the moment of writing it down. The narrative, featuring the protagonist Ron Sukenick's various attempts at sexual conquest and his relation with the New York avant-garde scene of the 1960s, has no identifiable linear plot or story line. A collection of disjointed fragments, its improvisational and discontinuous form renders impossible any unitary or unequivocal centre of narrative mediation or narrative authority, as the narrator himself has no stable, definable identity, and nor do any other characters. The party scene that concludes the novel is a farewell party as well as a celebration. Ron invites all of his characters, from whom he realises he is now free – as Harris has observed, "the novel doesn't conclude, then, so much as it terminates, closing on a strange and evocative image."[30] The only stable elements in the characterization are the characters' names, but these serve merely as placeholders for completely disparate character features.

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25 "Sukenick's columns and word games and spatial arrangement of type make the readerly performance gymnastic. While reader execute linguistic flips (puns) and sommersaults (assonance) and ssssssplits (onomatopoeia), they can't help but become aware of their role as co-author, a role easily submerged in the traditional "readerly" text" (Tomasula, "Taking The Line For A Walk, 18).

26 McHale comments: "The first of these corresponds […] to the underlying orality of spontaneous prose […], to the writer 'sitting there writing the page.' The second of these realities, the written word, has different consequences. […] This other 'truth of the page' is the truth of writing's *materiality*, its existence as a structure of real objects: the white space of the page, the shapes that typography makes, the concrete 'technological reality' of the book (*IF*, 206)" (McHale, "Sukenick in Space, or, the Other Truth of the Page," *Musing the Mosaic*, 143-4).

27 McHale, "Sukenick in Space," 144.

28 Charles B. Harris, "'At Play in the Fields of Formal Thinking': *Up* and Post-modernist Metafiction," *Musing The Mosaic*, 42.

29 "Sukenick's *Up* signals an altogether different direction. For if late-modernist Gass wishes to demarcate literature from life and early-postmodernist Barth wants to illustrate that life, like literature, is also a text […], Sukenick insists, both in *Up* and in his essays and interviews […], that fiction provides us with a way to make contact with what he calls 'experience beyond language.' Thus Sukenick begins to use autobiographical elements in his fiction long before most other postmodernists do, not because he wants to write about himself but, as he explains in an early essay, because "experience begins with the self" (Harris, "*Up* and Post-modernist Metafiction," 43).

30 Harris, "*Up* and Post-modernist Metafiction," 57-8.

This destabilisation takes place on the level of the names themselves; Sukenick's key biographical theme of exile (shared with Federman) allows for the following ironic self-portrait: son of a Brooklyn immigrant, "Ronnie Suchanitch Sukanitch Subanitch […] Sukenick" (*Up* 97) feels at home in his East Side bachelor apartment surrounded by "images of heroic isolation, types of exile and self-exile, Kafka, Joyce, Lawrence, Melville" (*Up,* 265). *Up* records the process whereby the writer tries to get at the truth of his experience by imaginatively recording his thoughts and perceptions occurring during and because of the composition of his novel. As a writer actually sitting at his desk and composing a novel, Sukenick obviously sees the book he is writing as both an imaginative and a coherent structure. He reminds the reader of the materiality of the book on several occasions by using various typographical devices (multiple columns, various font sizes, etc.). The imperative, throughout, is on the truthfulness of the record: "it's all true what I've written, every word of it, I insist on that" (*Up,* 329). Another theme running through the text is the metaphor of writing as flight, most convincingly rendered in the kite-flying episode, where after two unsuccessful attempts, a group of characters finally launch a kite and manage to keep it up in the air for a while. Kutnik has aptly linked this metaphor with Sukenick's overall poetics, his theory of composition as an autonomous and continuous process.[31] However, this project, just as the kite flying, is ultimate doomed – Kutnik points out that "*Up* does not fully satisfy the requirement of Sukenick's aesthetics of failure because it moves in a (closed) circle: it emerges as an experience and then folds back on itself."[32] Moreover, the narrator's own idea of experiential immediacy is fairly self-serving, reducing the flow of experience to his activities as a writer –to which one of the fictional critics in the book objects: "[F]iction isn't confession. You and I may be interested in your tribulations and so on. But the reader. To the reader this sounds like a maudlin exercise in group therapy" (*Up* 55). And although these objections come from a reviewer stuck in a canonical version of modernism, with predilection for "something in the first person, as if Bloom were writing Proust in order to recapture the American myth like Faulkner" (*Up,* 57), his criticism remains largely valid.

Out (1973) is a text entirely structured by spacing. It starts with chapter 10 and concludes with chapter 0. There are ten lines in each paragraph in chapter 10, nine in chapter 9, and diminishing by one line in each successive chapter. However, the number of paragraphs per page remains a constant three, although in chapter 1, several pages have only two paragraphs. Chapter by chapter, the empty space grows, "allowing his novel to move out from between the book's covers and literally disappear from the page."[33] This form has an obvious impact on the reading process, as the reader ends up turning the pages of the book at an ever increasing rate corresponding to the acceleration of the pace of the "action." The first five chapters present the unfolding of the plot while systematically undercutting its "reality" by studding it with hints about its fictitiousness; the middle chapter, 5, lays bare the fictitiousness of the story told; and the final five chapters replay the fictions of the novel's first half *as* fictions constructed in front of the reader. The plot, if there is such, involves the journey of an indefinable character, or a number of characters, across the US from NY to California. A classic American theme were it not for the indefinability – as in *Up*, the plot effectively develops by an accumulation of causally discontinuous episodes which form random sequences and do not create a meaningful pattern: as is advertised on page one, "it's all chance" (*O,* 1). The randomness is further brought home in a chapter 9 scene in which the purpose of the character's mission is read from a letter soup, via various permutations on the letters. What critics have termed a "stream of character," already hinted at in *Up*, here becomes one of the central tropes, as the main character transforms from Harrold to Carl to Nick to Rex to RS to Ron to Roland Sycamore to be finally reduced to the minimal R. *Out* features numerous metafictional comments on its own procedures as fiction, e.g. "Data accumulates obscurity persists" (*O,* 100); "Connection develops meaning falls away" (*O,* 128); "Meaning disintegrates connection proliferates what does that mean" (*O,* 164). Kutnik aptly ties the letter-soup episode in with the larger con-

31 "As a metaphor for writing, the image expresses Sukenick's theory of composition as an autonomous and continuous flowing which is not so much governed by the writer as initiated by him and then imaginatively participated in. Like kite flying, writing is an activity whose meaning is the actual performance of this activity and not some goal to be reached by means of this performance" (Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance,* 97).
32 Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance,* 98.
33 Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance,* 99.

cerns of Sukenick's fiction, its "sensual approach to the world, internalized via the sense."[34] Sukenick's novel demonstrates playfully and self-consciously that the most obvious thing done by any writer when writing is that he *writes*; therefore, it is important to render the experience of writing *as* writing – hence, the end of the text foregrounds the end of writing and the move back "out" into the world:

> this way this way this way this way this way this way this
> way out this way
> way out (*O,* 294)

Long Talking Bad Condition Blues (1979) begins as a solid block of unpunctuated prose, followed by a prose block in which "gaping holes" have been introduced in lieu of punctuation, followed by pages in which blocks of prose and rectangles of white space alternate. At the exact center of the text, page 57 is entirely blank; then the whole sequence is recapitulated in reverse, akin to a second verse in a blues song. The prose, as in Federman's *Voice in the Closet* (published in the same year), is unpunctuated, and Sukenick's juxtaposition of words in a free syntax gives rise to subtle wordplay:

> complaints of clams gesticulation of sea weed torpor of sidewalks hullaballoo of slugs gleam of jet planes smudge of stacks rain drops bridge work tin cans knees streets sighs curves sheets the clarity of persistent ellipsis the logic of lacunae the facile discords of discontinuity thinking at the same time the phrase (*LT*, 9)

In passages like this, Sukenick's "rhythmic prose" brings about a shift in coherence from conventional syntactic units (sentences, clauses, or paragraphs) to what he calls "prose measure," rendering the quality of the spoken word in his writing. Yet the material quality of the text, again, becomes foregrounded by means of the introduction of "smudges" or gaping holes – elisions in the main character's erratic trains of thought:

> he said good I'm going out for breakfast good she said he went out for coffee smoked five cigarettes was furious wished he had a cat but he told himself at least he knew he was at ground zero where everyone else seemed to be (*LT*, 9)

Coupled with these smudges is Sukenick's use of page-space as expressive medium. For example, in a section from p. 26 to 41, the nervousness and the tension in the narrative are reflected in the typographical layout, as the text is printed in a vertical column occupying only one-half of the page, "pressed" and "oppressed" by the blank surrounding. The narrative, here, is reduced to a minimal set of random episodes, which, as Kutnik points out, furthers Sukenick's project of "free[ing] his writing from the traditional obligation to convey ideas, to tell the 'truth' about reality, and creates instead situations in which he can concentrate completely on the observation and recording of the process by which his own consciousness structures experience."[35]

Sukenick's most linguistically experimental work of prose is his late novel, *Mosaic Man*, published in 1999. It performs a parodic rewriting of the five books of Moses that form the core of the Hebrew Old Testament (here, redubbed as "Genes," "Ex/Ode," "Umbilicus," "Numbers" and "Autonomy") in which Sukenick's eponymous protagonist searches for his Jewish roots. Again, the challenge to the binary between fiction and reality is in the foreground, brought home via the *Wake*an pun of the "reel" x the "unreal" and presented through a huge repertoire of variegated textual material, interspersed throughout the narrative by means of drawn symbols or lower-case boldface captions beneath those symbols that recite a personal narrative about discovering the **reel/unreal** nature of narrative itself: David's star referring to "Jewish rules," a circle with a dot in the middle to "reality", a dollar sign to "making it/losing it," two horizontal lines with two semi-lines opposing each other in between them to "reel/unreal," and finally a check sign to "the true story, the word" (*MM,* 20). These are coupled with the insertion into the text of letters, recipes, road signs, newspaper articles, and even Federman's notes on earlier drafts of the manuscript, together with factual texts, ex-

34 "The meaning is not *behind* but *in* those events. It is not referential but superficial and, like the alphabet soup, it is not to be interpreted but experienced, not deciphered by the mind but ingested by the body, internalized not via the intellect but via the senses. […] The full value of a self-contained sensual approach to the world can be appreciated by Sukenick only when he finds out that it is the chief source of man's imaginative power" (Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance,* 104-5).
35 Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance,* 145.

cerpts from a biography of Eisenhower and Chayim Bloch's *The Golem.* Blank spaces, known from Sukenick's earlier texts, here take on the additional function of signalling the absence of key information. Rewriting the titles of the Books of Moses, *Mosaic Man* also rehashes and some of the plots of the Old and New Testament (the story of Adam and Eve, the motif of the Golden Calf, the last supper) from an iconoclastic perspective that emphasises the progress from "Testimony," "Commandments" and "Numbers" to "Writing," the book's last section, creating a new sort of "bible" out of the "babble" (*MM,* 148) that is the turn-of-the-millennium political-cultural milieu. These broader thematic concerns are outlined in the novel's opening:

> In the beginning was the WORD which is unspeakable, unreadable and unintelligible. Beyond human perception. Sublime. Writing not yet language. Dazzle. Pure information. Generative. Algorithmic. Digital, i.e. DNA. Digital Not Analog. Helical. The master code. Original. The first person. Iconoclastic. Always beginning.
>
> Then the WORD says. It says language. It says analogy. A metaphor. A picture. RNA. Real Not Artificial. You. Mensch. Personal. Genetic. Chronic. Iconic. Scripture. A story. Worth thousands of words. All of them analogous. Guilt. Knowledge. Dream. The world, i.e. A mensch in the world. The WORD in the world. In the book of life. There but hidden. Finding it. In the story. As promised. (*MM,* 9)

Via a series of puns, the text deals with the increasingly empty notion of the Jewish identity, bringing on board a broad spectrum of contemporary political concerns – e.g. the extreme right-wing xenophobic policy of Jean-Marie Le Pen, according to whose anti-Semitic pronouncements "Jews had better keep their mouths shut. Le Pen is mightier than the word" (*MM,* 12). The Jewish theme, throughout, is treated as a means to the end of examining humanity at large:

> Personally, being Jewish is just an advanced case of being human, and being human may be a terminal disease that's run its course. Personally, maybe we're just beings, forget human, beings among other beings, some hairy, some furry, some feathery, some leathery, and some who possibly will soon arrive from other sectors of the universe. (*MM,* 15)

Coupled with the Jewish theme is a retrospection of Sukenick's own career as an "innovative writer" condemned to "progressive invisibility" (*MM,* 182) by official culture, and thus morphing into a "comic, a crazy" (*MM,* 201), a "Mosaic man," punning his "genetic language" against "the Babel of background DNA" (*MM,* 208-09), a desensitised Shylock:

> He can't say what he really feels because he's not a real person. He doesn't really feel anything. He's a dummy. A manikin. An android. An alien cyberpod. Slapped together. Mosaic man, the man of parts. Ceramic. Or silicon. Prick him he doesn't bleed. He who? The Jew. Of thee I sing. (*MM,* 205)

Mosaic Man links the fate of the post-war innovative writer to his capacity to turn history into a story of possibilities, "opening doors" in the dead-end past (*MM,* 170), thereby participating, in Cornis-Pope's estimation, in "an important recent trend of analytic-utopian fiction that challenges our complacency about human history at the end of the second millennium."[36]

Taken as a whole, Sukenick's is an exceptionally monolithic oeuvre whose chief thematic concern is with the "reality of fiction" and "fictionality of reality," with what can be identified as the two "truths of the page," in surfictionist writing.[37] As the progress from *Up* to *Mosaic Man* shows, the direction of Sukenick's writing was from the "process-oriented" toward the "materialist" one – the kind of writing identified in his piece on the *Wake* as "words as concrete objects."

"THE PRODIGIOUS FORMAL INNOVATOR": WALTER ABISH & HARRY MATHEWS

In the chapter of his book, *Design and Debris: A Chaotics of Postmodern American Fiction*, devoted to what he calls American "proceduralism," Joseph M. Conte makes further distinction between proceduralism and mere structural formalism. Whereas the value of the latter—common to all literary writing observant of formal/generic conventions—is largely based on its conformity with the rules of the form/genre, the formal consists in "the adoption of a rigorous and

36 Marcel Cornis-Pope, "Unwriting/Rewriting the Master Narratives of "Bankrupt" Modernity: Ronald Sukenick's *Mosaic Man*," *Musing the Mosaic*, 209.

37 "Just as there are two 'truths of the page,' the truth of the page-as-process and the truth of the page-as-material, so there are two correlative types of narrative content. Improvisatory, process-oriented writing […] favors narratives of picaresque adventure, restless circulation, the open road. 'Materialist' writing, by contrast, tends to favor fixed sites, bounded spaces, fictions of *place*" (McHale, "Sukenick in Space, or, the Other Truth of the Page," *Musing the Mosaic*, 145-6).

efficient design in advance of the composition of a work of literature as proceduralism". Proceduralists, then, "invent forms without knowing the precise manner of text that will be generated" and "welcome a degree of indeterminacy in literary production and do not confuse the value of the text with its conformity."[38] Conte places the American proceduralists—most prominent among whom are Harry Mathews, Gilbert Sorrentino and John Barth—within the 1970s American avant-garde surfictionists.[39]

The necessary components of a procedural text, in Conte's account, are invention, constraint, generation and synergy – and it is with reference to Marcel Bénabou's essay on "Rule and Constraint" that the latter is distinguished from the former, analogously to the formalist x proceduralist distinction. Whereas "rule" is inherent to all literary production, "constraint" takes the prescriptiveness a step further, achieving a degree of difficulty that is exceptional, forcing the system out of its normal functioning. The paradox, here, is that "what appears to be an unnecessary and deliberate restriction on the writer's practice can actually serve to liberate the writer from conventional means of expression and the tyranny of having to invoke some personal font of inspiration."[40] Hand in hand with this sense of liberation comes the principle of synergy – opposed by Conte to the notion of "design" which "produces a text with little more than a one-to-one correspondence to the effort expended," the system tending "toward an unpromising steady state." Synergy, on the other hand, arises when "the complex dynamical system initiated by the constraint has the capacity of exceeding authorial control," and when "the unpredictable nature of the language system" results "in a creative autonomy, a generative text that far exceeds the enumeration of its preordained structure."[41]

The Oulipo group,[42] even though primarily Francophone and France-based, is an international movement, as its membership features Italo Calvino and Oskar Pastior, an Italian and a German, respectively, while also featuring the British and American writers Ian Monk and Harry Mathews. Despite making a point of basing their lives and literary activities in France, both Monk and Mathews have functioned as translators/propagators of the group's works in the Anglophone world, as mediators between the two linguistic cultural spaces. For, to be sure, there have been—particularly in the US of the 1970s—writers formally unconnected to the group who have, however unwittingly, still displayed interest in Oulipian procedures. A case in point is a work on which Mathews' co-edited *Oulipo Compendium* bestows the appellation of one of "the most remarkable Oulipian works by an author not belonging to the group"[43] – the first novel by Walter Abish (*1931), *Alphabetical Africa* (1974).

The reason for this special status is the compositional method—and the constraint—governing the text's form and style. Exploring the "idea" of Africa literally from "A" to "Z," this novel's opening and closing chapters consist wholly of words beginning with the letter "A," and the intervening forty-nine chapters gradually accumulate (from A to Z) and then repress (from Z to A) words beginning with each of the remaining twenty-five letters of the alphabet. The other rule observed throughout stipulates that every chapter begin with the letter which is being "added" in the first, accumulative half, and then "repressed" in the other, repressive half of the text. For Mathews, this method, of Abish's own devising, is Oulipian "both in its axiomatic simplicity and in the extent to which it determines both the ingenious narrative and its beguiling linguistic texture."[44] The *determination*, here, is significant, for indeed the restraint determines the narrative—chiefly dealing with two murderous jewel thieves pursuing their perfectly proportioned, promiscuous partner throughout Africa—to an unprecedented degree, the form being, to a large extent, the content, the medium, the message. If in the first chapter, the narrative consists largely of lists—"Africa again: Antelopes, alligators, ants and attrac-

38 Joseph M. Conte, *Design and Debris: A Chaotics of Postmodern American Fiction* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002) 76.
39 "Proceduralists share a penchant for "blatant artifice" in literature with other practitioners of metafiction. They are allied with the surfictionists, especially in the use of graphical typography and the manipulation of textual space that one finds in Raymond Federman's *Take It or Leave It* or Ronald Sukenick's *Long-Talking Bad Condition Blues*. In this regard proceduralism is always antimimetic, a contrivance that disturbs a reader's willingness to become absorbed in the regime of representation" (Conte, *Design and Debris*, 83).
40 Conte, *Design and Debris*, 83-4.
41 Conte, *Design and Debris*, 84.
42 The subject proper of Chapter VI.
43 *Oulipo Compendium*, eds. Mathews & Brotchie, 45.
44 *Oulipo Compendium*, eds. Mathews & Brotchie, 47-8.

tive Alva" who is "apprehend[ed] anatomically, affirmatively and also accurately"(*AA*, 1)—then with B comes temporal distinction—"Before African adjournment, Alex, Allen and Alva arrive at Antibes" (*AA*, 3)—and it isn't until the ninth chapter that interiority can enter into the narrative together with the introduction of the first-person pronoun: "I haven't been here before. I had hoped I could hire a car, but I can't drive. I have been awfully busy finishing a book about Alva" (*AA,* 21). As the first list shows, the combination of alphabetical constrictions and the difficulties entailed in representing Africa as conforming to Western orthodoxies give rise to a narrative that often reads like a comic tour through the "dark" continent: through an Africa of the images, stereotypes, prejudices, and fantasies of Western imagination; one of "antelopes, alligators, ants." However comic in this thoroughly self-referential game of con- and restraint, *Alphabetical Africa* is also a highly difficult, arduous text, where the amount of what is unsayable vastly surpasses and haunts what can be said most of the time.

This obsession with the ability of linguistic forms to construct the familiar and to neutralise the uniquely unfamiliar does, in Tony Tanner's words, achieve "some distinctly novel effects, as the text moves from constriction and gradually expands until it seems to have achieved a new kind of freedom."[45] The main relationship, however, is not one a dual one—author and the alphabet at his disposal—but a triadic one: author, alphabet, and Africa. However Oulipian in its making, it would be a mistake to dismiss it together with Tanner (and perhaps Mathews) as merely "a one-off book" based on "an interesting experimental idea" which "produced certain unusual effects."[46] For, Abish's treatment of the inherently thorny issue of European (Abish was born in 1930 in Vienna and didn't become a US citizen until 1960) representation of a strikingly non-European experiential framework is replete with political import. Claire Fox has drawn powerful analogies between Abish's work and that of his clearest precursor in terms of subject matter, Joseph Conrad, arguing that both "have demonstrated that 'Africa' is an image constructed in language, but they have also demonstrated that writing itself is creation,"[47] while Anthony Schirato has emphasised the twofold nature of language in Abish's understanding, both as "an ontologically empty system of reproduction" and as "discourse full of references to its connections with the world outside."[48]

As Katalin Orbán has powerfully argued, what saves *Alphabetical Africa* "from being merely a *tour de force* by The Incredible Rubber Author" is "the grim relevance of its machinery to its colonial subject," or in other words, "if Abish's language keeps pointing to itself, that 'itself' would be thoroughly different without an 'Africa,' however alphabetical in its appearance in the text."[49] As Orbán shows, it is the colonial subject matter that provides the textual demonstration of the culpability of any systemic apprehending and structuring.[50] Here, it should be noted that the last chapter recounts a long list of alternative options, finally concluding on "another awareness another awakening another awesome age another axis another Alva another Alex another Allen another Alfred another Africa another alphabet" (*AA*, 152). As Orbán points out, it is no accident that "another alphabet" rather than "another Africa" is put in the final position in this list, it is significant in positing "otherness and language in relation: the problem at the core, yet farthest out of reach."[51]

Despite its discursive preoccupation and decidedly experimental character, *Alphabetical Africa*, though certainly qualifying as a *tour de force* in Oulipian constraint writing, might hardly be termed a Joycean experiment. And neither

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45 Tony Tanner, "Present Imperfect: a Note on the Work of Walter Abish," *GRANTA 3: New American Writing*, eds. William Buford & Pete de Bolla (Spring 1979): 66.
46 Tanner, "Present Imperfect," 67.
47 Claire Fox, "Writing Africa with Another Alphabet: Conrad and Abish," *Conradiana* 22.2 (1990): 125.
48 "There is in *Alphabetical Africa*, a play between, on the one hand, the notion of textual discourse as nothing more than the product of a system that is capable only of reproducing that system and is, therefore, ontologically empty, and, on the other, a notion of discourse as being full of references to its connections with the world outside language and of its dealings and relationships with politics, colonialism, and exploitation" (Anthony Schirato, "Comic Politics and Politics of the Comic: Walter Abish's Alphabetical Africa," *Critique* 33.2 [Winter 1992]: 136).
49 Katalin Orbán, *Ethical Diversions – The Post-Holocaust Narratives of Pynchon, Abish, DeLillo and Spiegelman* (New York & London: Routledge, 2005) 79.
50 "*Alphabetical Africa* would collapse without Africa just as promptly as it would without the alphabet; nevertheless, by choosing the alphabet as master structure and by focusing on letters and words as the primary analytic elements, Abish's text keeps restating the question of otherness in linguistic, philosophical and ethical terms much broader than African colonial exploitation" (Orbán, *Ethical Diversions*, 80).
51 Orbán, *Ethical Diversions*, 81.

can Abish's other novel – *How German Is It* (1982), which deals, similarly to *Alphabetical Africa*, with questions of visibility and concealment and the representation of the two – only this time the framework is not postcolonial, but post-Holocaust. Nor do Abish's short stories, particularly *In the Future Perfect* (1977), which is similarly concerned with familiarity, otherness and constraint (even though, here, one of the narrative viewpoint, reduced to its visual, scopic component) and which oftentimes treat language as both a barrier and an opening (cf. the last short story, "Language Barrier"), quite repeat the same intensity of the language effect developed in his first novel. His 1990 experimental text, *99: New Meaning*, even ceases to be at least remotely Oulipian in embracing chance and textual collage as its procedural and compositional method. It consists of ninety-nine segments by as many authors, each line, sentence or paragraph appropriated from a page bearing that same, says Abish "mystically significant number 99,"[52] – thereby reminiscent of William Burroughs' cut-ups.

Harry Mathews (1930) is a writer officially Oulipian. Born in New York in 1930, Mathews studied music at Harvard University and despite frequently teaching writing in the United States, since 1952 Mathews has been based in France. As he confided to John Asbery in their interview,

> in 1952 I ran away from America. Which was not America: it was the milieu in which I'd been raised, and I thought that's what America was, that is to say, an upper-middle-class Eastern WASP environment, which I read as being extremely hostile to the poetic and artistic enthusiasms that I felt were most important at that time.[53]

Already influenced by Raymond Roussel's proceduralism, in France, Mathews gradually came under the influence of the Oulipo group, whose only American member to date he became (in 1973). However, a body of his work predates his accession to Oulipo, significant in its own right so as to set it off as a separate, self-contained period in his overall *oeuvre*. Symptomatic of his Oulipian turn in 1973 is the fact that ever since the mid-1970s publication of *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium and Other Novels*, Mathews has written only two works of fiction that can be loosely labelled as novels, i.e. *Cigarettes* (1987) and *The Journalist* (1997), and that neither of these two can be said to follow any strict Oulipian "programme" or "poetic agenda." Mathews himself has provided the following personal view on his pre- and post-Oulipian development:

> How much has the Oulipo mattered to me, and why? It is hard to answer simply, because its influence has been gradual, because I had strong non-Oulipian feelings about three of its members, because my devotion to the group involves much more than its ideas. […] I had written my first three novels without even hearing of it. […] I was not yet aware of what the Oulipo was in fact changing: my understanding of the act of writing. (*CPM*, 85)

In the many interviews and public pronouncements made over the course of his life, three instances in particular cast light on the significant, yet limited role played by Joyce's example in Mathews' understanding of literary history and his own influences. Mathews opens his 1987 interview with John Ash for *Review of Contemporary Fiction* with acknowledging his debt to Ronald Firbank, about which he is "delighted," observing that "of course Firbank was the great formal innovator. He invented modernism, more so than Joyce really." He goes on to specify Firbank's stylistic influence on the example of the opening of his first novel, *Conversions*: "the sentences are very simple, but there's something slightly out of kilter about them. There's something about their lack of emphasis or the way the emphasis falls in an unexpected place. Firbank did this first of course, and it's almost a source of irritation that there are so many things one can't do without sounding like him."[54] Two years later, in an interview later on featured in Warren Leamon's book-length study, Mathews specifies the relative importance of Joyce vis-à-vis Firbank more generously: "To my mind Firbank's superiority resides in this: Joyce's innovations have affected us mainly in the domain of style and the way his material is presented, whereas Firbank transformed the basic narrative procedure of fiction. This is a hastily concocted

52 Qtd. in *Oulipo Compendium*, eds. Mathews & Brotchie, 45.
53 "John Asbery Interviewing Harry Mathews," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 7.3 (Fall 1987): 46.
54 John Ash, "A Conversation with Harry Mathews," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 7.3 (Fall 1987): 21.

remark; I wouldn't find it interesting to get stuck in an argument defending it."[55] Finally, in a 1994 interview with Lytle Shaw, the subject of Joyce is treated in more detail, and again Mathews is outspokenly in favour of what he sees in Firbank or Kafka as minimalist subversion to Joyce's medieval monumentality or encyclopaedism. However, he displays close familiarity with both *Ulysses* and the *Wake*, and from the former, he derives "great pleasure, most of the time":

> The "Night Town" scene above all is an extraordinary work of subversion. What struck me in re-reading *Ulysses* was [Joyce's] encyclopedic view of "reality": if you find a narrative that is valid, you can load it with any amount of cultural freight, and the more you load, the truer it will become. In spite of syntactical or rhetorical alertness, in a sense he remained pre-modern because of this encyclopedic cast of mind.[56]

This encylopaedism of *Ulysses*, admirable though it is, by Mathews' own admission, "isn't pushing me to see what I can do next." For the *Wake*, the praise is similarly limited and qualified: although "fabulous" and "haunting," some passages (e.g. the whole ALP section) are found "sentimental and self-indulgent." Moreover, as the interviewer suggests, there looms the sense of Joyce's texts' pre-programmed and omniscient character, which renders the reading experience into a passive one:

> It's a passive experience [...]. (In *Ulysses* that's not always the case and that's why I love the "Night Town" scene.) A kind of all-knowingness. I suppose someday I will write a long book and everyone can say it's my magnum opus. But I prefer classical subversion to monumentality. That's why I love Firbank: such explosive froth! There is something about small books – a book is like a time bomb, and a small, demure time bomb seems to me most efficient of all. But someday self-interest may beguile me into Grand Design.[57]

All three Mathews' pre-Oulipian novels start off as seemingly simple quest narratives that become gradually enmeshed in complex realms of arcane knowledge and abstruse erudition. His most common procedure is to break the linearity of the simple framing quest-narrative by insertion of sundry tales within tales, the effect of whose multiplication is to collapse plot into a patchwork of diversions. As quest narratives, each of the first three novels involves the use and reworking of some sort of mythology – with the hindsight of a long-term Oulipian, Mathews discerned in his own preoccupation with mythology an Oulipism *avant la lettre*, and it is also one that departs from the modernist mythological project:

> My first three novels depend on a non-systematic Oulipism, if such a phenomenon exists – a combination of techniques of variation and substitution that often determine the nature of narrative materials as well as their use. In *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*, the accumulation of these procedures has become an omnipresent "table of obligations" (Perec's *cahier de charges*): the text is, to put it mildly, overdetermined. From *The Conversions* to *Odradek*, the use of "justifying myths" in the manner of Joyce and Eliot yields to that of "non-certifiable" materials organized in quasi-systematic ways – a tendency pointing eventually to a complete Oulipisation. (*CPM*, 88)

For Mathews, hand in hand with mythology goes the discourse that supplanted it, at least in the European cultural space – as he confided to Lynne Tillman, "the substratum of the first three novels is a religious one."[58]

In *The Conversions* (1962), the quest is one after the answers to three riddles contained in the last will of a late millionaire, Mr Wayl, whose vast estate is left to the person who knows "When was a stone not a king? What was *La Messe de Sire Fadevant*? Who shaved the Old Man's Beard?" (*C*, 46). His quest for these answers takes the narrator on a journey both in space and time and into areas of conceptual and factual obscurity (the secret Cult of Silvius just the most conspicuous among them). The quest turns out futile as, just as he is on the brink of finally solving all three riddles, the narrator learns that "Mr Wayl's will had been thrown out as a complete hoax" (*C*, 165). The quest, thus, acquires a sort of meta-twist – as it is the reader's quest to determine the reasons that motivated the narrator's quest in the first place. Crucial, in this sense, is the opening scene of the novel, the narrator's meeting with Mr Wayl and his

55 Warren Leamon, *Harry Mathews* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993) 16.
56 Lytle Shaw, "An interview with Harry Mathews," *Chicago Review* 43.2 (Spring 1997): 36.
57 Shaw, "An interview with Harry Mathews," 36.
58 Lynne Tillmann, "Harry Mathews," *Bomb* 26 (Winter 1988-9): 35.

introduction to the mystical adze that later on forms part of the inheritance. Of the literary inheritance upon which *Conversions* has drawn, Mathews himself acknowledged his debt to Firbank.[59]

If the first novel was a first step in using the plot as a frame for other stories and games, then in *Tlooth* (1966), Mathews takes this even further. His second novel can be (and has been) described as an elaborate game, a compound of absurd adventures, faked documents, diagrams and word puzzles, and its very loosely traced plot is that of travelogue-adventure in which all places are very much the same, whether they be called Russia, Afghanistan, India, Morocco, or Venice. These are the locales featuring in the itinerary of the narrator's quest which takes the form of a crazy pursuit of a certain Dr Evelyn Roak, who is believed to have caused the mutilation of the narrator's hand. The quest, then, is revenge – and it is a quest from a failed attempt at it to a refusal to take it; again, the quest is incomplete, it rejects to convey any ultimate "message" or "moral." One of the games played by Mathews in this narrative is obscuring the narrator's gender – whose incipit successful wooing of Yana (a woman) establishes the narrator's falsely assumed masculine identity, which only the concluding proposal of marriage to Joan (a man), and his calling the narrator "Mary," restores her feminine gender. One of the chapters, "Spires and Squares" (*T,* 63-71), contains a witty debunking of one of the text's key preoccupations: code deciphering and cracking. There is the mysterious message containing the inscription "r e s," accompanied by the incomplete sentences: 'The Mother cannot … her Son. The Son … his Father. The Mother … their Spirit." This message is exposed to many elaborate exegetic tools, including Biblical and Christian allegorical reading, *res qua res*, etc., only to be found discovered as an incompletely copied text taken from a German grammar textbook. In fact, the fabric of the novel's plot is interwoven with a plethora of heretic or cultic conceptual frameworks – Fideism, Resurrectionism, Darbyism, or Nestorianism, all having to do with the medieval attempts to solve the problem of the trinity's hypostatic union. The language of *Tlooth* undergoes distortion in some of its most explicitly erotic passages, where it seems to result from an intensification of experience and sensory perception on the part of the narrator who, in the following scene, is writing (and living) a pornographic screenplay. "Bewildered with desire," the narrator's language goes from fairly minor departures from standard spelling ("She ceemed exsited") to some witty double entendres ("I followed her into the atartment" [*T,* 120]) to full-fledged systematic (and largely phonetic) distortion of the written language:

> 'Yeu. Kwik and kan yoo raiz yoohr as u lit'l? Uy waunt too prupair dhe waiy.' 'Yoo noh darling Uym priti wet dhair aulredi.' 'U lit'l riming nevur hurt eniwun, and dohnt let goh uv mee—Uy dohnt waunt too loos u hair auf dhar ureksh'n.' 'Noh, ainjul, noh.' [122-3] 'i held eel while she wifted her shun lit (her pan dlazing her crup bate and so grinly i could hard shoff it) and it was Iee, when she farted to hum, who with spast kong mugs of her fips and a clangled hie of 'Flip it, yoo shit!' drew my sweering seef ooss inte the rut famp-hole of her jassness, constreasured by her own savaging reizure of plicter and pain. I uuuuuuuuuuuuucccc lought of Dante's whines at that foment, *L'altra piageva sì, che di pietale, &c.* (*T,* 123)

The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium is an epistolary novel whose plot is developed by means of an exchange of letters between Zachary McCaltex, a librarian living in Miami, and Twang, his Southeast Asian wife sojourning in Italy, and centres around their treasure hunt. Twang's letters are written in an amusingly broken Pidgin English, which improves as the novel progresses – it is here that one can again find some witty distortive language effects reminiscent of Joyce's *Wake*an project. But the *Wake* is present on two other levels: the novel opens midsentence of a letter ("…confidence in words, Twang" [*O*, 365]) and ends with an incomplete letter with no period at the end of it ("I have telephoned but it will not answer, and shall wire but you will not believe it" [*O*, 554]). Moreover, one of the lesser characters, Lester Greek, is seen at work on a study called *The Confidential Walrus*, which seeks to establishes "the palindromic precedence of 'Eve' over 'Anna' in *Finnegans Wake*" (*O*, 446-8). Letter-writing presents, again, not only the form, but also the content of the novel, as much of its plot revolves around and departs from the confusion caused by one letter that goes undelivered – as becomes revealed only in the final letter. Having found out that their correspond-

59 Leamon concurs: "Like Firbank, Mathews creates a world in which all the parts are 'representational,' but when put together they come to 'represent' something other than what the reader expects. […] Mathews' style is both limpid and opaque in that there is nothing difficult about the 'stories' that make up the novel but how (or if) those stories go together presents great difficulty" (Leamon, *Harry Mathews*, 33).

ence is being opened and read, Twang sends Zachary a letter secretly apprising him of this fact and informing him that henceforth she will write "fake" letters to which he is to pay no attention, and devises a code by which he is to communicate the date of their next reunion. This letter, as is revealed in a footnote, is returned to the sender due to insufficient postage applied – thus Zachary takes Twang's nonsense letters seriously, and Twang believes that Zachary's serious letters are nonsense. The confusion reaches its climax when in his next letter, Zachary unwittingly uses the code that tells Twang to come to Miami, which she does just at the same time he departs for Italy. It is not until Twang's final letter, "written in an English that signifies Twang's conquest of more than language," that the crucial confusions are clarified: "(1) that a letter that never reached its destination has caused great confusion; (2) that the treasure never left Italy; (3) that Twang is the rightful heir to the treasure; (4) that the treasure has been secured and loaded for shipment to Burma on a ship called the *Odradek Stadion*."[60] However, the mystery of the title—although now revealed to refer to the ship carrying the treasure in question—is not completely explained away (in a text riddled with "mistakes," the transition from the Greek *Stadion* to the Roman *Stadium* is hardly surprising), nor can it ever be established whether this crucial letter does or does not reach its destination. In Leamon's estimation, "one thing is certain: not all questions are answered by the title of the novel any more than solving the final riddle in *The Conversions* answers all the questions in that novel. In fact, the title, *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*, is, like everything else in the novel, successful on a number of levels."[61]

The narration of Mathews' fourth novel, *Cigarettes* (1987), which appeared after a seven-year break in publication, is structured by the depiction of fourteen character-relationships, prominent among whom is Elizabeth, around whom (whose portrait) the other thirteen revolve. In his own words, the novel "started as an attempt to solve a specific problem [...] how to tell a story about a group of people belonging to the New York art and business world in a way that would allow the reader to make it up."[62] The narrative covers two time periods: 1936-38 and 1962-3, with no causal connection established between them, the sole link being the portrait of the character Elizabeth, painted in 1936 and copied, stolen, bought, sold, and seemingly (but not actually) destroyed sometime in the 1961-3 period. However, apart from its flirtation with circular structures and haphazard sequencing of events (left up to the reader to "make up"), *Cigarettes* adds little to Mathews' linguistic experimentation undertaken in *Tlooth* and *Odradek* – as he himself has observed, the constrictive structure in *Cigarettes* is not *syntactic*, affecting the "material aspects of language (letters, words, syntax)," but instead *semantic*, affecting 'what language talks about' (subject, content, meaning)" (*CPM,* 136) and thus need not be followed in any more detail, here. The same goes for *The Journalist*, Mathews' latest, 1997 novel, presenting a journal of the protagonist's daily activities in which he embarks on an elaborate scheme intended to organise his life, reminiscent of B.S. Johnson's *Christy Malry*. As Conte has observed, the chief constraint, for both Mathews and his protagonist, becomes the system for indexing lived experience "in the presence of an always unclassifiable 'other.'"[63] As each subdivision of his categories makes finer distinctions, each leaves behind an intransigent remainder of "other actions and events," "other matters," "other people," until the realisation dawns on him that "it's not this or that category, it's the overall problem I can't master. The more I put in, the more I leave out" (*J*, 84; 110). Parodying and subverting, in his later works of fiction, the modernist obsession with all-inclusiveness, Mathews' early work, nonetheless, clearly partakes and continues in the footsteps of Joyce's "revolution of the word," explicitly referring to the *Wake* at least at one point, and working upon and reworking material aspects of language in many different ways and instances.

"LANGUAGE IS A GIVENESS LIKE ALL OTHER GIVENESSES": KATHY ACKER

60 Leamon, *Harry Mathews*, 72.
61 Leamon, *Harry Mathews*, 73.
62 Ash, "A Conversation with Harry Mathews," 31.
63 Conte, *Design and Debris*, 102.

"Words belong to everybody, […] nobody owns words, […] there's nothing sacred about words, […] let's break the word habit."[64] Brion Gysin's famous injunction regarding the material for the cut-up method which he invented (and William Burroughs put to use) is as good as any motto to the work of Kathy Acker (1947-97). Or, in the words from one of her books, "The code said: GET RID OF MEANING. YOUR MIND IS A NIGHTMARE THAT HAS BEEN EATING YOU: NOW EAT YOUR MIND" (*ES*, 38).

A controversial avant-garde writer and cult figure of the punk movement, Acker[65] is widely considered one of the most significant proponents of radical feminism in the American post-war letters. Born Karen Alexander and using such *noms de plume* as "Rip-Off Red" or "The Black Tarantula," Acker established herself in the 1980s as a well-versed literary theorist and sophisticated experimenter, whose provocative fiction posed a serious challenge to established literary forms, categories of literary authorship, propriety, etc. Early on, Acker became associated with the discordant, irreverent music of punk rock, which gave her, as she confided to Ellen Friedman, gave her a sense of community: "We were fascinated with Passolini's and Bataille's work, but there was no way of saying why or how."[66] Her introduction to the work of Deleuze and Guattari "and somewhat Foucault" gave her a language for expression of her group's ideas and values: "For the first time we had a way of talking about what we were doing."[67]

Acker's iconoclastic, plagiarist fiction (an amalgam of extreme profanity, violence, graphic sex, autobiography, fragmented narrative, and recycled texts) drew on an extraordinarily wide range of sources and a very complex methodology of writing which rejected conventional morality and traditional modes of literary expression. Critic Peter Wollen recalls Acker's pronouncement to the effect that none of her readers is expected to read any of her books cover-to-cover, which to his mind suggests the notion of reading as "perpetuation of Acker's creation." As long as her writing was the result of her reading, then so should any individual reading of her work perform its own rewriting.[68] A critical term often used (by Wollen as well) to describe Acker's practice is the situationist *détournement*, or re-functioning by re-contextualizing, by making strange. As Jeanette Winterson observed in her introduction to *Essential Acker*, Acker was "ahead of her time," her fiction "closer to the European literary tradition of Borges and Calvino" than to "the Anglo-American narrative drive of Salinger or Roth or Amis," and she was "a woman – therefore she was locked out of tradition and time" (*EA,* vii). Acker's strategies of plagiarism can, consequently, be seen as her revenge upon the male-constructed and dominated tradition and her attempt at re-appropriating, re-inscribing herself within it – a point brought home in Winterson's introduction.[69] One of *Essential Acker*'s editors, Amy Scholder, has also challenged the notion of "plagiarism" as applied to Acker's writing, the two main problems being that

> 1. she's open about it, and 2. she alters those texts (at times they become unrecognizable), or she embeds chunks of another work into a new context, one that's so unfamiliar that the pirated text's meaning is radically distorted. Let's call it appropriation, for lack of a sexier term – the music industry came up with "sampling" years after Acker tried it in literature. (*EA*, xi)

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64 Harold Norse, *The Beat Hotel* (San Diego: Atticus Press, 1983) 62.

65 Born in New York City, Acker was raised by her mother and stepfather. Her biological father, whom she never met, abandoned her mother before she was born. Her mother later committed suicide when Acker was thirty. Acker attended Brandeis University and the University of California, San Diego, where she earned a bachelor's degree in 1968. Twice wed--first to Robert Acker in 1966, then to composer Peter Gordon in 1976--and twice divorced, Acker returned to New York during the 1970s to work as a secretary, stripper, and performer in live sex shows and pornographic films while promoting her fiction in small press publications. She began a combined doctoral program in classics and philosophy at the City University of New York and New York University, but left after two years. An amateur bodybuilder, tattoo enthusiast, and adjunct professor at the San Francisco Art Institute beginning in 1991, Acker also appeared as a visiting instructor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of California, San Diego, and the University of Idaho in 1994. Shortly before her death, she produced Bodies of Work (1997), a collection of essays, and Eurydice in the Underground (1997), a volume of short fiction. At age fourty-eight, Acker succumbed to breast cancer at an alternative cancer treatment centre in Tijuana, Mexico.

66 Ellen G. Friedman, "A Conversation with Kathy Acker," *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 9.3 (Fall 1989): 15-6.

67 Friedman, "A Conversation with Kathy Acker," 16.

68 "In other words, you can make your own montage, you could appropriate and re-order, just as Kathy Acker had appropriated and re-ordered the writing of others […]. Leslie Dick once remarked that Kathy Acker's writing was an extension of her reading, that her plagiarism was a way of reading, or re-reading, appropriating and customizing what she read, writing herself, so to speak, into the fabric of the original text" (Peter Wollen, "Kathy Acker," *Lust for Life: On the Writings of Kathy Acker*, eds. Amy Sholder, Carla Harryman, Avital Ronell [London & New York: Verso, 2006] 1).

69 "Acker saw herself as dispossessed – from her homeland, because of its politics, and from literature, because she was a woman. […] Acker took revenge on a male literary tradition by raiding it mercilessly; her so-called plagiarism is a way of appropriating what is otherwise denied. As a woman, she can't inherit. As a pirate, she can take all the treasure for herself" (*EA,* ix).

The formal ingredient of Acker's subversiveness—plagiarism—is coupled with her thematic concern with pornography and sexual explicitness. This for chiefly two reasons: one loosely biographical,[70] the other conceptual: not only does Acker believe that "desire is the only honest part of us" and that "art is authentic desire" (*EA*, ix), but for Acker, notes Scholder, writing porn was a stylistic challenge: "using language, pushing limits, turning on" (*EA,* xiii).[71] Acker's staple style is a pastiche combining sensationalised autobiography, political tract, pornography and appropriated texts to generate visceral prose in which characters—often famous literary or historical figures—easily move through time and space while frequently changing personalities and genders. Deliberately non-chronological and usually evoking a quest theme, her largely plotless stories progress through disjointed, jump-cut sequences that juxtapose excerpted texts from various sources.

As critic Ellen Friedman has noted,[72] Acker frequently embodies patriarchal domination in sadistic, cowardly father figures (often adopted or step-) and embodies women's relation to the patriarchy with self-destructively dependent daughter figures. Fathers in Acker's work literally control with their phalluses, practicing rape and incest and then abandoning their daughters. In these moves, they are identified with the phallogocentrism of the culture: The daughter's weapon of revolt is irrationality and desire, the feminine language that as it writes the female body, defies the law of the father. Her first publication, *Politics* (1972), is a combination of poetry and prose heavily influenced by the work of William Burroughs and his cut-up method, written in one unpunctuated sentence. *The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula* (1973) contains the following author note: "All the above events are taken from *Helen and Desire* by A. Trocchi, *The Wilder Shores of Love* by L. Blanch, and myself" (*EA,* 41). *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac* (1974) already features Acker's staple ingredient of openly erotic, pornographic language:

> I absolutely love to fuck. These longings, unexplainable longings deep within me, drive me wild, and I have no way of relieving them. Living them. I'm 27 and I love to fuck. Sometimes with people I want to fuck; sometimes, and I can't tell when but I remember these times, with anybody who'll touch me. These, I call them nymphomaniac, times have nothing to do with (are not caused by) physical pleasure, for my cunt could be sore, I could be sick, and yet I'd feel the same way. I'll tease you till you don't know what you're doing, honey, and grab; and then I'll do anything for you. (*EA,* 42)

1978 saw the completion of three short novels: *Florida*, a brief satire of the film *Key Largo*; *Kathy Goes to Haiti*, relating the sexual exploits of a girl visiting Haiti; and *The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec by Henri Toulouse Lautrec*. During the early 1980s, Acker moved to London where she achieved a degree of fame and maintained a steady output of novels including *Blood and Guts in High School, Don Quixote, and Empire of the Senseless* (1988), all among her best-known works.

The English version of *Blood and Guts in High School* (1984) includes the shorter novel *My Death My Life by Pier Paolo Pasolini*, later republished as part of *Literal Madness*. Another of her fictitious autobiographies, *My Death My Life* reconstructs the 1975 murder of the Italian writer and filmmaker through a series of loosely related vignettes, including Shakespearian parodies and an obscene epistolary exchange among the Bronte sisters. Part One, "Sex," juxtaposes these with meditations on language, capitalism, materialism:

> What is language? The discovery of the urban peripheries has so far has been essentially visual – I'm thinking of Marcel Duchamp's rationality or autism and Sheeler's social-realism that is discontinuity that is seeing without psychology. Wittgenstein seems to understand language as function, therefore, without psychology […] The question is: Does capitalism which must be based on materialism or the absence of values stink? The question is: What is art? Is art worth anything in the practice of art making (of values) or is it craft? (*LM,* 219)

An example of how Acker's plagiarism serves to depersonalise her confessional: "I keep trying to kill myself to be like my mother who killed herself. I kept working on the 'Large Glass' for eight years, but despite that, I didn't want it to be the expression of an inner life" (*LM*, 222). Even at this moment of (apparent) full self-disclosure, Acker is speaking

70 As Scholder points out, "At a pivotal time in her life K worked in a strip club in NYC's Time Square. The experience of the sex industry and the stories she heard from the other girls would find their way into almost everything she wrote" (*EA,* xii).
71 "Still, sexuality in Acker's work is a site of confusion – and it's within that confusion that her female characters come alive, expressing who they are and what they want. They are victims who crave and get revenge. […] Desire is a place of not yet having: it's in the becoming, the longing, the imagining, that Acker wants her women to exist" (*EA*, xiii).
72 Ellen G. Friedman, "'Now Eat Your Mind': An Introduction to the Works of Kathy Acker," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* (9.3): Fall 1989, 41.

through the work of Marcel Duchamp, whose cubist painting "The Large Glass" was produced through years of interrogating the gaze. In the first section "Sex," Acker's sexualised pastiche of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* is also interspersed with ruminations on language: "How available are the (meanings of the) specifics of all that is given? Language is a giveness like all other givenesses. Let the meanings not overpowering (rigid) but rather within the contexts, like Hamlet's father's ghost who tells the first meaning, interpretation of nothing, be here" (*LM*, 200). This is suddenly interrupted by a cutback to Zurich and a mediation on Joyce's grave via a *détourned* passage from the "Hades" episode of *Ulysses*: "—Some say he is not in that grave at all. That the coffin was filled with stones. That one day he will come again. Hynes shook his head. —Parnell will never come again, he said. He's there, all that was mortal of him" (*LM,* 200; *U* 6.923-7). After another plagiarised passage from the "Aeolus" episode (*U* 7.21-7, 142-4), there is another cut and the scene is Paris, with passages from the "Proteus" chapter of *Ulysses* interspersed:

> Comparison: **Paris rawly waking, crude sunlight on her lemon streets. Moist pith of farls of bread, the froggreen wormwood, her matin incense, court the air.** The milk of architectural tits. *Têtes.* Frenchmen can only think. We invited two hookers to sit with us cause Frenchmen are only polite to language and food before you've fucked them. **There Belluomo rises from the bed of his wife's lover's wife, the kerchiefed housewife stirs, a saucer of** sunk gone oh below the cement. I say, pick up skirts. Show cunt. Smelly fish all over the sides of flesh going slowly arising. (*LM,* 202; *U* 3.209-12)

Here, Stephen Dedalus' lyrical description (possibly in itself a pastiche of his readings / parody of Joyce's own youthful style) is counterpointed by Acker's provocative stereotypisation of the French and sexual explicitness. Following this passage is the peculiar avowal "*I can no longer speak English*" with a shift into French. Part Two, "Language," features the minimalist "Narrative Breakdown" dedicated to language poet Carla Harryman:

> The people in the world blow up the world. After the end of the world.
> One. One and one. One and one. One and one. One and one. One and one. One and one. One and one. One and one. One and one.
> One and one and one. One and one and one. One and one and one. One and one and one. One and one and one. One and one and
> One and two. One and two and no more. One and two. One and two and no more. One and two. One and two and no more. One and two. One and two and no more. One and two. One and two. (*LM,* 243)

In *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream* (1986) Acker casts Don Quixote into the role of a woman on a quest to defeat the evil enchanters of the modern American life. Her tool is language, the foundational site of power in Western civilization, portraying a society so blind to its own incarceration by greed and corruption that it requires an outside perspective to sort out what is even human (this outsider comes in the character of Godzilla). Signification itself is the subject of Acker's examination, and throughout *Don Quixote*, she relates language to the formation of gender identity; in sentences like "since a broom's sweeping hisandorher bald pate, heandorshe is a which," or "he whom I love is my eyes and heart and I'm sick when I'm not with him, but he doesn't love me; he's my I's; I see by my I's; he's my sun. My son lets me see and be. Thus he's my and the @" (DQ 75; 101), Acker is not simply exploiting puns to form sentences with multiple possible meanings,[73] but to purposefully disrupt the illusion of narrative coherence or message. The only Joyce cameo in the novel, again, has to do with the notion of authorship and propriety: "Would not the attributing of *The Imitation of Christ* to Louis Ferdinand Céline or James Joyce be a sufficient renovation of its tenuous spiritual counsels?" (*DQ,* 55).

With *Empire of the Senseless* (1988), Acker turns to mythology as the over-arching structure for her work, to the communal myths that pervade the general culture. *Empire of the Senseless* recounts the picaresque adventures of Abhor, a female protagonist of mixed race and human-robot composition, and her male accomplice, Thivai, as they look for meaning and legitimate modes of expression amid war and revolution. The two become terrorists resisting an institution of power disseminated by the media and governed by money, so that "Empire" refers equally to systems of

73 Christina Milletti speaks of Acker's "terrorist aesthetic": "In contrast to James Joyce's work, which celebrates an infinite web of language and meanings, Acker tends to exacerbate fictional language, present it as a faulty tool that, because of its figural structure, lacks an essential clarity. Indeed, for her, narratives seem to be designed so poorly for communicative purposes that understanding itself is a fraud, ineffably deadlocked within language itself" ("Violent Acts, Volatile Words: Kathy Acker's Terrorist Aesthetic," *Studies in the Novel* 36.3 [Fall 2004]: 363).

representation and the Western hegemony that governs them. Indeed, Thivai's initial remark, "Money is a kind of citizenship. Americans are world citizens," comes to fruition later in the novel when he makes precisely this link: "What is language[?] ... Does language control like money?" (*ES,* 38; 164). Chapter titles in *Empire* such as "Let the Algerians take over Paris" and "On Becoming Algerian" stage Acker's ongoing consideration of the possibility of socio-political opposition for marginalised Others. The "real values" on which to base legitimate modes of expression are found in Acker's female bodies, positioned against a larger, collective body of oppression. The opening section is called "Elegy for the World of the Fathers" and features the following graphic scene of incestuous rape:

> At the moment my mother was whining, daddy was smelling my cunt. 'I've reached my best moment now!' he explained. Now I was sure what he was referring to. 'This is the moment of truth!!! … I'm going off off off jacking it off!!! … my hands're gonna be broken from this one!!! … I don't even recognize my own body!!! … and it doesn't matter!!! … I know you're mine!!! … I made you!!! … I'm making you!!! … I swore I'd live for pleasure!!! … My tongue is fucking enormous!!! … feel it!!! … it's reaching down to my waist!!! … God almighty!!! … nothing matters!!! … you're my God!!! … my daughter: I worship you!!! … I beg you to do it, show I can please you!!! … now look at it it's big, in my corkscrewing hand!!! … kiss it!!!' […] I licked up his sperm. (*ES,* 15)

Together with the breach of the basic civilisational taboo occurs a disruption in signification and communicative function of language:

> This is what daddy said to me while he was fucking me: 'Tradicional estilo de p… argentino. Q…es e.mas j…de entablar g … amistades o t… tertulias a … es m… similar a. estilo t…: se c… la c… con l. palma de la m… y s. apoyan l… cinco d… se s… y s. baja l. mano, l… de e … manera y . el c … se h … hombre. origen e. profundamente r… y s. han h … interesantes t… en l… jeroglificos e … y m … Es e.mas r … para d … de l … comidas p… no c… la de …' He had become a Puerto Rican. (*ES,* 17)

Apart dismantling language as communication tool with these and similar deformations, Acker directs her sarcastic barbs against the powers that be and people who happen to wield power: "In agreement with Dr Freud, Dr Schreber defined paranoia as a defence to homosexual love. Dr Schreber was paranoid, schizophrenic, hallucinated, deluded, disassociated, autistic, and ambivalent. In these qualities he resembled the current United States President, Ronald Reagan" (*ES,* 45). Interspersed with these are Acker's staple poetic vignettes and meditations on loss, absence and death:

> The absence of me. Not even the existence of nothingness represented me. When I regained consciousness, unlike the old cashew nut, I lifted up the first public phone receiver I could find.
> Somebody answered me, 'Death.'
> 'That's not my name.' Alive I protested.
> 'It's your code.' I knew his voice. The curer of death. 'For the living, winter is death.'
> (*ES,* 52)

In the "Let the Algerians Take Over Paris (Abhor)" section, Acker's terrorist project is tied in with the more abstract category of the exile. As her female protagonist Abhor recounts, "I would have run somewhere if there had been anywhere to which to run. But there wasn't. I know, I know there's no home anywhere. Nowhere: Exile was a permanent condition. A permanent community, in terms of relationships and language. In terms of identity. But from what was identity exiled?" (*ES,* 63) Whatever future or power her terrorist characters possess, Acker never tires of pointing out that it lies in and as writing: that any subject's future is determined by marks on the page.[74] And it is through such textual acts of terrorism that Acker hopes one day to figure a "society," as she writes in the final line of Empire, "which isn't just disgust":

> I stood there, in the sunlight, and thought that I didn't as yet know what I wanted. I now fully knew what I didn't want and what and whom I hated. That was something. And then I thought that, one day, maybe, there'ld be a human society in a world which is beautiful, a society which wasn't just disgust." (*EO,* 227)

To this end, her manifesto appears in *Empire of the Senseless*, explaining her textual practices and taboo exploration as "an attack on the institutions of prison via language":

> That part of our being (mentality, feeling, physicality) which is free of control, let's call it our "unconscious." Since it's free of control, it's our only defense against institutionalized meaning, institutionalized language, control, fixation, judgement, prison.

74 Speaking of Acker's "terrorist aesthetic," Milletti puts the equation as follows: "For the terrorist, that mark is a bomb. For Acker the writer, that bomb is a fictional language which creates—not simply spurs—subjects to action" (Milletti, "Violent Acts, Volatile Words," 355).

> [...] What is the language of the unconscious? [...] Its primary language must be taboo, all that is forbidden. Thus, an attack on the institutions of prison via language would demand the use of a language or languages that aren't acceptable, which are forbidden. Language, on one level, constitutes a set of codes and social and historical agreements. Nonsense doesn't per se break down the codes; speaking precisely that which the codes forbid breaks down the codes. (*ES,* 133-34)

Echoing some of Jolas' revolutionary pronouncements and sharing his conviction of the necessity of treating (and attacking) the language of official discourses as a political entity, Acker's novels contain some of the most stylistically difficult writing in the entire period. The narrative voice, as well as the setting in time and place, typeface, page layout, language (portions of *Blood and Guts* and *Empire of the Senseless* are in Persian) have a fragmented quality; the characters' histories, sex, and even species change without warning or explanation. The aggressive, confrontational intertextuality of her novels is arresting and disturbing, and presents a strikingly original reworking of the Joycean fictional exploration of the materiality of language.

"JOKY JOYCE, JOYCE THE JEWEL, JIMMY THE JOY": GILBERT SORRENTINO

The most explicitly *Ulyssean* work of fiction of the entire period is doubtlessly *Mulligan Stew* (1979), written by Gilbert Sorrentino (1929-2006).[75] However, both preceding and following it is a body of work whose experimental nature results from Sorrentino's highly idiosyncratic blend of influences and his proceduralist approach to fiction – as he confided to Charles Trueheart of *Publishers Weekly*, "form not only determines content, but form invents content."[76] Sorrentino's output commingles poetry and prose to an almost equal degree: by the time his first novel was published, two books of his poetry had come out, preoccupied with spatial presentation of language, an occupation shared by his fiction. His first two novels, *The Sky Changes* (1966) and *Steelwork* (1970), prefer spatial arrangement and non-chronological simultaneity to linear narrative progression. In *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things* (1973) Sorrentino satirises the New York avant-garde art world of the 1950s and 1960s, a world in which he played a part. This work is the first one in which Sorrentino's modernist heritage clearly surfaces: each chapter is devoted to one of eight principal characters and the novel proceeds by way of digression, anecdote, asides, and itemisations, all filtered through a single narrator.

First of Sorrentino's formally experimental works is *Splendide-Hôtel* (1973), a short book consisting of twenty-six sections, each based on a letter of the alphabet and the images it suggests. As the back-cover blurb[77] makes clear, *Splendide-Hôtel*, influenced by the poetry of William Carlos Williams and Arthur Rimbaud—the title is taken from Rimbaud's "Les Illuminations"—aims to rescue the poetic language from the grasp of commercialism. Dedicated to his old friend Hubert Selby, Sorrentino's *Splendide-Hôtel* is meant as an antidote to what he saw as a general neglect of prose. Written in late 1970 and early 1971, the overall structure of the work is provided by the alphabet, and Sorrentino assembles fragments that tell no story and make no cumulative point. Sorrentino aims in *Splendide-Hôtel* to preserve the creative tradition. These literary artists are touchstones for this series of exercises in style, which conserves—according to numerous Sorrentino interviews—the value of the artist in an age devoted to being entertained. The motto is Rimbaud's "*Et le Splendide-Hôtel fut bâti dans le chaos de glaces et de nuit du pôle*" and below is a sample of the opening lines for a few letters:

A

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75 Sorrentino was born in Brooklyn and spent most of his life in New York. He married twice and had three children, and served, via conscription, in the Army Medical Corps from 1951 to 1953, after which he began to write fiction. Early in his literary career, Sorrentino cofounded *Neon* magazine and served as its publisher and editor from 1956 to 1960. When Neon folded, he took a book editor position with Kulcher and then with Grove Press, where he witnessed a revolutionary period in avant-garde publishing. By the time he left Grove in 1970, Sorrentino had published several works of poetry and fiction. From that point forward, he continued to publish consistently and worked in various faculty positions for institutions including Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, the New School for Social Research, the University of Scranton, and finally Stanford University, where he served as a professor of English from 1982 to 1999 and then professor emeritus.

76 Qtd. in *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* (New York: Merriam Webster, 1995) 1053.

77 "Arthur Rimbaud's invented *Splendide-Hôtel*, "built in the chaos of ice and of the polar night," provides the occasion for Gilbert Sorrentino's imaginative meditation on letters and language. Each chapter serves as an opportunity for the author to expand on thoughts and images suggested by a letter of the alphabet, as well as to reflect upon the workings of the imagination, particularly in the art of William Carlos Williams and Arthur Rimbaud. Reminiscent of the philosophical treatise/poem *On Being Blue* by William H. Gass, *Splendide-Hôtel* is a Grand Hotel of the mind, splendidly conceived."

> A continuing rejuvenation? Of flies! *Mouches éclatantes*. The poet has it that this primal vowel is black. The great alpha, black A. "Black velvet coat of glittering flies." Black, black. The A, sitting quietly on the page, wings folded back over the shining body. A, a fly. AA, two flies. […]
> B
> B-b-b-b-b. The sound an idiot makes. I remember Jo-Jo, ah, a perfect idiot name. A Mongoloid, shuffling down the street on the arm of his grey and faded Irish mother, punching himself in the face. […]
> F
> A poem may sometimes open to you, a flower; or it will close up suddenly, a trap, inside a nervous rat, moving in swift jerks. One sees, not the poem, but the poet's absolute intent. Or, the floor unexpectedly opens, and a black underworld is glimpsed.
> (*SH,* 7; 9; 19)

Sorrentino's letter-based texts employ a whole range of techniques by which to bring home the associations. In the above quotation alone, there is the visual/material resemblance ("A" resembling a fly), the auditory/conceptual connection ("B" being "the sound an idiot makes"), or alliterative ("F" evoking a "flower," a "floor," etc.). The parts of the book constitute a celebration of language and of creativity.

Still in 1973, Sorrentino published *Flawless Play Restored: The Masque of Fungo*, a satire in the manner of Ben Jonson that on its title page declared itself "part of a novel-in-progress presented in play form, but not intended for the stage." In 1975 Sorrentino completed the novel—initially titled "Synthetic Ink"—in which the play was the centrepiece. Sections of the book appeared in various magazines beginning in 1973, but the nearly 450-page work was rejected by many publishing houses before being accepted by Grove Press, on the condition that the title be changed to *Mulligan Stew*, with its punning allusion to *Ulysses* Buck Mulligan, and the novel was published in May 1979. *Mulligan Stew*, a mélange of literary bits and pieces that serves to demonstrate the breadth of its author's technical skills while dismissing and parodying the avant-garde, is widely considered Sorrentino's masterpiece. Sorrentino uses the simplest narrative frame (the plot of the novel concerning an author who attempts to write a story) on which to hang his collected knowledge, cultural awareness, and modernist technical expertise. The title's frame of reference is Joyce, but as its first reviews showed, the novel's intertext encompasses Rabelais, Sterne, as well as the Flaubert of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* or the Flann O'Brien of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, to whose "virtue *hilaritas*" the novel is dedicated and who is also the source for an epigraph that prepares the reader for a book considered as a "personal musical instrument." The other two mottoes are "Ber*serk. Ber*serk. Ber*serk!* Ber*serk? Ber*serk! *Ber*serk . . . ?" (attributed to Philip Vogel, in conversation) and "I done me best when I was let […] And lilting on all the time," from the penultimate page of the *Wake*.

The novel, regarded by many as a culmination of literary modernism, is prefaced by a series of letters and a reader's report detailing the difficulty of seeing such a novel into publication. One of the letters warns that what follows wallows "in the mortal sin of bookishness," and the novel is indeed composed ostentatiously of fictional documents—more letters; extracts from journals, scrapbooks, and notebooks; interviews; reviews; poems; as well as *The Masque of Fungo*. Sorrentino told John O'Brien that "every one of my books is an attempt to solve another fictional problem that I set myself," and one the solutions he uses is "inventing another voice or another group of voices."[78] Sorrentino lifts characters from other novels to populate *Mulligan Stew*, drawing Ned Beaumont from Dashiell Hammett's *The Glass Key* (1931) and Antony Lamont from *At Swim-Two-Bird*s. Martin Halpin finds himself "plucked out of the wry, the amused footnote in which I have resided faceless, for all these years, in the work of that gentlemanly Irishman, Mr. Joyce" (*MS*, 26), and transplanted into a novel being written by Lamont, within the work of Sorrentino:

> I can't understand how Mr. Joyce allowed him to take me away! Surely, it can't have been for money! Or does Mr. Joyce even *know* that I have gone? Maybe he's dead. […] Mr. Joyce, knowing that I could do nothing at all, merely stated, *stated,* mind you, that I performed "odd jobs." […] If there is one thing I learned while working for Mr. Joyce, it is that one cannot escape for long from a writer, unless he decides to completely rewrite a whole section. (*MS,* 26-7)

This "plucking out" occurred from *FW* 266.F2, where he makes a brief appearance as the originator of the phrase "to make hobbyhodge happy in his hole," and is presented as "an old gardener from the Glens of Antrim who used to do

78 Qtd. in Julian Cowley, "Gilbert Sorrentino," *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 173: American Novelists Since World War II, Fifth Series*, eds. James R. Giles & Wanda H. Giles (The Gale Group: Northern Illinois University, 1996) 252.

odd jobs for my godfather, the Rev. B.B. Brophy of Swords." The character Antony Lamont is writing a novel within Sorrentino's novel, and midway through the book, Lamont's characters try to escape and go their own way. *Mulligan Stew* traces the decline of Lamont into bitterness and paranoia, the squandering of his creative energies in his struggle to write.

Part of this creative dissipation mapped throughout the book is a Sorrentino's staple device: the catalogue structure, which oftentimes takes the form of mere lists of words on exhibit. The lists occur at all levels of narration and include a list of books and periodicals found in the fictional cabin (*MS,* 31-35). The list's humour lies in its allusiveness as well as its treatment of characters as authors themselves: thus, alongside "*How to Understand the Deaf* by James Joyce," there are also books such as "*Having That Affair* by B. Boylan," "*Say Yes to Love* by Molly Bloom," "*The Layman's Missal* by Buck Mulligan," or "*James: Preserves and Jellies* by Stuart Gorman" (*MS,* 31-4). As the narrator remarks in an ironic aside, "whatever one may make of such a list I don't know. Certainly Ned has no idea what it means" (*MS,* 35). There are recurring lists of "questions and answers" in the scrapbook; the answers are often lists in themselves. The embedded short story "O'Mara" is nothing but lists of insufferable clichés cataloguing everything the "hero" likes and everything he dislikes (*MS,* 66-75). The "Anonymous Sketch" begins with the phrase "a maker of maddening lists" (*MS,* 259) and accordingly, the whole paragraph then becomes a list, the sketch construed around lists of editorial descriptions. There are also lists (in the mode of "Ithaca") of merely potential, not actual items, e.g. a two-page list of what Halpin would have preferred to find instead of what he did find (*MS,* 411-13). *Mulligan Stew* even ends with a list from Beaumont's second letter to Halpin (*MS,* 439-45): "a list of gifts given by writers to characters of theirs who have patiently waited for years and years, after working like dogs, in manuscript and long-forgotten and out-of-print books—waited to be seen and known, loved and hated. Tokens of their employers' esteem and gratitude" (*MS,* 439). The problem of finding a suitable audience for a novel like *Mulligan Stew* is in fact directly addressed in its own initial pages—e.g. through the series of rejection letters received by "Gilbert Sorrentino" (rejecting the book we are about to read). "Lookit," writes one "Edgar Naylor," a "Senior Editor," "you are talking to a man who would have turned down 'Aunt Lydia Plurabelle'—and with no regrets" (*MS*, 7).

James Joyce, notoriously, features among the characters of *The Masque of Fungo*. The list of *dramatis personae* lists "James Joyce, *a grocer's assistant*" alongside e.g. "Fucking Whore" or "Harry the Crab." His contribution is reduced, by and large, to one-line replicas, witticisms, or shibboleths, all culled from the *Wake*, such as "A vagrant need is a flagrant weed" (*MS,* 198; *FW* 294.F3); "He ought to blush for himself" (*MS,* 199; *FW* 47.1); "Respect the uniform" (*MS,* 201; *FW* 579.14); "One must sell it to someone, the sacred name of love" (207; *FW* 268.F1); "Note his sleek hair, so elegant, *tableau vivant*" (*MS,* 209; *FW* 65.7); "I rose up one maypole morning and saw in my glass how nobody loves me but you" (*MS,* 212; *FW* 249.26); "I believe in Dublin and the Sultan of Turkey" (*MS,* 213; *FW* 266.F1). The conclusion of the masque, then, is the following:

> James Joyce: Ere we hit the hay, brothers, let's have that response to prayer. (*FW* 307.F9)
> ALL: No cheating. Unwary.
> James Joyce: Loud, heap miseries upon us yet entwine our arts with laughters low! (*FW* 259.7-8)
> ALL: With laughters low! (*MS,* 216, my brackets)

What is remarkable about these *Wakean* borrowings is that, although borrowed from across the book, they are without exception instances of plain, common language, devoid of the *Wakean* punning deformations or portmanteau complexification. In a sense, Sorrentino's *masque* unmasks the myth of the *Wake* as a difficult book, and dismantles its fetishisation as *the* avant-garde text by showing how much of it is not avant-garde at all.

Sorrentino's metafictional or self-reflexive treatment of characters, their employment at his hands as little more than value functions within the exchange processes at the literary market, as well as the nature of his *Wakean* borrowings, underlie his critique of the mythologies—popular and elitist—of its culture. As Werner has noted, this treatment of character as commodity has to do with Sorrentino's suggested antidote to his pessimist diagnosis of the state of Amer-

ican cultural life.[79] A function of the society, a writer, however subversive, writes *of* that society, *within* the society. Nowhere is this clearer than through the foil of Lamont's novel whose ample excerpts are scattered all through *Mulligan Stew*. For instance, Chapter 10, "Nameless Shamelessness," describes an encounter between Halpin, Beaumont, the woman of their dreams Daisy Buchanan, and Mesdames Corrie Corriendo and Berthe Delamode, a pair of pornographers—prostitutes with whom they have become entangled—literally, as in the following:

> I saw Madame Corriendo lie back on the couch, entreating Daisy to forbidden pleasures with a look so flamy that I quaked with lust. And Daisy, who still talked haltingly on of our moral obligations toward dear Ned Beaumont, suddenly ceased, and gently lowered herself to the floor; on hands and knees, cooing softly and deeply in her ivory throat, she crawled toward the lush rose that Madame Corriendo, panting, proffered her, while I helplessly began to undo my curiously constricting trousers. (*MS,* 324)

Lamont's supposedly "stylish" take on writing is here undermined penchant for the trite phrase ("forbidden pleasures," "quaked with lust," "ivory throat") and the gauche euphemism ("lush rose"); he could be no more successful as pornographer as he is as an avant-gardist (a failure). Stylistic lushness, then, is arguably even less effective in a genre that requires a minimum of obfuscation.

A chapter of Lamont's novel entitled "Making It Up As We Goes Along" (*FW* 268.F2) is not only another allusion to a footnote in the same section of the *Wake* which introduces Martin Halpin to the literary world, but also Sorrentino's point that, indeed, a writer does make up his fiction as he goes along, from the linguistic material conditions of his culture, the inevitable result being that the fiction inevitably reflects the culture. Notes Werner, "just as Joyce filled the *Wake* with references to cricket stars, Sorrentino fills *Mulligan Stew* with allusions to baseball players." Similarly, the literary myth of Joyce's Leopold Bloom is no more important to *Mulligan Stew* than e.g. the myth of Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan: "Sorrentino, like Joyce, accepts and employs everything which falls within his experience without aesthetic preconceptions either realistic or romantic," insisting only that "we work with the full range of the experience at our disposal."[80] Echoing the final question of the catechism chapter of the *Wake*, Sorrentino writes: "Q: When is a man not a man? A: When he is a sham" (*MS*, 42). In a culture of sham, men become shams/characters as characters/shams become men, as does the Joyce whom Sorrentino salutes in the closing "credits" to *Mulligan Stew* as "Joky Joyce who lost her undies" (*MS*, 440), as "Joyce the Jewel of the merchant fleet" (*MS*, 444), and as "Jimmy the Joy of Dublin" (*MS*, 445) – a single man of many shams.

As critic Daniel Green has noted, the 1979 publication of *Mulligan Stew* marked the climax of the self-reflexive novel in the US letters, appearing alongside such works as Gaddis's *J R*, Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, and Barth's *LETTERS*. However, Sorrentino's book "appeared at a time when critical attention was beginning to shift toward the various forms of minimalist neorealism that would dominate the 1980s and 1990s" and so "the *Stew* was too easily dismissed as a vestige of a waning era, a wildly excessive book that seemed increasingly out of step with the sour and sober fiction of the minimalists."[81] Sorrentino's style changed, too, and never did he repeat the stylistic exuberance of the *Stew*; however, he still went on writing experimental works, each one of which developed its own unique form. Indicative of his overall approach is his 1981 review of *Exercises in Style*, Barbara Wright's translation of Raymond Queneau's stunning set of variations on a banal theme. His conclusion neatly sums up the position from which Sorrentino has written all his fiction, but which appears most immediately pertinent to the works beginning with *Blue Pastoral* and climaxing in the trilogy: "What it posits, in a great bravura performance, is the joyous heresy that will not go away, despite the recrudescence of such aesthetic nonsense as Moral Responsibility, Great Themes, and Vast Issues as the business of fiction, and that heresy simply states: form determines content."[82] In his next novel, *Aberra-*

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79 "He demonstrates that the 'character' Halpin is as much a function of the disintegrating world of the 'experimental' writer Lamont as he was of the 'quiet world' of the 'gentlemanly' Joyce. Sorrentino makes the point that one's view of the universe depends in large part on one's position in that universe; few of the characters in *Finnegans Wake* lead such a sedate life as Halpin. But S extends his discussion to indicate that Lamont (and by extension Sorrentino, also an 'experimental' novelist) is himself a function of the culture in which he lives" (Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 198-9).
80 Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions*, 199.
81 Daniel Green, "'Terribly Bookish': Mulligan Stew and the Comedy of Self-Reflexivity," *Critique* 41.3 (Spring 2000): 243.
82 Qtd. in Cowley, "Gilbert Sorrentino," 253.

tion of Starlight (1980), Sorrentino turns to a more conventional form, writing a story set on the New Jersey coast near the end of the Great Depression and concerning four characters, each of whom narrates the events of thirty-six hours at a local boarding house. *Crystal Vision* (1981) marks a return to intertextual design based on the Tarot deck and featuring a series of 78 unconnected stories. It is in *Odd Number* (1985), *Rose Theater* (1987) and *Misterioso* (1989), all three of which published in 1989 under the title, *Pack of Lies*, that Sorrentino blends the perspectivism of *Aberration of Starlight* with the design/procedure of *Crystal Vision*.

Pack of Lies presents the three novels as trilogy, however, there are a few noteworthy aspects according to which this conventional appellation fails to apply, not least of which being the undermining of narrative linearity and character identity.[83] The basic constraint suggested by the title of *Odd Number* is a division of the text into three sections comprised of thirty-three questions – an interrogation for which no reason is ever provided. In accordance with Sorrentino's creed, the form induces the content: the questioning serves to direct the novel toward a particular discourse, that of the detective or mystery story. The questions are posed by an unidentified interrogator, the answers provided by an unidentified informant:

> Was it still twilight, or had it already grown dark?
> If you'll again permit me to get my notes in order, I'll according to my data, what there is of it, it was not yet quite dark, yet it was just past what is usually called twilight certainly it was not yet dark enough not to be able to see, since it is clear that the three of them were seen in the street, beneath a plane tree it was a soft evening late spring (*PL,* 9)

The responses, as can be seen, are presented as replete with lacunae, elisions or deletings, implying a third agency mediating, and interfering with, the transcript of the interrogation. The fact that the questions of part one are repeated in reverse order in the second part of the novel, suggests that the interrogator has turned to a different informant, one who is, in contrast with the taciturnity of his predecessor, now loquacious, adorning his responses with irrelevant digressions and personal associations. Then, a brief final section follows where the same interrogator (presumably) questions a third informant who presents evidence contradicting the previous two testimonies. This cyclicality is, then, enhanced in *Odd Number*'s conclusion: a continuous loop of text that would seem to describe the novel before us: "On his desk there is a manuscript, a typescript, to be precise, of a little more than a hundred and fifty pages . . . Next to the manuscript is a single sheet of white paper on which there is typed a paragraph that reads:" (*PL,* 146), with the text repeating itself up to the colon, implying repetition *ad infinitum*. The absence of a framing narrative that would explain the reasons behind the interrogation ultimately undercuts the teleology of the narrative, as critic Louis Mackey has observed, "What you get in *Odd Number* is lots of language, indeterminately representational, but no determinate representation: narration without a narrative."[84]

Rose Theater contrasts the austerity of *Odd Number* with punning verbal exuberance, whose acknowledged source is the *Wake*. In the first section, entitled *Littel alter*, we read:

> Do Not Disterb. It was the McCoy, a honeymoon suite from which the ocean could be glimpsed. In the dark, in Asbury Park, for a lark. Quark quark. *Finnegans Wake* that's from. Art which rescued him from the provincial. Right. Quark you. Oh Dick, the thteak is wuined. Just like in the movies. With ascot all undone and in a generally unbuttoned state, the young woman but partically dressed, he ascendeth to the Seventh Heaven. A far cry from Mechanicville. A girdle! That was in a nother country, you can bet the rent on that. He preferred *Dubliners*, yes, I prefer *Dubliners*, to tell the truth. Self-denigrating smile. To tell the what? Father Graham turned to face them, his best vatic smile beaming. It's a sin to laugh in church. (*PL,* 158)

Rose Theater introduces the inner lives and outer circumstances of the principal female characters (ten in total) in *Odd Number*. It is constructed according to the principle of the catalogue, the fiction continuously referring to itself as a "found object," a catalogue of ultimately arbitrary, theatrical properties representing nothing more than the artifice of fiction, its fifteen chapters named for an inventory of props found in London's Rose Theatre in 1598. As Sorrentino

83 As Conte has noted, "the names of characters reprise in each of the novels, but in violation of literary convention, the characters are assigned different attributes. Each is a shifting signifier in a complex lang game. One will have to find some other rationale than linear (narrative) sequence for grouping these three novels together, in the order in which they appear" (Conte, *Design and Debris,* 88).
84 Louis Mackey, *Fact, Fiction, and Representation in Four Novels by Gilbert Sorrentino* (Columbia: Camden House, 1997) 30-1.

states in *Rose Theatre*'s dust jacket, it sets out to correct the errors of its predecessor, but "in its desire to stabilize and clarify, adds new and unsettling material to that which we already possess."

Finally, *Misterioso* takes its title from a song by jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk. In 1983, four years before he started writing it, Sorrentino wrote to O'Brien that he envisaged "a book that is a series of lists and catalogues—no narrative, no characters, no author, and no place or time or action, no nothing but those words that 'tend towards maximum entropy.'"[85]Although not quite as chaotic as Sorrentino anticipated, *Misterioso* is still a singularly opaque recapitulation of figures and events from the first two books of the trilogy. Its structure is based on the alphabet, and the order into which the names of characters and places, titles, some substantive nouns, and other attributes appear to fall surfaces within the first few pages. Where Abish's *Alphabetical Africa* unleashes a strict, chapter-by-chapter process of addition and subsequent reduction, *Misterioso* has no chapter or section divisions, only blank slugs that separate text ranging from a single sentence to several paragraphs in length. If *Rose Theater* concludes on the inconclusive note "Now, what" (*PL*, 283), then *Misterioso* opens on a hopeful note:

> Perhaps a question will open the way to resolution, for instance: Why does this old A&P supermarket, with its wooden floors, narrow aisles, and overabundance, or so some think, of house-brand canned goods and bakery products, display, as if carelessly forgotten atop a binful of Granny Smith apples, a seemingly well-read paperback copy of *Absalom! Absalom!*? (*PL,* 289)

The alphabetical constraint is responsible for the orderly disorder of the text. The reader experiences the alphabetised materials of the text as blatant artifice, the imposition of an implausible ordering of persons, places and things. As Conte has shown, "these materials are brought into proximity by lexicographical accident, selected according to a principle that is foreign to the development of character, scene, or plot."[86] There are not twenty-six sections, each one featuring names beginning with the appropriate letter of the alphabet, but twenty-five: The missing section—crossed out—should be devoted to X, Xavier to xylophone; instead, X is found in the penultimate paragraph of the novel, mysteriously lurking among the Zs. With reference to Sorrentino's own pronouncements, Conte has contextualised this anomaly via the Oulipian theory of the *clinamen*:

> the deliberate anomalies in the alphabetical order of the text are examples of the Oulipian theory of the *clinamen*, or swerve. Georges Perec contends that a system too rigorously ordered will fail to be generative of any new order, remaining perpetually in an undifferentiated state. […] *Misterioso* enfolds the previous two works within its alphabetical ordering; but as in the folds of a strange attractor, no detail recurs in precisely the same place or with the same attributes.[87]

Sorrentino's next book, *Under the Shadow* (1991), is a genre classification defying assemblage of fifty-nine mysterious fragments. Each vignette has a simple noun for its title, so the contents page reads as a heterogeneous list, starting with "Memorial" and concluding with "Things." Its coherence is that of a collage rather than of a narrative, and intertextual: each of the chapters is based on one of the 59 drawings Raymond Roussel commissioned Henri A. Zo to create as illustrations for his *Impressions d'Afrique.* With *Red the Fiend* (1995) Sorrentino returned to the quasi-naturalistic mode of his early output, and none of his subsequent works achieves the kind of complexity and stylistic variety of *Mulligan Stew* or the trilogy. Commenting on Sorrentino's career, *Newsweek* writer Ray Sawhill declared that

> Sorrentino has the mind of an avant-garde experimentalist and the instincts of a profane showman. His novels overflow with elaborate literary contrivances and games, and the titles he gives them [...] lead you to expect one hall of mirrors after another. But there's nothing dry or ingrown about his writing. His novels have the kind of physical charge and excitement more often associated with jazz and improvisational comedy than with literature.[88]

Even though, as he confined to Dennis Barone, ours is a "Pound era" (in Kenner's coinage), not a "Joyce" or "Eliot era,"[89] Sorrentino's avant-gardism was one informed by his reworking of Joyce's *Wake* – a reworking that is at once parodic and reverential, in service of creating a highly individual and idiosyncratic poetics.

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85 Qtd. in Cowley, "Gilbert Sorrentino," 254.
86 Conte, *Design and Debris,* 96.
87 Conte, *Design and Debris ,*97.
88 Ray Sawhill, "*Blue Pastoral* – A Review," *Newsweek* (July 4, 1983).
89 "Pound. There is no way to gauge his importance. He is by far the most important literary figure of the twentieth century. His energy, his dedication, his brilliance, his critical faculties, his ability to find things out, to locate things, to attack what was rotten and to plug what was good. His casual

remarks in letters and his short essays are, by themselves, enough to make most critics seem fatuous. Edmund Wilson is a kind of Tom Swift of letters compared to Pound. Just his services on behalf of Joyce are enough to make him great, and there's his own work. I don't think it's a mistake that Hugh Kenner called his book *The Pound Era*, which shocked a lot of people. They thought he should have called it *The Joyce Era* or *The Eliot Era*, but it's not. He's right, it's Pound" (Gilbert Sorrentino and Dennis Barone, "An Interview with Gilbert Sorrentino." Partisan Review 48, no. 2 (1981): 246).

WITHIN OR BEHIND OR BEYOND OR ABOVE THE NEW NOVEL: FROM *PORTRAIT D'UN INCONNU* (1947) TO *PORTRAIT DE L'ARTISTE EN JEUNE SINGE* (1967)

The first thing to say about the *nouveau roman* group is that, very much like the writers and artists associated with Jolas' *transition*, it is no group in any conventional sense of the term; in fact, part of the New Novelists' shared agenda was precisely to challenge the notions of literary grouping and group mentality as such. It has become a critical commonplace to stress the differences both on the basis of comparison between two or more New Novelists and within the development of their individual oeuvres. One oftentimes does little beyond the usual acknowledgment that the New Novel, just as all literary-historical labels, is slippery and imprecise in terms of both the period described and authors referred to. Still, there are a few shared traits discernible across a whole range of texts published simultaneously or within a couple of years of each other, as Laurent Le Sage observed as early as 1962, from the mid-1950s onward, the New Novel has "attained a notoriety important enough to consecrate it as an authentic avant-garde phenomenon."[1] In fact, Le Sage's comment comes just around the very peak of a five-year period which saw the publication of six novels by six relatively unknown authors: *La Jalousie* (1957) by Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Modification* (1957) by Michel Butor, Nathalie Sarraute's *Le Planétarium* (1959), Claude Simon's *La Route des Flandres* (1960), *La Marquise sortit à cinq heures* (1961) by Claude Mauriac, and Robert Pinget's *L'Inquisitoire* (1962). The period from 1957 to 1962 can be seen as a nucleus of the group's activity, with the preceding decade devoted to pioneering preparatory work and the subsequent two decades witnessing the group's transformations and gradual dissolution.

The term "New Novel" has its own genealogy and, just as so many other literary-historical terms, its own problems. Its inception took place in the July 1958 special issue of the *Esprit* magazine devoted to novel writing and featuring the work of ten authors including the authors discussed in this chapter (minus Claude Mauriac) plus the work of Jean Cayrol, Marguerite Duras, Kateb Yacine and Jean Lagrolet. Although its *ad-hoc* character is best documented by the fact that the appellation of the New Novel post-dates the appearance of the first novels supposed to have inaugurated the group by no less than five years, still, the name—unlike the many other terms (Bernard Dort's 1955 *romans blancs*; Alain Bosquet re-application of Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of the *anti-roman* from 1947; Émile Henriot's notion of "École du regard" or Ronald Barthes' *littérature objective*)[2]—did catch on and was sanctified at the beginning of the 1960s by Robbe-Grillet's *Pour un nouveau roman* (*For a New Novel*). By the end of the 1960s, however, the troubles with its application to the above six authors (let alone the others) had begun to show. As John Sturrock—author of one of the first book-length studies on the New Novel in English—observed in 1969, although "responsible critics who show a keen and sympathetic understanding of the practices of the New Novelists have not abandoned the term," there have been "certain radical divergences in purpose and seriousness" between individual New Novelists—most notably between Butor and Robbe-Grillet—which make it "perfectly understandable that the New Novelists themselves should have been outraged by the glib way in which their differences had been obscured."[3] Still, Sturrock's study—focusing on Robbe-Grillet, Simon and Butor—argues for the viability and pertinence of the label, viewing the three novelists as proponents of "a central proposition about the *nouveau roman*: that these novels must *never* be read as exercises in naïve realism or naturalism, but as studied dramatizations of the creative process itself."[4] Despite its claim to "newness" and its outspokenly polemic character, Sturrock insists that the movement is "part of the tradition which insists that the novelist explain or reveal his principle of organization in the text itself" and has a point in showing that Robbe-Grillet, for all his brash exorcism of the past, "has always claimed that he was not overturning the past, but extending it in the only possible direction. His tradition of the novel extends back through Beckett, Faulkner, Kafka,

1 *The French New Novel: An Introduction*, ed. Laurent Le Sage (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962) 1.
2 For more, see Le Sage's overview of the critical genealogy in *The French New Novel*, 2-3.
3 John Sturrock, *The French New Novel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) 1-3.
4 Sturrock, *The French New Novel*, 3.

Joyce, Proust, Roussel, and Flaubert, whom he values for their successive technical contributions to the form."[5] Sturrock's study also originated the now broadly accepted periodization of the New Novelist evolution as a movement, which it is useful to recall especially in the context of the next chapters detailing the development of other, subsequent groupings and movements, such as Oulipo or the group around the *Tel Quel* magazine. Neither of the two can be said to have supplanted or replaced the New Novel: all of the six protagonists mentioned above went on developing their novelistic output well into the 1980s and 1990s, and so the New Novel is "always there" within the context of post-World-War-II French novel.

The common periodisation distinguishes three distinct phases. The first period, roughly from mid-1950s to mid-1960s, saw Robbe-Grillet at the helm and the novelists he associated with through his editorial post at the Éditions de Minuit, publisher of Beckett's trilogy and *Les Gommes*, becoming the hub of the New Novel publishing. Sarraute, for her part, was committed to Gallimard (where Queneau was based), and so markedly different were the two publishing houses' agendas throughout the 1950s and 60s that e.g. Butor's switch from Minuit to Gallimard in 1960 meant to be taken as a gesture of active dissociation from Robbe-Grillet's New Novelist programme. The authors loosely connected by their publisher and critical proponents were more alike in what they stood against than what they stood for. The next decade, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, saw the leadership of Jean Ricardou (Robbe-Grillet having withdrawn from theoretical polemics to cinema and other artistic collaboration). It was Ricardou's organisation that sought to turn the New Novelists into a group of like-minded writers whose strategic participation in public events and conferences was meant to demonstrate their intent to collaborate in promoting the practice and theory of the modern novel.[6] Ricardou's theory emphasised the self-reflexive nature of the novel and a critique of realism while limiting the active presence of the personality of the writer in favour of the productive power of language and critical reflection on the part of the reader. The second phase—together with Ricardou's leading role—was brought to an end by Robbe-Grillet's return to the public forum at the 1975 Cerisy colloquium, where he objected to the rigorously systematic character of Ricardou's analyses and interpretations which, to his mind, turned his novels into reassuringly comprehensible texts, a tendency at odds with his goal of producing meanings which were multiple and mobile. Thus, the third, post-1975 phase is marked by a turn against and away from Ricardou – its high point being the 1982 New York colloquium, where Robbe-Grillet, Pinget, Sarraute and Simon celebrated Ricardou's absence and placed a renewed emphasis on the novelist's expression of his or her personality.

France's humiliating wartime occupation deeply scarred the members of Robbe-Grillet's generation—in fact most of the New Novelists experienced the occupation in highly personal and sometimes traumatic terms—which naturally shook the grounds of their belief in the commitment to the philosophy and ideology of literature preached by intellectuals of the preceding generation, particularly Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Robbe-Grillet spoke for many when calling, in *Pour un nouveau roman*, such concepts as meaning, identity, story and history "obsolete," positing instead the necessity of acknowledging the instability, relativity and indeterminacy in individual perceptual and conceptual consciousness of the surrounding world. This tendency toward indeterminacy has been dubbed as "suspicion" by Nathalie Sarraute who, quoting Stendhal, turned it into the guiding principle of the post-war era. Suspicion, to her mind, was particularly directed toward the self-unity and self-identity of the staple ingredient of the traditional novel – the character:

> le personnage n'est plus aujourd'hui que l'ombre de lui-même. C'est à contrecoeur que le romancier lui accorde tout ce qui peut le rendre trop facilement repérable : aspect physique, gestes, actions, sensations, sentiments courants, depuis longtemps étudiés et connus, qui contribuent à lui donner à si bon compte l'apparence de la vie et offrent une prise si commode au lecteur. (*ES*, 74)

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5 Sturrock, *The French New Novel*, 5.

6 As Sturrock observes, "the idea of the Nouveau roman as a group of novelists served all its members by promoting interest in their work. Their novels became well-known to generations of foreign university students […] the French Ministry of Culture sent New Novelists abroad to represent the French novel; no comparable movement arose to take its place" (Sturrock, *The French New Novel*, 6-7).

Robbe-Grillet's conception of the New Novel can be viewed as a phenomenological revision of Sartre's existentialism. His early work posits the phenomenological view of consciousness, in which consciousness confronts the world without pre-existing ordering notions, marked by what Husserl terms "intentionality" – an orientation toward the world. Le Sage was among the first critics to tease out the implications of Husserl's philosophy for the practice of the New Novelists, paralleling their rejection of the analytical method of presenting characters with Husserl's rejection of ideality.[7] In literary terms, the New Novel can best be seen as a revolt against the realist tenet of objectivity, regarding it as an illusion to be discarded together with what Robbe-Grillet calls old myths of profundity: myths on which the novel used to be based. Together with the illusion of objectivity is to be discarded Sartre's programme posited in his 1948 work, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, and commonly denoted as *littérature engagée*. In his *For a New Novel*, Robbe-Grillet treats "engagement" as precisely one of the "obsolete notions" to be discarded. He rejects Sartre's call for a literature of *moral* as a utopian fantasy and insists that as soon as one "expresses something outside literature," literature itself "beings to disappear."[8] In the same breath, Robbe-Grillet calls for engagement to be restored to "its only sense possible for us," that is, "the full consciousness of the current problems of one's own language, the conviction of its extreme importance, and the willingness to resolve them from the inside."[9] The only engagement possible for a New Novelist, Robbe-Grillet insists elsewhere in the book, is literature rather than politics, since "political life obliges us incessantly to suppose known significations," whereas art is "more modest—or more ambitious" for in it, "nothing is known in advance":

> *Le seul engagement possible, pour l'écrivain, c'est la littérature.* Il n'est pas raisonnable, dès lors, de prétendre dans nos romans servir une cause politique, même une cause qui nous paraît juste, même si dans notre vie politique nous militons pour son triomphe. La vie politique nous oblige sans cesse à supposer des significations connues : significations sociales, significations historiques, significations morales. L'art est plus modeste—ou plus ambitieux—: pour lui, rien n'est jamais connu d'avance. (*PNR,* 120)

It is, however, not only on the political level that Sartre's programme is to be rebuffed from Robbe-Grillet's perspective. Despite the occasional nod of approval toward *La Nausée*'s protagonist Roquentin—in a sense a blueprint for so many New Novelist anti-heroes—Robbe-Grillet rejects the its perceived subscribing to a "Balzacian" order of realism, i.e. the subservience of form to content or message in so much of existentialist writing. At one point in *For a New Novel*, he pits Stendhal against Balzac by showing how the "confused" descriptions in *La Chartreuse de Parme* no longer belong to the Balzacian order.

That the New Novelist canon as put forth by Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet should primarily include Kafka the Prague German, Faulkner the American, and the two Irishmen, Joyce and Beckett (with a 19th-century enjambment, in Robbe-Grillet's case, of Gustave Flaubert, and in Sarraute's, of Dostoevsky) is symptomatic of their revolt against what the so-called "Balzacian" tradition of the French novel, whose repercussions they viewed as stretching far beyond the demise of 19th-century mentality in the trenches of World War I. By comparison with these six writers, the importance of French modernists like Marcel Proust or Raymond Roussel is acknowledged much less readily, and still less so in the case of stylistically more conservative writers like André Gide or Paul Valéry. The one major attempt at claiming the central position within the New Novelistic canon for Joyce as *the* "great predecessor" of the nouveau ro-

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7 "The new novelists' rejection of the analytical method of presenting characters is postulated upon the same philosophic rejection of ideality that motivated Edmund Husserl in the first years of this century to reject neo-Kantism. Husserl, before Sartre or any of the new writers, had said that the world is there before it is anything. But the world to be there is not to be fully autonomous. The world is there only because it is perceived by human consciousness, which gives it its significance and its reality" (*The French New Novel*, ed. Le Sage, 16).

8 "Que reste-il alors de l'engagement? Sartre, qui avait vu le danger de cette littérature moralisatrice, avait prêché pour une littérature *morale*, qui prétendait seulement éveiller des consciences politiques en posant les problèmes de notre société, mais qui aurait échappé à l'esprit de propagande en rétablissant le lecteur dans sa liberté. L'expérience a montré que c'était là encore une utopie : dès qu'apparaît le souci de signifier quelque chose (quelque chose d'extérieur à l'art) la littérature commence à reculer, à disparaître" (*PNR,* 38-9).

9 "Redonnons donc à la notion d'engagement le seul sens qu'elle peut avoir pour nous. Au lieu d'être de nature politique, l'engagement c'est, pour l'écrivain, la pleine conscience des problèmes actuels de son propre langage, la conviction de leur extrême importance, la volonté de les résoudre de l'intérieur. C'est là, pour lui, la seule chance de demeurer un artiste et, sans doute aussi, par voie de conséquence obscure et lointaine, de servir un jour peut-être à quelque chose – peut-être même à la revolution" (*PNR,* 39).

man—Vivian Mercier's monumental study *The New Novel: From Queneau to Pinget*—posits as the primary impulse for the New Novel not so much Husserl as

> a deep dissatisfaction with an art form now paying the penalty for the high degree of development it had achieved in the nineteenth century. The French novel of the first half of the century was technologically obsolescent or obsolete: it badly needed to "retool," following the lead of such English-language masters as Joyce, Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf, or such German-language ones as Kafka and Thomas Mann.[10]

It seems that in their blank refusal of the French novelistic tradition, Robbe-Grillet and Sarraute have thrown out the baby with the bath water. Proust they accept with reservations and Roussel they value primarily as a theorist of *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres*, Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* receives an occasional nod of approval, but other modernists like Paul Valéry and avant-gardists like André Breton are largely ignored. What the New Novelists, at least Robbe-Grillet and Sarraute, seem to not only disavow but revolt against, is existentialism as practiced by Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, novelists committed to humanist causes. Robbe-Grillet's "Éléments d'une antologie moderne" in his *Pour un nouveau roman* does include Roussel, Joë Bosquet or Beckett, but not as much as would express an explicit alliance. Given this eclectic formation of tradition and their overt alliance with figures like Faulkner, Kafka and Joyce, and the necessary confusion evoked by labels such as "modernism" or "postmodernism" vis-à-vis the New Novel, it is prudent of critic and theorist Stephen Heath to exclude them from his criticism of the New Novel and to focus instead on the issue of its "new realism." For, if Robbe-Grillet famously claimed that "Flaubert écrivait le nouveau roman de 1860, Proust le nouveau roman de 1910" (*PNR,* 10), then what he meant by "new" was not so much their formal or stylistic innovations as what Roland Barthes has called "la connaissance du langage" and what Heath calls the "practice of writing," defined as "a radical experience of language."[11] Heath's Joycean training leads him to consider the *Wake* as precisely a text in which such a radical experience of language takes place, offering "the *space* of a work always '*in progress,*' the scene of a play of language and not, as in realist writing, the (intended) linear progression of a process of notation." [12] In this respect, Heath argues, the "situation of the nouveau roman is post-Joycean: Joyce, that is, is a major element in its situation.[13]

It is in their conception of tradition and what Heath terms "a radical experience of language" that the New Novel is firmly embedded in the genealogy stretching from Stendhal and Flaubert to Joyce and Beckett. However, although sharing a common starting point and a few structural resemblances, the careers of all individual New Novelists are highly idiosyncratic and in no way reducible to the outline above. Just as in the previous chapters, the avant-garde status of the New Novel will be examined through the prism of the avant-garde heritage of James Joyce. The ordering of the following six authors is one of progressive Joyce-involvement, from minimum to maximum, starting from those who imply or acknowledge his influence, but write decidedly "after" him, and moving towards those tackle his legacy directly, writing "through" or "with" him.

"LE TÉMOIN D'UNE ÉPOQUE RÉVOLUE": NATHALIE SARRAUTE

Nathalie Sarraute (1900-1999), the oldest of the nouveaux romanciers, was also the first to begin her career as a writer – her earliest text, an unusual series of short sketches in prose entitled *Tropismes*, was written in 1932 and published, like Joyce's *Wake*, on the eve of the Second World War, her first novel, *Portrait d'un inconnu*, was written during the war (spent, as a Russian-born Jew, in hiding) and published in 1948, and her first essayistic work on the theory

10 Mercier, *The New Novel From Queneau To Pinget* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1971) 3.
11 Stephen Heath, *The Nouveau Roman: A Study in the Practice of Writing* (London: Elek Books, 1972) 24.
12 Heath, *The Nouveau Roman*, 26.
13 However, Heath hastens to add, "to say this is not so much to suggest particular points of influence, though no doubt these could be traced if it were felt to be important to do so (continuity is the backbone of the natural attitude), as to stress the position of the Nouveau Roman in the general context of the shift in literary consciousness that has been described here as the practice of writing, and so to indicate that the Nouveau Roman functions not on the grounds of the natural attitude […] but as a questioning of that attitude in its work of research in and exploration of the premises and possibilities of the novel. Its situation is that work of textual reactivation in which the work of Joyce represents so important a stage" (Heath, *The Nouveau Roman*, 29).

of the novel, came out in 1956 as the afore-mentioned *L'Ère du soupçon*. Her oeuvre, completed as late as 1997 with her last novel *Ouvrez*, would comprise a dozen novels, seven theatre pieces and several volumes of essays. In all the genres it tackled Sarraute's work precedes her fellow New Novelists' by more than a decade. This is an important consideration for reading *L'Ère du soupçon*, later on recognised as a sort of New Novelist manifesto, but written before the notion itself came into circulation.

L'Ère du soupçon (*Age of Suspicion*) comprises four long essays, of which the eponymous one turns out the shortest. The first essay, "De Dostoïevski à Kafka," sets out to defend the psychological novel (as written by Dostoyevsky and, Sarraute argues, by Kafka as well) against the onslaught of the existentialist novel of the absurd as practiced by Camus. On the basis of *L'Étranger*, Sarraute shows that despite the author's programmatic proclamations to the contrary, Camus' writing is not devoid of conventional realist psychologising. The title essay has already been quoted above – its thesis is that Stendhal's diagnosis of the "age of suspicion" sounded the death knell for the "Balzacian" era of character verisimilitude and "liveliness." Sarraute bases the contemporaneity of the disbelief in and suspicion of "character" on psychoanalysis and its discovery of the unconscious – particularly on the Jungian "collective unconscious," which reveals any claim to human individuality as a problematic construct. The psychoanalytic discovery goes hand in hand with developments in literary modernism – as Sarraute notes, "même le nom dont il lui faut, de toute nécessité, l'affubler, est pour le romancier une gêne," and her examples include Joyce's *Wake*: "Gide (sans les patronymes), Kafka (une initiale), Joyce désigne par H.C.E., initiales aux interprétations multiples, le héros proteiforme de *Finnegans Wake*" (*ES*, 75). This anti-realist vein is taken up in the fourth and last essay, "Ce que voient les oiseaux," which critiques the trompe-l'oeil realism in the novel as a rhetorical construct and style far removed from any lived "reality." The well-structured novel with its plot, subplots, realistic dialogue, refined character study, setting, and descriptions is not, for Sarraute, destined to produce an "objective" study of the outer and inner worlds of man, but rather a formalistic deformation of them.

In the collection's third and longest essay, "Conversation et sous-conversation," Sarraute opens with what appears a dismissal of Virginia Woolf and her claim of the "dark spaces of psychology" as the modern novelist's chief point of interest: "Qui songerait aujourd'hui à prendre encore au sérieux ou seulement à lire les articles que Virginia Woolf, quelques années après l'autre guerre, écrivait sur l'art du roman?" (*ES*, 83) Sarraute continues with a presage of an era in which Joyce and Proust will not be revisited unless guided and in "respectful silence" pertinent to "historical monuments":

> [P]our la plupart d'entre nous, les œuvres de Joyce et de Proust se dressent déjà dans le lointain comme les témoins d'une époque révolue. Le temps n'est pas éloigné où l'on ne visitera plus que sous la conduite d'un guide, parmi les groupes d'enfants des écoles, dans un silence respectueux et avec une admiration un peu morne, ces monuments historiques. Voilà quelques années déjà qu'on est revenu des « endroits obscurs de la psychologie ». (*ES,* 84)

She goes on to dismiss "the great blinding truths" of the "literature of the absurd," claiming that to her generation, these seem no longer credible, and observes that Joyce—with the implied reference to the "Penelope" episode of *Ulysses*—failed to draw out of these "dark depths" anything more than "an uninterrupted sequence of words.[14] However, only after these preliminary dismissals does the true difficulty posed by the moderns for Sarraute appear:

> Et il est bien vrai qu'on ne peut refaire du Joyce ou du Proust, alors qu'on refait chaque jour à la satisfaction générale du Stendhal ou du Tolstoï. Mais n'est-ce pas d'abord parce que les modernes ont transporté ailleurs l'intérêt essentiel du roman ? Il ne se trouve plus pour eux dans le dénombrement des situations et des caractères ou dans la peinture des mœurs, mais dans la mise au jour d'une matière psychologique nouvelle. (*ES*, 95)

In a sense, this remark turns an explicit critique into an implicit praise – Joyce and Proust cannot be "repeated" with the same ease as Stendhal or Tolstoy because they have "displaced the essential interest of the novel" and imposed upon it the necessity of revealing a "new psychological subject-matter." It slowly becomes apparent that what Sarraute

14 "Depuis les romans américains et les grandes vérités aveuglantes que n'a cessé de déverser sur nous la littérature de l'absurde, y a-t-il encore beaucoup de gens qui y croient ? Joyce n'a tiré de ces fonds obscurs qu'un déroulement ininterrompu de mots" (*ES*, 85).

is denouncing is precisely her day and age in which it is more convenient for authors to repeat Stendhal and Tolstoy rather than to take seriously the challenge posed by modernists:

> Aussi, dès qu'un auteur, renonçant à l'héritage que lui ont légué ceux de Virginia Woolf appelait il y a trente ans les modernes, dédaignant les libertés […] qu'ils ont conquises, parvient à capter quelques mouvements de l'âme dans ces lignes pures, simples, élégantes et légères qui caractérisent le style classique, aussitôt on le porte aux nues.
> (*ES*, 86-7)

In a letter defending this essay—which has so often been misread as a dismissal of the modernists—Sarraute writes that her novelistic project is in fact similar to theirs, aiming to "supposer la destruction de tout la gangue des conventions romanesques que Virginia Woolf dénonçait elle-même dans ses essais critiques," and that for the contemporary writer, what is most important is "en se délivrant d'un formalisme encombrant, de parvenir à saisir une réalité. Cette réalité, je la cherche dans les mouvements psychologiques à l'état naissant, la sous-conversation, ce que j'ai appelé les 'Tropismes'." If there is a critical point to be made about the modernists, for Sarraute, it lies in the fact that the modernist subject still falls prey to the trap of individual completion, that their characters have a finished absoluteness about them and that their presentation is by and large inward. Opposed to the "sub-conversational" Proust or Joyce, and ultimately praised higher, is Ivy Compton-Burnett and her "solution absolument originale, à la fois élégante et forte" which makes her "celle d'un des plus grands romanciers que l'Angleterre ait jamais eus." Compton-Burnett's method of character presentation is dialogical, exterior, and yet decidedly "written" – "ces longues phrases guindées, à la fois rigides et sinueuses, ne rappellent aucune conversation entendue" (*ES,* 118-9). What emerges from Sarraute's essays are reservations about the particular ends to which the modernist experiment had been brought—by Proust, Woolf, or Joyce—but also her unambiguous pledge of allegiance to taking it further. As long as the well-structured realist novel is to be refused as a deformation of reality, then the modernist exploration of unbiased subjectivity is to be supplemented with an equally unbiased objectivity. Sarraute situates her work within a tradition of psychological realism while simultaneously proposing to take it to its logical conclusion and to surpass any individual psychology.[15]

The widespread misreading of Sarraute as a critic of modernism is also in stark contrast to her own personal pronouncements on her indebtedness to Joyce and the moderns. She repeatedly stated that her early reading had convinced her, if not how to write, then definitely how *not* to: "As for me, after reading Proust and Joyce, which I did between 1922 and 1924, and then reading Virginia Woolf, I felt that it was no longer possible to write as people had done previously."[16] The big "Art of Fiction" interview with Sarraute in the Spring 1990 *Paris Review* issue revisited the beginnings of her as novelist and charted the same genealogy:

> The traditional novel, with its plot and characters, etcetera, didn't interest me. I had received the shock of Proust in 1924, the revelation of a whole mental universe, and I thought that after Proust one could not go back to the Balzacian novel. Then I read Joyce, Virginia Woolf, etcetera . . . I thought *Mrs. Dalloway* was a masterpiece; Joyce's interior monologue was a revelation.[17]

Last but not least, *L'Ère du soupçon* is also noteworthy for including Sarraute's creed as a writer, her "comment j'ai écrit" confession regarding her first book, *Tropismes*. In what has become one of the most-cited passages in all of Sarraute, she speaks of her texts as of "spontaneous expressions of highly lively impressions," produced by what Sarraute terms "mouvements […] actions intérieures sur lesquelles mon attention s'était fixée depuis longtemps." As Mercier points out, Maria Jolas' 1967 translation of *mouvements* as simply "movements" is inadequate, and his suggested surrogate makes for a better approximation: "emotional stirring."[18] Of these stirrings, Sarraute further observes:

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15 As Mercier has noted: "No doubt Madame Sarraute was not entirely satisfied with the achievements of Proust, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, but she was certain that the French novelists of 1956 had not yet learned the lessons taught by this trio well enough to go beyond them. The newness of the New Novel, one may say, lies in the attempt of its authors to begin where these three great experimenters (Proust, Joyce, Virginia Woolf) had left off, instead of reverting to the classical tradition of the French novel or following what Sarraute calls the "behaviorist" approach of American novelists like Hemingway" (Mercier, *The New Novel*, 138).
16 Germaine Brée, "Interview with Nathalie Sarraute," *Contemporary Literature* (Spring 1973): 138.
17 "The Art of Fiction CXV. Nathalie Sarraute," trans. Jason Weiss & Susha Guppy, *The Paris Review* 114 (Spring 1990): 150.
18 Mercier, *The New Novel*, 104.

> Ces sont des mouvements indéfinissables, qui glissent très rapidement aux limites de notre conscience ; ils sont à l'origine de nos gestes, de nos paroles, des sentiments que nous manifestons, que nous croyons éprouver et qu'il est possible de définir. Ils me paraissaient et me paraissent encore constituer la source secrète de notre existence. (*ES,* 8)

This passage resonates with echoes of *Stephen Hero*'s notorious definition of the epiphany:

> This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. (*SH*, 211)

The resemblance is striking – Sarraute says "mouvements" where Joyce says "moments," but both draw parallels between word, gesture and emotion ("sentiments" in Sarraute and "phase of the mind" in Joyce) and both agree that such mouvements/moments represent the writer's point of departure. However, any direct influence of Joyce's epiphany upon a text composed between 1932 and 1939 can be ruled out as *Stephen Hero* was not published until 1944 and *The Workshop of Dedalus*, a first complete edition of the epiphanies and early drafts of *A Portrait*, only in 1965 – the affiliation, however remarkable, is coincidental.

Upon closer inspection, dissimilarities between *Tropismes* and Joyce's epiphanies begin to surface. In her "Foreword" to the English translation, Sarraute claims that while these movements/stirrings are performed, there are "no words express them, not even those of the interior monologue" and thus "it was not possible to communicate them to the reader otherwise than by means of equivalent images that would make him experience analogous sensations."[19] Where Joyce records or reconstructs, Sarraute constructs "analogous sensations." Thus, none of the textual snippets collected in *Tropismes* achieves the total, unmediated (as much as can be) scrupulous objectivity of a Joycean epiphany – it is Sarraute's choice of "equivalent images" that turns her *Tropismes* as well as her *Portrait d'un Inconnu* into studied and contrived contrasts between the banal sphere of characters (whether in action or conversation) and the narrative's "analogous" imagery and metaphoricity. Nevertheless, closely analogous to Joyce's is Sarraute's methodology following which both developed their first novelistic endeavours as elaborations upon these snippets of text – as Sarraute has observed, "this first book contains *in nuce* all the raw material that I have continued to develop in my later works."[20] Mercier notes that at least half of the items in *Tropismes*—Nos. II, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, XIV, XV, XVII, XX, XXII, XXIII—suggest one or more of the three main characters in *Portrait*: the domineering old man, his shrinking daughter, or the hypersensitive young man. His example is the following extracts from tropism No. XV and a corresponding passage from Sarraute's *Portrait*: "Dover, Dover, Dover? Eh? Eh? Dover? Thackeray? England? Dickens? Shakespeare? Eh? Eh? Dover?" (*T*, 95) A novelistic rendering of this passage in *Portrait* looks as follows: "Biarritz? hein? hein? Ustarritz? Vous savez ce que c'est? Vous connaissez? Ustarritz?" Il roule les *r* très fort. "Biarritz? La Bidassoa? Hein? Hein? Chocoa?" (*PI*, 137).

Upon comparison between Joyce's and Sarraute's *Portraits*, differences proliferate: where Joyce's text presents the gestation and development of an individuality with the goal—whether achieved or not—of becoming an artist, then Sarraute's text examines the very possibilities and general qualities of such a presentation in the first place. Through this, she was formulating not only the programme for her own career as writer, but a general ambition of the New Novelistic movement as a whole – as Sarah Barbour has observed,

> The problematization of linearity found in the works of the *nouveau roman* issues from a changing notion of the literary text itself, which represents an investigation of what has been considered literature's mimetic relationship to lived reality. The innovations in form enacted by these works constitute a reflection on the act of creation and of making meaning as it effects a more reciprocal perception of the relationship between art and reality.[21]

This novel's examination of its own novelistic procedures led Jean-Paul Sartre, in his famous 1947 preface, to call it an "anti-novel" and define it as "le roman en train de réfléchir sur lui-même" (*PI,* 8). If there is a relation between Sar-

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19 Nathalie Sarraute, "Foreword," *Tropisms*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Grove Press, 1967) vi-vii.
20 Qtd. in Mercier, *The New Novel*, 113.
21 Sarah Barbour, *Nathalie Sarraute and the Feminist Reader – Identities in Process* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1993) 16.

raute's and Joyce's *Portraits*, it consists not in allusion or any other reference, direct or indirect, but in what Sarraute herself believed her task as a post-Joyce writer to be: to write where he "left off." This continuation is present on a very literal basis: the novel opens with the first-person narrator "encountering life," the two subjects/objects of his art: "Une fois de plus je n'ai pas pu me retenir, ç'a été plus fort que moi, je me suis avancé un peu trop, tenté, sachant pourtant que c'était imprudent et que je risquais d'être rabroué" (*Pl,* 15). Sarraute's *Portrait*, just as Joyce's, describes the narrator's search for reality as expressed and constituted through the medium of language, but where Joyce concerns himself with aesthetics and the establishment of an ironic distance between Stephen's would-be-artistic interiority and the drab everyday outside whose poetic potential is beyond his grasp, Sarraute remains stubbornly non-theoretical and external. The focal point of the narrator's attention lies on the outside: in his attempts to discover the truth about the relationship between an old man and his daughter. Like a detective, he spies on them and even imagines scenes between them at which he is not present – his method of exploration consists of perceiving and imagining precisely the above-defined "tropisms." However, the Joycean ironic distance is still palpably there, found almost on every page, even if transposed onto another level: that between "conversation" and "sub-conversation."[22] A case in point would be the longest and most important scene of the novel, presumably imagined, in which the daughter and the father—compared to two dung beetles—lock horns in an epic battle whose rhetorical and metaphorical bombast is undercut by the banality of the reason for their brawl: hassle over money for the daughter's medical care.

Even though Sarraute would continue, after *Portrait* and *L'Ère du soupçon*, writing highly influential novels for another four decades, her aesthetic principles as formulated in her early fiction and mid-1950s essayistic work would change surprisingly little. Unlike Joyce who would to a large extent repudiate the scrupulous objectivity of *Dubliners* and abandon his youthful alter ego Stephen Dedalus by the end of *Ulysses*, Sarraute would devote the best of her works to analysing tropisms and moving away from the representation of interiority. In the former, she remained faithful to her first work of fiction, in the latter, to her first book of essays and her tribute to Ivy Compton-Burnett. Never, however, did Sarraute's direct her exploration of tropisms and psychology to the linguistic possibilities of articulating these aspects, never did she attempt to match these novel and complex conceptions of identity to an equally novel and complex language, and so, despite acknowledging him as a shaping influence, her fiction stayed very much her own and was not impacted by Joyce's experiment to any significant or meaningful degree.

"L'IMPASSE NOUVEAU ROMAN": ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

As said before, Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922-2008) did more than any other novelist to theorise and practise the so-called nouveau roman, and whether self-appointed or not, he was the generally acknowledged leader of the group. The most interesting biographical fact about this, according to many, "most influential French writer of his generation,"[23] is that he was not educated in the humanities, much less in literature, but in agronomy, which he also pursued as his vocation. As employee of the Institut des Fruits et Agrumes Coloniaux, between 1948 and 1951, he travelled to Morocco and further to Guinea, Guadeloupe and Martinique, but had to be repatriated on account of an illness. He never returned to his career as an agricultural scientist, using the period of convalescence to focus on his writing and becoming, with the 1953 publication of *Les Gommes*, a full-time writer and Éditions de Minuit editor instead.

Just as the name of the New Novel movement itself came after the fact (i.e. the publication of Sarraute's and Robbe-Grillet's novels), so did its theoretical articulation. The publication of his famous essay collection, *Pour un nouveau roman*, postdates his first novels by nearly a decade and its primary impulse is reactive: Robbe-Grillet's surprise at how critical response to his first novels was guided by "une référence implicite—ou même explicite—aux grands

22 As Mercier notes, whether "slight enough at times" or "very often breath-taking," the contrast between "the banal conversation or action" and the "imagery used to define the underlying 'movements'" is essentially comic and not without ironic overtones (Mercier, *The French New Novel*, 106).
23 Cf. John Fletcher, "Alain Robbe-Grillet," *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 83: French Novelists Since 1960*, ed. Catharine Savage Brosman (Tulane University, Detroit: The Gale Group, 1989) 197-211.

romans du passé, qui toujours étaient posé comme le modèle sur quoi le jeune écrivain devait garder les yeux fixés" (*PNR*, 7). Robbe-Grillet argues for a turn-away from the past great novelist (Balzacian) tradition and posits the necessity of following Flaubert and Proust in search of "a new realism."[24] Robbe-Grillet's own theory began by declaring that the surface of things must no longer be thought of as a mask for reality, but as the only reality we can grasp. According to one his often-repeated tenets, the world is neither significant nor is it absurd – it simply *is*, and it is to this simple existence that the new realism must stick, postulating nothing about what may or may not lie behind phenomena. The new realism entails a re-definition of what Robbe-Grillet famously terms "obsolete notions," such as character, plotline, the literary treatment of time, or form and content as separate entities – obsolete not as such but in the way they were treated in realist novelistic tradition and its critical discourse. Repeatedly, Robbe-Grillet insists on the parochialism of French critics who have not taken into account the achievement of Joyce, or Kafka, or Faulkner.[25]

Robbe-Grillet stubbornly refuses to apply the notion of "avant-garde" to the New Novel, because the word has become discredited, denoting an aberration from the standard. Of the seven defining traits of the movement collected in "Nouveau Roman, Homme Nouveau," the only avant-garde goal lies in the very heading of the essay: the New Novel both responds to the new reality of its contemporaneity and reshapes it so as to address and possibly help to generate – a new man. Apart from this, the seven postulates are again reactive: opposed to the "absurdes idées reçues" that have marked the critical response to the New Novel. The seven tenets are:

> *Le nouveau roman n'est pas une théorie, c'est une recherche.*
> *Le nouveau roman ne fait que poursuivre une évolution constante du genre romanesque*.
> *Le nouveau roman ne s'intéresse qu'à l'homme et à sa situation dans le monde*.
> *Le nouveau roman ne vise qu'à une subjectivité totale*.
> *Le nouveau roman s'adresse à tous les hommes de bonne foi.*
> *Le nouveau roman ne propose pas de signification toute faite*.
> *Le seul engagement possible, pour l'écrivain, c'est la littérature.*
> (*PNR,* 114-20)

Two points deserve to be zoomed-in on: Robbe-Grillet's "total subjectivity," which counters the early critical claims that the New Novel represented an objective literature of "chosisme," oftentimes denoting cold neutrality and aloof impartiality. This, Robbe-Grillet insists, is a harsh misunderstanding:

> Non seulement c'est un homme qui, dans mes romans par exemple, décrit toute chose, mais c'est le moins neutre, le moins impartial des hommes: engagé au contraire *toujours* dans une aventure passionnelle des plus obsédantes, au point de déformer souvent sa vision et de produire chez lui des imaginations proches du délire. (*PNR,* 117-8)

The other point concerns the New Novelist proposition of an incomplete signification: here, Robbe-Grillet argues that realist object-descriptions in e.g. Balzac are reassuring because "ils appartenaient à un monde dont l'homme était le maître; ces objets étaient des biens, des propriétés, qu'il ne s'agissait que de posséder, de conserver ou d'acquérir" (*PNR*, 119).

Le Voyageur collects Robbe-Grillet's essays on literature and cinema from chiefly the 1980s and 90s. With the hindsight of the many years elapsed since *Pour un nouveau roman*, Robbe-Grillet repeatedly restates the claim implied in his early criticism: that 1950s New Novel could seem a revolutionary undertaking only to an "illiterate" group of critics in the major periodicals of the times:

> On a beaucoup dit que le nouveau roman des années 50 représentait une révolution totale par rapport au roman tel qu'il était avant nous. Si cela a été dit, c'est parce que les gens qui avaient la parole à l'époque étaient curieusement illettrés. […] Ils n'avaient pas lu Proust, ils n'avaient pas lu Dostoïevski, ni Kafka, ni Faulkner, ni Joyce bien sûr, etc.; si bien que ce roman, le nôtre, qui pour nous était simplement la suite, le pas supplémentaire dans la subversion du système, ce roman paraissait, pour eux, une chose parfaitement aberrante; ils étaient les victimes de ce mythe de la naturalité du roman de type balzacien, c'est-à-dire d'un système d'ordre reposant sur la chronologie, la continuité causale et la non-contradiction. (*LV*, 144)

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24 "De Flaubert à Kafka, une filiation s'impose à l'esprit, qui appelle un devenir. [...] Au-delà du naturalisme de l'un et de l'onirisme métaphysique de l'autre, se dessinent les premiers éléments d'une écriture réaliste d'un genre inconnu, qui est en train maintenant de voir le jour […un] nouveau réalisme" (*PNR,* 13).

25 "*Ulysse* et *le Château* ont déjà dépassé la trentaine. *Le Bruit et la Fureur* est paru en français depuis vingt ans. Bien d'autres ont suivi. Pour ne pas le voir, nos bons critiques ont, chaque fois, prononcé quelques-uns de leurs mots magiques : « avant-garde », « laboratoire », « anti-roman »... c'est-à-dire : « fermons les yeux et revenons aux saines valeurs de la tradition française »" (*PNR,* 26).

This point, cited here from the 1976 essay "Cinéma et l'idéologie," is repeated on at least four other occasions throughout the collection. In a 1978 tribute piece to Roland Barthes, "Pourquoi j'aime Barthes," Robbe-Grillet goes further in his analogy between the New Novel and its predecessors in positing as a constant of the development of the novel genre its tendency toward reaching an impasse:

> Et s'il est important que tu ne franchises pas le pas de te plier à quelque règle que ce soit concernant un roman à venir, c'est parce que le roman est de nouveau dans l'impasse. Ce qui caractérise le genre Romanesque, c'est qu'il a besoin d'être à chaque instant dans l'impasse. Il y a eu l'impasse Joyce, il y a eu le nouveau roman des années cinquante qui a aussi connu sa propre impasse, puis le nouveau roman avec Jean Ricardou qu'on a appelé le nouveau nouveau roman et qui est également dans son impasse. Quelque chose de nouveau doit être fait par quelqu'un qui refusera d'être un romancier de profession, d'appliquer quelque règle que ce soit du roman passé. (*LV*, 154)

The novel as *genre*, contends Robber-Grillet, is predicated upon the constant need of being in an impasse, on the brim of violating the rule constitutive of its creation – just as there had been a Joyce impasse, so there was, later on, an impasse of the *nouveau roman*. In the opening interview acting as a preface to his last collection of essays, *Préface à une vie d'écrivain*—in many senses his "last word" on the many subjects of his interest—Robbe-Grillet connects the notion of a shared impasse to his lifelong refusal of the term "avant-garde" and speaks of the exemplary importance of the "dazzling path" taken by Joyce's work, with the peak in *Ulysses*.[26] In an essay entitled "On raconte toujours la même histoire," Robbe-Grillet presents his most complete account of his personal fascination with Joyce's *Ulysses*, "one of the founding books of contemporary modernity."[27]

This fascination came to inform the first of Robbe-Grillet's novels. In a late interview included in the *Voyageur* collection, Robbe-Grillet notes on the subject of *Les Gommes* (1953) that its "attitude to Sophocles" still remains an unanswered question to him: "Comment, en somme, s'est passé la présence de ce texte?" And he avows that the "deformed" motto from Sophocles in *Les Gommes* was meant to function identically to the title of Joyce's novel – as a "key" to its mythical inter- or subtext:

> Lisant *Ulysse*, j'étais très frappé de m'apercevoir que, ma culture étant insuffisante, je n'aurais très probablement pas vu, sans la préface de Valery Larbaud, que le voyage de Leopold Bloom à l'intérieur de la ville de Dublin reproduisait le circuit d'Ulysse en Méditerranée. J'étais donc intéressé de savoir si le texte ancien était caché, ou exhibé, dans le nouveau texte. Il est évident que Joyce nous donne une indication: il appelle son livre *Ulysse*. Sort d'étiquette qui met sur une piste (on se demandera pourquoi *Ulysse*, on pensera alors au retour d'*Ulysse*, etc.). Je croyais donc être aussi honnête en insérant la citation de Sophocle, déformée, en tête des *Gommes*. Aucun des critiques qui ont écrit sur le roman n'a détecté ce texte caché à l'intérieur de mon texte, ce qui m'a énormément troublé. […] Parmi mes proches, seul un lecteur l'avait immédiatement remarqué, c'était Samuel Beckett. (*LV*, 262)

Just as in *Ulysses*, the mythological framework in *Les Gommes*—the Theban myth of Oedipus—becomes quickly juxtaposed with many other intertextual parallels, chiefly generic: *Les Gommes* embraces and transforms the genre of the thriller/detective novel as developed by Raymond Chandler. Critic John Fletcher quotes Robbe-Grillet's claim that *Les Gommes* is faithful to the mystery genre, having a murderer, a sleuth, and a body: "indeed, the traditional functions are respected insofar as a killer fires a fatal shot, a victim dies, and a detective solves the crime to everyone's satisfaction."

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26 "Je n'employais pas le mot « avant-garde », et je continue à ne pas l'employer, parce que ça a trop l'air de supposer qu'on est un des premiers d'une colonne qui s'avance et peu à peu va grossir, et que le gros de l'armée va suivre. Pas du tout. On pourrait même presque dire que chaque carrière d'écrivain est un sorte d'impasse. C'est Blanchot qui dit que chaque écrivain s'achemine vers son propre silence, et effectivement, on ne voit pas très bien ce que Joyce pourrait écrire après *Finnegans Wake*, que nous-mêmes, vous et moi, avons beaucoup de mal à lire, surtout dans les traductions françaises ! Le très fulgurant parcours fait par Joyce, depuis les *Dubliners* jusqu'à *Finnegans Wake*, avec ce qui pour moi est le sommet, *Ulysses*, ce très bref parcours est allé au bout de son impasse, c'est-à-dire que ça n'a pas été l'avant-garde de quoi que ce soit" (*PVE*, 13).

27 "Joyce imagine de réécrire *L'Odyssée* d'Homère, mais en l'inscrivant dans la ville de Dublin, qui devient la Méditerranée où Ulysse va errer avant de retrouver Ithaque. J'ai été très frappé, quand j'ai lu ce livre, du fait qu'il s'appelait *Ulysse*. […] Joyce avait une grande culture, très supérieure à la mienne dans de nombreux domaines. Une culture grecque d'une part, chrétienne d'autre part, qui m'a complètement manqué, et aussi une très grande connaissance de Shakespeare. Dès lors, comment se fait-il qu'*Ulysse* me passionne alors que je suis à peu près sûr de n'y percevoir, au mieux, qu'un petit quart de ce que l'auteur y a mis? Parce que les choses que je ne décrypte pas, je les sens malgré tout comme cryptogrammes. Cela crée une sorte d'épaisseur énigmatique du monde qui fait que je lis ce livre, *Ulysse*, avec passion. Il est très facile d'accès, contrairement à ce que les gens disent. Après, Joyce a écrit des livres très difficile, comme *Finnegans Wake*, qui est presque illisible, ou en tout cas intraduisible, or comme je ne connais pas l'anglais, cela revient pour moi à la même chose. Tandis qu'*Ulysse* est un récit à peu près cohérent, seulement tout ce qui s'y passe à son double ailleurs" (*PVE*, 99).

However, he adds an important corrective that "the relationship among these functions is far from straightforward."[28] Just as Joyce's deployment of the myth entailed certain structural aberrations from Homer, so too does Robbe-Grillet's treatment of the structure of the thriller genre: chiefly the notorious fact that the protagonist Wallas—during the "vingtquatre heures en trop," or the superfluous twenty-four hours of the action, throughout which his watch stands still—turns from the murder's investigator into the murder's perpetrator, fulfilling the fated Oedipal crime of patricide. The somewhat mysterious title refers to Wallas' purchase of erasers from (unbeknownst to him) his stepmother for whom he experiences a tinge of desire. The text is structured like an ancient tragedy, with a prologue, five sections, and an epilogue.

The title of *Le Voyeur* (1955) underwent erasure, as it were, already as an avant-texte, for originally Robbe-Grillet planned to call it *Le Voyageur*: Mathias the protagonist is a travelling watch salesman, visiting the island of his birth on a trip from the mainland. The criminal plotting is provided by the motif of a girl of questionable reputation called Jacqueline who disappears during the day and whose photograph conjures up in Mathias the memories of Violette, with whom he was evidently once involved. His interior perception merges the two, a confusion important on account of the French *viol* meaning rape. After Jacqueline's body is washed ashore, it is commonly assumed, and officially stated, that she had become a victim of an accident. Mathias eventually leaves the island. If *Les Gommes* was structured by means of a reference to an (absent) myth, early on it becomes evident that *Le Voyeur* also circles around a gap, a hole, within the text: something has been left out in the account of Mathias' sojourn on the island, his schedule is missing a period of time during his first day that is never accounted for. Out of the various hints and obsessive fantasies haunting Mathias' mind emerges the strong suggestion that he attacked, tortured, raped and killed the girl, observed all the while by a certain Julien Marek and his accusatory eyes – perhaps the "voyeur" of the title. As critics (Jean Ricardou, Ben Stolzfus) have noted, *Le Voyeur* is organised into series of eight or juxtaposed circles, the figure 8 acting as what Robbe-Grillet would later call a "signe générateur": a point of departure for multiple figure eights on the island, on the jetty, on doors, in the newspaper, and so on; Mathias covers the same itinerary twice; the voyeur's eyes are described as two adjacent circles.

La Jalousie (1957) perhaps best encapsulates Robbe-Grillet's tenets of "total subjectivity" in his fiction, although it has been so often misunderstood as its very opposite. It takes up where *Le Voyeur* left off – the voyeur and narrator are one. The title plays on the double meaning of "jealousy" and "venetian blind" – through which so much of the jealousy-driven observation takes place. Set in an unspecified plantation colony, the narrative involves closely scrutinised descriptions of a budding affair between the voyeur's wife, designated simply as A, and Franck, the owner of a nearby plantation. The narrator's namelessness, absence, and the constructed "objectivity" of his account are so extensive as to completely eradicate him from the narrative – there is not a single "je" in his narration, his verbal participation in the action narrated (e.g. in the evening soirées on the terrace) is limited to such impersonal constructions as "le moment est venu de s'intéresser à…" or "la question est posée si…," his physical presence in some of the early scenes featuring A and Franck indicated by "a fourth" chair remaining empty due to Franck's wife Christiane having taken ill and failed to attend the dinner. The very word "description" becomes inadequate here, as what Robbe-Grillet's narrative is doing in fact is *enacting* the workings and processes of the husband's jealousy-driven, obsessive mind undertaking a morbid scrutiny of the presumed lovers' slightest utterance or gesture. Sometimes his presence is even more subtle and just as the tuned-down presence of Joyce's "arranger" in the early chapters of *Ulysses*, it is reduced to the use of adverbs as in: "Elle s'appuie de l'autre main au bras du fauteuil et se penche vers lui, si près que leurs têtes sont l'une contre l'autre. Il murmure quelques mots : un remerciement, sans doute" (*J,* 18). In passages like the following, his presence is disguised behind an impersonal syntactic construction:

> « Vous ne trouvez pas que c'est mieux ? » demande A…, en se tournant vers lui.

28 Fletcher, "Alain Robbe-Grillet," *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* 198.

> « Plus intime, bien sûr, » répond Franck.
> Il absorbe son potage avec rapidité. Bien qu'il ne se livre à aucun geste excessif, bien qu'il tienne sa cuillère de façon convenable et avale le liquide sans faire de bruit, il semble mettre en œuvre, pour cette modeste besogne, une énergie et un entrain démesurés. Il serait difficile de préciser où, exactement, il néglige quelque règle essentielle, sur quel point particulier il manque de discrétion. (*J,* 23)

Although "it would be difficult to specify where exactly" Franck "lacks discretion," such exactitude is not necessary: the very hint points to how, to the narrator's mind, Franck already does. Elsewhere still, jealousy motivates a hypothetical conditional and one of the many stray observations: "Si Franck avait envie de partir, il aurait une bonne raison à donner : sa femme et son enfant qui sont seuls à la maison. Mais il parle seulement de l'heure matinale à laquelle il doit se lever le lendemain, sans faire aucune allusion à Christiane" (*J,* 30). In a sense, Robbe-Grillet expands upon what Hugh Kenner has described in Joyce as the "Uncle Charles Principle."[29] Later on in the narrative, Franck and A spend the night away in a hotel – after their return the next day, a punctured tyre of their truck is blamed and no further sign is given as to what the night might have involved. Once left alone, however, the husband becomes haunted by increasingly detailed visions involving sexual intercourse between his wife and Franck, all products of the powers of his erotic imagination. The already blurry line between the narrator's foggy memory and obsessive imagination becomes almost non-existent – at one point, Robbe-Grillet heightens the confusion through a double meaning of the word *serviette*, meaning both napkin and a towel. Thus, Franck's "real-life" gesture of crushing a centipede crawling upon the wall with his napkin wadded into a ball after the first dinner chez A becomes confounded with his "imagined" repetition of the same action in the hotel room shared with A – only this time, with a wadded towel. The imperceptible transition from serviette as napkin to serviette as towel momentarily disguises the fact that the narrative has slipped from the remembered into the imaginary, indeed into erotic fantasy, in which the wife, excited by Franck's manly action against the insect, closes her elegant fingers in a tight grip on the sheet of the bed. So, rather than aiming to abolish psychological novel—as so many critics misinterpreted his real goal in fiction—Robbe-Grillet undertakes something very different in *La Jalousie*.[30] After this climactic scene of emotional turmoil, the narrative turns to—yet again—a mathematically precise description of the geometry of the banana plantations and the narrative concludes by a recapitulative summary of the elements occupying its opening pages – an appropriately cyclical ending for a narrative in which temporal linearity is constantly undermined.

Dans le labyrinthe (1959) has an even thicker plot to deduce and paraphrase: following a major military defeat, a soldier wanderis around a town in the depths of winter, searching for a man to whom he has, it appears, undertaken to give a parcel containing the personal effects of a dead comrade. When the advance guard of the enemy troops arrives to occupy the abandoned town the soldier is wounded in trying to escape, and eventually he dies in the flat of a young woman whose own husband is at the front and whose small son has befriended the lost soldier. Critical consensus is that this is Robbe-Grillet at his most Kafkaesque, his most anxious, and his most inward – e.g. the accounts of the soldier's nightmares or the paroxysm preceding his death are among the most emotionally loaded pages in all of Robbe-Grillet. It is also the most character-based and -driven, and in a sense the most conventional. The four Robbe-Grillet novels published over the course of the 1950s were quick with the critics to establish a sort of a template of the New Novelistic writing retroactively defined in his later essays. Yet, especially in the number of derogatory criticisms directed against Robbe-Grillet and the New Novel, many of Robbe-Grillet's theories were misunderstood as pertaining

29 The conviction that reality "does not answer to the 'point of view,' the monocular vision, the single ascertainable tone. A tone, a voice, is somebody's, a person's, and people are confined to being themselves, are Evelines, are Croftons, are Stephens... The True Sentence, in Joyce's opinion, had best settle for being true to the voice that utters it, and moreover had best acknowledge that when voices commence listening to themselves they turn into styles" (Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* [London: Faber & Faber, 1978] 16).

30 He takes "psychological analysis a stage further than great predecessors such as Stendhal and Proust: he makes the jealous character an observer recounting the whole business in the third person as if it were of no direct personal concern to himself. But it is, of course: from this inherent contradiction between the hero's emotional involvement and his pseudo-objective stance Robbe-Grillet derives fine effects of irony—ones which Stendhal and Proust would have appreciated" (Fletcher, "Alain Robbe-Grillet," *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* 203).

to his fiction and often in a garbled form misapplied to them.[31] As critic George Szanto has also pointed out, "to no small extent Robbe-Grillet himself has contributed to the rampant misunderstanding about his fiction." This for a number of reasons: first, by investing his interested more into "considering the nature of the external world" than into "discussing the techniques he utilized in viewing that world." Second, by too easily dismissing the mimeticism of Balzacian realism and the psychologism of existentialist fiction as somehow to be "superseded" – far from it, Robbe-Grillet's novels "display a relevant realism that keeps them in the tradition of that fiction which is altogether descriptive of human experience." Third, and in consequence to the two, "in his enthusiasm to formulate the boundaries of a New Novel, Robbe-Grillet attempted to begin with too much of a clean slate, and, for the earlier critics, everything was erased."[32] However, any sensitive reading beyond some of the more sweeping generalisations must discover that Robbe-Grillet's argument was always far more nuanced than his first critics would allow.

The first half of the 1960s saw Robbe-Grillet at work on his essays and his cinema (in collaboration with e.g. Alain Resnais), and so his next novel, *La Maison de rendez-vous* (1965), appeared six years after *Dans le labyrinthe*, heralding a new departure in his fiction. Its place-specific setting in Hong Kong is a first striking innovation compared to the general, unspecified locales of his previous texts. However, it soon becomes clear that here, Hong Kong is the city of the popular imagination, replete with clichés identifying it as ridden with opium traffic, sexual indulgence, and gang warfare. Another stereotype is the plot's location in a high-class brothel, the "house of assignation" of the title, with its madam, Lady Ava, and Lauren, its most expensive girl. The storyline features a Victorian pornographic novel prototype character, blasé Englishman called Sir Ralph, alias Johnson, killing a certain Manneret, his associate in shady business, and consequently in need of leaving Hong Kong in a hurry. Wishing to take Lauren with him, he applies to his associate Manneret for the money, and upon refusal decides to murder him. Consequently, he needs to leave Hong Kong in a hurry. Finally, he makes the mistake of returning to the brothel to elope with Lauren, only to find the British police lying in wait for him, betrayed by his *femme fatale*. Thus, in *La Maison* Robbe-Grillet can be seen to move from his exploitation of the clichés of particular literary genres in his early fiction toward systematic deployment of the pop-cultural clichés/myths of the collective unconscious.[33] *La Maison de rendez-vous* demonstrates the New Novelist lesson *par excellence* that for anything like consistency to emerge, a narrative has to resist or eliminate a number of contradictory elements, quite apart from those of time reversal, modified and literal repetition of incidents within different contexts.[34]

Projet pour une révolution à New York (1970) presents the city as the home of violence, the stereotypical setting of the gangster story and the mythical site of American urban violence. The genre exploited in the book is pornography, particularly sado-erotic, so that Robbe-Grillet's city of subways, skyscrapers, narrow straight streets, and ubiquitous fire escapes is no more (or less) like the real New York than the Hong Kong of *La Maison de rendez-vous* is like the British colony in southern China. Violence here is trivialised and repeated *ad nauseam*, used as little more than narrative material upon which to display possible permutations in structuring.[35] It is, thus, in his late fiction that Robbe-Grillet,

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31 Critic George Szanto was among the first to notice that "Robbe-Grillet's first three novels, *The Erasers, The Voyeur, and Jealousy* are told in the third person, yet the importance of each novel lies in its capacity to produce the immediate presence of a narrator. In each novel the narrator exists at every point only within the character relevant to that particular narrative. There is no gratuitous description, no gratuitous object; everything is linked to the central character" (George H. Szanto, "Internalized Reality: The Subjective Point of View," *Narrative Consciousness: Structure and Perception in the Fiction of Kafka, Beckett, and Robbe-Grillet* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972] 134).

32 Szanto, "Toward a New Novel: A Theory for Fiction," *Narrative Consciousness*, 124-5.

33 As Christopher Butler has observed, "this is a kind of Jung updated, modified by a Pop-art acceptance of the urban environment, and a Barthesian treatment of the thing as a sign (but without any attempt to say what or how significant their underlying codes may be, for Robbe-Grillet's codes are the codes of his own writing) […] The point that it does have, once we turn to the novels that are supposed to exemplify the theory, is to suggest that the 'subconscious' of society is an irredeemably banal mixture of sado-masochistic fantasies" (Christopher Butler, *After the Wake: An Essay on the Contemporary Avant-Garde* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980] 47).

34 "In Robbe-Grillet's works from *La Maison de rendez-vous* onward, Butler argues, "the notion of the even freer, 'ludic' novel has become central to his thinking. This deliberately exploits the narrative and thematic clichés in his work," with central emphasis laid "on their structural interrelations, which demonstrate the free creativity of the author" (Butler, *After the Wake*, 45).

35 Butler has connected this structuralist bent to Saussure: "Extreme stylistic simplicity in description goes hand in hand with a very complex ordering […]. This repetition with variation of key sentences may conceivably be of great linguistic interest to some (as a game is played with the Saus-

the proponent of a literature of *désengagement*, begins to write socially, if not politically engaged texts, his method connected to a further ideological concern.[36] Bruce Morrissette argued along similar lines when observing about the section of *Projet pour une révolution à New York* written in the form of an interrogation that, rather than conjuring up literary predecessors, its referent needs to be sought in the social. The precedents of this technique are less Joyce or Pinget than "the innumerable interviews that Robbe-Grillet himself has given."[37]

After *Projet pour une révolution à New York* (1970) Robbe-Grillet went on to engage other popular genres—such as dystopian or apocalyptic science-fiction in *Topologie d'une cite fantôme* or *Souvenirs du triangle d'or*—whilst sticking to his predilection for the hard-core pornographic. Critical evaluation, whilst unanimously positive as regards his earlier output, becomes increasingly ambiguous and negative the later one moves within Robbe-Grillet's canon. For instance, John Fletcher's highly admiring account of Robbe-Grillet's career ends on the grim note that "the novels published since *La Maison de rendez-vous* are mechanical and disappointing affairs, peddling an increasingly suspect form of near-pornography."[38] Butler, while sharing Fletcher's disgust and boredom, offers a holistic perspective from which Robbe-Grillet's later move into pornographic pastiche might seem more than the "inability to repeat the achievement" of his early work:

> The new realism of Robbe-Grillet and others was thus as much philosophical stance as new technique. It was also a recasting of tradition, an attack on the straw man of nineteenth-century narrative. Robbe-Grillet's later move into the free play of structures, or "écriture," can be seen as a logical development from his earlier belief in the free play of the mind upon things. […] It is in the later ludic novels that the theory of creation and of imaginative freedom begins to get a grip on the equally theory-dominated narrative procedures. The point of these is […] to liberate the reader from bourgeois ways of seeing the world in the play of the text.[39]

And although doubts remain as to the permanent effect of such "revolutionary" writing, which is moreover constantly under the threat of functioning as little more than the demonstration of its own methods, it is precisely in this later work that Robbe-Grillet moves beyond redefining the modernist mythical framework, approximating the kind of conceptual *écriture* that critics like Stephen Heath perceived as the lasting heritage of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Ben Stolzfus discerned as underlying the later stages of Robbe-Grillet's career.[40]

Although by no means the sole or most important presence in his canon, it is clear that Joyce did function Robbe-Grillet did turn to Joyce for a sense of literary ancestry if not inspiration during both distinctive phases of his career. Their parallel needs to be sought on the conceptual plane – in their shared exploration of contemporary and ancient social mythology, and the pursuit of literature whose subversive character (recasting, however temporarily, the whole of the past tradition of novel-writing) could inscribe itself within this social mythology and bring about a turn for the better.

"PAS À TENTER UNE SECONDE FOIS": CLAUDE SIMON

Claude Simon's (1913-2005) biography, unlike those of the other New Novelists, involves an active engagement with politics and involvement in major historical events of the first half of the 20th century – much of which comes to inform

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surian *langue* that lies behind the novelist's *parole*), but it also quickly brings about the extinction of any direct emotional response. […] one is either past caring or mildly sickened by the repetitive and stylized violence" (Butler, *After the Wake*, 49).

36 "This can be expressed in the claim that the breaking away from emotional involvement with persons, and that sequential type of narrative which is tied to bourgeois assumptions concerning the social order is in *itself* revolutionary or liberating. This has become a commonplace amongst many French writers and critics, reflecting an alliance between the two attacks on the nineteenth-century narrative led by Roland Barthes and Robbe-Grillet" (Butler, *After the Wake*, 50).

37 "Interrogation itself is a new technique with Robbe-Grillet, and he gives it, as may be supposed, unforeseen twists. The basis or precedent for these passages is perhaps less literary than one would at first think. We are reminded less of the question-and-answer chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*, or of Robert Pinget's *L'Inquisitoire* (despite undeniable resemblances), than of the form taken by the innumerable interviews that Robbe-Grillet himself has given to reporters and reviewers, a large number of which are printed in the format of an interrogation" (Bruce Morrissette, *The Novels of Robbe-Grillet* [Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1975] 283).

38 Fletcher, "Alain Robbe-Grillet," *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* 211.

39 Butler, *After the Wake*, 51-2.

40 "This dramatization of language and its productive or generative capacities, by stressing the internal reflexive activity of language and narration, is of seminal importance for the New New Novel [after *La Maison de rendez-vous*]" (Ben Stoltzfus, *Alain Robbe-Grillet – the Body of the Text* [London & New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1985] 25-6).

his fiction works.[41] Simon's place in literary history seems to have been secured by the 1985 decision of the Swedish Academy to award him the Nobel Prize for literature – but the circumstances of this crowning recognition of his work attest to his life-long obscurity. In his acceptance speech, the laureate himself alluded to the fact that Parisian journalists had searched frantically for information on the new winner, while Maureen Dowd, writing in *The New York Times* (18 October 1985), mentioned the perplexity of New York intellectuals, few of whom were acquainted with Simon's name. His alliance with the New Novel was as problematic as his claim to literary fame – so much so that critics dealing with his work customarily begin by singling his oeuvre out from the New Novelist canon and insisting on its difference.[42]

Simon himself voiced similar reservations in his contribution to the 1982 New York colloquium on the New Novel, entitled "Reflections on the Novel." He sets off by remembering that at the time he joined Éditions de Minuit, he had read none of the writers published there with the exception of Beckett, and that no conspicuous sense of affiliation stood out "all that clearly to me when I became acquainted with their works, unless, just as in my case, the period of a certain form of novel seemed to them to have come and gone, a form that had become unbearable even, and that like me they were seeking to do 'something else.'"[43] His own work follows no precepts or programme, but continually reverts to and departs from the work of several of his predecessors:

> I used to work, and still work, in a totally empirical way, taking—to begin with—what suited me, and rejecting what did not suit me in one or other of the authors I liked to read, such as Dostoevsky, Conrad […], Joyce, Proust, Faulkner, and I made my way forward (and still do so) like a blind man, never knowing when I start a text what it will be like at the end of the day.[44]

Simon then goes to show that, twenty years after Robbe-Grillet's defense of the New Novel against "traditional" criticism, the critical response to his latest novel *The Georgics* still operates with criteria such as the "reality" of characters, "fragmentation" of narrative or "frustration of narration," which he counters with the assertion that *discontinuity* is the basic mode of perception and experience and that "realism" is discontinuity "concealed from the reader's eyes by the assurance given by the writer that he is reporting there 'the essentials.'"[45] The break in literature is located round the year 1913 "because at the same moment Proust and (although to a lesser extent) Joyce (for *Ulysses* still wants to load itself with more or less esoteric meanings) undertake to construct on their own behalf texts in which […] considerations of quality will govern the linking, or, if you prefer, the confrontation of elements." The decisive and differential element is, once again, verisimilitude and "faithfulness" to reality. This break, and reaction against it, brought about two dangers or "maximalisms." Just as the world, according to Valéry's famous quip, is menaced by two dangers: order and disorder, language is jeopardised by two dangers: "on the one hand, that of being considered only a vehicle for meaning; and on the other, as only a structure, for it is always *at the same time* one and the other."[46] Simon concludes on an unambiguous note of affiliation with the New Novel on the basis of their shared principle of epistemic uncertainty: within the material processed and presented in the novel, "too many unknowns remain, too many contradictions, too many doubts":

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41 Simon was born in Tananarive, Madagascar, then a French colony, where his father was a cavalry officer. Shortly after the outbreak of World War I (in which his father died) his family returned to southern France to their ancestral home, where he was raised by his mother, until age twelve, when her death left him to the care of his maternal uncle. His studies of mathematics, in which he completed his baccalaureate in 1930, were followed by his military service after which, in 1935, he joined the Spanish Civil War on the Republican side. He then served again as a cavalryman in the French army in 1939-40, before being captured and transferred to a POW camp in southwest France in October 1940. Having escaped from the camp, he went to Perpignan and participated in the Resistance movement. In 1944, under the threat of possible denunciation, he fled to Paris where he stayed until the end of the War. (Based on Doris Y. Kadish, "Claude Simon," *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 332: Nobel Prize Laureates in Literature, Part 4: Quasimodo-Yeats*, ed. Catharine Savage Brosman [Tulane University, Detroit: The Gale Group, 2007] 261-83).

42 Most recently, critic Alastair Duncan has argued that Simon "always made it clear that he is a novelist, not a writer with theories about the novel" and even though historically, "Simon's work can be related to the New Novel and shows traces of the New Novelists' common history," still, "as a dominant perspective in which to view Simon's work as a whole the New Novel is too limiting: it omits too much of what is specific to Simon and sets him in too narrow a framework" (Alastair Duncan, *Claude Simon: Adventures in Words* [Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994] 7-8).

43 Claude Simon, "Reflections on the Novel," trans. Anthony Cheal Pugh, *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 5.1 (Spring 1985): 16.

44 Simon, "Reflections on the Novel," 16-7.

45 Simon, "Reflections on the Novel," 17.

46 "Proust, Joyce, or Faulkner erect constructions whose solidity trustworthiness, and *continuity* seem to be far more determining, if one can use such a word, than a fortuitous encounter of two characters or two animals in a fable, for these other kinds of meetings, if they are dictated by associations between impressions or images, are also […] inseparable from the raw material" (Simon, "Reflections on the Novel," 20).

> And it is doubtless this uncertainty, over and beyond our divergent views, which creates the solidarity existing between myself and my friends in the New Novel movement, […] a common feeling brings us together, a feeling that one is never quite sure of anything and that we are forever advancing on shifting sands.[47]

Following the earlier critical divisions of Simon's career, one can now speak of five distinct phases in the development of his oeuvre.[48] *L'Herbe* (1958) is marked by what critics have described as a baroque, proliferating Faulknerian style, combining lengthy sentences oftentimes running for many pages, including many subordinate constructions set off by parentheses or dashes. Recurring grammatical constructions within that style include such participle forms such as "se rappelant" ("remembering"), "se demandant" ("wondering"), "se voyant" ("seeing him/herself"), etc. Syntactically, Simon makes use of conjunctive constructions, which oftentimes posit alternative or mutually exclusive meanings ("soit… soit…" [whether… or whether…]; "sans doute… ou peut-être…" [probably… or perhaps]; "mais peut-être même pas" [but perhaps not even that]), and his regular sentence thus becomes crammed with acts, images, hypotheses, and recollections that seldom yield an unambiguous, coherent picture. The narrative of *L'Herbe* is launches Simon's regional family saga not unlike Faulkner's imaginative mapping of the Yowkapatawpha country. *L'Herbe*'s muddled plot concerns the personal ramifications of World War II as they have marked a group of family members living in the South of France. The narrative focalisation is the character of Louise, a central consciousness seeking to understand her family's present through memory, imagination, and documents from the past.

In *La Route des Flanders* (1960), again, the narrative concern with personal memory points to Proust, its occupation with group and place identity (further development from *L'Herbe*) in the time of war, to Faulkner – both of whom are present in the enormous length and sinuousness of the sentence structure. Although the character of the down-to-earth, cynical Jew Blum—a counterpoint to Georges the protagonist with whom he fights in combat and later becomes reunited in the p-o-w camp—has been seen by e.g. Levitt as a nod toward *Ulysses*, it is Simon's stylistic and linguistic experiments in *La Route* that yield more conclusive evidence of Joyce's presence. Mercier cites the first of the many instances of Simon's description of female genitals ("cette chose au nom de bête, de terme d'histoire naturelle—moule poulpe pulpe vulve—faisant penser à ces organismes marins et carnivores aveugles mais pourvus de lèvres, de cils…" [*RF*, 39]), where *moule* means both "mussel" and "mould," and it is this second meaning—by which the vulva becomes the mould into which man is pressed and from which he issues—that is played on a few lines later: "ces moules dans lesquels enfant il avait appris à estamper soldats et cavaliers" (*RF*, 39). This "moule" becomes one of Simon's leitmotifs to which he returns throughout the text (e.g. "moule humide d'où sortaient où j'avais appris à estamper en pressant l'argile du pouce les soldats fantassins cavaliers et cuirassiers se répandant de la boîte de Pandore…" [*RF*, 238]) and which he weaves into a number of scenes. Of note is the quasi-scientific description of the novel's final sequence where the four cavalrymen ride out into an ambush:

> tous les quatre également munis d'un sabre dit bancal d'environ un mètre de long d'un poids de deux kilos à la lame légèrement courbe soigneusement affûtée dans un fourreau de métal lui-même à l'abri d'un fourreau de tissu marron, sabre et fourreau maintenus par deux courroies dites courroie de pommeau […] les cinq chevaux avançant d'un pas pour ainsi dire somnambulique quatre demi-sang tarbais produits de croisement connu sous l'appellation anglo-arabe deux d'entre eux entiers celui du capitaine hongre le quatrième (monté par le simple cavalier) étant en fait une jument, âges s'échelonnant entre six et onze ans (*RF*, 276-7)

Punctuating these and other reminiscences is the constant phrase "comment savoir?" or "comment appeler?" – both pointing to the central theme of the novel: the impossibility of understanding the past. This impossibility is furthered by the narrative practice of calling into question the narrator's identity. The "I" who narrates and the Georges, or "he,"

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47 Simon, "Reflections on the Novel," 23.

48 1945-1957, the early period from *Le Tricheur* to *Le Vent*, first published by Minuit; 1958-1967, the decade from *L'Herbe via La Route des Flandres* to *L'Histoire*, where all the novels are "based on Simon's experiences or on the lives of members of his family and question what we can know about others or the past since all knowledge is partial, memories fragmentary;" 1969-1976, a period of a novel tetralogy comprising *La Bataille de Pharsale*, *Les Corps conducteurs, Triptyque* and *Leçon de choses*, which all seem to follow similar formal and compositional procedures (typically featuring the use of present tense, elaboration of the associations of key words and situations, interweaving of parallel stories, multiple point of view and streams of more than one single consciousness); 1981-1989, in which the three novels—*Les Géorgiques*, *L'Invitation* and *L'Acacia*—are all conceived on a grand scale and combine the features of the two main earlier phases of his work; 1997-2001, where the last two works, *Le jardin des plantes* and *Le tramway*, revisit and play variations upon Simon's favourite themes of microcosmic personal memory and macrocosmic history.

whose actions are narrated appear as two separate characters whose voices are discordantly juxtaposed: when, however, after some fifteen pages narrated in the first person, the novel abruptly changes to the third, with similar shifts occurring throughout the novel, one discovers the two to be interrelated. The shifts from "I" to "he" occur at such destabilising moments as exposure to the effects of fatigue, alcohol, or tobacco, divesting the central character of control over himself. It is this oscillation that, to Stephen Heath's mind, generates the strongest parallel between *La Route des Flanders* and the *Wake*, both texts deeply invested in the questioning and destabilising of identity.[49] Simon himself contributed to critical parallels with Joyce by describing his novel's geometrical design and its compositional procedure.[50] Simon has been quoted to the effect that during the final stages of writing the novel, he used "coloured threads and strips of paper marked with coloured pencils to represent the different themes and visualize their interweaving."[51]

The title of *Histoire* (1967) means either "history" or "story"; and in Simon's blend of personal memory with collective history, the two become conflated. The narrative begins at night, as the narrator's perceptions of the fragmented forms and movements of a tree give rise to recollections about members of his family (with many characters recurring from *La Route*). The second chapter presents the narrator in the morning of the single day recounted in the novel, again recalling the past as he goes about his mundane daily routine. The motifs most frequently reverted to include, again, the Spanish Civil War, memories from World War I, Simon's dead father, or his family postcard mania. Various critics have commented on Simon's reuse of the myth.[52] A more relevant theme is *Histoire*'s treatment of Christianity, used, says Orr, "to explore and create language associations, but in order to bypass the *mystical* elements of such vocabulary."[53] Here, perhaps the most explicit Joycean borrowing in all Simon occurs in the form of the character Lambert, who in *Histoire* perverts the words of the Kyrie to produce pornographic statements, a direct echo of Joyce's Ned Lambert who also, in *Ulysses* (particularly in the "Aeolus" episode), introduces pastiches of literary style, especially bombastic pretentious language. Simon's Lambert provokes pastiche, but of a more sacrilegious kind: "Arsenal de calembours et de contrepèteries censé d'affranchir par la magie du verbe des croyances maternelles et des leçons du catéchisme. Donc je suppose quelque chose comme Introibo in lavabo" (*H*, 43). Here, Simon incorporates even the famous parody of the Mass ritual as performed by Buck Mulligan on the first page of *Ulysses*. Critic J.A.E. Loubère has noted how this particular sentence also reinforces the connection between the Latin and the eroticism of the novel, while simultaneously foregrounding the fragility of the link between sense and sound in the most solemn circumstances: "A word is never sacred, says the pun, it can be subverted by the tripping tongue, and once we have ceased to give it credence, it can only reveal our preoccupation with ourselves."[54] Simon's "non-mystical language," while deploying Joyce's vocabulary and style, inflates both to Latin and eroticism to exaggerated proportions, as in Lambert's Kyrie: "Qui riez et les frissons ou j'ai z eu ta bite si gloire il y a au lieu de Kyrie Eleisson ou de Jésu tibi sit gloria" (*H*,

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49 "In the writing of *Finnegans Wake* Joyce demonstrated clearly that the question of 'who speaks?', of the origin of expression, avoids the recognition of the real problematic. No one speaks in *Finnegans Wake*: the drama is played *between* Joyce as subject and language (personal, cultural, historical, social, etc.) and in its attention to that drama Joyce's book realizes its scene, reads itself as '*polyhedron of scripture*.' For all that it conceals the scene of its production, a semiotic analysis could, in fact reconstitute this scriptural scene of a realist text. To pose the question: 'who speaks?' with regard to Simon's text (a text that is post-Joycean) is to pose that problematic the consciousness of which is at the heart of Simon's *practice* of writing" (Stephen Heath, "Claude Simon," *Claude Simon*, ed. Celia Britton [London & New York: Longman, 1993] 192).

50 Mercier quotes Simon likening the form of *La Route des Flanders* to the shape of ace of clubs, which one cannot draw "without lifting pencil from paper except by passing three times over the same point […], the dead horse toward which, in their wanderings, the cavalrymen return three times" (Mercier, *The French New Novel*, 29).

51 Simon's outlines and maps can be consulted in an appendix to the 2006 Pléiade edition of his *Oeuvres*. See more in Kadish, "Claude Simon," *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* 270.

52 Levitt has regarded *Histoire* as the "culmination of Simon's modernist novel series" marked by a style "built upon a continual and perilous accretion of language and detail, on rhythms which are seductive and endlessly involving […] a style which in itself is emotionally, as well as intellectually, demanding" (Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 158). Orr has argued that *Histoire* "undoubtedly comes closest to *Ulysses*, it being Simon's most epic novel, with many classical references embedded in it, but not according to any elaborate scheme like that to the be detected in *Ulysses*."52 Not only is there no overarching mythological framework, but to Orr's mind, Simon inverts references to classical mythology through almost crass deflation, "pushing this anti-mythic use of language to the point of gently mocking Joyce's practice of presenting Bloom as contemporary Ulysses" – an example being the exaggerated recreation of a Theseus figure, not in the labyrinth killing Minotaur, but in a boiler-room, to show the incongruity of such mythical comparisons (Orr, *Claude Simon*, 149).

53 Orr, *Claude Simon*, 149.

54 J. A. E. Loubère, "The Generative Function of Translation," *Orion Blinded – Essays on Claude Simon*, eds. Randi Birn & Karen Gould (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981) 190-1.

336). Similarly Joycean is also Simon's demystification of the INRI inscription, reminiscent of Bloom's musings on the subject in "Lotus Eaters," or his presentation of ritual and ritualistic language as banal, even ridiculous – for example through the repetition of "Miséricorde" (*H*, 27). However, Orr is correct in pointing out the limitations of Simon's Joycean borrowings.[55] The lessons Simon appears to have learned from Joyce centre on verbal association and wordplay as structuring devices, and it is the epic project of *Histoire* that permits him the "one-off" collision with Joycean avant-garde writing, even though on a reduced scale. In Orr's estimation, for Simon, being a revolutionary entails "a different thematic way to Joyce" and later on "expurgates Joycean tendencies of language usage in *Histoire* and indeed from his subsequent novels."[56]

La Bataille de Pharsale (1969) betrays a conceptual rather than textual Joycean influence via its concern with multiple viewpoints, with the writing of history, and historical cyclicality.[57] The radical departure from the use of a single point of view occurs when the narrator and other characters come to be designated as O, l'oeil (the eye) or observer who serves as the narrative focalisation. Just as the Joycean HCE or ALP, O can be anyone, anywhere, at any time. But O is also the phoneme in the first word of the novel, jaune ("Jaune et puis noir temps d'un battement de paupières et puis jaune de nouveau" [*BP,* 9]), and the repetition of the opening sentence (only this time introduced by "O. écrit:" [*BP*, 271])" also brings home the point of O functioning as the emblem of the circular form of the novel. Part One, "Achille immobile a grands pas," foregrounds, via a quote from Valéry on the arrested flight of Zeno's arrow, the trans- or a-temporal arrangement of verbal images, paired, interwoven and linked together in a synchronic arrangement. Part Two, "Lexique," explores the poetic qualities of seven words presented as unrelated units in a lexicon – thus, the first entry, "Bataille," presents discontinuous fragments of battle scenes as depicted in various artworks, "Machine" entails a detailed description of an abandoned MacCormick harvester gone from a functioning system to a collection of dys-functional bits and pieces. Part Three, "Chronologie des Événements," prefaced by a quote from Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, establishes still other narrative patterns, switching into the present tense, impersonal narration, and simple style, no longer reminiscent of Faulkner or Proust but far more in alignment with Robbe-Grillet's 1950s style – even though it is a style which, just as in Proust, ultimately enables the central narrative consciousness to generate, as it were, the text in front of us.

The last of Simon's novels surveyed here, *Triptyque* (1973), is a representative of his late style, marked by the deployment of so-called "generating images" designed to determine the content and narrative coherence of the novel, in the absence of a preconceived narrative design. The tripartite structure highlighted in the title—inspired, as is so often the case with Simon's writing, by a parallel with the visual arts (this time, by a painting by Francis Bacon)—maintains equality among the various three-part arrangements in the novel. The three sections are of three different spatio-temporal settings (a country village, a northern industrial city, and a southern resort city) and of three main types of artistic representations (postcards, posters, and films) – triangular images of all sorts, including geometrical figures, run the length of all three:

> "Connaissant la valeur de l'angle ABC, démontrer: 1) que le rapport des surfaces des triangles ABC et A'B'C' est proportionnel à…" Pénétrant par la fenêtre ouverte le soleil projette dans la chambre un parallélogramme de lumière dont l'un des côtés coupe en oblique l'angle supérieur droit de la feuille où est tracée la figure, délimitant un triangle rectangle éblouissant. (*T,* 24)

The narrative concerns a series of implied events to do with such archetypical situations as sexual intercourse (voyeuristically spied upon), wedding, infidelity, death, and betrayal. Common to the three sequences is the central issue

55 "By encompassing Joyce, however, Simon fails to supersede him. This is partly due to a vocabulary consisting of mythical and mystical components, but constructed so as to demythologize and demysticize them in a new banal context. In part also, it is the erotic associativeness of Joyce that holds sway in *Histoire* at the expense of other elements from *Ulysses*. The biggest hurdle to further Joycean intertextual activity on Simon is the erudite density of the English which is quite beyond Simon in ways which Proust's is not" (Orr, *Claude Simon*, 151).
56 Orr, *Claude Simon*, 152.
57 In Levitt's estimation, this novel presents "the turning point" between distinctive phases of Simon's writing, marked by "a new dynamic operating: the author's own self-conscious involvement with the process of writing as process, with the literary text as a manifestation of a reality ostensibly more basic than that of love or politics or betrayal, with the reconstitution of a text as if it were life" (Levitt, *Modernist Survivors*, 161).

of how reality is represented, with emphasis on angles of vision and lighting, generating an acute awareness of the mediated nature of the narrated situations. Loubère has linked *Triptyque*'s "excessive emphasis on abrupt alterations in the language structures" which calls attention to "the process of textual fabrication" to similar processes at work in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode of *Ulysses*.[58] Shifts also occur in the medium of the representation – Simon's frequent use of a *mise en abîme* technique is designed to blur further any distinction between the narrated reality and its "representation." Another common theme in Simon is eroticism, which is treated here in a startlingly graphic way in *Triptyque* – explicit descriptions of genitalia and sexual acts become longer and more important as the novel progresses, with the close association of certain recurrent colours (pink, yellow, purple), forms (triangles, vertical lines, openings), and words such as lips. These colours, forms, and words are the basis of the passages from one sequence to another. Especially the first sexual encounter between a chaperone and a farmworker at a barn (introduced by the passage quoted above) has all the geometrical precision and clinical language of e.g. the "Ithacan" description of Bloom's pornographic photograph. Christopher Butler praises *Triptyque* for how it "beautifully adapts the techniques of the New Novel to make up" for "one of the chief conventional constraints upon the narrative artist as opposed to the painter," that is, the impossibility of going back "to the same subject, as the painter can, and produce variants."[59] Simon's technique of "redescription with variations and recombinations" is based on his "virtuoso control of "point of view" in quite the *literal* sense. This visual metamorphosis is deftly combined with "that play of language that constitutes 'écriture,' and frees it, not of course from narrative as such, but from any dependence upon spatio-temporal continuity, and from that moral significance which arises from seeing characters in a book as continuously 'real' persons."[60] Correspondences between the stories are brought about by "les métaphores, les tropes, les associations, les oppositions, etc." and it is this contrast between linguistic patterning and narrative arbitrariness that defeats any search for a single underlying narrative unity. An interesting point in Butler's analysis of the novel concerns its parasitical status vis-à-vis traditional modes of mimesis:

> Thus a literature consisting *solely* of this mode of writing would be unthinkable; its revolutionary techniques are parasitical upon earlier ones and will remain so just as analytical cubism will always retain its relationship to representation. The manipulation of the reader largely depends upon a sudden disorientation from realist norms. […] A frequent symptom of this self-consciousness is the "*mise-en-abîme*"; that image in the novel which seems to recapitulate its own procedures.[61]

One of the crucial *mise-en-abîme* motifs entails a late scene in which a completion of a jigsaw puzzle by one of the characters yields an image which turns out to be the very same hamlet, river cascade, and so on, of the novel's opening description – another example of the text's circularity. Moreover, "the act of assembling the puzzle is analogous to that of reading the novel; the pieces do not correspond with whole objects, any more than do the partial descriptions of the text correspond to completed sentences."[62] Loubère's account provides a picture of Simon's course viewed as parallel to Joyce's, and broadens the discussion to include Simon's 1970s works and their thematic concerns.[63] More significant still are parallels between Simon's later output and the *Wake* – here, Simon is regarded as working and playing "on various levels of sense and sound, reality and myth, rhythm and structure, granting to no one element precedence over the rest, but constantly establishing new ties between all the details, however minute, that go to make up a continually renewable text."[64] Not least of these ties is circularity or cyclicality.[65] However implicit and lim-

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58 J. A. E. Loubère, *The Novels of Claude Simon* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1975) 222.
59 Butler, *After the Wake*, 150-1.
60 Butler, *After the Wake*, 151.
61 Butler, *After the Wake*, 152.
62 Butler, *After the Wake*, 153.
63 "The later novels clearly demonstrate that Simon moves in the same paths as Joyce. One can see a remarkable coincidence of thematic material and some examples of such encounters have already been noted – the blasphemous Mass in *Histoire* and the divine dove in *Pharsale*, for instance, recall the early chapters of *Ulysses*. A long list of others could easily be compiled. The tramcars in *Le Palace* crisscross the city like those in Joyce's Dublin. A constant preoccupation with cuckoldry, journeys, puzzles, chamberpots or chalices, plumbing, the zodiac, the significance of certain letters or numbers, appears in both authors" (Loubère, *The Novels of Claude Simon*, 241).
64 Loubère, *The Novels of Claude Simon*, 241-2.
65 "Like Joyce, Simon brings us along Vico's circular road from the end to the beginning. […] Simon's writing is about writing. He lacks, it is true, the Gargantuan fantasy of Joyce and relies far more extensively on the literary, Proustian mechanisms of the memory. […] Nevertheless, Joyce is the

ited, Simon's lifelong interest in and passion for Joyce—combining his refusal of the *Wake*'s engagement in "the incommunicable" with his acceptance of its underlying structural and narrative principles, as well as textual conception of history—stands as yet another testimony to the *Wake*'s and Joyce's unclassifiability vis-à-vis the modern/postmodern dichotomy. If not to its impracticality and ultimate untenability.

"AVEC BEAUCOUP D'ADMIRATION TOUJOURS": ROBERT PINGET

Robert Pinget (1919-1997) is together with Simon the only of the New Novelists without any essayist, critical or theoretical body of work expressive of his poetics and novelist practice. In fact, he made a point of evading publicity, refusing interviews, and shunning any sort of self-promotion – had it not been for Robbe-Grillet's interest in his early-1950s novels which he republished with Minuit, Pinget is highly unlikely to ever have made an effort on his part to associate himself with the New Novelists at all. Toward the end of his life, he even embarked on systematically destroying his papers, notes and correspondence; a gesture of purposeful self-eradication from history, particularly poignant in the context of his work.[66] Of the little that is known about his obscure personal life, the following can be reconstructed.[67] His novelistic output took the form of an expanding, cyclical novel, with recurrent characters, themes, topics, situations, stylistic devices and turns of phrase – this makes his novels into exercises in sequential coherence and incoherence and endows them with rich potential for intertextual connection and theme variation.

It was not until 1993 that the first book-length interview with Pinget, undertaken by Madeleine Renouard, was published. Here, apart from shunning political questions and dismissing the notion of postmodernity as "absurd," Pinget's most interesting self-revelation concerns his attitude toward Beckett. They were "friends," and of Beckett's oeuvre, Pinget singles out three plays (*Waiting for Godot, Endgame,* and *Happy Days*) and the novel trilogy as works that have "marked him the most" – especially by what he pinpoints as Beckett's most admirable quality, "le combat qu'il a mené contre toute facilité."[68] Pinget goes on to claim that very early on, Beckett perceived a "similarity" between Pinget's and his own work, which facilitated their rapprochement. Twice he mentions the subjects of their many talks: "Il me parlait de Joyce, Dante, de son propre travail, de ses hésitations," and, even more revealingly, "il me parlait souvent de Joyce également, avec beaucoup d'admiration toujours."[69] Still, Pinget insists that, for all their proximity, "il n'y a pas de rapport entre mon écriture et la sienne," and that the only major influence Beckett ever had on him consisted in "la conscience même que l'on met à son travail."[70] The few other times Pinget broke his silence and appeared in public always made for a memorable event, especially his appearances at the New Novel colloquia at Cerisy in 1975 and New York in 1982, with the latter coming closest to the status of an artistic creed.

He opens his "Address to the NYU Conference" with a polite critique of the "scientificality" of contemporary literary criticism (particularly, if also anachronistically, "New Criticism"), whose attempt at rational grasp of literary work as text displaces, to Pinget's mind, such traditional features—examined by e.g. Poe or Baudelaire—as "innateness, spontaneity, inspiration." Immaterial and immeasurable though these may be, they all belong to the unconscious com-

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Master of the Games from which derive so many of the manoeuvres in the texts we are now considering. […] In the later Simon novels, the anonymous O. is present, more or less, and that is all" (Loubère, *The Novels of Claude Simon*, 242).

66 Cf. Robert M. Henkels, "Robert Pinget," *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 83: French Novelists Since 1960*, ed. Catharine Savage Brosman (Tulane University, Detroit: The Gale Group, 1989) 177-8, which the present overview loosely follows.

67 Pinget was born into a comfortable Catholic middle-class family in Geneva, studied at the Collège de Genève and at the school of law, where he took a licence. After his law studies he moved to Paris in order to take up painting as a pupil of Souverbie and acquired certain renown as an artist. His gradual shift to writing occurred in the early 1950s, when, following the rather modest reception of his first two novels, his third novel, *Le Renard et la boussole* (1953), caught Robbe-Grillet's attention and earned Pinget the stable publication platform with the Éditions de Minuit. His long travels took him on an extended sojourn at a kibbutz in Israel. His work, like that of the other New Novelists, covers multiple genres including theatre – here, his life-long friendship with Samuel Beckett gains in importance. Their collaboration was mutual: among other things, Pinget translated *All That Fall* into French, a favour Beckett returned by transposing Pinget's *La Manivelle* ("The Crank") into English as *The Old Tune*. (For more information, see Robert M. Henkel, *Robert Pinget – The Novel as Quest* [The University of Alabama Press, 1979], esp. "Introduction" & "Part Four: Taking Stock."

68 *Robert Pinget à la lettre – Entretiens avec Madeleine Renouard* (Paris: Belfond, 1993) 32.

69 *Robert Pinget à la lettre*, 33, 244.

70 *Robert Pinget à la lettre*, 243.

ponents of the creative process and as such should be reflected in the critical process, for "It is not solely in the light of pure deductive reasoning that my books should be approached, for insofar as it is possible I allow them to be activated by the irrational, particularly in their sequences." This, Pinget insists, is not to argue for some kind of "psychological" primacy in the creative process over the aesthetic significance of the product, but instead to "avert the error people may fall into if they consider that once my book has been closed, nothing should remain but the pleasure—or boredom—of having read it. Something more, something indefinable, fortunately, is intended to be its distinguishing characteristic." Here, Pinget broaches the topic of his technique – the structure of his novels is described as "built on recurrences," essentially of four kinds:

> 1) complete recurrence or repetition of the first part of the text in the second – what he calls "a bipartite structure" and describes as ridden with "modifications, distortions, variations, transfigurations, which finally destroy, or at least shake, the certainties that the reader may have fastened on in the first part";
> 2) partial and progressive recurrence of certain parts of the text, at certain points – a recap of sorts, what Pinget terms "unipartite" structure;[71]
> 3) complete but reversed recurrence, starting from the middle – a bipartite structure "disguised as unipartite," what Pinget also calls *anamnesis*;
> 4) pure and simple repetition of certain key-phrases or *leitmotifs*.

Taken as a whole, these structures of recurrence have all in common certain self-negation, self-contradiction, illogicality – but as Pinget argues, his art is founded not upon logic but upon exploration of *potentiality.* A necessary ramification of this technique is "the intermingling of themes and variations," that is, treatment of motifs and topics as particles of a musical form – throughout the interview with Renouard, Pinget expresses his admiration for baroque music. More specifically, Pinget emphasises the sound-property of his writing, a writing "linked to oral expression."[72] Pinget's declared intention, from his very first book, is "to extend the limits of the written word by replenishing it with the spoken word." His novels, Pinget repeats, belong to the realm of art in that they are artificial, composed of "every artifice of language," among which contradiction is Pinget's preferred semantic gesture, accompanied with all the possible "suggestions, refutations, prolongations and metamorphoses of fragments of speech" that could be taken stock of. Examination of these possibilities, then, points back to Pinget's earlier emphasis on the unconscious in creativity: he speaks of approaching "the dark face of language, in order to make it easier for unconscious values to break through and thus enlarge the field of my conscious activity." Pinget concludes by stressing that his thirty years of publication with Les Éditions de Minuit have been a conscious gesture expressing his "affiliat[ion] to the New Novel" and his support of "its efforts and discoveries, which are of great diversity and undeniable present-day significance."[73]

Perhaps the decisive traits that set Pinget off from the rest of the nouveaux romanciers is the levity of his diction, verbal humour and what Robert Henkels—author of *Robert Pinget: The Novel as Quest*, the sole book-length study on Pinget in English to date—calls the "atmosphere of practical jokery linger[ing] over Pinget's world" – a feature which, particularly in the "engaged" 1950s gave Pinget the unfashionable semblance of "a light-fingered Harlequin."[74] However genuine Pinget's desire "to blow conventionalized wisdom sky-high," his early novels went almost unnoticed by the reading public, making "stimulating, if difficult, fare because of the originality of both what he says and the way in which he says it."[75] His first work of prose, *Entre Fantoine et Agapa* (1951), already sketches out the basic map for his subsequent novel series by introducing two urban areas, their geographical dispositions, historical determinants and present-day inhabitants. While seemingly taking over the format of the realist, Balzacian small-town novelistic sociology, Pinget stands many of the genre's staples on their head, revelling in parody and invention, ridiculing constraint and enlarging the scope of verbal expression. The text, generically resembling a collection of loosely and vaguely inter-

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71 Robert Pinget, "Address to the NYU Conference," trans. Barbara Wright, *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 3.2 (Summer 1983): 102.
72 "For thirty years I have devoted myself to a kind of experimental writing that is intimately linked to oral expression. My exercises in vocabulary, syntax, rhythm, punctuation, have always been aimed at trying to match this writing to the voice that inspires it. My ear catches something that my pen endeavours to transcribe. My books are to be listened to, rather than to be read" (Pinget, "Address to the NYU Conference," 103).
73 Pinget, "Address to the NYU Conference," 104.
74 Henkels, *Robert Pinget – The Novel as Quest*, 4; 12.
75 Henkels, *Robert Pinget*, 12-3.

connected short stories, is divided into two parts, composed of some twenty surrealistic flights, connected through some very loose principles of association and all based on the generative power of language. For instance, Henkels quotes a passage describing the steeple at Fantoine, where "*clocher*" ("steeple") suddenly becomes "*cocher*" ("*coachman*") – a possible misprint. However, it is a property and achievement of Pinget's "polysemous writing" that in the particular context, "the resulting sentence is no more satisfying than the original. The author plays with both words in order to create a polyvalent context in which neither of them makes conventional sense."[76] Already in his first text, Pinget's later remarks about the fusion of the rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious, through his writing, seem palpably present.

Le renard et la boussole (1953) directs its parodic onslaught against the voyage narrative genre, continuing also the free-flowing experiments in verbal association and character unity dissolution. Its novelty lies in the employment of the story-within-a-story device, or a novel-within-a-novel, which is, from now on, to form an indissociable part of basically all Pinget's prose works. Thus, a narrative account of the journey to the Middle East of two characters, David and Renard, is counterpointed by a description of how the would-be narrator (of the ridiculous name of John Tintouin Porridge) struggles and fails to squeeze that story into adequate expression in words, again rendering the limits of linguistic representation within the literary convention into the novel's subject and object. Henkels notes how another departure is presented by Pinget's turn "away from merely spoofing nineteenth-century narrative," toward a more direct engagement "with serious questions of writing and what writing means."[77] As the tension between the two narrative lines escalates, so does the increasingly episodic nature of the "narrative" and the fanciful associations of sound and image linking one projected plot and the next. The most Joycean scene is the novel's surreal climax where the scene abruptly shifts to a medical amphitheatre where a surgeon is calmly dissecting the cadaver of Joan of Arc. To the horror of curious onlookers, the doctor discovers male organs, and the spectator's choppy commentary sputters into verbal fireworks similar the dialogues of absurd theatre or Joycean mock-catalogues. In Henkels' translation:

> Mercy on us, says the priest. – Heavens Above, says the schoolmistress. Mein Gott, says the Balance-Sheet. – What the Hell, says the general's wife. – The dirty rats, says Cecile and Michonne. – Superb, says Poppie, – Faulty drafting, say the jurors. – Good enough to eat, says the sewer rat. – Outlandish, says the tailor . . . – Bed-hopper. – Horse's Ass. – Aspen. – Crab Apple. – Poppycock. – Fricasseed. . . –Instigator. – Mouse-trap. – Scrounger. – Fowler. – Asshole. – Cooked-butt. – Monkey prick. – Feather of goose. – One balled asparagus. – Hot cock. – Soil the Virgin. – Pierce the Noodle. (*R&B* 211-2)

Even more prominent is the wordplay displayed by Pinget's next novel, *Graal Flibuste* (1956), which broadens the parody of conventions associated with the voyage motif and thus extends the experimentation in the previous text. Here, the explorer is a drunkard teetering between drunken delusions and no less delusional hung-over glimpses of reality. The novel opens with a cautionary introductory chapter that transcribes the blurry impressions of a drunkard whose file of vision swims before the reader's eyes, presaging the jumbled journey to follow in the form of diary notes. Again, the movement is from (at least attempted) incipit "objectivism" and "realism" toward an increasing level of surreality. The title is richly suggestive of the two key generic intertexts, combining overtones of the Grail Quest ("grail") and piratical adventures ("flibuste/flibustier" [buccaneer]), in accordance with which "the novel moves back and forth between the known and the unknown, trundling on to the next mystery once the last one has been more or less elucidated."[78] The pseudo-scientific objectivity and historicity is first undermined by a Joycean device *par excellence* – the parodic catalogue enumerating Graal Flibuste's family tree:

> Affaful enfanta Boute-Boute.
> Boute-Boute enfanta Lapa.
> Lapa enfanta Miamsk.
> Miamsk enfanta Loin.
> Loin enfanta Peute.
> Peute enfanta Peute-Peute.

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76 Henkels, *Robert Pinget*, 16.
77 Henkels, *Robert Pinget*, 28.
78 Henkels, "Robert Pinget," *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* 180.

(*GF*, 73)

As Henkels notes, just as in Rabelais' genealogies, so here "the wheezes, sneezes, puns, and translingual puns produced by the list of names casts doubt on the accuracy of the very process of naming, and if read aloud, the genealogy sounds like a vintagemotor car being started after a long rest in the garage."[79] Indeed, all erudition and pretext of mastering reality through knowledge is ridiculed via the mocking names Pinget devises for the authors of the learned treatises studied by the protagonist: "Ida's Mishaps" by a certain W. H. Sampeek ("ça me pique," "it's itching me") and a treatise on erotic dreams by one "S. Blanculz" ("blanc cul," "white arse"). Together with verbal pyrotechnics (the similar sound and reversed vowels of the words "*céramiste*" and "*caméristе*" provide the one tenuous link between two chapters; at another point, Pinget puns on the slang expression for girlfriend, "*Nana*," by playing with the sounds "*Maman,*" "*Anna*," and "*Ex-Nana*")[80] escalates the gradual trailing off of any coherent narrative line, which yields to longer and longer descriptive non-sequiturs, digressions, and increasingly detailed accounts. *Graal Flibuste* marked Pinget's entry into the Éditions Minuit circle of authors, associating him firmly with the nouveaux romanciers.

The first group of novels, affiliated by their shared parodic impulse and linguistic complexity, culminated in *Baga* (1958), another work whose narrative centres around a voyage of self-discovery in which the narrator makes repeated and inconclusive efforts to write his memoirs. The voyage, here, is introspective, and features the protagonist, King Architruc (a mispronunciation or *Archiduc*, in Henkels' translation, King "Super-thingamajig"), a man questioning his own dignity in the flickering light of his life's major events. Again, the memoirs develop coherently only up to a certain point, after which the narrative branches off into a labyrinth of self-contradictory hypotheses, Architruc projecting himself into a succession of avatars (warrior-king, adoptive parent, hermit, postulant nun), a metempsychosis that provides him, however, with no ultimate discovery. In Henkels' well-wrought formulation, Pinget's first novelistic tetralogy foregrounds two paradoxes central to his understanding of language and literary statement, treating language as "open to multiple associations" and at the same time "inadequate to express anything completely."[81]

The second tetralogy is undertaken as a parodic rewrite of the detective-story genre and concerns either letter/document-writing or an interrogation that generate various distortions and deformations of the narrated "reality" outside. Importantly, their linguistic makeup undergoes similar distortions and deformations, and so Pinget's *Le Fiston* (1959) is narrated through what initially seems a successive drafts of a letter from a M. Levert (the title, incidentally, of the book's 1961 US translation) to his runaway son, trying to convince him to return home. However, about half-way through the text, Pinget introduces "a technical device for which it is difficult to recall a precedent in the history of the novel"[82] – he lets the impersonal narrative break off and restart in the first person. Each of Levert's drafts starts off by an increasingly blurry description of a funeral of the daughter of a certain Mme Chinze, with whom—it is implied a few times—Levert may have been amorously involved, which has in turn a potentially incestuous implication for his son's possible affair with the now-dead daughter. Each of these hypotheses, however, is carefully undone or deconstructed by Pinget's use (described in his NYU address) of repetition with variation bordering on outright contradiction. What remains is an urge to confess, but the contents of the confession remain insubstantial – the first edition of the book was published without page numbers, eliminating the conventional and convenient points of reference within the text's "progression"; but in this text, there is almost none. Linguistically, this novel is Pinget at his most Joycean, for the variations upon the first-draft letter bring to mind the late-*Ulysses* self-referential deformations and the *Wakean* paronomasia of guilt and confession. The narrator's initial statements seem straightforward:

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79 Henkels, "Robert Pinget," *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* 181.
80 Henkels, *Robert Pinget*, 52-3.
81 "[T]hat language is at the same time open to multiple associations and inadequate to express anything completely. When a word is bound by narrow dictionary definitions, it becomes a dead cipher. And yet when a word or phrase can trigger so many associations that it seems without limit, it means nothing. […]
that every affirmation implies its own contradiction-whence the lack of closure in his novels and the reappearance of material from one book to the next" (Henkels, "Robert Pinget," *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 83*, 182).
82 Mercier, *The French New Novel,* 394.

> La fille du cordonnier est morte. L'enterrement a eu lieu jeudi dernier. Il y avait la famille et quelques personnes. Madame Chinze, la mère, était recouverte d'un crêpe noir, on ne voyait rien d'elle et c'était tant mieux. Le père avait un chapeau melon à la main. (*LF,* 7)

Later on, the narrator works on his letter at a bar, hoping that alcohol may help to clear-up his powers of recall. But what it does instead is it hampers his linguistic abilities and the tipsy narrator's words glide furrily into unintended puns, giving voice to admissions that he is trying to repress. So, eighty-one pages later, the paragraph is cited almost verbatim, but the form it takes is the following:

> la fille du nier du la fille à nier. Aveugle. A nier. La nier du mordofille est corte. L'enterdi eu a jeu linier derment. La Chinzille et pelquame ersonnes. Famère étout recremoire un pauverte von nelloyait mientant nieuxvelle cherpinze lostait coirume oireau echon memain lonla fetit plusemme. (*LF*, 88)

As Henkels observes, "the resulting gibberish sends English readers of French sputtering to the dictionary repeatedly until they realize that Pinget is holding language up to a distorting mirror." Particularly revealing is the dislocation of the last syllable of "*cordonnier*" ("cobbler") which gives rise to the verb "nier" ("to deny"), a Freudian slip that brings Levert's repressed paternity to the surface: "The fatherhood he struggles to deny finds its way, willy-nilly, into words."[83] Throughout *Le Fiston,* Pinget insists on the linguistic foundation of reality, according to which outside words lies non-being. The novel's last sentence concerning Levert's perpetually unfinished letter ("En dehors de ce qui est écrit c'est la mort") posits the paradoxical prevalence of the written, despite its many flaws and insufficiencies, over the lived spoken.

Clope au dossier (1961) is even more elusive and ambiguous as to what "actually happens" and "how to make sense of it." It dramatizes a failed experiment, a novel that turns out not to get written, after all. The narrator, Clope, sets out to compose a dossier of recorded conversations of witnesses regarding a single act: the firing of a shot, rather than the interlocking reactions to the death of Marie Chinze. Again, Pinget's interlocking of Clope's rather venial sin—of firing a shot from his garden in a fairly thickly inhabited area which brought down a wild goose from a flight passing overhead—with the dark overtones of a person's death, suggests a possible (however irrational) connection between these two incidents. The novel's episodes unfold in a spiral, snail-shell pattern that pivots around the axis of that precise moment. There are no sections as such, only six enormous paragraphs, various characters' accounts of what they were doing at the time of the shooting, their day-to-day routine, etc. The narrative impersonality is breached in various special places and situations; for example, in the second paragraph, devoted to Simone née Brize, and her daily routine as a young mother of a small boy, there is a detailed shower scene during which her naked body is examined with voyeuristic precision – which occasions a sudden eruption of the first-person singular (in a form reminiscent of a stream of consciousness) form in what poses as an impersonal narrative:

> Le cul à Simone. Rose grassouillet fondant que le Pierrot qu'il aime tant ça qu'il a même essayé mais oui ce cochon essayé aïe tu me fais mal gros dévergondé et tant trituré tout dur lui allons c'est bon gueule pas là tu vois là ça va mieux oui. Rinçage. Ensuite pauvre Simone les pieds. Elle pose la cuvette par terre et les met dedans et se baisse continuons et les savonne pauvre Simone merde toute la vie comme ça se laver les pieds. Attends sois sage qu'elle dit attends voilà je viens c'est fini. (*CD*, 52)

Later on, the fifth paragraph opens with the query "Simone quand elle se couche à quoi est-ce qu'elle pense" (*CD*, 107), which implies a narrative consciousness, and yet the text immediately switches back into impersonal narrative. However, again, when it comes to dealing with Simone's intimacy, the narrative undergoes some excitement-induced disturbances: "La fièvre. Prise de fièvre. Flambe. L'image de sa queue partout grossie grossie partout bouche ventre cul là là oui viens oui ça rrrrrrr ensemble ça cá rrrrrrr ensemble rrrrrrraaaaaaa" (*CD*, 112). This feverishness is also what marks Clope's concluding soliloquy as he puts the finishing touches to the dossier that he faintly hopes will prove his innocence. Such disturbances give rise to a juxtaposition of multiple conflicting versions of the gunshot and the narrative ostensibly intended to explain it – and the text closes on a note of ultimate indeterminacy and self-

83 Henkels, *Robert Pinget*, 78.

inconsistency. But these disruptive outbursts also mark certain other instances throughout the text which have the air of impersonality, bringing home the point that below the surface objectivity lies an organising—and disturbed subjectivity. Throughout, Pinget uses an intrusive phrase, "eardrum damaged," to puncture the narrative flow, suggesting the narrative subject's proximity to the scene of the shooting. The first appearance of this phrase also leads to a first disintegration of congruent syntax à la Beckett or Joyce:

> Eh oui le temps villain temps villain temps villain temps de mon temps voyez-vous, eh bien oui quoi le temps passé il y a beau temps je dis bien tout ce temps tout ce temps passé et quel passé ah là là un temps pour tout un temps un sale temps ne trouvez-vous pas le temps d'aimer et le temps de mourir alors qu'est-ce que vous croyez bien pire bien pire on a le temps de croyez-moi mourir pas d'aimer il est bien temps grand temps vous m'entendez et tenez tout ce temps qu'on perd à vouloir en gagner mais oui à tant le temps qu'on a mis à ne pas le perdre vous m'entendez mais allez leur faire entendre allez donc leur faire entendre allez donc. (*CD*, 27-8)

But there are linguistic sleights of hand more subtle than such outbursts. Henkels' examples include Simone Brize's expressions, twisted in transmission from English to French, which provides them with a hit-or-miss quality: for example, "*ouisqui,*" "*ouell boy*," and a "*djip*." The narrator achieves a similar effect by giving different names to the same character. The cinematic cut between scenes is oftentimes made on the basis of a double-meaning within single words that perform the shit. For example, "*tirer*" in French means both "to pull" and "to shoot," which enables Pinget to make the sudden cut from a scene of shooting to a housewife and her maid making the beds: "Elle voulait dire qu'Anne Dothoit avait tiré sur son mari. Tirez moins fort dit-elle vous me tuez. Elles tiraient toutes les deux sur les draps" (*CD*, 16). Puns appear in parallel scenes describing the same action performed by different characters. Thus, in an account of the housecleaning in the Bille family: "Mme Bille cherchait un pendant d'oreille sous le piano, elle disait *ce pendant* n'a pourtant pas pu s'envoler, tu perds tout dit Bille." And then: "*Cependant* que Julie Pommard pliant l'avant dernier drap ou était-ce le dernier…" (*CD,* 18, my emphasis).[84]

Widely regarded as his masterpiece, on account more of its scope and breadth (the only Pinget novels to run for almost 500 pages) than its aesthetic merits, Pinget's *L'Inquisitoire* (1962) has invited the most numerous (if also superficial) Joycean parallels on account of its question-answer form reminiscent of Joyce's supposedly "New Novelistic" *Ulysses* episode, "Ithaca." Such parallels seldom hold water upon further examination. For one thing, the respondent is a clearly individualised character, an old, nearly-deaf servant who is subjected to an interrogation regarding his previous employment (and employers) at a local chateau. "Oui ou non répondez" is the first of more than two thousand questions posed, beginning with those concerning the daily routine at the chateau, the location of rooms and staircases, and the general tone of the parties held there. In these early passages—when the old man is asked to provide a detailed inventory of the furniture in virtually every room of the chateau—that Pinget's cataloguing and enumeration does achieve the exhaustiveness and personal dimension of Joyce's "Ithacan" lists.[85] The questioner's agenda slowly surfaces as the session gradually zooms in on members of the staff, the relationships among them, and their acquaintances in town. This becomes the opportunity for Pinget to recast dozens of his characters from practically all his previous novels. The interrogation becomes increasingly detailed and personal, probing into the old man's dim past – his air of a confirmed old bachelor is shattered upon the discovery of his past marriage and present widowerhood of ten years, persistent prodding also reveals his heavy drinking habit, etc. Finally, an admission is dragged out of the old servant by the incessant questioning that a certain M. Pierre lives in one of the chateau's towers, takes his meals alone, receives few visitors, and observes the stars. The novel ends on a note of fatigue: "Oui ou non répondez je suis fatigué." Reference is occasionally made to the central events of both *Le Fiston* and *Clope au dossier*, but instead of casting some light upon them, the examination obscures them further by piling up more hear-say and rumour. This is

84 Such overlapping scenes, argues Henkels, "invite the reader to intervene actively," by offering him to "rearrange the garbled syntax as he pleases. The punctuation of the text and the division of blocks of experience and of run-on sentences are left open for him to explore" (Henkels, *Robert Pinget*, 96).

85 As Mercier has rightly observed, the fact that all of the old man's answers are permeated by "indirect self-revelations" makes the numerous inventories "far from tedious, for he cannot help offering his personal associations with this or that piece of furniture, work of art, or building" (Mercier, *The French New Novel,* 369).

also why *L'Inquisitoire* can be regarded as different in degree, not in kind, as a synthetic work that summarises Pinget's previous interests and concerns. Language achieves some level of Joycean playfulness by means of speech distortions caused by the old servant's deafness. Overhearing becomes the generator of some trivial and less trivial spoonerisms such as (Henkels' list): "clergyman" becoming "kleptomane"; "nymphomane" – "nymphatique"; "misanthrope" –"misancroque"; "somnifères" – "somnifèvres" (sleeping pills and sleeping bills); "Menerve" is domesticated into "M'énerve"; "Venus Aphrodite" becomes "Venus Amphibite"; "études de seminaires" become the very opposite, "études d'inseminaires"; "cottes de maille" turn into "crottes de maille" (sheath of armor and shit of armor), etc.[86] Another Joycean parallel has been brought up by Mercier: that of the circular form wherein the last question is a repetition of the first.[87]

Quelqu'un (1965) returns to examination of writing, featuring another hunt for a missing manuscript. It also features the writer figure by the name of Mortin, who is to become Pinget's alter ego in a few novels to come – e.g. *Le Libera* (1968). What has been observed of Robbe-Grillet and other nouveaux romanciers counts in Pinget's case as well – after the culmination of the New Novelist style in his early-1950s-to-mid-1960s works, he embarked on an increasingly individualised (and autobiographical) style, less in common with the New Novelist aesthetics as well as Joyce.

"NOUS TOUS, QUI SOMMES NÉS DE JOYCE": CLAUDE MAURIAC

Claude Mauriac's (1914-1996) coinage, in 1958, of the term "alittérature" was motivated by the perceived "pejorative" sense into which "littérature" had fallen, and formed through the use of the same morphological process by which the negation of "morality" is "amorality" by means of the private prefix "a-." In his conception, l'alittérature "est un pôle jamais atteint, mais c'est dans sa direction que vont depuis qu'il y a des hommes et qui écrivent les auteurs honnêtes. Aussi l'histoire de la littérature et celle de l'alittérature sont-elles parallèles" (*AC*, 7). Aliterature, he explains, is literature pruned of precisely those of its aspects that have rendered it a pejorative term – though Mauriac does not bother with enumerating them, it is supposed that one of them is the above-mentioned "morality." The point of the collection, Mauriac holds, is to present "alittérature contemporaine" as practised by some of its most significant representatives, whether essayists, poets or novelists. Aliterature, he states, "n'évite de se dégrader en littérature que pour tomber dans l'excès contraire. Appel au secours chez Kafka, mais appel rédigé en clair, même si nous ne sommes pas toujours surs de le comprendre, elle glisse chez d'autres dans l'incohérence" (*AC*, 9). It is this vague conception of incoherence that Mauriac sees as culminating, from silence in Rimbaud, via the blank page in Mallarmé or the inarticulate cry in Artaud, in the "l'alittérature en alliterations" that melts down in Joyce:

> L'auteur de *Finnegan's* [sic] *Wake* crée en effet de toutes pièces des mots chargés de tant de significations différentes qu'ils en sont occultés. Pour Beckett au contraire, les mots disent toujours la même chose. À la limite, c'est en écrivant n'importe quoi que cet auteur exprime le mieux ce qui lui tient à cœur. Le résultat est le même. (*AC*, 10)

However radical and subversive, even aliterature stops short of Joyce's experiment – apparently, "coherence" is not a concept as easily disposable as "morality." And yet, both Artaud and Beckett (as well as Bataille, Borges, Ionesco and many others) are each awarded a lengthy, appreciative essay, with pride of place accorded to Kafka as the epicentre of the aliterary activity – Joyce's presence is reduced to this one fleeting remark. Still, Mauriac's was an epoch-making book, whose whole third was devoted to the yet undefined group including Butor, Pinget, Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Simon, Jean Cayrol and Philippe Sollers.

Le Temps immobile is a monumental diarist endeavour, whose composition was begun shortly after Mauriac *père*'s death in 1970 and whose first volume saw the light of day in 1974. It combines excerpts from his diary begun as

86 In Henkels' summary: "In short, the preliminary hearing leads nowhere. The interrogation never comes up with the key question. The grand synthesis obscures everything. Individual words release Roman-candle showers of meanings, and the scrambling of titles of famous works of art suggests that the sacrosanct humanistic tradition itself is vulnerable to chaos, and confusion, and derision" (Henkels, *Robert Pinget*, 109).

87 ""The opening implies that the questioning has already gone on for some time and the close does not necessarily imply that the questioning is over. In spite of the hint of cyclic form, life does not fit into a neat pattern even here" (Mercier, *The French New Novel,* 375).

far back as the 1930s with observations contemporary with their recombination and reworking over the course of the second half of the 1970s and the 1980s – a work, as he termed it, of a "montage romanesque." The project came to comprise ten volumes published over the course of fourteen years, from *Le Temps immobile* (1974) to *L'Oncle Marcel* (1988). The first volume is not so much an account of Mauriac's novels or his critical writings, and it has relatively little to say about his family. It covers the period from 1958 to 1975, focusing mostly on three men who played a dominant role in Mauriac's life during those years: General de Gaulle, André Malraux and Michel Foucault. Joyce starts appearing very early on:

> Paris, mardi 19 juin 1973 : Cas exemplaire de « work in progress » que *Le Temps immobile*. Joyce, justement, eut une influence décisive sur moi dès avril 1938, au lendemain même de ma libération, après dix-huit mois de service militaire. Le roman que je commençai alors, comme ceux que j'écrivis et publiai enfin, tant d'années après, naquirent de lui. (*LTI*, 33)

Not only is Mauriac's own opus magnum likened to that of Joyce's, but ever since his first novelistic attempts in 1938, Joyce "has had a decisive influence" on him, and all of Mauriac's later novels "have issued forth from him." However, Mauriac's attitude toward Joyce is not one of uncritical admiration and unconditional acceptance of his aesthetics. In a diary snippet from 1938, Mauriac speaks of Joyce's "errors" and "omissions."[88]

Joyce's "error," as Mauriac sees it, lies in his reduction of the human experience by omitting its "least animalistic" aspect – there is more to human experience, insists Mauriac, than Joyce allows. Still, what Joyce detects is of "capital" importance to Mauriac, and to "founder in this way, in an attempt at the superhuman, is a remarkable success" in his estimation. Even though, as his reading proceeds, he likes *Ulysses* "less and less," it enables Mauriac to discover a way of writing whose existence has hitherto been unknown to him.[89] Not only does a reaction to Joyce evoke Mauriac's first novelist attempt, but Joyce remains a steady point of reference throughout Mauriac's further diaries detailing his subsequent writing career. Joyce is a steady presence in any discussion of literary style, particularly interior monologue and stream of consciousness – as Mauriac's reading experience of *Ulysses* shows, his admiration pertains largely to the early style and gradually diminishes during the later, parodic episodes. This becomes increasingly conspicuous during Mauriac's composition of his novel tetralogy entitled *La dialogue intérieur*,[90] when sundry random recollections of early *Ulysses* and *A Portrait* seem to dovetail with his own novelist exploration. Two entries are of particular significance, both à propos Mauriac's 1961 novel, *La Marquise sortit à cinq heures*.[91] The tetralogy Mauriac published in the prime of the New Novelist movement, between 1957 and 1963, and entitled *La dialogue intérieur* will also present the focal point of this exposé, since his engagement with Joyce achieves its most interesting and explicit form.

Toutes les femmes sont fatales (1957) introduces the protagonist of the whole tetralogy, Bertrand Carnéjoux, by means of the most straightforward and least experimental of the methods deployed in the novel series – that of a single-character stream of consciousness. The text is divided up into four sections ("La plage de Rio ou les incertitudes du désir," "Une soirée dans le monde ou le sérieux de la séduction," "La promenade à New York ou les vérités de

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88 "*Vémars, vendredi 8 avril 1938*: J'ai continué à feuilleter l'*Ulysse* de James Joyce. Tentative ratée mais passionnante. Je transpose, grace aux leçons de ma propre vie, et c'est la découverte de possibilités prodigieuses. Les erreurs de Joyce m'apparaissent et je les sens évitables. Plus que ses erreurs, ses omissions. Car il méprise, me semble-t-il, toute une partie de la vie intérieure, la plus belle peut-être, la moins animale. Je ne veux pas dire qu'il faille instaurer une hiérarchie dans nos sensations. Il faut voir ce qui est. Or, il y a plus que ce que Joyce y voit. Ce qu'il y décèle est pourtant capital. Echouer de cette façon, dans une tentative aussi surhumaine, est une remarquable réussite" (*LTI*, 36).

89 "Cela vous plaira, j'en suis persuadé », me dit Chadourne de sa voix douce. Non, cela ne m'a pas plu. Cela me plaît de moins en moins. Mais cela me montre une voie dont je ne soupçonnais pas l'existence. Une voie merveilleuse. Comme Joyce a peu profité, a mal profité, de cet extraordinaire instrument dont il percevait si bien pourtant la valeur ! Je ne puis m'empêcher de commences dès ce soir *Le Cœur battant*, mon roman. J'écris de dix heures à minuit. Timide essai. Première prise de contact, passionnante" (*LTI*, 37-8).

90 As Mercier notes, Mauriac's original intention was to name the tetralogy *Le Temps immobile*, only later on deciding to reserve that particular title to his diary series.

91 In the one (Paris, lundi 17 juin 1963), Mauriac quotes Stephen's metaphor of history as a nightmare from which to awake as an "*illumination d'où sont nées tant d'œuvres d'aujourd'hui et celle-ci*" (*LTI*, 98). The other is evoked by Mauriac's rereading of Jean-Jacques Mayoux's work on Joyce and a quote from *A Portrait* ("So timeless seemed the grey warm air, so fluid and impersonal his own mood, that all ages were as one to him." [*P,* 153]), in which he finds, to both his sadness and joy, an encapsulation of what he attempted in *La Marquise*:

"Je pense fugitivement, tristement, avec une joie vague pourtant : c'est ce que j'ai moi-même tenté d'exprimer dans *La Marquise*, sans savoir que Joyce . . . Ou l'ayant oublié . . . Nous essayons tous indéfiniment de dire le même secret. C'est donc qu'il y a un secret. Cela pour la joie. Ceci pour la tristesse : mais à quoi bon, après Joyce, après Proust . . ." (*LTI*, 164).

l'amour," and "Une nuit d'amour ou la solitude du plaisir"), four separate interior monologues, each covering a brief period of time, but the entire set spans about fifteen years, and the narrative follows the protagonist's amorous conquests and reminiscences of conquests past. Apart from a womanizer (his surname literally means "flesh and games"), Bertrand is also a would-be novelist, planning on writing an *essai Romanesque*, tentatively and pretentiously entitled *Phenomenology of Physical Love*; so a staple New Novelist motif of novel-within-a-novel is played upon, even though not as fully developed as in e.g. Pinget. The interior monologue, into which the reader plunges at the very start, approximates the immediacy and camera-like montage quality of the modernist/Joycean stream of consciousness:

> Deux trous d'ombre à la place des yeux, Mathilde est étendue non loin de moi. Avec ses seins lourds, sa taille mince, ses jambes longues, sa peau surtout, fruitée, veloutée, dorée, elle serait une des plus jolies filles que j'ai connues si elle ne manquait à ce point d'expression. Elle se tait. J'ai toujours aimé les femmes silencieuses. Le sable est doux à mon corps presque nu. Il s'affaisse sous mon entre et tout à la fois se tasse, m'enserrant dans une gangue souple. Élasticité électrisée. Tiédeur. Il suffirait d'une pensée et de l'ébauche d'un mouvement pour ce que ce plaisir se précisât. (*TFSF*, 9)

Le Dîner en ville (1959) is in that it is composed of the conversation and unspoken thoughts of eight characters seated around a dinner table, with recurrent characters from the previous book. The book opens with the guests' arrival at the dining room and closes as they leave the table to go back to the salon for coffee. Plot is characteristically non-existent. The apartment is that of Bertrand Carnéjoux, now married to Martine, the daughter of one of his former mistresses. While no major formal innovation or progress is made compared to the previous book, there are the first few classic instances of Mauriac's *dialogue intérieur* – those rare moments when one character's unspoken thoughts answer those of another with a coherence seldom found even in spoken dialogue. An example is a passage (*LDV,* 99-100) where two characters, Gilles and Gigi, exchange memories of their long-dead love affair without a word spoken aloud. What is developed to some extent is the intratextual thematisation of Bertrand's book, meditations on whose contents and form permeate his stream of consciousness.

However, it is only in *La Marquise sortit à cinq heures* (1961) that Mauriac embarks on a genuinely innovative novelistic text. The time span of a single evening in *Le Dîner* is further reduced to one hour, and the private interior location is replaced with a public urban one: the Carrefour de Buci, a five-street intersection in central Paris. Bertrand Carnéjoux is still the central character, and he spends the hour watching the street scene from his balcony, now separated from his wife and resigned from his editorial positions, fully devoting himself to the writing of his next book, which one is now reading. The title refers to Paul Valéry's famous remark to André Breton (cited in his Surrealist manifesto), dismissing novel-writing on the basis of his aversion to ever beginning a text with a phrase as trite and shallow as "The marquise went out at five" – Mauriac reverts to this statement and attempts to write an experimental poetic text that would still issue from this banal opening:

> La marquise sortit à cinq heures. Reposée. Bichonnée. Pomponnée. Ballonnée. Ça, c'est moins bien. Ce ventre, il faut vraiment que je m'en occupe sérieusement. A part cela, en forme. D'attaque, quoi. Ne parlons pas de malheur ! Chère marquise. Traîner dans les rues, à son âge. (*MSCH,* 11)

Mauriac's stream of consciousness is here enforced by the matrix of haphazard sensations and fleeting impressions that is the modern urban space. What is novel, however, and goes beyond Joyce's early *Ulysses* style, is Mauriac's attempt to present the eight centuries of recorded history of the place, by means of insertions from authentic historical documents. He foregrounds these by means of Carnéjoux's *alter ego* Desprez, an erudite historian, who is watching from a balcony on the other side of the intersection, assuming the part of commentator (his name, in turn, echoes the famous local church of St-Germain-des-Prés). In a gesture reminiscent of Pinget's *La Fiston*, half-way through the novel, the marquise is replaced by another imagined character:

> Rose. Avais-je déjà eu une fille de ce nom ? Pas tout à fait idiote, mais un peu dérangée. J'aimerais la mettre dans mon livre, mais alors il faut que je change de sujet, la marquise ne peut la connaître. Ce carrefour, mon carrefour, en voilà un beau thème et que m'importe la marquise, je renonce à la marquise, mais j'introduirai Rose, avec mes autres voisins, dans mon roman… (*MSCH*, 165)

What is more, this is followed by the elevation of Carnéjoux into the author of the book in front of us. Now that he has become the omniscient narrator and Mauriac's surrogate, Mauriac enters the text's conclusion, as it were, *in propria persona*: and in a theatrical fashion of a "master of ceremony" of sorts, showing how the series of narrative removes have turned his protagonist into

> personnage triple, puisqu'il est supposé écrire les livres où il joue lui-même en tant que héros un rôle. Romancier animé par un romancier que romancier moi-même j'ai mis dans un roman où rien pourtant ne fut inventé, un jeu de miroir y prenant à ses pièges, des sensations, des sentiments et des pensées vécues […]. Mon livre, je l'ai imaginé, écrit, achevé sans idée préconçue autre que celle de ce thème : la réalité du temps à la fois exacerbée et niée par cette foule qui de jour en jour, d'année en année, de siècle en siècle, n'a cessé de traverser un même carrefour de ma ville. (*MSCH,* 311)

After the personal intervention of the authorial voice, the novel quickly dissipates into a series of statements about writing, language, and literature, with the final sentence, "La marquise ne sortit pas à cinq heures," negating the novel's opening premise and, as Leon Roudiez has powerfully argued, challenging the notion of fiction's self-importance.[92]

Finally, *L'Agrandissement* (1963) continues the project of immobilising time, now reduced to an interval of barely two minutes. As the title suggests, this text is an enlargement of a detail of the preceding work, consisting of a long stream of Carnéjoux's consciousness that takes place in the length of time required by the Carrefour de Buci traffic light to turn amber to red, green, and amber again. In these two minutes, Carnéjoux/Mauriac presents a commentary on the preceding three novels, and offers his thoughts on a planned fourth one – apparently, the one we are in the process of reading: at one point, the observation is made that "Ce livre est l'histoire d'un monsieur qui se demande comment il va écrire un roman que j'ai déjà écrit" (*A*, 197). *L'Agrandissement* is thus not only a reprise and a blow-up of several of the details of the previous books, it is also an afterword to the series. It introduces, most notably, the notion of *dialogue intérieur*: "Notons dès maintenant qu'il existe une forme de dialogue intérieur voisine du monologue intérieur, si même elle ne s'y ramène pas" (*A*, 14), which, at a later stage, becomes "a dialogue, but with oneself": "Pourquoi ne pas choisir cette technique pour mon roman: du dialogue, mais avec soi-même" (*A,* 172). Thus, Carnéjoux's monologue is periodically interrupted by his interior dialogue with the imagined professor-character from *La Marquise* – the majority of the text may be viewed as mainly a combination of this type of interior dialogue with the type consisting of an author's dialogue with characters already seen in previous texts. Most importantly, the Carnéjoux/Mauriac exchanges concern literature and questions of technique and artistic ancestry. Joyce looms high in these discussions, particularly as an acknowledged antecedent of Mauriac's (re)discovery of the interior dialogue:

> qu'en 1903 James Joyce, de passage, découvrit sur un rayon, parmi d'autres invendus, un livre abandonné là depuis une quinzaine d'années, *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, d'Édouard Dujardin, où il devait trouver l'idée du monologue intérieur. Émotion de penser au hasard qui fit tomber ce roman inconnu dans les mains d'un obscur Irlandais, le seul homme au monde à pouvoir en comprendre l'importance et y prendre ce qui devait, grâce à lui, devenir plus important encore, le monologue intérieur, que nous avons réemployé à sa suite et qui nous a permis de (re)découvrir le dialogue intérieur. (*A,* 52)

Interior monologue is, then, linked to the notion of simultaneity and spatial representation. Here, Mauriac notes: "*On pourrait dire : chez Joyce simultanéité pratiquement alternée ; chez Dos Passos, simultanéité émiettée* ; *chez Carnéjoux, simultanéité aussi instantanée que peut le rendre ce non-simultané qu'est l'écriture. Mais je ne le dirai pas, n'ayant pas relu Joyce et Dos Passos récemment*" (*A,* 92). Joyce also makes an appearance in a discussion of literary description and "key sentences":

> Mais à qui bon, à quoi bon, puisqu'il existe deux phrases-clefs. Joyce, probablement. Joyce, sûrement : *Face hargneuse de gargouille qui me provoquait dans la rue Saint-André-des Arts au-dessus de notre gargote et de ses hachis de boyaux. Des mots et des mots pour des mots, palabras*. Les deux phrases y sont. Il faudrait retrouver le passage original dans *Ulysse*. […] Des mots et des mots pour des mots, palabras. Words, words. *On ne s'attendait guère à voir Ulysse en cette affaire.* (*A,* 61-2)

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92 "He undoubtedly shared the apprehensiveness of many older novelists when faced with Valéry's dictum. Even though he used the anathematized statement to show that the poet had been mistaken, his last sentence, "The marquise did not go out at five," is an unwitting justification of Valéry's distrust. In emphasizing the reality that lies at the source of his fiction, he not only refuses to recognize the creative power of language but, by laying bare the mechanisms of his work, he has in one sense retreated from the position assumed by traditional novelists, who, like Balzac, might have considered their fiction more important than reality" (Leon S. Roudiez, *French Fiction Today – A New Direction* [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972] 147).

The sentence quoted in translation from a passage in *Ulysses* (*U* 9.576-7) detailing Joyce/Stephen's recall of meeting Synge in Paris, is quoted in the original at a later stage: "*Harsh gargoyle face that warred against me over our mess of has of lights in rue Saint-André-des-Arts. In words of words for words, palabras*" (*A,* 107). Throughout, however, Joyce remains an object of deliberation rather than formal or linguistic source of inspiration – Mauriac has little interest in following Joyce in his linguistic complexity, and his formal experiments with the narrative point of view are decidedly his own.

Again, Mauriac's authorial voice intervenes on the last-but-two page, and the final cadenza of the book presents us with the narrative subject staring, as so often throughout the text, at his own hand, and--in what seems another, perhaps unwitting Joycean/Dedalian echo—sticking to "the simple, incontestable words":

> Ce n'est que moi, à mon balcon, soir, été : rien que de certain et de rassurant. Des mots dans lesquels je peux avoir confiance. Feu orange. Bientôt feu rouge. La sonnerie du téléphone s'interrompt. La mouche se pose sur une feuille de lierre. Des mots simples, incontestables, pour des choses vraies, irrécusables… (*A,* 200)

L'Agrandissement marks the high Joycean point of Mauriac's writing, the culmination of his tetralogy, as well as a point beyond which the Carnéjoux series could not logically be continued.

Mauriac's next work, *L'Oubli* (1966) marks the beginning of another series of seven more novels, grouped under the title *Les Infiltrations de l'invisible*, and worked on until early 1990s. *L'Oubli* is markedly different from the tetralogy in that it is at once a parody of and a tribute to the New Novelist aesthetics and movement. The plot belongs to the mock detective-story genre and combines Robbe-Grillet's ciné-roman and Arsène Lupin stories. Its action takes place during one night and centres around a clique of novelists termed "Les Treize," without however full account being given of its thirteen members. The ending presents an incomplete catalogue of five of its members, including some thinly disguised authors of the present selection, and also entailing a tribute to Beckett and via him, Joyce, portraying "Sam" as "même le premier de nôtres depuis que James est mort" (*O,* 228). On this note of Mauriac's high recognition of Joyce as the *primus inter pares* among the New Novelists, the present survey has sufficiently exhausted the Joycean focus on Mauriac's work, which makes for an interesting story of both denial/dismissal and of admiration/acceptance.

"FAIRE TOUT CE QU'ON PEUT POUR TIRER LE MAXIMUM": MICHEL BUTOR

As long as Robert Pinget's involvement with the group was a rather tangential one, and the chief reason, apart from the very few of his public pronouncements and Robbe-Grillet's acknowledgement of his oeuvre, were certain traces in his work which became increasingly idiosyncratic over time, then Michel Butor's (*1926) association with the *nouveaux romanciers* is even more tenuous – in fact, his 1960 switch in publisher from Minuit to Gallimard signals active dissociation from Robbe-Grillet. The two most significant biographical traits shared with Butor's[93] "master" Joyce are his devoutly Catholic family background and Jesuit upbringing—with subsequent abandonment thereof and rebellion against it—as well as a highly nomadic existence.[94] A general overview of Butor's multifarious and extremely prolific output would include four early novels, a dozen other book-length works of unique genres, half-a-dozen of volumes of essays, an equal number of volumes of literary criticism, a three-volume collected interviews, books of collaborations with visual artists (such as Jacques Monory, Pierre Alechinsky, or the Czech artist Jiri Kolar) and numerous poetry collections.

Butor's creed as a novelist was formulated in his 1955 essay, "Le roman comme recherche," which maintains a loosely phenomenological viewpoint: he starts by remarking that the novel is a particular form of *récit*, understood

93 Butor's lycée years were marked by the German occupation, which his family weathered in its very heart – the Nazi-occupied Paris. In 1945 he enrolled in the School of Letters at the Sorbonne, and in 1949 he defended his thesis on "Les Mathématiques et l'idée de nécessité" under the direction of philosopher Gaston Bachelard. Shortly after his graduation, Butor accepted a position of French teacher abroad, which took him to Egypt for a year, during which time he also explored Tunisia and Algeria. Between 1951 and 1953, he held the same position at the University of Manchester, then, from mid- to late-50s, in Greece, Turkey and other destinations. Then, in 1960, Butor relocated to USA, where he held various academic positions at various institutions until early 1970s, during which time he also visited Japan or Australia for considerable periods of time.

94 Critic Michael Spencer went as far as to consider the basis of his writing as consisting in "a violent personal reaction to what he sees as the *malaise* of the Western world, stemming from the imposition of Christianity on a way of life in direct contrast to it – with the blame falling on the religion rather than on the society it has invaded" (Michael Spencer, *Michel Butor* [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974] 16).

more broadly than its conventional sense of "story," approaching the status of "discourse" or "narrativity" as such. For Butor, it is a phenomenon surpassing the domain of literature, being "un des constituants essentiels de notre appréhension de la réalité." He goes on to broaden the notion of *récit* to include all discursive structures that determine any individual's behaviour or knowledge acquisition: "depuis la tradition familiale, les renseignements que l'on se donne à table sur ce que l'on a fait le matin, jusqu'à l'information journalistique ou l'ouvrage historique." These he terms "récits véridiques," as their common trait is their verifiability – however, unlike all these, the novelistic *récit* is marked by its "deliberate invented" nature (*R1,* 7). The very word *roman* signals, in Butor's phrase, "qu'il est vain de chercher […] confirmation" – and therefore does not have to rely on external evidence, but generates its own rules and production of reality, becoming an "ideal phenomenological domain."[95] Butor then turns to the question of form – and basically voices a sentiment identical to the one Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet would (later) express: that only new form can reveal "new things and relations in reality" and that "traditional techniques are incapable of integrating the new conditions" of contemporary era. This search for new forms, however (again, a point Robbe-Grillet would agree with), is "bien loin de s'opposer au réalisme comme l'imagine trop souvent une critique à courte vue, est la condition *sine qua non* d'un réalisme plus poussé" (*R1,* 9). This "realism pushed further" reveals that any application of the novel to "reality" is an endeavour of "extreme complexity," as it appears that realism within the novel (what Butor also terms its "theme or sujet"), forms a unity with "formalism and symbolism." This unity, when pushed forward, results, for Butor, in a transformation of the very genre and its approximation of (again, in anticipation of Robbe-Grillet's evaluation of Joyce, Proust and Faulkner) the condition of poetry.[96]

Butor's 1948 "Petite croisière préliminaire à une reconnaissance de l'archipel Joyce" is an expository guide piece. The first thing to be noted is Butor's striking familiarity with the entire Joyce canon, including minor texts (such as *Stephen Hero* or *Exiles*) and his letters. He is also apt at providing historical and biographical background, particularly to the composition, publication and reception of *Ulysses,* its effect likened to that of "a bomb." Appreciating of *Dubliners*' achievements of being "on par with reality" and slightly deprecating *A Portrait* and *Exiles* as "works whose interest lies in what their author wrote afterward," he devotes most attention to *Ulysses*, which, "before being anything else, is a novel" (*R1,* 199). The diversity of Joycean style renders the genre into "un instrument d'une étonnante variété, explorant souplement les uns après les autres tous les niveaux de ses personnages" but Joyce does not stop here: "On a dit que le principal personnage d'*Ulysses*, c'était le langage, et il y a là quelque chose de profondément vrai" (*R1,* 201). As regards the novel's theme, Butor identifies as its "central problem" the relation between father and son, which binds the novel's "entire dialectic" – in its early stage, via the question of *Hamlet*.[97] In the opening of Butor's discussion of the *Wake,* where *Ulysses* is itself viewed as a "transitional" text:

> Certes, *Ulysses*, par l'ampleur de ses perspectives, sa vie, sa vérité, sa variété, par la perfection de son écriture et son paradoxal classicisme, représentait un achèvement. Mais, de même que le *Portrait* conduisait de *Dubliners* à *Ulysses*, *Ulysses* forme le passage nécessaire entre le monde de *Dubliners*, inséré dans la tradition anglaise, et celui de *Finnegans Wake*. (*R1*, 208)

In the *Wake*, Butor argues, Joyce expands the breadth of stylistic variety of the English language as explored in *Ulysses*, not—as one would expect—primarily by opening it up to the verbal material of dozens of other languages, but by integrating "tous les provincialismes et tous les défauts de prononciation," multiplying "les néologismes et les formations argotiques," and verbal deformation which produces "une vertigineuse densité d'expression." This density of expression, or what Butor claims Joyce himself called "word fermentation," renders this work one whose essence is

95 "C'est pourquoi il est le domaine phénoménologique par excellence, le lieu par excellence où étudier de quelle façon la réalité nous apparaît ou peut nous apparaître ; c'est pourquoi le roman est le laboratoire du récit" (*R1,* 8).
96 "Il résulte de tout ceci que toute véritable transformation de la forme romanesque, toute féconde recherche dans ce domaine, ne peut que se situer à l'intérieur d'une transformation de la notion même de roman, qui évolue très lentement mais inévitablement […] vers une espèce nouvelle de poésie à la fois épique et didactique, à l'intérieur d'une transformation de la notion même de littérature qui se met à apparaître non plus comme simple délassement ou luxe, mais dans son rôle essentiel à l'intérieur du fonctionnement social, et comme expérience méthodique" (*R1,* 11).
97 It is here that Butor's observation surfaces about how even though "Stephen est la peinture et le porte-parole de Joyce lui-même," in reality, "Bloom l'est tout autant et, dans l'existence, il faut bien que le fils devienne père à son tour" (*R1,* 205).

"de n'être lisible et intelligible que graduellement." This first instance of the to-be-famous concept of *illisibilité* is, for Butor, in perfect accord with the nature of the project and actually empowers the reader rather than incapacitating them.[98] It is true that Butor subscribes to the then-popular reading, furthered by Joyce himself, of the *Wake* as a dream-book, that his claim of the *Wake*'s musicality is supported by the drastically overblown and incorrect biographical information according to which "Joyce had gone completely blind" during the *Wake*'s composition, and that his four-page overview of the "histoire" is largely derived from the famous *Skeleton Key*. However, Butor's is an exceptionally informed and well-written account of the *Wake*'s chief characteristics, and its admiration for Joyce's achievement is particularly striking especially given its very early timing.[99]

Nine years after this first probe, Butor returned to the problematic notion of the *Wake* as a "language of the dream" in his "Esquisse d'un seuil pour Finnegan," where he subjected it to further elaboration and refinement. There are at least six conceptual areas to which Butor contributes with fresh insight. The first is the notion of the *Wake*'s (un)readability, Butor's avowal that—even now, nine years after his first piece—he cannot claim to have read the *Wake* "au sens où vous entendiez le mot lire ; non, certes, je n'ai jamais réussi, moi non plus, l'ayant attaqué à la première ligne, à le suivre jusqu'à la dernière sans en sauter un seul mot, évidemment, ni même une seule phrase, évidemment, ni même des pages entières." Nevertheless, this fact "ne m'empêche, certes, nullement d'avoir eu *lots of fun at « Finnegans Wake »*. […] Je m'y suis amusé et plus qu'amusé, j'en ai bien profité et il n'y a pas d'autre façon de le lire" (*R1,* 219).[100] The second insight concerns the *Wake*'s succession to *Ulysses*: where *Ulysses* oftentimes juxtaposes two or more "mots primitifs," the *Wake* will contract and mould them together. It is at this point that Butor introduces Lewis Carroll's concept of the portmanteau word – again, Joyce's achievement lies in his transformation of the concept onto a whole new level, again challenging his own authority as the text's creator.[101] The third point pertains to the difference between the prosaic and the poetic functions of Joyce's word-contractions.[102] It is here that Butor's concept of "the dream of language" surfaces – in a nice Joycean twist, the genitive is both objective and subjective: the *Wake* becomes "cet état vers lequel nous désirons que le langage tende. Il est un rêve sur le langage" (*R1,* 223). Four, in a striking anticipation of David Hayman's concept of "nodality," Butor notes how Joycean deformations gradually begin to serve the function of "topoi," or "lieux communs" – and urges the reader to commence to "reconnaître les lieux communs joyciens classiques." These lieux communs have one aspect in common: their formal status as "calembours" and their thematic connection with the notion of lapsus:

> Toutes les différences peuvent être interprétées comme des lapsus significatifs conscients ou inconscients exprimant la personnalité de Joyce, projetant son rêve à travers sa lecture de cette seconde phase. Mais prenons bien garde que cette réduction à l'anglais normal est arbitraire. (*R1*, 224-5)

In one of Butor's memorable phrases, this turns the *Wake* into "a treasury of the possible slips of tongue in the English language." Butor's fifth intriguing remark concerns his intimation of Joyce's compositional method, which in mid-1950s

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98 "C'est une apparence de chaos et chacun peut entrer à l'intérieur de son organisation per des voies qui lui sont propres. […] *Finnegans Wake* est avant tout une symphonie. Le langage y est traité d'un bout à l'autre comme une matière musicale à l'intérieur de laquelle se déroulent thèmes et variations" (*R1,* 209-10).

99 "Le langage de *Finnegans Wake* est certes le plus grand effort jamais tenté par un homme pour transcender le langage à partir de lui-même, mais le poids du langage n'est qu'une expression du poids même de l'histoire sur nous, et le mythe de *Finnegans Wake* est certes un des plus grands essais de transcender l'histoire à travers l'histoire même" (*R1,* 212).

100 A re-take on the notion of *illisibilité*, here developed into the claim that the *Wake* dispels the illusion of an "integral reading" – in accordance with his earlier remarks on the *récit* of the novel, Butor expands the concept of "reading" to include "les autres, que nous ne réussissons jamais à lire aussi intégralement que nous l'imaginons, passant souvent des pages, relâchant notre attention […]." In the language of the *Wake*, this elusiveness is most obviously marked by the "incroyable proportion des mots qui […] ne se trouvent pas dans le dictionnaire anglais" – which casts even the native English reader in the role of finding themselves "devant le texte de *Finnegans Wake* comme devant un texte écrit dans une langue étrangère qu'il connaît mal, et dont il a le sentiment de reconstituer le sens" (*R1,* 220).

101 "Joyce va souvent empaqueter dans le même sac trois, quatre mots ou plus. Certains parmi ceux-ci pourront s'allier en mots composés, ou, dans une autre lecture, se détacher l'un de l'autre. Pour le lecteur, souvent, se dessinera à l'intérieur de cet ensemble, un mot auquel Joyce lui-même n'avait jamais pensé ; or, il est impossible de refuser droit de cité à cet intrus, de l'identifier comme tel. Les mots acquièrent ainsi un pouvoir germinateur, ce sont, comme dit Joyce, des « mots fermentés »" (*R1*, 222).

102 "Joyce dans *Finnegans Wake* va faire de ces mots contractés un emploi soit prosaïque, lorsque leurs significations ne fonctionnent qu'alternativement, soit poétique lorsqu'elles fonctionnent simultanément, lorsque la formation du mot lui-même par conséquent apparaît comme immédiatement justifiée. […] D'autre part, pour que la contraction puisse avoir lieu, il est nécessaire qu'il y ait entre les deux ou trois mots primitifs quelques lettres ou syllabes communes. Le mot contracté est donc toujours une allitération contractée" (*R1*, 223).

was still largely unexplored: Joyce's overwriting and writing-through of other texts.[103] Last but not least, Butor returns to the notion of *lapsus* and unreadability to claim that *lapsus* is not only the constitutive element of the text's composition, but also of its reading and interpretation. Even though reading the *Wake* "out loud" is the best way about it, there are inherent problems to this: not only "il nous faut nécessairement prendre de nombreux mots autrement qu'ils sont écrits, abandonner une partie de leurs lettres et leurs significations possibles," but also: "Le lecteur est obligé de faire un choix, d'adopter une prononciation, et peu à peu, entraîné par le rythme et le ton du texte, il se met à l'animer et en quelque sorte à le jouer" (*R1,* 225-6). It is only in this sense and context that Butor's remark about the *Wake* as "a machine to provoke and facilitate my own dreams," often trivialised in its garbled form, actually makes perfect sense and stands as testimony to his sensitive understanding of the *Wake*.[104]

Butor's essays make for a fascinating read especially given the time and circumstances of their composition. As Butor himself has recently remarked, his first article took shape through his readings, at the Sainte-Geneviève library, of *Ulysses* and the *Stèle pour James Joyce* by Louis Gillet, around the time when Joyce was "practically unknown" in France.[105] Naturally, Butor's novelistic output could not have gone unmarked by such a thorough and early exposure to Joyce's late work. However, if one were to look for direct allusions to Joyce à la Mauriac or quotations from Joyce à la Simon, one would search in vain. Yet, the reason for discussing the two essays in such a detail is their value as interpretive tools for the poetics of Butor's own fiction.

The three-volume monumental edition of Butor's *Entretiens*, containing his interviews over the four decades from 1956 to 1996, includes plenty of name-dropping and references to Joyce, mostly pertaining to Butor's own work. When prompted, Butor is also willing to identify very loose, conceptual rather than textual, connections between his novels and Joyce's work: for instance, in the next interview, still from December 1957, for *Le Figaro littéraire*, he develops the interviewer's mention of Joyce and Proust in order to discuss how the Joyce/Proustian heritage of "the long sentence" was all the encouragement he needed to write *L'Emploi du temps* and *La Modification* in the particular fashion he did: "Si j'ai osé me lancer dans des phrases longues, c'est parce que Proust, Joyce en avaient fait avant moi. Sinon je ne sais pas si j'aurais osé."[106] Almost all further parallels are both reverential and interesting, but also rather immaterial and impressionistic. It is only much later—in the 1980s and 1990s interviews—that Butor elaborates at some length on the slow and complex process by which he both absorbed and consciously resisted Joyce's influence. In a March 1983 interview for *Esprit*, Butor is posed a question regarding the very heart of the matter: "Is it possible to be truly 'post-Joycean'? Is it possible to escape […] repetition?" Butor begins, as is his wont, with the general,[107] and proceeds with the particular:

> En ce qui me concerne, j'ai fait tout ce que j'ai pu pour tirer le maximum de leçons de Joyce, je n'ai pas fini, j'aurais encore bien des choses à lui prendre. Pendant un certain temps, je me suis efforcé d'éviter ce qui aurait été des emprunts trop voyants ; par exemple je me suis longtemps interdit d'inventer des mots. Aujourd'hui je n'hésiterais plus parce que j'ai établi des distances telles que ça n'a plus d'importance. Lorsque j'étais plus jeune je ne pouvais pas, justement pour tirer le meilleur profit de Joyce.[108]

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103 "Joyce prend un texte, on pourrait presque dire n'importe lequel, il rêve sur lui, il déchiffre à travers lui un autre texte, qu'il y intègre et qui devient aussi important que le premier, qui joue exactement le même rôle que lui" (*R1,* 225).

104 "*Finnegans Wake* est ainsi pour chacun de nous un instrument de connaissance intime, car ce portrait de moi- même que j'y discerne, ce n'est pas celui que j'aurais dessiné avant la lecture. Ces phrases dont l'orthographie ambiguë me contraint de les interpréter au moyen d'innombrables lapsus servent de catalyseurs à ma conscience, rongent et minent peu à peu les étages de ma censure. Ce n'est donc pas, comme on le dit souvent, la simple description d'un rêve, mais une machine à provoquer et faciliter mes propres rêves" (*R1*, 226).

105 "Quand j'ai écrit mon premier article sur Joyce, en 1948, il était presque inconnu en France. On en avait beaucoup parlé à une certaine époque, puis la vague de l'Occupation l'avait recouvert, comme tant d'autres choses. Ce qui m'a influencé chez lui, c'est l'utilisation de grilles, le fait d'écrire non pas au fil de la plume, au long du texte, mais en quelque sorte perpendiculairement à lui" (*Michel Butor – Rencontre avec Roger-Michel Allemand* [Paris: Argol, 2009] 57).

106 *Michel Butor – Entretiens*, *Vol. 1 : 1956-68 ,* 53.

107 "Effectivement il y a beaucoup de choses en littérature contemporaine actuelle qui sont des exploitations de détails de l'œuvre de certains grands écrivains du début du XXe siècle et en particulier de l'œuvre de Joyce : cela est tout à fait normal… C'est un phénomène très courant et qui ne permet pas du tout de dire qu'il soit particulièrement difficile de faire quelque chose après Joyce ; au contraire, c'est plus facile. Il y a chez Joyce une telle dose de nouveauté que c'est contagieux."

108 *Michel Butor – Entretiens, Vol. 3 (1979-96),* 127.

Here, Butor confesses to an interesting dialectic at work in his absorption of Joycean influence: in order to "make the best profit" out of Joyce's lessons, he concedes that for a certain time he "forced himself to avoid the most obvious borrowings" of his influence, so that, for example, he "forbade" himself "to invent words." Now that he has established "a distance" between himself and Joyce, he "would no longer hesitate" to let his texts be marked by Joycean borrowings. On another occasion, in an interview for the winter 1994 issue of *Otrante,* Butor gives an early example of such a "borrowing at a distance" in *L'Emploi du temps*.[109] Butor repeatedly posits his re-appropriation of Joyce's invention of "an external grid" as an organising principle of the novelistic material as his most overt Joycean debt – even though here he insists that the uses to which he puts his mythic patterns in *L'Emploi du temps* differ markedly from those of Joycean Homeric parallels. The presence of a temporal pattern in Butor's work has been implied by himself on numerous occasions and subsequently elaborated by many, even though it achieved its best classification in Dean McWilliams' book-length study of Butor:

	DAY	YEAR
1 *PASSAGE DE MILAN*	7:00 PM-7:00 AM	
2 *L'EMPLOI DU TEMPS*	Revel writes a journal at night	1 Oct. to 30 Sept.
3 *LA MODIFICATION*	8:10 AM – 5:45 AM	15-16 Nov.
4 *DEGRÉS*		Oct. 1954 – Nov. 1955
5 *DESCRIPTION DE SAN MARCO* AND *PORTRAIT D'ARTISTE EN JEUNE SINGE*	Begins at midday ends at sunset Central section: 8 days & 7 nights	Covers seven weeks
6 *MOBILE*	3:00 AM EST to 12:00PM MST	Occurs at the vernal equinox
7 *6.810.000 LITRES D'EAU PAR SECONDE*		April to March

The existence, in Butor, of temporal patterns, of cycles, the ritual "of withdrawal, initiation, and return"[110] identified by critic McWilliams here, needs no further belabouring. The point, as has been argued, of utilising these grids and patterns is, for Butor, similar to Joyce's: "Just as it is possible to discover the universality of the *Odyssey* in the heart of the twentieth-century Dublin, similarly Butor's novels make considerable use of dreams and mythological symbolism in order to uncover some kind of pattern or structure underlying our acts."[111]

In Butor's first novel, *Passage de Milan*—published in 1954 by Éditions de Minuit—the temporal grid is further enhanced by spatial arrangement – Butor uses the device of the apartment-house setting. The novel's organisation is symmetrical and neat: The action of *Passage de Milan* takes place within twelve hours, from seven in the evening until seven in the morning, at an apartment house divided into seven stories. There is a marked vertical segmentation, from the highest level with lofty characters such as abbé Jean—who in the opening scene contemplates the sky, observing the flight of an airplane or perhaps a hawk—to the lowest level, beset by the incessant din of Paris metro and inhabited by the working class. The complicated plot-driven narrative is composed as an almost musical counterpoint of motifs and character actions that get repeated, with variations, floor after floor. Various commentators have also noted the double-meaning of the title, which can refer to both the street where the novel is set, and Passage of the Kite, the savage bird of prey connected with abbé Jean's Egyptian studies. Butor employs the interior monologue/stream of consciousness technique to examine the psychic interiority of many of the sixty-six characters that people the apartment house. Surprisingly, no critic[112] so far has commented on Butor's observation printed on the back cover of the book, according to which "Les événements futurs projettent déjà leur ombre sur nous," which is almost a literal rendering of a sentence from *Ulysses*: "Coming events *cast their shadows before*" (*U* 8.526). Another Joycean allusion is provided by one of the subplots involving a group of writers attempting a collective work, an imaginary book entitled *Les Faubourgs*

109 "Évidemment, beaucoup de choses dans ce livre viennent d'une réflexion sur Joyce. Mais il y a une différence profonde entre *Ulysses* et un livre comme *L'Emploi*. Dans *Ulysses*, le mythe sert de grille et de thème, mais il n'est pas raconté à l'intérieur du livre. Il est à l'extérieur, seulement dans le titre. Ce sont les commentateurs qui vont donner des titres aux chapitres. Tandis qu'à l'intérieur de *L'Emploi*, les histoires de Caïn et de Thésée sont racontées. L'histoire de Dédalus et Bloom reproduit l'histoire de Télémaque et Ulysse, mais sans qu'ils le sachent et sans qu'ils y fassent quoi en ce soit" (*Michel Butor – Entretiens, Vol. 3 (1979-96),* 334).
110 Dean McWilliams, *The Narratives of Michel Butor: The Writer as Janus* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1978) 10.
111 Spencer, *Michel Butor*, 25.
112 Not even in F. C. St. Aubyn's excellent entry on Michel Butor in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 83,* 13-29, where this fact is mentioned and briefly analysed.

de Trieste, the first long-term locale of Joyce's exile from Dublin. On a more general level, another modernist trait of *Passage de Milan* is its simultaneous presentation of the consciousness of people in motion; Butor's enactment of their dreams, desires and ambitions—similar to Joyce's—reveals them as hopelessly isolated, non-communicative entities.

Butor's observations on the structuring of *Ulysses* and the language of the *Wake* can be taken as insights into his own creative procedure in his first novel. For instance, his insistence on *Ulysses* being, first and foremost, a novel, expresses the intention of his own first four novels as partaking of the most elastic of forms, his reading of the *Wake* as structured around *lieux communs*, in turn, reveals his own activity in *Passage* as closely corresponding to this description.[113] The *lieux communs*, in *Passage*, are formed by numerous colloquial phrases and clichés that circulate in the characters' consciousness (e.g. "entre chien et loup," "faire le pied de grue," "on ne les connaît ni Eve ni d'Adam," "les vannes sont ouvertes") and although these commonplaces are not deformed or "fermented," Butor does achieve some punning orchestration with them. For instance, as Lydon notes, the phrase "faire le pied de grue" (lit. "to make the foot of the crane," to stand motionlessly and expectantly in one place) becomes echoed when the female protagonist, Angèle Vertigues who is just about to be shot dead is mentally dismissed by another character as "une petite grue," slang for "slut" or "whore," but literally a "crane" (in English), which in the French form of "crâne" means "skull." Such incidents, although relatively scarce, point to Butor's Joycean preoccupation, attested to throughout his interview, with "les moments où, tiens, quelque chose que nous ne comprenions pas se met à se révéler à nous, quelque chose nous devient clair"[114] – one need not fetch the analogy too far to link such pronouncements to Joyce's epiphany. In fact, the very title of Butor's book is precisely such an instance of epiphanic double-coding: the showing forth of Horus, the hawk-like sky god, of whom each of the Pharaohs was held to be a reincarnation. And, of course, within the Joycean mythology surrounding *A Portrait*, there is the "hawklike man," Daedalus. Among the other broader themes and concepts identifiable as Joycean is Butor's preoccupation with paternity (the *Hamlet* theme), fraternity (three brothers of the Mogne family refer to "la tête d'Essau" [*PM*, 149] and speak of "ta main et la sienne" [*PM*, 160], echoing the Biblical allusion to Esau and Jacob from the *Wake*'s opening), and the family at large. Last but not least, *Passage de Milan* is an encyclopaedic work, testifying to Butor's proclaimed ambition of "trying to put everything in it." The question, for Lydon, remains whether the Joycean (and Balzacian) analogies provoked by the text "detract from the novel's originality." It is here that the strongest, essential parallel between Butor's *Passage de Milan* and Joyce's *Portrait* arises.[115] Thus, Lydon concludes, as long as Pater and Newman are "discernible in the background of *Portrait*," then equally one can say that "*Ulysses* could not have been written if *Portrait* had not first been produced." And in the context of Butor's oeuvre, *Passage de Milan* fulfils the same function, even giving rise to the notion that "his first novel is the matrix of his *oeuvre*."[116]

If his first work had come and gone without attracting sales or critical attention, Butor's second novel, *L'Emploi du temps*, fared much better, effectively launching his career as a writer. Where *Passage* has dealt with the time span of twelve hours, *L'Emploi* spans twelve months, detailing the hardships of a young French newcomer to a large industrial city of the English Midlands – evidently based on (and written during) Butor's own sojourn in Manchester, fictionalised as the city of Bleston in the novel. Apart from Butor's experiment—along the lines of Robbe-Grillet's New Novel—with the detective story genre, a few metatextual devices (diary-keeping, novel-writing characters), and a staple

113 Cf. Mary Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile – A Study of the Novels and Aesthetics of Michel Butor* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1980) 54-5.
114 *Michel Butor – Entretiens*, *Vol. 1,* 27-8.
115 "No doubt all artists are indebted to other artists, a fact which has led to the conclusion that every artist's career begins with the pastiche. This term might seem a little strong, but if it is accepted, for the sake of argument, the ambivalent nature of this initial pastiche must be emphasized. It is at once an effort at absorption and expurgation (at least in the case of the great artist), and on its success depends the emergence of his mature works. This is the essential difference between such pastiche and the activity of those who take the famous book of days gone by and tart them up" (Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 64).
116 Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 64.

mythological intertext with the Theseus myth discussed above by Butor himself, this novel presents little by way of the formal design or linguistic experiment of Butor's first book, and need not be treated in much detail. Its most markedly intertextual gesture beckons toward Proust's examination of time and memory, its chief ambition, expressed in the phrase "donner une durée au langage" (*ET*, 88), to Proust's philosophical bedrock, Henri Bergson.

Butor's third novel, *La Modification*, is formally experimental and has combined both critical acclaim and popular success. Divided into three sections of three chapters each, *La Modification* presents the same mathematical precision as the previous novels while recounting in meticulous detail a train trip from Paris to Rome with great attention to the stations along the way. Its most idiosyncratic stylistic trait is its form of second-person verbal address, Butor's use of *vous* throughout the text, and the unprecedented degree of identification with the novel's hero evoked in the reader. If *Passage* traced the differences and parallels among multiple consciousness(es), *Modification* focuses on its protagonist Léon Delmont who embarks on a train journey from Paris to Rome in order to leave his family and begin a new life with his mistress, Cécile, only to undergo a "modification" and to end up determined to return to his wife and children, avoiding any contact with the mistress. Here, Butor's *lieux communs* include a series of questions originating in the chief character's dreams during his all-night trip, raised by the haunting spectre of the Grand Veneur, in fact a ghost of his wife. The questions are "M'entendez-vous?" (Do you hear me?), "Qu'attendezvous?" (What are you waiting for?), "Où êtes-vous?" (Where are you?), "Êtes-vous fou?" (Are you crazy?), "Qui êtes-vous?" (Who are you?) – and they function as *leitmotifs* haunting the narrative subject throughout – also in the scene of similar questioning at the French-Italian border. The occasional wordplay, though muted, is there again, to some comic effect – e.g. in the sentence about the train's loudspeaker ("Alors une bouffée d'air frais entre dans le compartiment et l'on entend la voix raque d'un haut-parleur qui profère des syllabes méconnaissables" [*M*, 40]) which evokes the apparition of a sibyl in Léon's dream via the euphony of "syllabe" and "sibylle" – a word "fermentation" of precisely the kind identified by Butor in Joyce. Most of all, and appropriately for the plot setting, Butor seems to delight in the phrase "être en train de faire" (*M,* 83, 85, 120, 196, 205). Another Butorian *lieu commun* includes having his protagonist determined, toward the end, to effectuate his liberation from his past and present by writing a book – presumably, the book that is *La Modification*. Ultimately, the "you" address is an appeal upon the reader to undergo their own "modification" into a mental state conducive to creativity.

Butor's fourth novel, *Degrés*, has a pivotal status in his oeuvre in standing as the last of what has been called his "Romanesque" period, the last book to date to bear the subtitle *roman*, in a sense condensing and combining the methodology of the previous three while also anticipating Butor's post-novel period which breaks with the poetics established in the four novels. Also, its 1960 publication with Gallimard marks the end of Butor's most explicit allegiance with the New Novel. Again, the title is ambiguous and rich in meanings. The central narrative situation concerns the various degrees of relationship in a Parisian lycée among thirty-one students and their eleven professors, and the students' academic degrees. However, their studies of geography, physics or geometry also involve the degrees of longitude and latitude, of heat, and of the circle; their private lives raise questions of degrees of drunkenness; and last but not least, several of the important characters come down with the grippe, which ineluctably necessitates a thermometer. Structural symmetry is here brought onto a whole new level of complexity: there are three parts, each narrated by a different subject and divided into seven sections. The three parts are in a sense variations on the same structure. In the first part the characters are taken up three by three, in the second two by two, and in the third one by one. In each of the triads of the first part, three characters are introduced in each of the seven sections, either two professors and one student or two students and one professor, thus gradually introducing all thirty-one students and all eleven of the professors. The chief meta-literary project involves the professor of history writing down notes toward a true phenomenological description ("une description littérale, sans intervention de mon imagination, un simple enregistrement de faits exacts" [*D*, 22]) which would enable his nephew to attempt a total recall of a single day, his fifteenth

birthday. However, embarking upon this project, vaguely modernist in its encyclopaedism, turns out an impossible undertaking for the professor: not only is it impossible to represent reality in language without "intervening" in it himself, he also needs the intervention of his nephew, the addressee of his account – a shift in viewpoint also brings about a change in pronominal designation, the "I" suddenly usurped by the nephew, the professor becoming a "you." The project exhausts the uncle to the point of reducing him to bed, at which point another professor—of classics—takes over the third part. He becomes the "I" of the narrative, the "you" denotes the nephew and the uncle becomes reduced to a "he" – a veritable confusion of pronouns, so that the uncle's final question which also concludes the text, "Qui parle?", is one repeatedly raised by the text itself.

Having completed his novelistic tetralogy, Butor went on to produce texts of highly idiosyncratic character, each with a genre, as it were, of its own making. Only two years after *Degrés*, Butor published perhaps his most radical experiment, *Mobile* (1962). Printed on unusually large pages, the text is disposed in what appears to be a highly idiosyncratic manner. Use is made of five different margins, the leftmost concerning the state whose chapter it is, and the others neighbouring states progressively more removed from it, and several type-faces. The text is divided up into fifty "chapters," one for each state taken in alphabetic order, the time-span of the narrative stretching across forty-eight hours over the spring equinox. Thus the sections for the "daylight" states begin with a "Welcome to—" road sign, which is omitted at "night." Some pages are thickly covered with print, others are what B calls *aéré*. Lydon has stressed the connection between *Mobile* and what Butor called (and theorised as) the "book-object," in which use is made of the spatial possibilities of print distribution and its visual properties, and which challenges the so-called "book-idea." The form, as is so often the case with concrete textual objects, is mimetic, expressive of its content. It is determined by Butor's perception of the United States and serves as means of making that country, as he perceived it, present to the reader.[117] Also noted by Lydon is the work's subtle attempt at circularity: the first page opens with "nuit noire à CORDOUE, ALABAMA, le profond Sud" (suggesting the blackness and segregation of the South and also potentially referring to the Moors of Cordoba), a peculiar beginning in an alphabetically organised text which seems to omit the letters A and B. However, the last two cities to be mentioned are ALBANY and BUFFALO, and thus "the series A, B, C links the end of the book with the beginning, just as the last word in *Finnegans Wake* points backwards to the first.[118] Now, the evident difference between Butor's treatment of language in *Mobile* and Joyce's *Wake* is that there is no "fermentation," no deliberate distortion, of words. The similarity with Joyce's procedure, however, lies in the incessant mutability and fluctuation of the meaning of everyday words: Butor takes special care to pick those US place names that are based on their European predecessors or analogies; and the specifically American keywords, such as Washington or Lincoln, designate now men, now mountains, now cities, now rivers, etc. *Mobile* is the rare case in Butor's oeuvre of a *lieu commun* made into both matter and manner, thereby, to Lydon's mind, "neutralizing the tendency to consider *Mobile* either as a literary work or as a representation of the US – to divide it into form and content."[119] Butler notes that the basic syntactic form is the list, "echoing that of the sales catalogue, quotations from which also have a large part to play in the text and seem to symbolize American consumerism and diversity."[120]

Shortly after *Mobile*, Butor went on to produce a "*texte radiophonique*" and an "*étude stéréophonique*" – *Réseau aérien* (1962) and *6 810 000 litres d'eau par seconde* (1962), respectively. The former is a description of a circuit of

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117 "Few countries could rival America in the sweep and complexity of its links between different times, places, and persons. What conjunctions are possible between the statements one could make about this New World; what conjunctions connect it with the Old, link together the man-made states of the Union? Among those proposed by Butor are the homonyms among place names that are found in state after state, often echoing the names of European cities, the catalogues of the giant mail-order companies of Sears and Montgomery Ward, and the four time zones that testify to the vastness of the country" (Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 163).

118 Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 167.

119 Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 170.

120 "A fascinating tension is thus set up between the fragmentation of any particular sequence (this supposedly representing the discontinuity of reality and the way in which we are daily bombarded from all sides by information whose truth or falsity we cannot possibly assess) and our growing awareness that the fragments do fall into thematic groups and thus implicitly at least encourage us to make judgements" (Butler, *After the Wake*, 84-5).

the globe by ten aeroplanes, none of which completes the circuit. The latter is a typographical and linguistic conveyance of the mass of water in the Niagara Falls. *Réseau aérien* is prefaced by a "note technique," a body of instructions regarding the "realisation of the text:"

> Le texte est conçu pour être réalisé par 10 acteurs : / 5 hommes : A B C D E / 5 femmes : *f g h i j*. / Les acteurs sont toujours traités par couples auxquelles est donné chaque fois un petit fragment de dialogue comportant six répliques. Les italiques indiquent la nuit, enregistrement sourd avec réverbation. Le signe [aéroplane] indique un bruit d'avion. Le signe [visage] un bruit de foule. Le signe [tunnel] une percussion sourde. Les chiffres qui suivent [les signes] indiquent le numéro de l'avion (il y en a 10). Ils peuvent être réalisés en prenant deux enregistrements du premier prélude du *Clavecin bien tempéré*, clavecin pour le jour, piano pour la nuit, et en donnant sur le fond du bruit le nombre de notes correspondant ; mais on peut rêver d'une musique faite pour le texte. (*RA,* 7)

In addition to these symbols, two type-faces and four margins are employed, the text punctuated by technical instructions, the "narrative" constantly switching among the actors, planes, symbols, etc. The route of the text is, ultimately, cyclical, beginning and ending at the Orly airport. *6 810 000 litres* is prefaced by a similar note, only this time concerning the reading procedure:

> Les lecteurs pressés prendront la voie courte en sautant toutes les parenthèses et tous les préludes.
> Les lecteurs moins pressés prendront la voie longue sans rien sauter.
> Mais les lecteurs de ce livre s'amuseront à suivre les indications sur le fonctionnement des parenthèses et à explorer peu à peu les huit voies intermédiaires pour entendre comment, dans ce monument liquide, le changement de l'éclairage fait apparaître nouvelles formes et aspects.
> Deux voix au centre, celle du speaker, fort, celle du lecteur, assez fort. (*6 810*, unpaginated)

Echoes of Butor's notions of the *Wake*'s "unreadability" and his own procedure of reading it resonate here.

Finally, Butor's most explicitly textual reference to a Joycean avant-texte was realised in his 1967 work, *Portrait d'artiste en jeune singe*. Joycean already by its allusive title, as Butor explained in an April 1967 interview for *Les Lettres françaises*, the parody works on multiple levels.[121] Not only does Butor "do for Joyce what he himself has done already" (there is also the intercepting presence of Dylan Thomas), but Butor's choice of a "young ape" has its own agenda independent of the two. As he made clear in the book's back-cover quotation: "Dans le titre, sous l'hommage à James Joyce et Dylan Thomas, on reconnaîtra la représentation médiévale de cette éminente espèce d'artiste qu'était l'alchimiste comme 'singe de Nature'"; underlying his homage to Joyce and Thomas is the figure of the alchemist, that medieval artist whose ambition it was to "ape" nature. The conceptual connection between the two *Portraits*, then, is metamorphosis: in Joyce, via the reference to the Dedalian myth in Ovid, in Butor, via the theme of alchemy as the art of matter transformation. There are some more textually specific parallels, too: there is the character of Père "Uriel" Athanase Kircher of the Jesuit order, which played such an important part in the formation of both Joyce and Butor. Lydon also finds "Stephen Dedalus' lapse into the seven deadly sins and his valiant effort to practice the seen virtues in their stead, with the help of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, as well as his status as a student of the seven liberal arts" paralleled in Butor's *Portrait* where the insistence on the magic number seven is "even more pronounced."[122] Critic Jennifer Waelti-Walters has also drawn attention to the importance, in both texts, of the symbolic presence of Thoth, the Egyptian god of writing, who, as Butor's *Portrait* notes was "*souvent représenté par un singe*," and later on, as Hermes Trismegistus, came to represent the god of alchemy. The ultimate narrative parallel—in what are essentially highly different sujets—is that if, at the end of Joyce's *Portrait*, Stephen turns eastward toward Europe, then Butor, from a different vantage point but with similar orientation, turns toward Egypt, where, he tells us, he experienced a second birth: "*C'était avant mon départ pour l'Égypte, c'est-à-dire que pour moi cela remonte très loin, car l'Égypte*

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121 "Parodie du titre d'un livre fameux de Joyce, qui lui-même était parodique par rapport non pas au titre d'un livre, mais à celui de très nombreux tableaux. Donc ce que je fais pour Joyce, c'est ce que Joyce lui-même avait fait. D'où le titre *Portrait* mais non *en jeune homme : en jeune singe.* Dans le mot *singe*, ce qui est souligné d'abord, c'est la notion d'imitation, de singerie, si vous voulez : dans ce titre, je montre que je suis le singe de Joyce (et bien d'autres) mais je rappelle que Joyce lui-même était le singe des peintres (ce que d'ailleurs je suis moi-même à certains égards). D'autre part, entre ma parodie et celle de Joyce vient s'inscrire une parodie intermédiaire qui est celle de Dylan Thomas. Le poète gallois a publié un recueil de nouvelles sous le titre *Portrait de l'artiste en jeune chein*. C'était déjà une parodie, avec un certain sarcasme, à l'égard de Joyce. Eh bien, dans *Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe*, il y a une portée qui est au moins quadruple, dans l'ironie : il y a une ironie à l'égard des peintres, une ironie à l'égard Joyce, puis de Dylan Thomas, enfin : de moi-même" (*Michel Butor – Entretiens, Vol. 1*, 320).
122 Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 221.

m'a été comme une seconde terre natale, j'y ai vécu pour ainsi dire une seconde enfance."[123] Stylistically, a tentative parallel may be drawn between their treatment of the materiality of language – e.g., in the "Mineralogy" section, a whole page is laid out as follows:

> (un moulage en plâtre d'un squelette d'ichtyosaure derrière une vitre brisée),
> « mais il y a surtout cette immense collection de minéraux »
> (zircons jaune gris traversant des monazites, aragonites en zigzag)
> « poussiéreuse, en désordre, nous n'avons pas encore eu le temps d'arranger tout cela »
> (il soufflait sur des argentites arborescentes, des bronzites vitreuses, des wolframites brunes de Portugal),
> « qui n'est pas bien spectaculaire, les spécimens dépassent rarement la taille d'une noix »
> (il époussetait barytines en livre ouvert, cinabres en efflorescences, dolomites rhomboédriques, vivianites bleues)
> « mais certains sont, paraît-il, fort précieux » (*P,* 97)

Thus, written almost entirely in a vocabulary foreign to all but mineralogists, the spatial arrangement of this page seems to treat words both literally and metaphorically as pieces of stone in a mosaic-type arrangement. However, both Lydon and Walti-Walters are correct in pointing out some equally significant differences between the texts.[124] There is, on the one hand, a broadly conceived, yet fundamentally important, parallel between Butor's oeuvre and Joyce's or Pound's modernist project. Modernism's conception of time and history follows from its rejection of the diachronic form for the diachronic age of realism, meeting "terror of history" with various modes of description for the human experience in time.[125] The desire, shared by most if not all modernists, to frame a portrait of the modern world as a whole situation, is essentially an epic ambition. And as long as Butor has repeatedly described himself as a writer for whom "the great novels of the twentieth century have existed," then his work shares with the modernist masters the similarly epic "general area of historical and cultural interest" –Butor's cultural inventory/"repertory" is of striking depth and breath. The two modernist figures that come closest to this scale are Joyce and Pound – yet any comparison with their poetics yields Butor's fundamental difference.[126] Butor, also, arguably imagines the past in a way fundamentally different from that of his modernist ancestors: if, for Joyce, the Homeric Golden Age occurred some three thousand years distant from the Dublin day in 1904 described in *Ulysses* and if the echoes and similarities that have survived from that long-dead epoch must necessarily be fragments and ironic, then Butor, on the other hand, "discovered on his first fateful voyage to the cradle of civilization that ancient Egypt was not irretrievably lost in the third millennium BC where the historians had placed it but is alive today."[127] Butor is a consciously post-Joycean writer who continues in the linguistic and formal experimentation of the avant-garde tradition of "making it new." It is false to reduce the Joycean presence in his writings to his early essays and first novels: Joyce, for Butor, represents much more than a youthful master-figure to be overcome in maturity; rather, he is a paradigm to be constantly returned to and re-applied.

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123 As Lydon comments, "like Joyce, it was necessary for [Butor] to put a distance between himself and his native land before he could begin to write about it" (Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 223).
124 Whereas Butor's is "a product of the writer's maturity," as such it "does not suffer from the rather uncontrolled lyricism of Joyce's book" and actually is "more in the line of *Ulysses*" – even though much shorter and less ambitious, "its range of reference and impulse toward a totalization of experience, if not on the same scale as Joyce's masterpiece, at least may be measured by the same standard" (Jennifer Waelti-Walters, *Michel Butor – A Study of His View of the World and a Panorama of His Work 1954-1974* [Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1977] 119-20). Lydon, in turn, argues that even though both Joyce's and Butor's poetics evokes a kind of reading that "allows all the elements in it to combine and recombine in constantly evocative patterns," their means to this end differ: whereas Joyce uses linguistic material, "Butor juxtaposes works of art, historical eras and objects to attain the same end" (Lydon, *Perpetuum Mobile*, 228).
125 McWilliams singles out two of these modes of replacing or supplementing the historical model of a horizontal line: "by a vertical line (subjective interior experience of temporal depth) and a circle (circular rhythms of the day or the year)" (McWilliams, *The Narratives of Michel Butor*, 109).
126 "Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance come to us in *Finnegans Wake* and the *Cantos* in broken, often barely recognizable fragments, brilliant and beautiful, but dead. Butor, on the other hand, has painstakingly separated each layer, joined broken shards, and attempted to resurrect the essential genius of each of these cultures" (McWilliams, *The Narratives of Michel Butor*, 112).
127 McWilliams, *The Narratives of Michel Butor*, 113.

JOYCEAN OULIPO, OULIPIAN JOYCE: 1960-1978, BEFORE AND AFTER

Can Joyce's late work be taken as belonging to a body of work referred to as "anticipatory plagiary" for the Oulipo group? If yes, is this an acknowledged influence? What other influences is it combined with? The task here is both to conceptualise a Joycean "Oulipo avant la lettre," and to trace a streak within the Oulipian literary output following both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* and going beyond the undisputed influence of their shared precursor (Lewis Carroll) and Joyce's recognised significance for perhaps the two most canonical Oulipians, Raymond Queneau and Georges Perec.

CONSTRAINT & POTENTIAL

Established on 24 November 1960 by François le Lionnais and Raymond Queneau, its founding members including Noël Arnaud, Jacques Bens, Claude Berge, Jacques Duchateau, Latis, Jean Lescure, Jean Queval and Albert-Marie Schmidt, Oulipo is France's longest-living literary group, their monthly conventions, the famous "jeudis Oulipo" still taking place at the Bibliothèque National de France today, fifty-three years after its inception and long after the deaths of Oulipo's founding fathers. As Hervé le Tellier has observed recently in his excellent study on the group's history and poetics, Oulipo

> est né d'une amitié. De celle que se portaient Raymond Queneau, écrivain, éditeur, amateur de mathématiques, et François le Lionnais, grand collectionneur de savoirs hétéroclites, mathématiques, échiquéens, littéraires et pataphysiciens, […] la pierre fondatrice du groupe sera l'exploration du lien entre mathématique et littérature, un lien qui va se decliner […] autours de notions évolutives et mobiles : structure, contrainte, consigne, axiomatique, manipulation, combinatoire, procédé, procédure, etc.[1]

It is important to say group (or, more precisely, workshop) while resisting the common appellation of "movement," for as the (unsigned) note of the editor of the first Oulipian compendium made explicit, insofar as a negative definition of the Oulipo is simpler than a positive one, it runs as follows:

> 1. Ce n'est pas un mouvement littéraire.
> 2. Ce n'est pas un séminaire scientifique.
> 3. Ce n'est pas de la littérature aléatoire.[2]

Not a literary movement, not a scientific seminar, and not a practice of aleatory literature, then – members of the Oulipo have been likened by Raymond Queneau, to "rats who must build the labyrinth from which they propose to escape."[3] The acronym stands for *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*—"A Workshop for Potential Literature"—and the "workshop" in question, significantly, denotes a "sewing circle": not of wealthy elderly females knitting quilts for the benefit of the poverty-stricken, but of mathematicians/writers devising systems of constraints for the use of the writer's-block-stricken. A workshop, in short: not of textures, but of texts, nonetheless. It is important to keep in mind point three in Le Lionnais' negative definition above, particularly in view of the fact that Queneau had been member of Breton's Surrealist group back in the 1920s, before breaking up with the ensemble rather vehemently and tumultuously in 1929. Taking, as late as 1960, the automatic free-association writing of the Surrealists as a foil, Queneau postulated as the motto for his own group the contention that "il n'y a de littérature que volontaire" ("the only literature is voluntary writing").[4]

This norm of voluntary, "willed," writing had, in Queneau's writings at least, a twofold ramification: texts were devised according to a system, usually, with some sort of a formal constraining device at work, and there were also texts that were presented in a perennially nascent and incomplete state. Here, the precisely calculable potential, according to a rather strict formulation from Le Lionnais, is meant to substitute for the traditionally vague notion of inspiration:

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1 Hervé le Tellier, *Esthétique de l'Oulipo* (Bordeaux : Le Castor Astral, 2006) 7; 13.
2 "Note de l'éditeur," *Oulipo – La Littérature potentielle: créations, re-créations, recreations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) 11.
3 Jean Lescure, "Petite historie de l'Oulipo," *Oulipo – La Littérature potentielle: créations, re-créations, recreations*, trans. as "A Brief History of the Oulipo," *The New Media Reader*, eds. Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nick Montfort (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2003) 29.
4 Qtd. in Lescure, "Brief History of the Oulipo," 32.

> It is possible to compose texts that have poetic, surrealist, fantastic, or other qualities without having qualities of potential. Now it is these last qualities that are essential for us. They are the only ones that must guide our choice […] The goal of potential literature is to furnish future writers with new techniques which can dismiss inspiration from their affectivity. Ergo, the necessity of a certain liberty. Nine or ten centuries ago, when a potential writer proposed the sonnet form, he left, through certain mechanical processes, the possibility of a choice.[5]

Queneau sought to reconcile these two opposites in a milder summary of the main objective of the *Oulipo*'s "Littérature potentielle": "Proposer aux écrivains de nouvelles 'structures,' de nature mathématique ou bien encore inventer de nouveaux procédés artificiels ou mécaniques, contribuant à l'activité littéraire: Des soutiens de l'inspiration, pour ainsi dire, ou bien encore, en quelque sorte, une aide à la créativité" (*BCL*, 321). These "aids for creativity" include the famous Oulipian constraints of numerical, alphabetical, graphic or prosodic nature, always combinable and recombinable to generate an infinite array of new forms. Among the more popular are lipograms (texts omitting one or more letters of the alphabet), heterograms, pangrams (phrases or sentences in which no letter of the alphabet occurs more than once), anagrams, perverbs, antonymic or homophonic translations, spoonerisms, palindromes, or the famous "N+7" method. In the light of these "conventions," the adjective *new* from Queneau's definition appears particularly dubious: and one need not have recourse to Le Lionnais' avowal in order to see that these procedures were neither "discovered" nor "invented" by any of the Oulipians, but had instead, known variously as "the cento" or "Sortes Virgilanae," served as tools of plagiarist expropriation within the literary realm ever since late Antiquity. Indeed, as Queneau himself made clear:

> The word "potential" concerns the very nature of literature; that is, fundamentally it is less a question of literature strictly speaking than of supplying forms for the good use one can make of literature. We call potential literature the search for new forms and structures that may be used by writers in any way they see fit.[6]

The recurrence of the formalist notion of "structure" should not pass unnoticed, harking as far back as Ferdinand de Saussure, according to whose famous metaphor "language is like a machine which keeps going regardless of the damage inflicted on it."[7] Analogously, the procedure theorised and practiced by Queneau's group, then, lays bare the fact that poetic language is like a machine which keeps going, not regardless of, but precisely only thanks to the damage inflicted on it by its author, the shape, form, or stylistic gesture—a constraint that brings it into being. There is, in other words, no "unrestricted freedom" into which "a rat" could escape (no "unrestrained freedom" of Surrealist automatic writing), and beyond wall of its labyrinth lurks yet another one.

As Jacques Roubaud's "Introduction" to *Oulipo Compendium* has argued, as long as the literary impetus behind the Oulipo's origins was a primarily negative one (i.e. against surrealism), the other, mathematical impetus was one of "an homage to" and "an imitation of" the Bourbaki group of mathematicians, who decided, in Roubaud's words, to "perform an Oulipian rewriting of mathematics" in that they drew their inspiration from the axiomatics of David Hilbert and made set theory the basis of their undertaking. This Oulipian bipolarity of mathematics and literature leads to the following fourfold classification of its members:

> (i) the first sort are composers of literature (prose, poetry, criticism) who are not mathematicians;
> (ii) the second sort are mathematicians who are not composers of literature; the members of type
> (iii) are composers of literature *and* mathematicians; those of type
> (iv) are mathematicians *and* composers of literature.[8]

The choice of the "limiting and at the same time crucial role" of mathematics played in Oulipian art made by its founders, Roubaud points out, was one whose rationale dictated that "after the exhaustion of the generative power of tradi-

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5 Qtd. in Lescure, "Brief History of the Oulipo," 30.
6 Jean Lescure, "Brief History of the Oulipo," 30.
7 Ferdinand de Saussure, *The Third Course of Lectures in General Linguistics (1910–1911)*, trans. & ed. E. Komatsu & R. Harris (Oxford: Pergamon, 1993) 113.
8 Jacques Roubaud, "Oulipo – Introduction," *Oulipo Compendium*, eds. Harry Mathews & Alastair Brotchie (London: Atlas Press, 1998) 38.

tional constraints, only mathematics could offer a way out between a nostalgic obstinacy with worn-out modes of expression and an intellectually pathetic belief in "total freedom."[9]

In addition to these two aspects—i.e. longevity and mathematical foundations—Roubaud mentions three other essential Oulipian features. So long as its aim is "to invent (or reinvent) restrictions of a formal nature and propose them to enthusiasts interested in composing literature," *as a group*, the Oulipo "does not count the creation of literary works among its primary aims" – for it is equally important originate the creation of new (even non-Oulipian) works by means of formal restraint.[10] A peculiar notion of authorship arises, with the adjective "Oulipian" acquiring a two-fold adaptability: "Whatever its other merits, a literary work that deserves to be called Oulipian may have been written by a member of the Oulipo, but it may have been written by a non-member of the Oulipian." Hence, the third Oulipian characteristic is the *collaborative* nature of its work, its products (proposed constraints and their illustrations) being "attributed to the group, even if certain constraints are invented by individuals."[11] The next step from this collaborative attitude to creation is Oulipian feature number four, its *potential universality*, which renders Oulipian procedures not only applicable to all languages apart from French, but also successive to a vast and old literary tradition, recognised as "anticipatory plagiarism," an expression which "delimits a part of past literature as susceptible of being examined with freshened eyes in the light of the constraint" and Roubaud's "masters" of the Oulipo include Lewis Carroll, Raymond Roussel, Alphonse Allais, and Alfred Jarry.[12] Finally, the fifth characteristic, consequent to and subsuming the preceding two, is that Oulipian literature is "neither modern nor postmodern" but what Roubaud calls "a traditional literature true to tradition" – hence its remarkable links (especially as regards poetic texts) with traditional or contemporary oral poetry.

What, then, are the relationships between constraints, combinative procedures, and potentiality? Chiefly twofold: First, there are works in which Oulipian constraints provide "the rules of a language game (in the Wittgensteinian sense) whose 'innings' (texts composed according to its rules) are virtually unlimited and represent linguistic combinations developed from a small number of necessarily interdependent elements." And second, there are also those works which chart out the particular potentiality that gives rise to them: "Potentiality is here explicitly linked to research in a new *combinatorial art* which, after Llull, proceeds from Bruno to Leibniz and which eventually finds support in the most recent developments in mathematics."[13] Roubaud's examples of both these types are two works by writers both most famous of the entire group and, as will be seen, most Joycean – the most illustrious example of constraint-ruled Oulipian work has become George Perec's *La Disparition* (*A Void*), whereas a case in point of a work of Oulipian potential literature is Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliards poèmes* (*A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems*).

"MA DETTE ENVERS LES ROMANCIERS ANGLAIS ET AMERICAINS": RAYMOND QUENEAU

It is difficult to overstate Raymond Queneau's (1903-1976) significance for the Oulipo group, which is due not only to his functioning as the group's founding father, of the dedicatee of some of the crucial works of other Oulipians, of the inventor of some of its most celebrated constraints and techniques, but also due to his Nestor-like status of a writer whose earlier works precede the establishment of the group by two-and-a-half decades.

It was Queneau's violent split with Breton's surrealist group in the late twenties that, thirty years later, shaped Oulipo's notions of "voluntary" writing opposed to "inspiration." Queneau's biographers detail how he met André Breton and become part of the Surrealist milieu, which was then in full effervescence in Paris, contributing a poem and two examples of automatic writing to the journal *La révolution surréaliste* and signing the Surrealist manifesto *Déclaration du 27 janvier 1925*. However, following his release from compulsory military service in 1927, alienation between him

9 Roubaud, "Oulipo – Introduction," 40.
10 Roubaud, "Oulipo – Introduction," 38-9.
11 Roubaud, "Oulipo – Introduction," 39.
12 Roubaud, "Oulipo – Introduction," 40.
13 Roubaud, "Oulipo – Introduction," 41.

and Breton escalated, following a series of personal incidents as well as Queneau's increasing dissatisfaction with the group's political position – i.e. its support of Joseph Stalin after the purging of Leon Trotsky from the Soviet leadership in 1926. The last straw, for Breton, came in 1930 when Queneau published "Dédé," in *Un cadavre* (*A Corpse*, 1930), a vehemently anti-Breton pamphlet co-written by Jacques Prévert, Georges Bataille, Robert Desnos, Michel Leiris, and others. As Queneau recalled in his *Bâtons, chiffres, lettres*:

> C'est ce qui arrive, je crois, à tous ceux qui s'excluent ou sont exclus de groupes fortement constitués. Je ne savais que faire et je me suis réfugié à la Bibliothèque Nationale où je me suis mis à étudier les fous littéraires.
> (That is what happens to those who are excluded or exclude themselves from tightly knit groups. I did not know what to do; I took refuge in the National Library, where I began to study literary madmen).[14]

Leroux also mentions the biographical trivia that Queneau "had read the *Dictionnaire Larousse* from A to Z" by the age of fifteen.[15] His obsession with dictionaries might be seen as indicative of his Joycean literary disposition, tending toward the literary encyclopaedia – and Queneau's multifaceted and variegated oeuvre stands as clear testimony to this particular tendency.

Queneau's early essay entitled "Technique du roman" (1937) opens with a "précaution […] de reconnaître ma dette envers les romanciers anglais et américains qu'il existait une technique du roman, et tout spécialement envers Joyce" (*BCL*, 28).[16] Queneau's 1937 avowal of his "debt" to Anglophone authors and "especially" to Joyce was followed in 1938 by his article entitled "James Joyce, auteur classique" (published in *Volonté,* no. 9, 1er septembre 1938), which reclaims Joyce to the heritage of classicism, for, according to Queneau, the author of *Ulysses* has "une parfaite connaissance de ses buts et de ses moyens" and "rien, dans ces œuvres, n'est laissé au hazard," without which "rien ne manifeste une contrainte." According to Queneau, Joyce's work tends "vers l'universel" and is "une nouveauté continuelle," resting upon "une connaissance de la tradition et des œuvres anciennes."[17] Although a classicist, Joyce, for Queneau, is an author of "continuous novelty" and experimentation – which he seeks to perpetuate in his own oeuvre.[18]

As Queneau reveals in "Technique du roman," two of his first three novels had elaborate arithmetical structures. Queneau's first novel *Le Chiendent* (1933) is constructed in a fashion which is to become typical of Queneau's 1930s novels, and was written after Queneau's trip to Greece (as the concluding Joycean postscript, "*Athènes et Cyclades,* juillet-novembre 1932," makes clear [*C* 432]). It is composed of a melange of proletarian background of a detective novel against bits of Cartesian philosophy, memories of Homer and technical devices of Joyce and Faulkner. It has been hailed by critics as an epic of the Parisian suburbs in that it features several typified individuals representative of class/social function (e.g. the petit bourgeois, the concierge, the junk-dealer, the bartender, etc.) who emerge little by little from the crowd to rush into a treasure hunt which finally becomes a world war. In *Entretiens avec Georges Charbonnier*, Queneau says à propos of his first novel that the inspiration was Joyce's tables of correspondences for *Ulys-*

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14 Qtd. & trans. in André Leroux, "Raymond Queneau," *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 258: Modern French Poets*, ed. Jean-François Leroux (University of Ottawa: The Gale Group, 2002) 355.
15 Leroux, "Raymond Queneau," 354.
16 In the estimation of the author of the most comprehensive work (well over 500 pages) on the subject of Quenenian Anglo-American influences, this group of writers included "Caroll, Joyce et Faulkner bien sûr, mais aussi Edgar Allan Poe, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller et Caldwell." (Lise Bergheaud, *Queneau et les formes intranquilles de la modernité* [Paris: Éditions Champion, 2010] 21).
On the subject of Joyce, Lise Bergheaud's *Queneau et les formes intranquilles de la modernité* surveys his meticulously kept *Journaux*, detailing Queneau's early acquaintance with *Ulysses* (which he read twice, in 1929 in French translation and, in 1933, in the original, and kept rereading throughout his life, together with relevant criticism) and the care with which he followed the chapter instalments of Joyce's "Work in Progress" in the *transition* magazine. As late as 1971, Queneau reads the 1959 volume of Joyce's *Critical Writings*, showing, according to Bergheaud, that "jusque dans les toutes dernières années de sa vie, il restera fidèle au Joyce à la fois écrivain et théoricien." (Bergheaud, *Queneau et les formes intranquilles de la modernité*, 66).
17 Qtd. in Bergheaud, *Queneau et les formes intranquilles de la modernité*, 69.
18 On the whole, Bergheaud's well-informed survey of Queneau's diaries reveals "un regard extrêmement aiguisé sur l'œuvre de l'Irlandais. On y trouve des synopsis de certaines sections de *Ulysses*, des tableaux de correspondances entre différentes éditions de ce texte, de longues citations extraites de l'essai d'Edmund Wilson sur *Work in Progress*, des notes relatives aux personnages de cette même œuvre […] ou encore le recopiage d'un tableau, élaboré par Joyce lui-même, qui met en relation chaque épisode de *Ulysses* avec un organe, une science, une couleur, un symbole ou une technique littéraire." ((Bergheaud, *Queneau et les formes intranquilles de la modernité*, 70).

ses, and that he drew up similar tables, "as formal as a chess game" for *Le Chiendent*.[19] *Le Chiendent* consists of seven chapters, each containing thirteen sections:

> every thirteenth (the last in each chapter, consequently) is situated outside of this chapter, in another direction or dimension; they are pauses and their genre can only be monologue, report of a dream, or newspaper clipping. Naturally, the 91st breaks the rule and becomes narrative once more to end the whole. (*BCL,* 25)

As one of the earliest Queneau critics and author of the first book-length study on the novel, Claude Simonet, has argued, *Le Chiendent* is an accomplishment of the revolution of language in French,[20] by following the Joyce/Jolasian revolution of language in chiefly two ways, conceptual and thematic: by creating imaginatively a "monde autonome et sans autres limites que celles d'une poétique rigoureuse" and by combatting "la tyrannie du temps"[21] in that the first two sentences are also the text's last:

> La silhouette d'un homme se profila ; simultanément, des milliers. Il y en avait bien des milliers. Il venait d'ouvrir les yeux et les rues accablées s'agitaient, s'agitaient les hommes qui tout le jour travaillèrent. La silhouette indiquée se dégagea du mur d'une bâtisse immense et insupportable, un édifice qui paraissait un étouffement et qui était une banque. Détachée du mur, la silhouette oscilla bousculée par d'autres formes, sans comportement individuel visible, travaillée en sens divers, moins par ses inquiétudes de ses milliers de voisins. (*LC,* 9)

> Un masque traversa l'air, escamotant des personnages aux vies multiples et complexes, et prit forme humaine à la terrasse d'un café. La silhouette d'un homme se profila ; simultanément, des milliers. Il y en avait bien des milliers. (*LC,* 432)

It would of course be mistaken to regard *Le Chiendent*'s circularity as a token of Queneau's *Wakean* inspiration, as in 1933 the circular structure had not been announced or made clear by Joyce. Somewhat more conclusive and explicit Joycean references and allusions begin to appear from Queneau's second and third novels onward. *Gueule de pierre* (1934) is less complex than *Le Chiendent*, mathematically at least consisting of only three parts, as Queneau explains in "Technique du roman," each in a different technique: "monologue of the solitary man in the first, narrative and conversations when he returns to the people of 'La Ville natale,' a poem finally in the third part when he elevates himself." However, as Vivian Mercier points out, each of the three parts also corresponds to one of the domains of nature—animal, vegetable and mineral—and the third contains all twelve signs of the Zodiac.[22] *Les Derniers Jours* (1936) was originally planned to have 8 x 6 + 1 = 49 chapters, with every sixth forming a pause; however, the published version has only 38, Queneau having "taken away the scaffolding and syncopated the rhythm" by suppressing certain chapters. *Les Derniers Jours* has been called by Simonet "une sorte de 'portrait de l'artiste en jeune homme'," [23] and this not only on account of its explicit mention of *Ulysses*: "Tuquedenne passa devant *Shakespeare et Cie* et s'arrêta convoitant le grand *Ulysses* à couverture bleue" (*LDJ,* 213). The play on number 7 should be seen as indirectly autobiographical, as both the author's first and second names contain seven letters each.

Queneau's most explicitly Joycean texts came into being in the period shortly after WWII. His *On est toujours trop bon avec les femmes* (1947), published as the purported French translation of a novel by fictional Irish writer Sally Mara, is set in Dublin during the 1916 Easter Rising and its plot concerns the story of the siege of a small post office by a group of rebels, one of whom goes by the name of "James Joyce." Their secret recognition password is, of course, the exclamation "Finnegans Wake!" The chief cause of the narrative merriment is the insurgents' realisation that a female postal clerk, Gertie Girdle, is still in the lavatory some time after they have shot or expelled the rest of the staff. However, it was in 1948 that Queneau's linguistically most innovative text appeared – his novel *Saint Glinglin* (1948). Although undated, a very plausible avant-text to the novel is a short exercise entitled "Une traduction en joycien" – "A Translation into Joycean." With the motivation to "appliquer la méthode joycienne à un texte quelconque,"

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19 Raymond Queneau, *Entretiens avec Georges Charbonnier* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962) 49.
20 Simonet cites the Jolasian pamphlet, observing that "les auteurs traduisent en préceptes la leçon qu'un jeune écrivain des années 30 pouvait tirer de l'exemple de Joyce et il est curieux de voir qu'ils manifestent une attitude littéraire à laquelle *Le Chiendent*—dans une manière très personnelle—correspond assez exactement." (Claude Simonet, *Queneau déchiffré* [Paris: René Juillard, 1962] 1).
21 Simonet, *Queneau déchiffré*, 2; 10.
22 Mercier, "Raymond Queneau: The First New Novelist?" 108.
23 Simonet, *Queneau déchiffré*, 25.

this little vignette translates the two opening paragraphs of Queneau's second novel *Gueule de Pierre* into Joyce's Wakese. Let us restrict ourselves to just the first of the two:

> Drôle de vie, la vie de poisson !... Je n'ai jamais pu comprendre comment on pouvait vivre comme cela. L'existence de la Vie sous cette forme m'inquiète bien au-delà de tout autre sujet d'alarme que peut m'imposer le Monde. Un Aquarium représente pour moi toute une série d'énigmes lancinantes, de tenailles rougies au feu. Cet après-midi, je suis allé voir Celui dont s'enorgueillit le Jardin Zoologique de la Ville Étrangère. J'y restai, bouleversé, jusqu'à ce que les fonctionnaires m'en chassent.
>
> Doradrôle de vie la vie de poisson. Je n'ai jeunet jamais pu unteldigérer qu'on ment on pouvait vivier comme ce la sol dos rêt. Fishtre, ouïes ! Son aiguesistence sucette mortphe m'astruitte et me cotte, mets ta mortphose dans la raie en carnation, euyet-moi ça, l'alarme dont crevette le monde, ô mort fausse, hue mor ! Quelle hummer ! Quelle hudor ! Où mort ? Où deurt ? Lamproie du rémore, je me limandais où j'allais j'irai. A quoi rhum ? Akvarium. Vite ! Je m'alosais, tourd torturé tourteau tortue matelote d'aiguilles, mais je n'avais pas d'anchois. J'allé je fus à l'énorgueil du gardin-patrie de la ville étrangère, l'acquarius où va-t-Hermann où là oulla verse le couguard. Qu'où gars ? Mais, m'amifère ! Was Herr Mann ? Raie l'action ! Esaüso qui coule o verso d'alpha fomalo fiché dans les tmimamellisfères bornéo ! Siaux d'os du sciel, piscez jusqu'o ramo ! Bélier ? Wieder ! Videz ! Vide pisces vide ariem. Ariestez-vous ici ! Arrêtes ! Enchristez-vous dans votre shell ! G'y menotais jusquiame que mussel funkchionnaire mé duse : sélassiez ! Ras d'eau ! Merduse ! qu j'grondinais, merlouze ! que j'harenguais. (*BCL*, 240-1)

The subject, here, is human wonder at the strangeness of the life of fish and water species (incidentally, another hidden "signature" of Queneau's, as Pisces are his zodiacal sign). Accordingly, Queneau "translates" a large portion of dictionary words into portmanteaux that pack together sea- or water-vocabulary: *drôle*, "funny," becomes *doradrôle*, echoing *dorade*, "sea bream," a Mediterranean fish species; "existence" under the restricted water conditions becomes "aiguesistence" – an "acute-sistence" but also echoing compounds like *aigue-marine*, "aquamarine." Queneau also employs the *Wakese* technique of phonological transliteration – *métamorphose dans la réincarnation* becomes "mets ta mortphose dans la raie en carnation," *Quelle hummer ! Quelle hudor !* is echoed in *Où mort ? Où deurt ?* etc. Like Joyce, even though to a more limited degree, Queneau doesn't restrict his wordplay to one language only: thus, "Was Herr Mann?" echoes the German *Wassermann*, "waterman," "*Wieder!*," German for "again," evokes via homophony the French "*Videz!*," the imperative for "Empty!"

Saint Glinglin, a rewriting and augmentation of *Gueule de pierre* and *Les temps mêlés*, is proof that this *Wakean* wordplay was not a solitary enterprise on Queneau's part, but a new tendency and interest of his writing. Its seven parts comprise the three sections of *Gueule de pierre* ("Les poisons," "Le printanier," and "Le grand minéral," here redubbed "Le caillou"), the second and third section of *Les temps mêlés* (nameless, in *Saint Glinglin* entitled "Les ruraux" and "Les touristes") and two "original" sections, "Les étrangers" and "Saint Glinglin." Referring to the fictional French saint, whose celebration day never comes (and thus serves as a convenient point of reference to potentially endless deferral), *Saint Glinglin* retells the primal Freudian myth of the fraternal patricide in a kaleidoscope of styles ranging from soliloquy, interior monologue to quasi-biblical verse or theatre-play dialogue. The mythical, utopian tale of a Ville Natale ("native city") where it never rains, where a bizarre festival is held every Saint Glinglin's Day is narrated by way of fractured syntax, hidden structures, self-imposed constraints, playful allusions, and puns and neologisms through which Queneau explores the most basic underpinnings of culture. A large portion of Queneau's verbal experimentation in *Saint Glinglin* has as its source the rewriting of his earlier texts. Though less linguistically daring than his "traduction à joycien," Queneau's *Saint Glinglin* does keep several of his neologisms. Especially the word "existence" is treated in a *tema con variazioni*-like fashion: from "aiguesistence" (*RQ III*, 201-2, 205, 212, 273, 313, 385) to "aigresistence" (*RQ III*, 220, 273, 315, 368), via "eggzistence," "ogresistence," "hainesistence," "alguesistence," or still "âcresistence" (*RQ III,* 203, 05-6, 12, 18). There are, in addition, the occasional monstrous portmanteaux, such as the adverb "méthodethnologiquement" (*RQ III*, 304), meant to mockingly combine method with ethnology in a pseudo-scientific approach to the Ville Natale and its inhabitants. Another neological trait of Queneau's text is its deployment of non-lexical onomatopoeia, its idiosyncratic transliteration of non-linguistic sounds and fragmented speech: "sgâla," "seuksé," "mieucnou," "ptitapti," "sovostrespé," "paskivnait dparler," "Dédicacélemeuh!" and "Imélamin'hocudlastar" (*RQ III,* 236, 7, 324, 364, 383, 320, 7). Such lists, in Bergheaud's estimation, in addition to Queneau's other "véritables

innovations linguistiques et littéraires," are indication of "l'inscription, dans le roman, d'une filiation directe entre Joyce et Queneau."[24]

Another exercise in stylistic rewriting, and perhaps the most famous of all Queneau's works, appeared just a year before *Saint Glinglin*. In *Exercises de style* (1947), the Joycean trait is much less conspicuous, even though far from imperceptible. Famously, Queneau's text features 99 stylistic exercises in which to narrate a rather banal mini-story featuring two separate events (a minor argument between two voyagers on a busy bus; an overheard bit of conversation regarding a supplementary button to be sown onto an overcoat) joined by a common protagonist and a narrator. The crucial structural point is the missing 100th element – the presumed "theme" upon which variations are played. Since according to music tradition, the theme must precede its variations, one would naturally look for it at the beginning:

> Notations
> Dans l'S, à une heure d'affluence. Un type dans les vingt-six ans, chapeau mou avec cordon remplaçant le ruban, cou trop long comme si on lui avait tiré dessus. Les gens descendent. Le type en question s'irrite contre un voisin. Il lui reproche de le bousculer chaque fois qu'il passe quelqu'un. Ton pleurnichard qui se veut méchant. Comme il voit une place libre, se précipite dessus.
> Deux heures plus tard, je le rencontre Cour de Rome, devant la gare Saint-Lazare. Il est avec un camarade qui lui dit: "Tu devrais faire mettre un bouton supplémentaire à ton pardessus." Il lui montre où (à l'échancrure) et pourquoi. (*ES,* 13)

The book's first section, written in the "Notations" form, would appear to pose, in critic Teresa Bridgeman's words, as "a linguistically minimal way of recording events," and yet, upon closer inspection, it is not such.[25] Queneau's point, thus, seems to be that there is no "neutral" telling, no "ground zero basis" from which to build one's stylistic edifice, no *fabula* to preceded the *sujet* (in Formalist terms), or in music notions, no "theme" upon which to play one's variations – all narrative rendering of reality is always already *stylised*. Queneau generates a fabula of sorts not only through the "Notation" exercise, but also through a few others, such as "Analyse logique," which seems to supply answers to the "Hésitations" section (replete with questions), only to subject it to a vast array of further destabilisations and challenges – e.g. "Le côté subjectif," where the events are focalised through the unreliable first-person narrator, or "Rétrograde," where they are related in reverse. Other exercises position the event sequence in narrative frames, as e.g. "Rêve" provides the oneiric frame, or ""Comédie," the theatrical setting, or "Télégraphique," the textual medium of the telegraphic transmission. Other exercises, still, work not so much on the text's narrative dimension as on its linguistic material: "Anagrammes" begins a comprehensive breakdown of the morphology of the text, shifting the position of letters only within each word, preserving the word as an identifiable unit through spacing and punctuation, the four "Permutations" sections go a step further in altering the linguistic material beyond easy recognition ("Jo un ve ur mi rs su di ap rl te la rm fo rr ea re iè na d'u o but de us li la eS" etc. [*ES*, 66]. "Aphérèses" and "Apocopes" enhance the typographical dimension of textual presentation, laid out as they are on a double-page spread, allowing the reader to combine them into a single text. Although present in spirit throughout, the Joycean heritage of multilingual punning and paronomasia is most palpably drawn upon and remembered in two sections of Queneau's *Exercices*, in "Anglicismes" and "Italianismes":

> Anglicismes
> Un dai vers midday, je tèque le beusse et je sie un jeugne manne avec une grète nèque et un hatte avec une quainnde de lèsse tressée. Soudainement ce jeugne manne bi-queumze crézé et acuiouse un respectable seur de lui trider sur les toses. Puis il reunna vers un site eunoccupé.
> A une lète aoure je le sie égaine; il vouoquait eupe et daoune devant le Ceinte Lazare stécheunne. Un beau lui guivait un advice à propos de bouton. (*ES,* 74)
>
> Italianismes

24 Bergheaud, *Queneau et les formes intranquilles de la modernité*, 288.
25 Not only does it have "a strong individual style, involving the suppression of certain elements which are usually necessary to a well-formed sentence," but it also "fails to qualify as neutral telling" in that it "not only establishes a series of events, but also includes other elements which we encounter in the texture of narrative, that is, description and evaluation, which cannot be seen as neutral and objective" (Teresa Bridgeman, "Telling Stories," *Raymond Queneau*, *Exercices de Style* [Glasgow: University of Glasgow French & German Publications, 1995] 13).

> Oune giorne en pleiné merigge, ié saille sulla plataforme d'oune otobousse et là quell ouome ié vidis? ié vidis oune djiovanouome au longué col avé de la treccie otour dou cappel. Et lé ditto djiovanouome oltragge oune pouovre ouome à qui il rimproveravait de lui pester les pieds et il ne lui pestarait noullément les pieds, mais qua nil vidit oune sédie vouote, il corrit por sedersilà.
> A oune ouore dé là, ié lé révidis qui asoltait les consigles d'oune bellimbouste et zerbinotte a proposto d'oune bouttoné dé pardéssousse. (*ES,* 82)

These two sections transcribe English and Italian vocabulary into French notation, sometimes blending the two together: "young" and "jeune" combined in "jeugne," "becomes" transcribed as "bi-queumze," "walking up and down" disguised in "vouoquait eupe et daoune" (the Italian section performing largely similar operations on the Italian lexicon). Thus, both in overall design, in its stylistic "message," and in some of its particular wordplay, *Exercices de style* can be seen, together with Mercier, as "a serious product" of Queneau's "discipleship to Joyce." Yet, some of its exercises already point to the mathematical approach to language as series of signs, to be re-arranged according to general principles of variation and permutation, setting out on a tangent alien to anything in Joyce's poetics.[26]

In other words, *Exercises de style* is Queneau's proto-Oulipian text, after which (and after *Saint-Glinglin*) his novelistic output will gradually be superseded by his poetic works and Oulipian essays and exercises. One of Queneau's most celebrated and lasting innovations is his variation on Jean Lescure's "La Méthode S+7," in which each adjective, substantive and verb is abstracted from a given text and replaced with the seventh adjective, substantive or verb following it in the dictionary, thereby transforming the original text. One of Queneau's contributions included in the 1973 *Littérature potentielle* anthology was his rewriting of Jean La Fontaine's fable, "La Cigale et la fourmi," central to the *Wake*'s "Ondt and the Gracehoper" story. The title of Queneau's textual transposition is "La Cimaise et la fraction," and although ludic and presented as wordplay, it isn't quite devoid of ramifications regarding the functioning of literary texts, i.e. their intertextuality:

> LA CIMAISE ET LA FRACTION
> La cimaise ayant chaponné tout l'éternueur
> se tuba fort dépurative quand la bixacée fut verdie :
> pas un sexué pétrographique morio de moufette ou de verrat.[27]

As critic Warren F. Motte has observed, this method gives rise to a certain spectral doubleness in the perception of the text, especially when read aloud.[28] To be sure, Queneau's S+7 method is decisively un-Joycean and un-*Wakean* in treating words as dictionary-defined, immutable entities, interchangeable on the basis of a numerical procedure. Still, in his pre-Oulipian novels, essays and in the idiosyncratic proto-Oulipian *Exercices de style*, Queneau appears as a writer whose taste for verbal experiment and stylistic innovation would not have formed as it did had it not been for his debt "tout spécialement envers Joyce."

"L'IMPRESSION D'ÊTRE DANS UNE VILLE IMMENSE, UNE METROPOLE, UNE CAPITALE": GEORGES PEREC

Even today, more than thirty years after his death, Georges Perec (1936-82) is still a member of the Oulipo group, which—and this ties in with what has been noted about its relation to tradition—makes no distinction between living or deceased membership. This membership began in 1967 when his friend Jacques Roubaud introduced Perec to the Oulipo, and a mere two years later, in 1969, Perec published his first novel directly inspired by his relationship with Oulipo, the remarkable *La Disparition*. In the same year he began assembling and organizing material for the masterpiece he would take ten years to complete, *La vie mode d'emploi*. In an appropriately precise mathematical fashion, he declared himself to be "a genuine product of the Oulipo," his existence as a writer being "ninety per cent dependent on

26 "Among the weirdest variations are those called 'Permutations': one written in groups of from two to five letters; one in groups of from five to eight; one in groups of from nine to twelve. Here we see again the mind of a mathematician rather than that of a literary artist at work" (Mercier, "Raymond Queneau: The First New Novelist?" 110).
27 Queneau, "Contribution à la pratique de la méthode lescurienne S+7," *Oulipo – La Littérature potentielle,* 152.
28 Warren F. Motte, Jr., *The Poetics of Experiment – A Study of the Work of Georges Perec* (Lexington: French Forum Publishers, 1984) 58-9.

my knowing the Oulipo at a pivotal point in my formation, in my literary work."[29] This formation was one of what he himself referred to as being a "man of letters": "The phrase that seems most appropriate in defining myself and my work is *man of letters*, a man whose work revolves around letters, around the alphabet. My work is not done with ideas or sentiments or images."[30] This work with and around letters involves, in an eminently Oulipian fashion, a formal constraint generative of literary inspiration. However, there is also the 10% outside of the commonality which is more interesting to pursue as it is precisely in places where Perec diverges from the Oulipian doctrine that his *raison d'être* as writer and man might be located.[31]

Although a "product" of the Oulipo, Perec is an out-standing Oulipian. His difference from the group is twofold, in degree and in kind. Perec substantially differs from Queneau and other Oulipians in the degree of control over, and exhaustiveness of, the combinatorial play of formal elements staged in his work. He can be said to push the Oulipian *potentiality* toward *actuality*, never regarding the method itself as sufficient merely in its virtuality, without its extreme realization. This obsession with exhausting the subject secured him the first place in quite a few of the Oulipian top charts, most notably, for his 1969 *Grand Palindrome*, with 5 566 letters the longest palindrome in the French language, and his 300-page novel *La Disparition* (also from 1969, translated into English as *A Void*), a book-length lipogram managing to do without the letter 'e' throughout, complemented in 1972 by the monovocal text, *Les Revenentes*, where the only vowel used is 'e.' Perec invokes this desire for totality, completion, and exhaustive inclusivity in discussing his aspirations as man of letters—"to write all that a modern man can possibly write," "to fill a drawer at the Bibliothèque nationale," "to use every single word in the dictionary"—and he applies it ceaselessly in his attempts at "description," "inventory," and "exhaustion."[32] His ambition is to recycle or invent methods, certainly, but above all to push them to their extremes in order to imbue the sphere of their realization. However, there is also a more substantial difference marking Perec off from others, more substantial because in kind rather than degree: his systematic determination to *motivate* the constraint. This motivation takes place not only in the sense of Jacques Roubaud's principle according to which "a text written according to a given constraint must speak of this constraint,"[33] which assumes the primacy of the constraint over the generated text, but also in the sense of a sort of constraint generated from within the text, a sort of modernist mimetic form whose mimetic property has to do with Perec's biography.

Both these Perequian particularities and divergences from the Oulipian doctrine make him closer in spirit to Joyce than any other Oulipian. Still, unlike Queneau for instance, neither his criticism nor his non-fiction writing (e.g. the 1985 posthumous volume *Penser/Classer*) contain much by way of homage to, or address of, Joyce – it is to Perec's interviews and talks, and of course his own fiction, particularly *La vie mode d'emploi*, that one must turn for specific textual evidence. Of the early interviews, one instance specifically stands out: in 1974, Perec acknowledges the destructive aspect of Joyce's heritage and voices the need to surpass it, to "reinvent" the writing destroyed, tying this project to his Oulipo membership.[34] Nonetheless, in his later interviews, most of them to do with *La vie mode d'emploi*, Joyce begins surfacing as an exclusively positive influence: in an interview for *Le Devoir* from June 1979, Joyce's status is heightened through association with *La vie mode d'emploi*'s key image of puzzle-making and solving; Joyce,

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29 "J'ai donc fait connaissance avec l'Oulipo, j'ai été invité à l'Oulipo, pris comme membre, comme associé ou correspondant […] Je ne me considère pas comme héritier de Queneau, mais je me considère vraiment comme un produit de l'Oulipo. C'est-à-dire que mon existence d'écrivain dépend à quatre-vingt-dix-sept pour cent du fait que j'ai connu l'Oulipo à une époque tout à fait charnière de ma formation, de mon travail d'écriture" (*Georges Perec – Entretiens et conférences*, *Volume II: 1979-81*, eds. Dominique Bertelli & Mireille Ribière [Paris: Joseph K., 2003] 148-9).

30 Qtd. in Bernard Magné, "Georges Perec, Oulibiographer," trans. Daniel Levin Becker, online at: http://www.drunkenboat.com/db8/oulipo/feature-oulipo/essays/magne/oulibio.html

31 As critic Paul Schwartz has similarly observed, "the importance of literary experimentation in Perec's development as a writer is clear: through constraint he discovered imagination. But there is another, more significant factor in his development which surfaces in his autobiographical works of 1973-78: his discovery and gradual understanding—with the aid of analysis—of the effect of his parents' death, especially his mother's, upon his creative imagination" (Paul Schwartz, *Georges Perec – Traces of his Passage* [Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1988] 3).

32 Qtd. in Magné, "Georges Perec, Oulibiographer," online at: http://www.drunkenboat.com/db8/oulipo/feature-oulipo/essays/magne/oulibio.html

33 Roubaud, "Introduction," 42.

34 "Joyce a montré qu'il est facile de détruire l'écriture; le problème me paraît être maintenant de la réinventer. C'est pour ça que je suis à l'Oulipo. Je le répète, nous sommes des artisans" (*Entretiens et conférences*, *Volume I: 1965-78*, 188).

together with "Butor, Kafka or Melville," is an author who draws "une sorte de constellation avec au centre (ou sur les bords) une pièce vide qui est celle que je vais venir remplir."[35] Broaching the "unreadability " of Queneau's *Le Chiendent*, despite the deep overall respect harboured for both the man and the oeuvre, Perec again refuses to classify Joyce's *Ulysses* as an unreadable text, placing it firmly into the genealogy of his development as both reader and writer.[36] Here, Perec avows freely that his earliest work, for "reasons which I absolutely couldn't explain to myself," was parody and pastiche of some of his favourite writers. Again, just as Queneau, Perec emphasises Joyce's influence as part of his own general interest in Anglophone literature – as he confided in an answer to Gabriel Simony's question regarding the "shaking off of the weight of all our literary heroes," the "weight" is felt "particularly with Anglo-Saxon literature," much more so than with the native French.[37] Joyce, just as Henry James or Dickens, even serves Perec in the role of an antidote to Flaubert's literary "terrorism" – *Ulysses* is singled out as giving Perec the reader "l'impression d'être dans une ville immense, une métropole, une capitale."[38] Even though Joyce, for Perec, is first and foremost the author of *Ulysses* whereas *Finnegans Wake*, if mentioned at all, is usually associated with "failure," in a late 1981 interview, Perec points out that the risk Joyce was running with his last work is one common to "all writers at any given time."[39] Any writer or artist who "destroys the conventions existing before him" will eventually "find himself facing a wall," without "successors." Still, Perec himself is an excellent example that in France, Joyce's *Ulysses*-project has been one with a steady innovative succession.

The first thing to note about Perec's corpus is that it stands as testimony to its author's intention, voiced in his autobiographical essay "Notes sur ce que je cherche," to "never write two similar books," to never repeat "the same formula" already "elaborated in a previous book."[40] The Perequian corpus—comprising 22 texts from 1965 to 1981 and 15 more volumes of the posthumous editions of his manuscripts, non-fiction, criticism, collected interviews, etc.—is notable not only for its scope and sheer bulk, but also for its unique variety. As Schwartz has remarked, the differences of style and subject in Perec's first three novels—*Les Choses* (1965), *Quel petit vélo* (1966), and *Un Homme qui dort* (1967) give the impression of "a man with a need to write, searching for a personal means of expression,"[41] but with Perec, this is no symptom of youthful search and uncertainty, but of a constant writer disposition. Critic David Gascoigne speaks of Perec's "heterogeneous memory-bank of choice morsels" and their "unexpected juxtapositions" that "nourish his writing."[42] Zooming in on just five years of Perec's career, 1973-78, during which he was most involved with *La vie mode d'emploi*: there are volumes like *La Boutique obscure: 124 rêves* (1973), Perec's dream book where he recounts the dreams dreamt from May 1969 to August 1972, an explicitly oneiric text whose narrative poses questions about the nature of representation, about the relation of ostensible lived experience and writing. *Espèces*

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35 *Entretiens et conférences*, *Volume II: 1979-81*, 76.

36 "Non, avec *Ulysse* ce n'est pas arrivé. Avec *Le Volcan* non plus. D'une certaine façon, au moment où j'ai commencé à écrire, mes idoles étaient plutôt—je dis mes idoles parce qu'effectivement c'étaient des idoles : je voulais à la fois les adorer, les imiter, leur ressembler—Malcolm Lowry, Joyce, et assez vite Roussel, pour des raisons que je ne pouvais absolument pas m'expliquer. […] Puis j'ai commencé à écrire plusieurs livres qui portaient les influences successives de Joyce, Malcolm Lowry… Le premier essayait de ressembler à du Malcom Lowry. Le second essayait peut-être de ressembler à du Joyce, j'en suis pas très sûr… Le troisième essayait de ressembler à du Leiris. Le quatrième, c'était *Les Choses*, qui ressemblait beaucoup à du Flaubert" (*Entretiens et conférences*, *Volume II: 1979-81*, 147-8).

37 "Moi, ce poids, je le ressens encore plus avec la littérature anglo-saxonne ; avec Joyce, Henry James, Dickens. Mais aussi très forte avec Flaubert. Cela m'a empêché d'écrire. À la fois empêché et tellement donné envie! Effectivement, si on reste terrorisé par Flaubert, c'est vrai que l'on se dit que l'on n'y arrivera jamais, que ce n'est pas possible" (*Entretiens et conférences*, *Volume II: 1979-81*, 219).

38 *Georges Perec – Entretiens et conférences*, *Volume II: 1979-81*, 224.

39 "C'est un risque que tout écrivain court tout le temps, que tout poète court, à savoir qu'il a impression que […] à force de faire un travail qui détruit les conventions qui existaient avant lui, il va se retrouver en face d'un mur et qu'il n'aura pas de successeurs. C'est sûr que pour Joyce… il y a… à la fin de *Finnegans Wake*, il y a quelque chose qui est du domaine de l'échec. Bon. Eh bien, c'est possible" (*Georges Perec – Entretiens et conférences*, *Volume II: 1979-81*, 290).

40 Si je tente à definir ce que j'ai cherché à faire depuis que j'ai commencé à écrire, la première idée qui me vient à l'esprit est que je n'ai jamais écrit deux livres semblables, que je n'ai jamais eu envie de répéter dans un livre une formule, un système ou une manière élaborés dans un livre précédant (*P/C,* 9).

41 Schwartz, *Georges Perec*, 1.

42 Perec is the most eclectic of writers. Magpie-like, he evidently gleaned from his voracious reading, as well as from his work as a scientific documentalist, a heterogeneous memory-bank of choice morsels—sentences, odd names, incidents real and fictional, technical terminologies—on which he drew in profusion and in unexpected juxtapositions to nourish his writing. In the literary and narrative games which he plays, many of the constituent materials and of the particular techniques can be found to be derived from writers whom he admired and constantly reread" (David Gascoigne, *The Games of Fiction – Georges Perec and Modern French Ludic Narrative* [Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006] 47).

d'espaces: Journal d'un usager de l'espace (1974) resists generic classification, composed as it is of a series of texts which resemble essays more than anything else, thematically dealing with the ways in which people furnish space – here, Joyce's importance for Perec as a writer of "space," mentioned in several interviews above, seems to directly reflect Perec's own involvement. *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (1975), again, is formally unique in that its structure is doubly bipartite. First, two separate narratives are juxtaposed throughout the text, and autobiographical narrative and a fictive narrative which Perec had first written at the age of thirteen. Passages of the two are interpolated in *W* in alternating chapters. Second, each of the two narratives is in itself bipartite; their respective caesurae coincide, so that the text as a whole is divided into two parts. *Alphabets* (1976) is a collection of heterogrammatic poetry, i.e. poetry written in successive anagrams of a given series of letters, each anagram constituting a "verse." Finally, *Je me souviens* (1978), perhaps the most immediately accessible Perec text, is an experiment in collective memory, containing 480 short allusions to recent history (political, cultural and popular), each prefaced by the phrase "je me souviens," "I remember," recuperating the banal element of the past. Still, Perec himself provided a useful and as exhaustive as possible classification of his works into four categories, to do with his central concerns as writer: first, the "sociological" order, dealing with "how to regard the everyday" (exemplary texts: *Les Choses, Espèces d'espaces, Tentative de description de quelques lieux parisiens*); second, the autobiographical order (*W ou le souvenir d'enfance, La Boutique obscure, Je me souviens, Lieux où j'ai dormi*); the ludic order ("all of the works inspired by the Oulipo research: palindromes, lipograms, pangrams, anagrams, isograms, acrostics, crosswords, etc."); and finally, the novelist order, inspired by Perec's "taste for stories" and his hope "to write books that get devoured" by readers "lying on their bellies in bed" – Perec's example is, of course, *La vie mode d'emploi.*[43]

Given the primary focus of this study, attention will be paid to just Perec's two crucial novelistic texts, *La Disparition* and *La vie mode d'emploi*. As Warren J. Motte has observed in his excellent study on Perec, *The Poetics of Experiment,* all of his texts partake of the literary tradition of constraint, however, with a particularly Perequian twist, a "constraint voluntarily imposed."[44] *La Disparition* and *Les Revenentes* are the most purely Oulipian of Perec's longer works, not only because of their constraint-observance and self-reference, but also because they are guided, as Motte has put it, by the essentially Oulipian questions of renewal and revitalisation: "Might the modern novel be revitalized through an increase rather than a decrease of formal rigor? Is the means through which this is to be effected a Draconian system of constraint? A castration of the alphabet?"[45] Although *La Disparition* is the first of Perec's longer texts to adopt the structure of the game overtly, Motte's questions are not merely rhetorical, as both a positive and a negative answer would only tell part of the story. The 10% of the non-Oulipian impulse in Perec has to do with his uniquely personal and painful experience. As Perec himself made clear in his "Histoire du lipogramme," the form and the gadget itself are no inventions of his – he duly credits the American Ernest Vincent Wright and his *Gadsby* (1939) as the first novel written entirely without the letter "e." However, it is precisely in comparison with Wright's text that the truly experimental character of Perec's novel crystallises. Already the first edition of Wright's book is furnished with an introduction presenting the book's chief constraint and the sundry difficulties ("trouble with pronouns," "the past tense of verbs, -ed," etc.) entailed in its composition. Wright also states that "this story was written, not through any attempt to attain literary merit" and that his sole hope is that the reader "may learn to love all the young folks in the story, as deeply as I have, in introducing them to you. Like many a book, it grows more and more interesting as the reader becomes well

43 Perec, "Notes sur ce que je cherche," 10.
44 "All works of art are composed according to a system of constraint; any human artifact bows to the constraints inherent in the medium within which it is produced. […] For the literary text, the minimal constraints are those of the language: in Saussurian terms, the *langue* constrains the *parole*. Generic constraints are culturally codified and may be more or less rigorous in various instances, depending upon both the specific genre […] and the relation of the text thereto, whether it proves itself submissive or antagonistic to the body of literature which precedes it. It is the third case, that of constraints voluntarily imposed, which concerns us here, for it is this that came increasingly to color the work of Georges Perec. […] It is also characteristic of the literary experimentation of the Oulipo as a whole" (Motte, *The Poetics of Experiment*, 18).
45 Motte, *The Poetics of Experiment*, 31.

acquainted with the characters."[46] The narrative of Wright's book relates the rather inane story of a certain John Gadsby whose community activism helps to transform his hometown, Branton Hills, from a stagnant municipality into a prosperous urban space – nowhere in Wright's story is the central constraint substantiated, referred to, conceptualised.

However, if Perec pulled off the feat of doing without the letter "e" for over 300 pages and so adroitly that none of the *La Disparition*'s first reviewers ever noticed, it was not just for the heck of it (like Wright), nor in order to draw his overarching narrative scheme (the disappearance of and feverish quest after the novel's protagonist, Anton Voyl /*Vowl*/) from a recurring metaphorical designation of its constraint; this from the overall design (26 chapters—the number of letters in the French alphabet—with chapter 5 left out, 6 sections—corresponding to six French vowels—with the second missing) to the minutes narrative details (26 books on the main character's shelf, with the fifth volume mysteriously missing, a pseudo-Oedipal episode with the Sphinx' question after an animal "that has a body as curving as a bow and draws back inwards as straight as an arrow," etc.). It was, rather, for the sake of turning this familiar undertaking into the central figure of Perec's personal universe marked by loss, absence, and disappearance – the central disappearance and absence of Perec's life being the disappearance of his parents (who were naturalized Polish Jews), his father on the battleground and his mother in the most gruesome concentration camp, of World War II. As critics have noted, together with the disappearance of the letter "e," both "père" and "mère," the author's "famille," must remain absent from the text, as well as its author whose name (itself a French transcription of its Polish original) contains the letter no fewer than four times.[47]

In *La Disparition*, the lipogrammatic structure creates all sorts of ancillary wordplay, such as the transformation of the well-known pangram: "Portez ce vieux whisky au juge blond qui fume" into the form demanded by the lipogram in E: "Portons dix bons whiskys à l'avocat goujat qui fumait au zoo" (*LD*, 51). The same sort of Oulipian exercise is involved in the transformation of six poems, "Brise marine," "Booz endormi," "Recueillement," "Correspondances," "Les Chats" and "Voyelles" – a veritable feat in transcription and literary encoding.[48] Even though traumatically personal, the elision of the letter E again forms part of Perec's lifelong mission of a "man of letters," a writer privileging the status of the individual letter – as will be shown, apart from E in *La Disparition* and *Les Revenentes*, there is also the famous double example of Perec's interest in W – *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* and *La vie mode d'emploi*. Perec's insistence on the materiality of the letter can, at least partly, be attributed to Joyce's materialist poetics privileging the letter as the smallest semantic/emblematic unit – observes Motte, "in this, Perec recalls other writers, among them Michel Leiris, who privileges the B, the F, the I, and the R in *La Règle du jeu*, James Joyce, who exalts the E in *Finnegans Wake*, Isidore Isou and the Lettrists."[49] However, *La Disparition*, unlike works "privileging" certain letters, is marked uniquely in how the E dominates the entire text *in absentia*. Since E is the most frequently used letter in French, its suppression clearly imposes a constraint which radically modifies normative language. Significantly, the return of the repressed "e" comes in the text entitled *Les Revenents*, meaning "ghosts," literally "the returned ones." The same letter which controls *La Disparition* in its absence dominates *Les Revenentes* by its presence; in fact, in *Les Revenentes*, the autocracy of the E is heightened, even though, from another perspective, *Les Revenentes* appears as a lipogram in A, I, O, and U.

Finally, Perec's longest text, *La vie mode d'emploi* (1978), a novel (or "novels," as its subtitle indicates) of some 700 pages, is structured upon two rigid systems of formal constraint. They preside over, respectively, the sequence of

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46 Ernest Vincent Wright, *Gatsby* (New York: Ramble House Edition, 1939) i-iii.

47 As Robert Bober has argued, *La Disparition* is "a book which in effect demonstrates the following: just as a book can be written without the most indispensable letter of all, the *e*, so Perec has showed what sort of a life could be lived without the most indispensable thing of all, a mother and a father. One *can* live in such circumstances […] only it's a different sort of life" (Qtd. in Gabriel Josipovici, "Georges Perec's Homage to Joyce (and Tradition)," *The Yearbook of English Studies – Anglo-French Literary Relations* 15 [1982]: 199-200).

48 As Motte has put it, Perec's text becomes a detective novel in which "the relation of the author to the reader […] is dominated by the ludic element; the text is a game proposed by the author to the reader" and "the hermeneutic task of the reader is analogous to that of the detective, of the exegete, of anyone who attempts to decipher an enigma" (Motte, *The Poetics of Experiment*, 60).

49 Motte, *The Poetics of Experiment*, 83.

the chapters and the constitutive elements of each chapter. The novel deals with a Parisian apartment building and its inhabitants. The façade of the building is ten stories high and ten unites wide, suggesting a 10x10 grid, an expanded chessboard. Perec chose this image as the basis for the system of formal constraint which governs the sequence of chapters.[50] Having established a system by which the sequence of chapters is regulated, Perec goes on to regulate the constitutive elements of each chapter.[51] Perec made up 42 categories, each of which contained 10 variables, to be included in each chapter. As he made it clear in numerous interviews the groups of ten included body positions, activities, colours, numbers of characters per room, events like America before Christopher Columbus, Asia in ancient times, or the Middle Ages in England, details about the furniture, literary quotations, etc. To take only the first two of these, since each category contains ten variables (for body position, they are: kneeling, sitting, lying on the stomach, lying on the back, an arm up in the air, etc., for activity: painting, having an interview, consulting a map, performing an erotic act, etc.), each one will be used, in principle, ten times. The kneeling position will be repeated in ten chapters, the standing in ten, and so on, thereby filling all the 100 chapters/rooms of the book. Furthermore, each body position is paired with one of ten activities, and each of these activities will in turn be repeated in ten different chapters. Ten different positions paired with ten different activities will, in principle, yield 100 unique position/activity pairs, one for each chapter of the book. In principle only, because there are only 99 chapters in the book; because Perec threw a (systematic) wrench into his system in order not to be systematic.

Furnished with forty-two elements to feature in each of the ninety-nine chapters, Perec could then proceed with the design of the narrative proper. Set on June 23, 1975, at 11 Rue Simon-Crubellier, the narrative of *La vie mode d'emploi* concerns the recounting—in what amounts to a dazzling total of 179 stories featuring over 200 characters—of the personal histories and present states of the flat's inhabitants, both present and past. What emerges from within this immense kaleidoscope as possibly the organizing leitmotif linking them all together is the story of a whimsical project undertaken by one of the flat's tenants, an English millionaire Perceval Bartlebooth, which involves learning the art of the watercolour, traveling the world painting 500 watercolours of seaports, sending these to Gaspard Winckler, an assistant craftsman who partitions these into a 750-piece puzzles, then, upon returning from the voyage, reassembling the puzzles into the painting again, sending the painting to the location of its creation, with the intent of having it washed with a detergent, leaving only a blank sheet of paper. The nothing that was at the beginning would be the nothing at the end. However, the project misfires as Winckler, avenging himself on Bartlebooth for the twenty years of pointless labour, produces puzzles of an increasing level of difficulty, and at 8 p.m. on June 23, 1975, the almost blind Bartlebooth dies as he haphazardly attempts to finish puzzle number 439:

> C'est le vingt-trois juin mille neuf cent soixante-quinze et il va être huit heures du soir. Assis devant son puzzle, Bartlebooth vient de mourir. Sur le drap de la table, quelque part dans le ciel crépusculaire du quatre cent trente-neuvième puzzle, le trou noir de la seule pièce none encore posée dessine la silhouette presque parfait d'un X. mais la pièce que le mort tient entre ses doigts a la forme, depuis longtemps prévisible dans son ironie même, d'un W. (*LVME*, 600)

> It is the twenty-third of June nineteen seventy-five, and it is eight o'clock in the evening. Seated at his jigsaw puzzle, Bartlebooth has just died. On the tablecloth, somewhere in the crepuscular sky of the four hundred and thirty-ninth puzzle, the black hole of the sole piece not yet filled in has the almost perfect shape of an X. But the ironical thing, which could have been foreseen long ago, is that the piece the dead man holds between his fingers is shaped like a W. (*LUM,* 497)

The ordering of the book's chapters, then, follows a design of dexterity and complexity taken to their extreme degrees and thereby nullified because no longer perceptible – the 99 chapters follow the famous Knight's tour, a mathematical problem involving a knight moving around chessboard (here, of a 10x10 grid), visiting each square only once. Thus,

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50 Motte points out that, for Perec, "it is not chess itself, as distinct from other games, which provides the interest, but the fact that it has historically been seen as a ludic framework within which problems are posed and then solved, very much akin, therefore, to his conception of literature itself" (Motte, *The Poetics of Experiment*, 36).

51 As Perec himself explained, there were "21 fois 2 séries de 10 éléments qui sont ainsi permutées et qui déterminent les éléments constitutifs de chaque chapitre [...] Au terme de ces laborieuses permutations, j'en arrivai ainsi à une sorte de « cahier de charges » dans lequel, pour chaque chapitre, était énumérée une liste de 42 thèmes qui devaient figurer dans le chapitre" (Georges Perec, "Quatre figures pour *La vie mode d'emploi*," *Atlas de littérature potentielle [Paris:* Gallimard, 1981] 387).

with 10 stories and two flights of stairs for either of the two cellar complexes, there are 12 "On the Stairs" chapters; since his is a 5-room apartment, indeed, there are 5 "Bartlebooth" chapters. The knight's tour performed by Perec's narrative is a closed one, that is to say, the last square of the voyage would be the one from which it was commenced – a leap two squares outside Bartlebooth's apartment and one down would indeed bring us back to the landing "between the third and fourth storey" of the first chapter. Just as Bartlebooth's own absurdly self-cancelling endeavour, the knight would be left at exactly the same spot it had left from. Consequently, the opening of the novel is equally random, as the closed knight's tour can be begun at every single one of its steps – and accordingly, the novel opens: "Oui, cela pourrait commencer ainsi, ici, comme ça…" (*LVME,* 19).

The opening meditation in *La vie mode d'emploi* on jigsaw puzzles is quite obviously designed to be taken as a metafictional commentary on the book itself, as its main narrative line, as well as the sundry digressions from which it is inseparable, indeed, indistinguishable, involves riddle- and puzzle-solving and its overall formal setup is meant to evoke, as much as possible in the essentially temporal medium of language, the spatial organization of a jigsaw puzzle. The entire "Préambule" is repeated, with only minor variations, in chapter 44; this is singularly appropriate, since the chapter recounts the meeting of Percival Bartlebooth and Gaspard Winckler, who was to become the former's puzzle maker – at the centre of *La Vie* is the distant, but no less fierce combat between Winckler and Bartlebooth, between puzzle maker and puzzle solver.[52] Perec starts off by pointing out that the English word "puzzle" signifies an enigma; and like all enigmas, the jigsaw puzzle, however perplexing at first, seems trivial when solved. His ultimate point, however, in the "Préambule" is the insistence on the communicative role of puzzle-making and solving:

> En dépit des apparences, ce n'est pas un jeu solitaire: chaque geste que fait le poseur de puzzle, le faiseur de puzzles l'a fait avant lui; chaque pièce qu'il prend et reprend, qu'il examine, qu'il caresse, chaque combinaison qu'il essaye encore, chaque tâtonnement, chaque intuition, chaque espoir, chaque découragement, ont été décidés, calculés, étudiés par l'autre. (*LVME,*18)

> Despite appearances, puzzling is not a solitary game: every move the puzzler makes, the puzzler-maker has made before; every piece the puzzler picks up, and picks up again, and studies and strokes, every combination he tries, and tries a second time, every blunder and every insight, each hope and each discouragement have all been designed, calculated, and decided by the other. (*LUM*, 19-20)

A "user's manual" of sorts to Perec's own text, one might use the "Préambule" to follow the "line laid down" for the reader and deduce from the thorough disquisition on the art of jigsaw puzzles Perec's own theory of reading. To substantiate this link which might seem haphazard, one only needs to refer back to the numerous etymologies of the word 'to read' (the English word itself having to do with 'solving, interpreting riddles'), as they occur across the various branches of the European linguistic family: the Latin *legere* meaning both 'to read,' 'to cull,' and 'to tie together,' the German *lesen* meaning both 'to read' and 'to collect,' the Czech (and more broadly Slavonic) *číst* having also to do with 'counting,' 'adding.' Most relevantly for Perec, the French *lire* is anagrammatically (if not perhaps etymologically) connected with *lier*, 'to join,' 'to put together'; as the passage itself reminds us, "the pieces," after all, "are readable only when gathered." Moreover, if one keeps in mind the often-cited homophone of pieces, the *pièces* (rooms) of a building, these two words also refer to the act of relating spaces or going from one space to another, whether that space is a room in a building, or a chapter in a book – or more precisely, a chapter in a book on the subject of a room in a building. Chapters in prosaic text, as well as stanzas in poetry, both have to do with building textual rooms.

Where does Joyce fit into Perec's textual jigsaw puzzle? The novel comes with a number of appendices: an "Index" (which runs to 40 pages), a "Chronology," an "Alphabetical Checklist" of some of the "Stories Narrated," and a "Postscript," in which it is revealed that:

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52 As Motte rightfully insists, Perec's theory of the puzzle is entirely consonant with his theory of literature; he used the image of the puzzle to characterize his writings." Perec the puzzle maker proposed, then, "his work as a ludic and enigmatic whole. His reader, the puzzle solver, enters therein at his own risk and peril; he will undoubtedly come to regard Bartlebooth's obsession with increasing sympathy and comprehension" (Motte, *The Poetics of Experiment*, 66-7).

> Ce livre comprend des citations, parfois légèrement modifies, de: René Belleto, Hans Bellmer, Jorge Luis Borges, Michel Butor, Italo Calvino, Agatha Christie, Gustave Flaubert, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Jarry, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Michel Leiris, Malcolm Lowry, Thomas Mann, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Harry Mathews, Herman Melville, Vladimir Nabokov, Georges Perec, Roger Price, Marcel Proust, Raymond Queneau, François Rabelais, Jacques Roubaud, Raymond Roussel, Stendhal, Lawrence Sterne, Theodore Sturgeon, Jules Verne, Unica Zürn. (*LVME*, 695)

Perec, thus, reveals a novel which had seemed such a highly original, hyper-realistic universe unto itself, to have in fact been a veritable mosaic, tissue, or puzzle of quotations. Notably, Joyce is one of only four English-language authors (the others being Lowry, Sterne, and Mathews). Perec's "Citations" notebook consists of precise references to quotations carefully garnered from a list of twenty authors. Here is Perec's list for Joyce:

> JOYCE
> 1 ch 23 *Ulysse* p 637
> 2 ch 32 *Ulysse* 550 (carte postale)
> 3 ch 36 " Homme Libre
> 4 ch 43 " p 151 (gomme Héphas)
> 5 ch 59 " p 608 (instruments)
> 6 ch 60 " p 471 (le lino) + des mots du diction
> 7 ch 67 " p 150 CABINET DE CONSULT.
> 8 ch 93 " p 447
> 9 ch 46

To the left is the number of the quotation in Perec's listing, followed by the number of the chapter in *La vie mode d'emploi* in which it was to be inserted. We then have the title of the book from which the quotation is to be drawn. The words to the right indicate that Perec was working from the French translation produced by Auguste Morel with Stuart Gilbert and Valéry Larbaud in 1929, and the pagination in the previous column refers to the 1948 Gallimard edition, which, as the catalogue of Perec's library confirms, was the one he owned.[53]

Although Perec's quotations from Joyce have certain distinguishing characteristics and generate particular kinds of intertextual glee—often relating, for instance, to the theme of translation that they both enact and represent—they are not of a markedly different kind from Perec's other adapted quotations. In *La vie mode d'emploi* a deliberate structural flattening or equalisation prevails: the lists, the chess and complex mathematical formulae that govern the trajectory of the narrative within the building and regulate the distribution of elements within each chapter preclude the possibility of one author being elevated above another. Evenly weighted, these voices form a gigantic intertextual puzzle. To quote in this way, for Perec, is to conjure a personalized literary microcosm within the wider literary macrocosm, a fictional space or constellation wherein the coordinates of specific authorial reference points define a space of writing in which "work on genres, codes and models" takes place.[54]

So Perec, like Joyce, consciously and self-consciously opens up his text to a plethora of other voices. Like Joyce, he makes intertextuality a compositional principle, and in his own eye-popping Oulipian style, finds astonishingly ingenious ways of flooding his text with quotation, even though Perec's intertextuality is of an order different from that of Joyce's.[55] Still, as Jacques Mailhos has argued in "The Art of Memory: Joyce and Perec," there is one *Ulysses* borrowing (the first one, in chapter 23) that stands out and above the others in that it "includes" the entirety of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Discussing how Perec resorted to similar solutions to the similar sorts of compositional problems Joyce faced while organising his encyclopaedic narrative, Mailhos shows "the extent and importance of Joyce's presence in *Life: A User's Manual*, while concentrating on an analysis of the similar use, by both writers, of the art of memory as a basis

53 For a closer analysis of these quotations, see Scarlett Baron, "Reading Perec Reading Joyce," forthcoming (courtesy of author).

54 "Mon ambition d'écrivain est donc de balayer, ou en tout cas de baliser, les champs de l'écriture dans tous les domaines où cette écriture m'a permis d'écrire à mon tour. Cela implique un travail sur les genres, sur les codes, et sur les "modèles" dont mon écriture procède: un certain nombre d'auteurs (de Joyce à Hergé, de Kafka à Price, De Scève à Pierre Dac, de Si Shonagon à Gotlib) définissent, circonscrivent le lieu d'où j'écris" (Bernard Pingaud, "Ceci n'est pas un puzzle," *Arc* 76 [1979]: 3).

55 As Scarlett Baron has pointed out, "Perec's sources are carefully selected, subtly modified, and inserted with hints as to their whereabouts and provenance. Joyce, by contrast, treated his sources and his quotations more cavalierly, both in his preparatory notebooks and in the final text. Their contexts are often more than just veiled: frequently they are elided, forgotten, sometimes irretrievably. His quotations are more than 'slightly adapted'. Not for Joyce the maniacal accuracy of Perec's masterful intertextual narrator. The changes that are wrought upon his borrowings are more comprehensive" (Scarlett Baron, "Reading Perec Reading Joyce," forthcoming [courtesy of author]).

for the creation of the fiction."[56] It is in its functioning as mnemonic system that Perec's intertextuality should be given its proper due without necessarily regarding it as inferior to Joyce's.[57] The notion of "memory places," in Mailhos' essay, gives rise to the idea of the book as textual space, a "house" of sorts, conjuring up Perec's first "altered quotation" from *Ulysses*, his borrowing of the character of "Mr Henry Fleury" (Bloom's pseudonym in "Lotus Eaters") in chapter 23 of *La Vie*, turning him into a room decorator – with reference to a "doll's house" taken from the end of the "Ithaca" chapter, where it forms part of Bloom's fantasy of his "ultimate ambition." Mailhos shows how via this doll's house, *Ulysses* as a whole enters Perec's novel.[58]

Moreover, where the Perec/Joyce relation is concerned, one need not stop with intertextuality. Gabriel Josipovici's 1982 review of Perec's novel for *The Yearbook of English Studies* went so far as to speak of "Georges Perec's Homage to Joyce."[59] Josipovici's argument is most convincing in his discussion of Perec's hyper-realism – "Is Perec a hyper-realist, only concerned to detail what is to be found in the average Parisian building around 1975? Or does he perhaps wish to tell us something about the characters through the descriptions?" is the question, and Josipovici answers:

> On the contrary. What we realize as we read this book is how very selective the ordinary novelist is and how Perec's method actually destroys the delicate balance of foreground and background on which novels depend for their effect of reality. But then this is in keeping with what new art always does: it does not render the old obsolete but helps to make us see the often hidden parameters and conventions of the old.[60]

Another feature, one in which Perec does seem to surpass Joyce, is the extreme non-linearity of his narrative – in the light of which even a text like *Ulysses* appears to grow pale.[61] In Perec's jigsaw puzzle, no affirmation of linearity and archetypical status can be said to take place. Josipovici's intervention makes a compelling case for Perec's *La Vie* as "a homage to tradition, the storehouse of possibilities" and in particular, "a homage to Joyce, the man who above all others made it possible," by which is meant "the book as it stands possible, but also made possible the pleasure which work on the book no doubt gave to Perec."[62] Even though less concerned than Queneau with *Wake*an expressive verbal deformation, Perec's *La vie: mode d'emploi* stands as Oulipo's most *Ulysses*-like novel: a novel of grids, schemas, dazzlingly broad and complex intertextuality.

"L'EFFET-BABEL": JACQUES ROUBAUD

Of the contemporary Oulipians, it is only Jacques Roubaud (1932) whose literary output follows in the footsteps of Queneau's and Perec's novelistic careers. Trained as a mathematician specialising in algebra, Roubaud began "composing"—as he refers to the activity—poetry before producing vast prose works. A member of the Oulipo since 1966 (the first new member apart from the founders, making him the longest-serving member in the group's history), his

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56 Jacques Mailhos, "The Art of Memory: Joyce and Perec," *Transcultural Joyce*, ed. Karen Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 151.

57 "It is precisely because *Life: A User's Manual* functions as a mnemonic system that the most insignificant references, the most trivial borrowings (and they are often particularly trivial) are (A) possible (they have found the structure which seals their places in the narration), and (B) import their original context with them. […] This phenomenon reveals itself, of course, in the interplay (in the necessary absence of complete coincidence) between the author's narrative trajectory through memory places […] and our own personal reading trajectory in which each of us has the capacity to unfold different stories to varying degrees" (Mailhos, "The Art of Memory: Joyce and Perec," 162).

58 "Through this doll's house, *Ulysses* as a whole enters *Life: A User's Manual* (in the same way as whole characters and books enter *Finnegans Wake* through assimilations, puns, cryptic references, etc.). This doll's house is a typical memory image which contains Bloom, Bloom's dreams, but also the idea (the possibility) of a different *Ulysses* with a different character […]; besides, the fact that this is an image which, in the narration, is presented as having been created by a pseudo-Bloom (Henry Fleury) only reinforces this aspect. […] Thus, in a way, Bloom himself was present—*under cover*—in Perec's Parisian building (and book), and Bloom himself, as an interior decorator, set all the elements in one of the apartments. […] Given the way in which this book functions, Bloom, as an interior decorator, thus becomes something like the author of one of its chapters" (Mailhos, "The Art of Memory: Joyce and Perec," 165).

59 Josipovici, "Georges Perec's Homage to James Joyce," 179.

60 Josipovici, "Georges Perec's Homage to James Joyce," 183.

61 "Even when a writer as boldly innovatory as Joyce wants us to get away from the anecdotal and the linear he can only do it by trying to present Bloom as Everyman. Joyce, like Freud, was very often confused by his own instincts and interpreted his discoveries in terms of the nineteenth-century patterns of thought which these very discoveries were in the process of subverting. Thus "Cyclops" and "Ithaca" pull in one direction, centrifugally, while "Circe" and "Penelope," for all their flirtation with fragmentation and the dissolution of self, really affirm a rather old-fashioned view of character and archetypes" (Josipovici, "Georges Perec's Homage to James Joyce," 189-90).

62 Josipovici, "Georges Perec's Homage to James Joyce," 200.

mathematical disposition was revealed already in his first notable poetry collection, published in 1967 and entitled ϵ, the mathematical symbol for "belonging" or "contained within," where mathematical strategies, chiefly from the field of combinatorics, are used for producing multiform sonnets according to the moves in a masters match of the Japanese game of go. His poetry collections, *Mono no aware* (1970) and *Trente et un au cube* (1973) reflect his lifelong interest and source of inspiration in Japanese poetry forms, mainly haiku and tanka. But Roubaud's literary canon is proverbially variegated and vast: he has rewritten French medieval texts (especially of the Holy Grail cycle), translated 20th-century American poetry (Charles Reznikoff), identified himself as inheritor to Lewis Carroll and has written on the history of the evolution of European verse forms, etc. Before embarking on his "Projet," Roubaud played an Oulipian game with the literary genre of the English detective novel in his "Hortense" series[63] which presents a zany pastiche of the English detective novel – if, as Taylor has rightly remarked, "*pastiche* is a word indeed wild enough to embrace the perpetually disarming 'distancing effects' sustained by the author in this trilogy."[64] The reader is constantly made aware that he is holding "a detective novel" to the extent that the "enigma" becomes less a "plot" than a series of evolving narrative structures.

In his own development as writer, the year 1983 marks a turning point in both Roubaud's life and work, as with the death of his young wife (aged 31), he falls silent for thirty months, and in the years following, commences an extended meditation on "her death and the intimate interrelationship among absence, loss and writing,"[65] which results in two volumes of poetry, *Quelque chose noir* (1986) and *La pluralité des mondes de Lewis* (1991) and the multi-volume work *Le grand incendie de Londres* (1989). The last work, *The Great Fire of London*, is the first volume of the so-called "Projet," a six-part series of large works of prose continued over the course of twenty years. Already the first volume is marked by stylistic variability, even though, as has been pointed out by critic Véronique Montémont, author of a book-length study on Roubaud's work, the possible analogy with Joyce is a faulty one. Since to every "branch" of *The Great Fire of London* corresponds, not a distinct style, but a sort of characteristic "cocktail" of style, then Roubaud's project differs from Joyce's.[66] It is useful to consider the contrastive example of Joyce in the context of another critic's definition of a "Roubaldian poetics."[67] As long as "an attitude of homage and profanation toward literary tradition," one of "revising, recollecting and rewriting tradition" is perfectly Joycean, or more broadly modernist, then approaching "language as a series of numbers," as abstract units recombinable in permutative series, goes beyond modernism of Joyce. Similarly, what Poucel terms Roubaud's "art of memory" is not without its Joycean conceptual overtones, and yet ultimately different in effectuation:

> His art of memory powerfully presents and reconfigures a collective and personal tradition; his work postulates that there is continuity and change in literary and linguistic developments, and that they may be traced along an interconnected and motivated chain of written occurrences. […] Writing under constraint […] can be read as a game that directs experimentation with the explicit goals of the invention, recollection, and transformation of tradition. […] In fact, we might imagine his collected works as a conglomerate sphere of memory, an organic simulacrum of memory whose form is constantly shifting and whose meaning is transient and essential.[68]

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63 *La Belle Hortense*, 1985, translated as *Our Beautiful Heroine; L'Enlèvement d'Hortense*, 1987, translated as *Hortense Is Abducted; L'Exil d'Hortense,* 1990, translated as *Hortense in Exile*.

64 John Taylor, "On Reading Jacques Roubaud," *Paths to Contemporary French Literature, Vol. 2*, ed. John Taylor (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009) 141.

65 Greg Kinzer, "Possible worlds: trans-world travel, haecceity and grief in Jacques Roubaud's The Plurality of Worlds of Lewis," *Journal of Modern Literature* 34.3 (Spring 2011): 162.

66 "Le projet n'est pas sans rappeler l'entreprise joycienne qui opte pour un style nouveau à chaque chapitre d'*Ulysse* […], mais chez Roubaud, le style n'est pas un facteur parodique, étant donné que la plupart des lecteurs occidentaux ignorent tout de ces distinction, et auraient de toute façon beaucoup de mal à les percevoir s'ils en étaient informés" (Véronique Montémont, *Jacques Roubaud, l'amour du nombre* [Lille : Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2004] 213).

67 "This is how Jean-Jacques Poucel defines it:

Plainly stated, it is a strategy by which a methodical memory of tradition becomes the basis of literary innovation. Two imperatives ground Roubaud's overall poetics. The first, borrowed from Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais, the co-founders of the Oulipo, is the decision to comport oneself toward language as if it could be mathematized. […] That is, Roubaud approaches language as a series of numbers, as families of forms, whose connectivity becomes the architecture of his memory and his innovative techniques. The second precept underlying his poetics, purportedly borrowed from Octavio Paz, is the imperative to adopt an attitude of homage and profanation toward literary tradition. Revising, recollecting and rewriting tradition—all fundaments of extending innovation—requires both a respect for and battle with literary tradition" (Jean-Jacques F. Poucel, *Jacques Roubaud and the Invention of Memory* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006] 12).

68 Poucel, *Jacques Roubaud and the Invention of Memory*, 14.

What Roubaud's "art of memory" ultimately amounts to, as Taylor has observed, is a confrontation with Proust and Bergson rather than a filiation with the Joycean "hypermnesis":

> It is in this confrontation between emotion and constraining form, between a pre-planned literary-mathematical structure and the painful vicissitudes of personal history, that Roubaud's writings raise so many essential questions. Most of the books written since his wife's death revolve around phenomena of memory, and in this respect he forges a different model of remembering than that underlying the unavoidable landmark for French (and other) writers in this domain: Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past.* In contrast to Proust's notion of memory as expanding from some small, insignificant detail (like a madeleine cookie, of which the author of *The Great Fire of London* must surely be thinking when he in turn brilliantly describes a fresh croissant), Roubaud conceives recollecting as a sort of "forest" in which branches and twigs of clustered trees overlap and intertwine.[69]

At an international conference on "The Poetics of Multilingualism," held in April 2013 in Budapest, Roubaud presented a plenary talk on "Multilingualism in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*." Critical of Joyce's project and of its academic veneration, his chief objection as regards the usefulness of Joyce's *Wake* was chiefly this: that Joyce, contrary to the beliefs maintained by his *transition* supporters and promoters, did *not* create a "new" language in the *Wake*, as his neologisms "cannot be used anywhere but within the *Wake*," cannot be extracted from their particular context that is *Finnegans Wake*.

Roubaud's criticism is not without its Oulipian predecessors and co-adherents. The only extended mention of Joyce in Le Tellier's *Esthétique de l'Oulipo* comes in the "L'effet-Babel" section, where the question becomes "où situer l'idiome du 'maçon des hommes francs' Tim Finnegan, héros du roman inachevé de James Joyce *Finnegan's wake*?" [sic] Factual errors proliferate in Le Tellier's brief disquisition, as he goes on to claim that "une bonne part de ces mots provient aussi de langages artificiels : *milito* vient de l'espéranto et signifie 'guerre,' adyo (adieu) du Volapük, etc."[70] These aside, though, Le Tellier's main issue with Joyce's *Wakean* Babel-project is this:

> Le meilleur argument contre les partisans d'une langue universelle reste celui, remarquable, de Saussure, lequel rappelle l'évolutivité des langues, que nul ne saurait maîtriser, et à laquelle on imagine mal une langue, fût-elle "la chose de tout le monde" échapper : l'homme qui prétendrait composer une langue immuable, que la postérité devrait accepter comme telle, ressemblerait à la poule qui a couvé un œuf de canard : la langue créée par lui serait exportée bon gré mal gré par le courant qui emporte toutes les langues.[71]

Ironically, the only mention of Joyce in another prominent work of Oulipian historiography and poetics, Mathews' co-edited *Oulipo Compendium*, comes in a similarly twisted manner – as "an interesting use of restricted vocabulary":

> VOCABULARY, RESTRICTED
> […] An interesting use of restricted vocabulary is James Joyce's translation of the last four pages of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" from *Finnegans Wake* into Basic English: a reduction of the English language (to 850 words) invented by C.K. Ogden in which, he claimed, "everything may be said." The text appeared in *Transition*, 21, March 1932.[72]

In Le Tellier's rendition, as in Roubaud's plenary address, Joyce is "a partisan of a universal language," a utopia doomed to fail, as Saussure's lesson teaches all too clearly, whereas for Mathews' *Compendium*, his interest lies in submitting his *Wakean* project to a proto-Oulipian constraint. A similar position has been expressed by another prominent contemporary Oulipian, Jacques Jouet, in an email to the author:

> *Finnegans Wake* ne m'a jamais attiré […] le poisson ne peut pas inventer une autre eau que l'eau. Un écrivain ne peut pas créer une langue. Il est dans une langue commune. C'est toute la beauté du poème, du roman, du drame: nager dans une langue commune à un groupe, peuple, etc.[73]

Jacques Roubaud himself went a step further, claiming that although "je l'ai lu avec plaisir" it was with the exception of "*Finnegans wake*, qui est d'un ennui mortel," and that Oulipo as such "n'a rien à voir avec Joyce," since "je vois assez mal une influence de Joyce sur Queneau ou Perec."[74] So long as Oulipo works by applying mathematical principles onto language by way of *constraint*, it is profoundly non-Joycean in its formal experimentation and reworking of linguis-

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69 Taylor, "On Reading Jacques Roubaud," 142.
70 Tellier, *Esthétique de l'Oulipo*, 106.
71 Tellier, *Esthétique de l'Oulipo*, 109.
72 *Oulipo Compendium*, eds. Mathews & Brotchie, 234.
73 Jacques Jouet, email to the author, 11 March 2013.
74 Jacques Roubaud, email to the author, 9 March 2013.

tic matter: and it is chiefly in the pre-Oulipian early work of its founding father, Raymond Queneau, and in the 10 personal non-Oulipian per cent in the formation of Georges Perec, that the most conspicuous and meaningful manifestations of Joycean materiality of language can be found.

THE ANTICIPATORY PLAGIARY

As long as the crucial defining traits of Oulipian writing are its (negative) opposition to the aleatory and the (positive) pursuit of "systematic" operations performed upon the "voluntary" rule-based writing that is literature, then Joyce's own understanding of his poetics fits the Oulipian bill almost perfectly. To take but one example from Richard Ellmann's biography:

> But of modem writers in general he remarked, "If you took a characteristic obscure passage of one of these people and asked him what it meant, he couldn't tell you; whereas I can justify every line of my book." And another day he remarked, "I have discovered I can do anything with language I want." But it was like him to counter these statements by saying to Beckett with impressive modesty, "I may have over-systematized *Ulysses*." (*JJ*, 702)

Here, Joyce's objection to modern writers, again, is based on their perceived lack of total control and perfect awareness of "every line" of their writing, their lack of an overriding creative method such as Joyce's—which allowed him to "do anything with language" he wanted—and their lack of a literary "system" – in this case, Joyce seems even worried that the systems imposed upon the linguistic and thematic material that comprise *Ulysses* may have been a few too many. Indeed, David Hayman defines Joyce's "real preoccupation" as one with "systems of presentation": "His development was toward the amplification of the verbal, the creation of autonomous forms in motion; toward the vitalized word in *Finnegans Wake*, the 'collideorscape.' To arrive there he was obliged to alter and recombine, but not to destroy, existing expressive codes.[75]

To "combine, not to destroy, existing" formal procedures is very much in tune with the chief Oulipian preoccupations. Since Hayman gives no further specification, one must ask further: which "systems of presentation" could be seen to have informed Joyce's writing and how did it "develop"? The schema is a traditional one, repeated, with minor variations, in Joycean criticism ever since its first pioneers (Stuart Gilbert or Harry Levin), revealing him as an author of a profoundly synthetic sensibility. To confine myself to just Joyce's three long works of prose: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* presents the definitive amalgam of the novel of a young man's experience while growing up, the development of the artist in contemporary society with a criticism of the social malaise of the times, and functions as a work simultaneously psychological and sociological. *Ulysses*, presents a step further in functioning as the complete modern novel, satisfying all of Northrop Frye's "four types of fiction" simultaneously—romance, novel, confession, catalogue—and blending the naturalistic with the psychological, the conscious stream of thought with the unconscious whirlpool, while still thoroughly developing the pattern of surface events. In *Ulysses*, as Bernard Benstock has remarked, "all previous tendencies in the development of the novel since Fielding were successfully amalgamated into a single, unified work, an inimitable book which was nonetheless imitated, becoming the single most important influence in the European and American novel for several decades."[76] Finally, *Finnegans Wake* ventures into a realm of such personal synthesis of techniques that it constitutes a medium which does not pretend to present any sort of "reality" or, rather, which announces its roots in a purely verbal universe – in Hayman's rendering, "the plays on words, words as self-destroying but resilient objects; the texture of clowning which imitates but does not create chaos, suggests but does not enforce order."[77]

"Ordering" is the most natural consequence to Joyce's "systematisation" of literary expressivity, brought, in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, to whole new levels. Despite their differences on the level of the signifier, both *Ulysses*

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75 David Hayman, "Introduction – Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," *In the Wake of the* Wake, eds. David Hayman & Elliott Anderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 13.
76 This account follows the survey in Benstock, "On William Gaddis: In Recognition of James Joyce," *Wisconsin Studies in Comparative Literature* (Vol. 6 No. 2: Summer 1965): 178.
77 Hayman, "Introduction," 6.

and *Finnegans Wake* present several superimposed systems of ordering of experience – and one of the crucial overlapping systems is the most fundamentally Oulipian one: Joyce's concern with numbers as symbolic and abstract means of interrelating disparate elements of reality. The number most prominent in Joyce is the number three: from the third stroke of Father Flynn in "Sisters" via Stephen Dedalus' Thomistic *claritas, consonantia, integritas* and his own creed of "silence, exile, cunning" in *A Portrait* to all the trinities and triadic structures of *Ulysses*, predicated upon the S-M-P, the subject-middle-predicate, structure of logical statement analysis. Analogously, *Finnegans Wake*, already on the very surface, advertises number four, or, better said, three-plus-one, as its structuring principle and square-turned-into-circle as its shape. The same Beckett to whom Joyce confided his worry regarding the over-systematisation of *Ulysses* also observed of the latter's "Work in Progress" the following:

> Why, Mr. Joyce seems to say, should there be four legs to a table, and four to a horse, and four seasons and four gospels and four Provinces in Ireland? Why twelve tables of the Law, and twelve Apostles, and twelve months and twelve Napoleonic marshals and twelve men in Florence called Ottolenghi? Why should the Armistice be celebrated at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month?[78]

Numbers, in their definiteness, enable disparity and variety to be measured, brought onto one plane of structural correspondence. Insofar as Beckett´s comment is equally relevant to his own method of shaping texts around a limited amount of numeric constants with value variables, his comment can also serve as a springboard for a reading to which *Finnegans Wake* yields itself most readily – as an immensely intricate structure of sundry, if not infinite, variables, however one which is structured around principles that are both definite and constant.

Hugh Kenner has tied this numerological preoccupation in Joyce to his "stoic comedy" of the "inventory," springing from Joyce's aesthetic conviction, departing from "two profound intuitions: that the Thomistic analogy with sight could guide the operations of a writer of prose fiction, that the analogy of the epiphany could govern the release of aesthetic clarity."[79] It is precisely lists of finite sets contained within reality, as well as epiphanic parallelisms with other texts that govern Joyce's numerological ordering of a text like *Ulysses*:

> There are twenty-four hours in a day, and he accounts for all but the ones spent by his characters in sleep. The spectrum has seven colors, and Bloom names them: roy g biv. The *Odyssey* can be dissociated into specific episodes, which Joyce accounts for. Shakespeare wrote some thirty-six plays; I do not know whether Joyce includes in the library scene an allusion to each of them, but it would not be surprising. The embryo lives nine months in the womb, or forty weeks; the body of the "Oxen o the Sun" episode has nine principal parts, in forty paragraphs, linked furthermore to a sequence of geological eras obtained from a list in a textbook.[80]

In the cyclical structure of the *Wake*, number *eleven* plays a very important role all through the text (as part of number 1132, featured ten times) as a symbol of "beginning anew." However, as Kenner shows elsewhere, number 11 is very much present, though less conspicuously, from the very start of *Ulysses*, a book "[aware] of numbers: how many people in a room, shillings in a ledger, even words in a sentence."[81] What deserves pointing out is how numbers operate at once on the realist (i.e. contained in the narrated reality), the symbolic (11 as the end and the beginning), and the material (i.e. contained in the narrating reality of language – 11 sentences, 11 letters, etc.) levels. Joyce's work with formal constraints is one of amplification, multiplication and layering of various means of ordering.

Thus, to revert to Roubaud, if Joyce's "language games" (the numerological one above is by far not the only one) can be seen as Oulipian, it must be as rule- (if not exactly constraint-)bound, and definitely not as works of "potential" literature – Joyce's comedy of the list, the encyclopaedic ambition toward (albeit impossible) all-inclusiveness, seeks

78 Samuel Beckett, "Dante…Bruno. Vico.. Joyce," *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (London: Faber & Faber, 1929) 21.
79 Hugh Kenner, *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962) 58.
80 Kenner, *The Stoic Comedians*, 53-4.
81 "A recurrent number is 11: the first sentence has 2 x 11 words, the third one (from "He" to "*dei*") has 11: as we become skilled navigators, we recognize 11 as a Ulyssean seamark. For in this book 11, the fresh start after a decade, is the number for the two primary kinds of events, beginnings and endings; and while sometimes it is specified, it sometimes lurks behind a count of episodes or paragraphs or words. A sampling of elevens: Rudy Bloom died 11 years ago, aged 11 days; Stephen's age is 2 x 11; "Marion Bloom" has 11 letters and so has "Hugh E. Boylan," and the hour of their tryst is set in the 11th episode; 11 paragraphs of entry and 11 of exit precede and follow the 40 paragraphs of gestation in "Oxen of the Sun"; as late as 1919, when he conceived "Wandering Rocks," Joyce had meant the center of the book to consist of 11 episodes. And in Joyce's final book, *Finnegans Wake*, the last sentence-fragment circles toward a new beginning with just 11 words" (Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye – The Modern Irish Writers* [London: Allen Lane, 1983] 193).

to exhaust the actual, not imply the potential. In his practice of "voluntary" writing based on formal and stylistic "rules" and accentuating the plurality of literary technique functioning "as a bridge over which to march my eighteen episodes" (*JJ*, 542), Joyce is as perfect a proto-Oulipian, as ideal example of an "anticipatory plagiary," as one can find in the Anglophone literary tradition (except perhaps Lewis Carroll). However, apart from his un-Oulipian tendency toward the multiplication and amplification of rules and systems of presentation, there is another, even more fundamental sense in which the Oulipian exploration of mathematical models for potential literature goes counter to the development of Joyce's poetics, in fact reverses it. As Kenner has put it, "Joyce's techniques—it is one of his principal lessons—are without exception derived from his subject, often excerpted from his subject. They are not means of representing the subject, and imperfectly; they are the subject's very members laid on the page, in eloquent or ludicrous *collage*."[82] Joyce's techniques, his rules and constraints, are always *motivated* by the subject matter, and inseparable from it; not—as is so often the case in Oulipo—vice versa, where the text is the *result* and an *illustration* of a pre-conceived method at work. It is in this twofold sense—as both their colleague and a writer of profoundly different sensibility and style—that Oulipians have conceived of Joyce as "anticipatory plagiary."

82 Kenner, *The Stoic Comedians*, 50.

JOYCE AS SUCH/A *TEL QUEL* JOYCE: 1960-1982 AND BEYOND

TEL QUEL'S "ENIGMATIC RESERVE"

After Jolas' *transition*, *Tel Quel*—co-founded by Jean-Edern Hallier and Philippe Sollers and run by the latter (chiefly in co-editorship with Jean-Louis Baudry and Marcelin Pleynet) in the period 1960-1982—is the single most important and most explicitly avant-gardist collective undertaking that consciously and pronouncedly placed itself in the tradition of the Joycean "revolution of the word." As Jean-Michel Rabaté has observed, "*Tel Quel* helped place Joyce into French avant-garde thinking in the 1960s and 70s just as Larbaud and *transition* had done in the 1920s and 30s."[1] Promoting a sophisticated international avant-garde, *Tel Quel*'s use of typically avant-garde shock tactics, political denunciations, and ideological reversals were all undertaken in order to directly connect literary and socio-political practice. Another trait shared by *Tel Quel* with *transition* was its penchant for tying literary practice, criticism and theory to an overriding programme or scheme, which it undertook as an explicitly group project. As Patrick Ffrench has pointed out it in his magisterial study, *The Time of Theory*, "*Tel Quel* was unlike most periodicals in committing every article and its author to the programme or project of the group. In this sense it is not just a review, but also a movement in literature and theory."[2] As journal, it was published in Paris between 1960 and 1982, appearing four times a year and amassing a total of ninety-four issues. However, *Tel Quel* was more than a periodical, and has taken on the different modalities of a group, movement, and ideology, modalities which are far less circumscribed and less institutional than that of a literary journal. As Ffrench has argued elsewhere, "if regular involvement in the numerous conferences, seminars and interventions that bear the name *Tel Quel* are signs of belonging, then the group certainly includes Roland Barthes, Guy Scarpetta, Jean-Joseph Goux, and novelists Pierre Guyotat, Maurice Roche, Severo Sarduy."[3] As a movement or ideology, *Tel Quel* is even harder to identify and pin down, since over its twenty-two year history, *Tel Quel* often defined itself punctually in relation to the context of any particular moment. As a whole, however, *Tel Quel* contributed to the crystallization of a new style and to the creation of new discourses and disciplines (such as semiology and semiotics) in the intellectual and ensuing institutional revolution, as one of its historians, Niiko Kauppi, has observed, the review "participated in the transition from Sartre's hegemony to that of the human sciences (*sciences humaines*)."[4] This transition was part of a larger transformation in

> the dynamics of the French intellectual field […] in the intermediate sector: the sector between scientific culture and literary culture (the poles of the professor and the creator) as well as the sector where the internal legitimation circuits (peers) and external legitimation circuits (the layman public) merged. […] In this context, *Tel Quel* could present and diffuse avant-garde symbolic goods—paradoxically, those destined for a restricted public—to a relatively large public at a relatively low price.[5]

As Philippe Forest's monumental study *Histoire de Tel Quel 1960-1982*[6] shows, the magazine's aesthetic-political beliefs shifted from an early identification with the *nouveau roman* to a radical break with it (in mid-1960s), from an early involvement with phenomenology and structuralism toward a full-fledged "revolution culturelle" (spurred by the student revolution of May 1968), from a Freudian reinterpretation of Marxism via an early-1970s fascination to Sollers' (and the magazine's) early-1980s conversion to Catholicism. Hand in hand with this volatility and plurality goes *Tel Quel*'s variegated literary programmatics – even though Ffrench's perceptive account does manage to tease out the crucial trait that remained a *Tel Quel* constant, its occupation with the scientificity of literature and literary criticism/theory:

> When science becomes […] rhetorical, it shares the ground of literature. The literature that provides science with analogies can itself be construed as scientific (the systematicity of Joyce; Lautréamont's advocacy of a *science nouvelle*) but the signif-

1 Sam Slote, "'Après mot, le déluge' 2: Literary and Theoretical Reception to Joyce in France," *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, eds. Wim Van Mierlo & Geert Lernout (2 Vols., London: Continuum, 2004) 394.
2 Patrick Ffrench, *The Time of Theory: A History of Tel Quel (1960-1983)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 3.
3 *The Tel Quel Reader*, eds. Patrick Ffrench & Roland-François Lack (London & New York: Routledge, 1998) 1.
4 Niiko Kauppi, *The Making of an Avant-Garde: Tel Quel* (Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994) xv.
5 Kauppi, *The Making of an Avant-Garde*, xvii.
6 Philippe Forest, *Histoire de Tel Quel, 1960-1982* (Paris: Seuil, 1995).

> icant affect is in the other direction: science becomes undermined by its object. This is happening when, in the theoretical discourse of *Tel Quel*, the twin dimensions of the subjective and the political come increasingly into play.[7]

This scientific outlook, then, pervaded *Tel Quel*'s theory as much as its practice of literature.[8] *Tel Quel*'s literary canon was also a "work in progress" of sorts: if Joyce and Céline are signalled as primary objects of analysis and celebration from early on, then a colloquium in 1972 highlights Artaud and Bataille as "subjects of excess," and Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) consecrates Lautréamont and Mallarmé as "proponents of a radical shift in knowledge." Ffrench's account also encapsulates the triple reasons for the importance of literature to *Tel Quel*'s socio-political revolutionary practice.[9]

The 1960 foundation of *Tel Quel* was a gesture aimed against another anti-traditionalism within French writing, the *nouveau roman*. In a 1963 issue of *Tel Quel*, Sollers claims that "a livelier lucidity can in effect, in making *language* the principal subject of all writing, open new perspectives" (*TQ* 17, back cover). As Chapter V in the present work strove to show, any "ideology" of the *nouveau roman*, which *Tel Quel* set out to confront, is itself an illusory phenomenon since the creative practice of each of the New Novelists was different. That said, the *Tel Quel* group found their common characteristics in the formalist experimentation with narrative and the reduction of the traditional elements of character and psychology, and it is this common characteristics that *Tel Quel* must confront in order to establish its own practice as distinct. Vastly different are the two avant-garde's literary and philosophical traditions within which they place themselves – and so, by extension, is their treatment of Joyce's legacy of the materiality of language. As long as in Robbe-Grillet's *Pour un nouveau roman*, Joyce is merely a name alongside those of Flaubert, Roussell, Proust, Kafka or Faulkner, in Sollers' tradition of the *œuvre limite*, Joyce occupies a central position. In the last issue of the magazine, one of *Tel Quel*'s foremost chroniclers and theorists, Jean-Louis Houdebine, observed that as long as in Robbe-Grillet's writings, "one would be at pain to find a single remark testifying to 'a real' knowledge of Joyce's work," for *Tel Quel*, from the very start, "the name of Joyce held an important symbolic value."[10] In another context, Houdebine identified the second half of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s as two periods of flurry in *Tel Quel*'s Joycean forays:

> la lecture de Joyce, le travail analytique mis en jeu par cette lecture, a été d'une grande importance, à mon avis exemplaire. C'est une longue histoire que celle-là, qui s'inscrit dans *Tel Quel* pratiquement dès les débuts de la revue, dans les années 1960, et qui prend un nouveau rythme, particulièrement actif, productif, dans toute la seconde partie des années 1970 et le début des années 1980, jusque dans le dernier numéro de la revue (le n° 94, en 1982).[11]

This "important symbolic value" of "an enigmatic reserve" is further cemented by Joyce's prominent position, according to Julia Kristeva, within the group's "cult of the Great Man":

> L'originalité de *Tel Quel* consiste à reconnaître le besoin de culte du Grand Homme, au cœur même du langage et au sein d'une société laïque. Et à accompagner ce besoin d'une stratégie qui propose une relecture du christianisme, à la fois pince-sans-rire et sérieusement scandaleuse, dont l'exemple le plus net est le rôle majeur que *Tel Quel* a accordé à Joyce – Joyce le polyphonique –, ainsi que la continuation de cette veine par Sollers. En ces temps de dénigrement des valeurs, la chasse ouverte contre Joyce est un des symptômes du populisme. Et on voit qu'elle se produit non pas pour désacraliser le besoin du Grand Homme, mais pour lui opposer justement d'autres grands écrivains de *best-sellers* ou de bouillons de culture.[12]

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7 *The Tel Quel Reader*, eds. Ffrench & Lack, 4-5.

8 "From *Nombres* to *Lois* to *H*, the textual space of Sollers' writing becomes organized as much by Chinese ideograms and exclamation marks as by number and sequence, before finally attaining unpunctuated seamlessness; […] in Maurice Roche's explosively visual textualizations, from *Compact* through *Circus* to *Codex*, the space of the scientific equation or diagram is invaded by figures and drawings, turning these "scientific" forms into different, figural space" (*The Tel Quel Reader*, eds. Ffrench & Lack, 5).

9 "The answer to the question "Why literature?" changes according to the different versions of canonicity promoted by or ascribable to *TQ*: firstly, because it is the vehicle of an epistemological radicality reflected in social and philosophical change, and of a rhetorical analysis of it which engages the participation of the reader; secondly, because it is the vehicle of a subjective excess which incarnates political and cultural revolution; and thirdly, because it is dissident with regard to any system, exceptional with regard to any rule" (*The Tel Quel Reader*, eds. Ffrench & Lack, 6).

10 "On serait bien en peine de trouver dans les interventions de Robbe-Grillet, réunies en 1963 sous le titre générique *Pour un nouveau roman*, la moindre remarque qui témoignerait d'une connaissance réelle de l'œuvre de Joyce" whereas for *Tel Quel,*
"même sous cette forme pour le moins sommaire, l'inscription du nom de Joyce, dans des débats auxquels participent les animateurs de *Tel Quel* dès les premières livraisons de la revue, garde une valeur symbolique importante : cette œuvre est bel et bien là, comme en réserve énigmatique, sollicitée pour des enjeux esthétiques, culturels, fondamentaux, qui mettent aux prises non pas ces spécialistes" (*TQ* 94: 35).

11 Jean-Louis Houdebine, "Histoires de ruptures," *De Tel Quel à L'infini: L'Avant-garde et après? (Colloques de Londres et de Paris – Mars 1995)* (Nantes : Éditions Pleins Feux, 1999) 61.

12 Julia Kristeva, "Les Samouraïs tels quels," *De Tel Quel à L'infini*, 23.

Gradually, however, Joyce's became an influence far more palpable and useful than any "symbolic value" (Houdebine) or "the cult a great man" (Kristeva) might have accorded him at the start. Even though Joyce came to prominence only together with the appearance of Jacques Derrida's essays in mid- to late 1960s (later collected in *Dissemination*), it was thanks to *Tel Quel*'s interdisciplinary bent that discussions of Joyce were not limited to literary critics. Rabaté has noted how Derrida's interest in Sollers was in fact emblematic of *Tel Quel*'s interest in Joyce, both aimed at the examination of the functioning of language:

> Derrida identified in Sollers' novel *Nombres* the utopia of a purely textual novel soon to become the hallmark of *Tel Quel*: resolutely 'experimental' texts half way between poetry and prose. Like *Finnegans Wale*, they did not represent anything but just exhibited the functioning of language. By showing the codes, cogs, and wheels of literary language, the production of a new poetic and political truth would hopefully shatter the dominant repressive ideology.[13]

For *Tel Quel* (and particularly for Sollers), Joyce was part of the line between Mallarmé, Sade, Lautréamont, Artaud and Bataille, which was exemplary of a certain canon of modernist literature that ruptures classical codes. As Houdebine would recall much later, the *Tel Quel* "programme" was formulated in autumn 1967, in Sollers' text, "De Dante à Sade," a text whose historical scope necessarily leaves out Joyce, but whose call for a multiplication of styles of writing by means of the "destruction of language" does relate to him, in concept if not name, since it is Joyce who is regarded to have given this process "une ampleur, une profondeur historique […] littéralement sidérante."[14] But the Joycean presence in *Tel Quel* was far from merely conceptual or "spectral," as even a cursory overview of its most conspicuous manifestations clearly shows.[15]

The bulk of *Tel Quel*'s essays on Joyce appeared after 1968, when rather than attempting to change the novel, *Tel Quel* aimed at a full-fledged cultural revolution. The 1972 issues 50-51 brought Stephen Heath's highly influential essay, "Ambiviolences," the first attempt at a philosophically rigorous articulation of the operations of the *Wake*'s semantic ambiguity and linguistic materiality, for which it gained so much currency among the *Tel Quel* practitioners, with reference to, among others, Vico, Jousse, Saussure, Kristeva, or Derrida. In the first part of the essay, of the *Wake*'s strategies of production of ambivalence, Heath identifies its contrarian attitude to continuity ("le texte n'est pas homogène mais sans cesse discontinue, une fragmentation du sens dans un perpétuel 'plus tard'" [*TQ* 50: 23-4]); its "strategies of hesitation" perceived across the entire Joyce oeuvre ("l'écriture de Joyce se trouve contrainte de poursuivre une activité constant de refus du sens, un constant dégagement de cette nappe continue des significations, explications, orders du discours" [*TQ* 50: 26]); its preference of "intertext" over "context" ("les textes de Joyce, dans leur déstabilisation, renvoient non à un context—et donc non à quelque 'Réalité'—mais à un intertexte" [*TQ* 50: 30]); its staging of the "matérialité des effects d'écriture," and its employment of the rhetorical strategies of "parodie – pastiche – plagiat - contrefaçon" (*TQ* 50: 32). The second half is devoted to the *Wake*'s elaboration of "incomprehensibility" rising from its "narration du langage" (*TQ* 51: 65), its "sillage de l'écriture, interminable remise en place du sens dans la forme, du signifié dans le signifiant" (*TQ* 51: 66); the *Wake*'s "scribenery" through which the *Wake* becomes a "theatralisation of language" on whose stage "le langage est retiré du monde de la communication et interrogé dans ses fictions" (*TQ* 51: 71); and finally, the *Wake*'s refusal of origin: "L'horizon de *Finnegans Wake* n'est pas une 'origine' mais le monde s'écrivant […], non pas la parole vivante mais l'insistance du significant, non pas la Lettre mais le jeu des lettres" (*TQ* 51: 75). Heath's ground-breaking article, in this context, is significant not only in terms of *Wake* scholarship, but also as a blueprint for *Tel Quel*'s own practice of fiction, a guideline for so much of *Tel Quel*'s literary produc-

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13 Jean-Michel Rabaté, "The Joyce of French Theory," *A Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Richard Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) 259.
14 Houdebine, "Histoires de ruptures," *De Tel Quel à L'infini*, 62.
15 Umberto Eco wrote a two-part article on Joyce for *Tel Quel* ("Le Moyen Age de James Joyce," *TQ* 11&12 [Fall 1962 & Winter 1963]). *Tel Quel* no. 22 (Summer 1965) featured Hélène Berger (to become Cixous)'s "L'Avant-Portrait Avant-portrait ou la bifurcation d'une vocation," a study of Joyce's *A Portrait* as exercise in literary auto-biography. *Tel Quel* no. 30 (Summer 1967) brought Philippe Lavergne's French translation of the *Wake*'s "Shem" (I.7) chapter, accompanied by Jean-Pierre Faye's "Post-scriptum: Shem trouvé" and Jean Paris' study "Finnegan, Wake!" in which three words from the *Wake* ("venissoon," "cweamy," and "notshall") are subjected to an exhaustive etymological and comparative linguistic examination which yields lists of possible analogues and echoes from several dozen languages. Joyce's work is regarded by Paris as the consummation of Shklovsky's ultimate goal in art: "cette singularisation, cet obscurcissement de la forme qui, en retardant, en déroutant la perception, nous rend au sentiment que 'la pierre est de pierre'" (*TQ* 30: 59). Lavergne's "Avant-Propos" to his translation, then, approaches the *Wake* from the more conservative viewpoint of a text "suivant les lois d'association-dissociation du rêve" (*TQ* 30: 67).

tion, often based on the treatment of language as discourse, as material, its "narrative" drive subdued in its sustained exploration of the functioning of language.

Issue 55 (Autumn 1973) featured an excerpt from Joyce's own Italian translation of "Anna Livia Plurabella," accompanied by Jacqueline Risset's study, "Joyce traduit par Joyce." Issue 64 (Winter 1975) brought a print version of Sollers' "Joyce et Cie," his plenary lecture at the Paris Joyce Symposium from earlier that year, in many respects the crucial *Tel Quel* text on Joyce as originator of the *Telquelian* fiction practice. In 1979, issue 81 featured Houdebine's essays "Joyce's signature" and "Jung and Joyce" (dealt with below) and *Tel Quel* issue no. 83 (Spring 1980), was a special Joyce issue entirely dedicated to *Ulysses*, the *Wake*, and the questions of his Catholicism – what stands out are Houdebine's interview with Sollers ("La Trinité de Joyce"), David Hayman's study "Stephen on the rocks" and Sollers' article "James Joyce, obscénité et théologie." Here, Sollers analyses the beginning of *Ulysses* as a conflict between Greek paganism and Jesuit Catholicism. Stephen Dedalus' refusal to kneel in front of his mother's deathbed is a symptom, for Sollers, of Stephen's will to attain a distance from matriarchy. Joyce's Catholicism, then, is a refusal of the worship of a pagan, maternal substance, which Sollers' *Paradis* suggests is the condition of society. This refusal on Joyce's part, for Sollers, is tied in with his conception of writing which offers access to the invisible, to something outside the order of the phenomenal. Joyce's religious mind-set (founded upon Trinitarianism) allows him to pass in language through the screen of the phenomenal. This, as Ffrench has shown, is consistent "with the constant critique in *Tel Quel* of the visual and representational, the spectacle, in favour of language and writing," and also has consequences for the relation of language to the body:

> Again, the body is left behind, as *déchet*, in this passage across and beyond the phenomenal. […] The voice or *le soufflé* intervenes in the body to transform it into an incarnation of the divine possibilities of language. The stress on the voice at the expense of the image reveals that the critique of the visual in *Tel Quel* is the negative side of an affirmation of language […] The materialism of *Tel Quel* is not a fetishization of writing but an affirmation of the irrepressible role of the voice in human relations.[16]

Adorning the cover of issue no. 92 [Summer 1982] is a photograph of Joyce's death mask, and part of its content is Beryl Schlossman's important article "Joyce et le don des langues." As Houdebine has noted, what is important about this surge in late *Tel Quel*'s interest in Joyce is that *Tel Quel*'s work on Joyce coincided with "la rédaction par Sollers de ces deux grands textes romanesques qui sont comme la signature du passage de *Tel Quel* à *L'Infini – Paradis (1)* et *Femmes*."[17]

Tel Quel's forays into Joyce culminated with Sollers's address delivered at the 1975 Paris Joyce Symposium, entitled "Joyce & Cie," later reprinted in Hayman's collection, *In the Wake of the Wake*. Opening with the provocative statement that "since *Finnegans Wake* was written English no longer exists [...] as self-sufficient language" since "Joyce introduces a permanent carrying over of sense from language to languages, statement to statements, punctuality of enunciation subject to series," (*TQ* 64: 3), Sollers's revisitation of the radically cosmopolitan, multilingual, avant-garde Joyce of *transition* sketches out Joyce's politics of refusal:

> Joyce's refusal to indulge in the slightest dead pronouncement is exactly *itself* the political act, an act which explodes at the heart of the rhetorical *polis*, at the heart of the narcissistic recognition of the human group: the end of nationalisms decided by Joyce at the time when national crises are at their most virulent (fascism in Europe). Nationalism can be characterized as a twofold obstruction—to the unconscious and to the area of the international. Hence […] it is always basically regressive, opening onto all the racist exclusions. (*TQ* 64: 3-4)

Joyce's most important political gesture, however (and here Sollers recalls some of the exagminers) is his "persistent determination to probe the religious phenomenon": for Sollers, Joyce "represents the same ambition as Freud: to analyze two thousand years of manwomankind, and not ten or a hundred years of politics." This enables Sollers to argue his case for the *Wake* being "the most forceful act ever accomplished against political paranoia […], the most formidably anti-fascist book produced between the two wars" (*TQ* 64: 4). Hand in hand with this politics is Joyce's aesthetics – again, as in Jolas's estimation, founded upon the word:

16 Patrick Ffrench, *The Time of Theory: A History of Tel Quel (1960-1983)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 253.
17 Houdebine, "Histoires de ruptures," *De Tel Quel à L'infini*, 62-3.

> How does the Joycean word function? […] My hypothesis, precisely, is that *Finnegans Wake* is a word, one immense word but in a state of skidding, of lapsus; a word jam-packed with words, in fact a name full of names, but "open," spiraling. This play on words seems to me to function on a simple nucleus where to give *one* word (or rather an "effect of word") there is a coming together of at least three words, plus a coefficient of annulation. (*TQ* 64: 7)

Examples of such "effects of words" are instructive: "Joyce writes SINSE, reading *since, sense,* and *sin*. The 'syllogistic' development of this condensation is as follows: ever since sense, there is sin; ever since sin, there is sense; ever since since (time), there is sin and sense [...] In one word, as in a thousand, you have a thesis on language and man's fall from paradise; and, simultaneously, it is funny" (TQ 64: 7). This "syllogistic" poetics has also ramification for Joyce's mytho-religious outlook: "in the beginning were neither heroes nor gods, nor even men, but collisions, aggregates of sounds, of syllables," a state which Sollers reads as *laughter towards the one* via a Francophone reading of the *Wake*'s opening word "riverrun" as *rire-vers-l'un* (*TQ* 64: 8).

Such and other French re-readings and re-writings of the *Wake* tie in with Sollers' opening statement, later on rephrased in terms highly reminiscent of Jolas: "English for Joyce is an angle and this angle, this filter, must open on the one side onto all languages, on the other onto what 'strictly speaking' has no language, the unconscious" (*TQ* 64: 10). Sollers does recall Beckett's early essay and agrees that "we are too decadent to read Joyce, too decadent perhaps to read any writing which moves in that direction. Dante, Bruno, Vico, Joyce – challenges to linear meaning, squarings of circles" (*TQ* 64: 10). Sollers concludes by linking his linguistic exploration of the *Wake*'s mytho-religious conceptual framework to a third crucial Joycean topic, his treatment of sexuality in which "the language is transformed into the joyance of languages" in which the last word—both of *Ulysses* and the *Wake*—is entrusted to a woman:

> It is this saturation of the polymorphic, polyphonic, polygraphic, polyglottic, varieties of sexuality, this *unsetting* of sexuality, this devastating ironicalisation of your most visceral, repeated, desires which leaves you—admit it—troubled when faced with Joyce. Freud, Joyce: another era for manwomankind. (*TQ* 64: 13).

Sollers's Joyce is a man of revolutionary politics (which he seems to have been only with a considerable stretch of imagination), but he is also a writer of striking linguistic innovation and lasting importance for Sollers's own experimental time and milieu. As Jean-Michel Rabaté has argued, for Sollers, "radical literary experimentations like those of Joyce were instances of subversion of middle-class complacency and resistance to totalitarianism."[18] Besides that, and even more importantly, they formed the basis on which *Tel Quel*'s three crucial novelists (Sollers, Roche, and Cixous) founded their linguistically materialist poetics, and its chief literary theorist (Houdebine) formed his numerous forays into discursiveness and the politics of language.

"MULTIPLICATION COMME FONCTION D'UN CERTAIN TYPE D'EXCES": JEAN-LOUIS HOUDEBINE

Houdebine's essays on (not only) Joyce from the period between 1974 and 1983 have been collected in his magisterial study *Excès de langages*, which deals with linguistic transgression (via excess) of all types of imposed normativity. This is performed across genres (both literature and philosophy/theology), across languages (the German of Hölderlin, Hegel, Marx, and Freud, the Latin of Duns Scot, the English of Hopkins and Joyce, the French of Sollers), and across discourses and traditions (Duns Scot's medievalism, Hegel's phenomenology, Cantor's set theory, Freud's psychoanalysis, Joyce's and Sollers' literary avant-gardism). In a short text on "La question *langage* face aux révolutions totalitaires," Houdebine echoes Jolas' notion of the "Revolution of the Word" while also placing the Joycean project within the philosophical-theological context:

> L'art n'a jamais été une affaire de concept, et encore moins d'idéologie. C'est une affaire de *Verbe*. Au commencement de l'Art est une expérience du Verbe; d'un Verbe infini se liant à du Nom comme s aspiration même. De cette Trinité, Joyce ne cesse parler, dans *Ulysse* et dans *Finnegans Wake*; et Sollers aujourd'hui, dans *Paradis*. Chacun à sa manière propre, dans l'époque où il leur a fallu naitre, des écrivains en dissent donc l'opération absolument singulière, dont se constitue paradoxalement son universalité absolue. (*EL,* 112)

The "Dossier Joyce" comprises a substantial part of the book (some 150 pages), beginning with the "Dossier politique," discussing three types of refusal of Joyce's fiction: the Soviet reaction against his poetics (on the occasion of the 1934

18 Rabaté, "The Joyce of French Theory," 257.

Moscow Congress of Soviet Writers and the famous critique levelled against Joyce by Karl Radek); Carl Gustav Jung's 1932 article attesting to his "fascinated horror" in the face of *Ulysses*; and finally the "silence," occasionally interrupted by "annoyed remarks," from the Surrealist camp, particularly from André Breton and Louis Aragon. The last of these refusals is worth dwelling on. In Houdebine's opinion, the Surrealist hostility toward Joyce had the following rationale:

> A nouveau, comme s'il y avait là, dans *Ulysses*, puis dans *Finnegans Wake*, quelque chose d'énorme, de trop énorme, de trop dangereux pour la doctrine et l'écriture surréaliste, et que celles-ci s'avèrent incapables de penser ; quelque chose, pour ainsi dire, de trop dangereusement proche et pourtant de totalement différent, et qui relègue immédiatement au rang de babioles mondaines les poèmes de ces Messieurs. (*EL*, 163)

An even finer difference comes into play when the work of a linguistically more innovative Surrealist like Michel Leiris comes to bear resemblance to Joyce's *Wake*, as for instance in his "*Glossaire: j'y serre mes gloses*" (published serially in *La Révolution surréaliste*, nos. 3-6). The difference is the vastly larger degree to which Joyce's work with language is "subversive" of the cultural-linguistic material operated with by means of parody, so sorely lacking in the surrealist "automatic writing."[19] Breton's 1953 critique of Joyce, according his fiction an "imitative" status, is countered with Beckett's insistence on the "thingness" of Joyce's words and Jolas' concept of linguistic autonomy.

In Houdebine's "Joyce Tel Quel," Joyce appears as the writer who epitomizes *Tel Quel*'s view of literature during the 1970s as the paradigm of the experience of the writer as exception, against historically totalizing movements such as Fascism and Stalinism. The textual effects commented upon by Heath or Hayman in the pages of *Tel Quel* and followed by practitioners like Sollers, Roche, or Cixous, have a real political importance in that Joyce is a historical unconscious, a return of the repressed. *Tel Quel* champions the exceptional values of Joyce's texts, mostly *Finnegans Wake*, against nationalism, through the concept of the plurality of languages – *l'élangues*, as Sollers neologizes in opposition to Lacan's *lalangue*.[20] Joyce becomes the touchstone of literature's ability to undermine politically totalizing systems, and thus the review's stress on Joyce is a political choice. This has effects in the review's interaction with the context. Joyce appears implicitly as the exception that returns on the rule to subvert and transform its system.

In Houdebine's two crucial Joyce essays, "Littérature et expérience catholique" and "La signature de Joyce," the emphasis falls on the intertextual, exegetic side of *Tel Quel* staple Joyce criticism (rather than its political counterpart). Joyce's Catholic experience is regarded as "fundamentally soliciting" his mode of writing – reference is made to Robert Boyle's *James Joyce's Pauline Vision* and its central conviction of the essential analogy between the mystery of religion and the mystery of literature. Houdebine returns to some points raised in his interview with Sollers on the subject of Joyce, which emphasises the theological treatment of *obscenity* as its exceptional dimension, through which the status of the sexual and of the symbolic is treated as equivalent in a speaking subject. Concentrating on the relation between "Ithaca" and "Penelope," which to his mind stages "la possibilité d'un passage à l'écriture de *Finnegans Wake*" (*EL*, 230), Houdebine reiterates the dynamic of the phenomenal and the transcendent, where the transcendent *Somma Theologica* of Aquinas (underlying the catechism of "Ithaca") contrasts with the "*lapsus*" into the phenomenal world of sexuality (in "Penelope"). *Tel Quel*'s feminist slant is evident in Houdebine's concentration on the central paradox of the episode: "que c'est un homme qui a écrit cette énonciation de femme, et que cette opération concerne directement le passage à *Finnegans Wake*" (*EL*, 236). Joyce's letter to Frank Budgen, identifying the four "cardinal points" of the female body and equating them with their verbal representations: "les seins, le cul, le ventre (*womb* : la matrice) et le con": *because* (pour les « seins » : *bi*-chose !), *bottom* (pour *arse* : le « cul »), *woman* (pour *womb,* la « matrice », les entrailles), *yes* (pour *cunt* : le « con »)" (*EL*, 239). This referential framework, writes Joyce to Budgen, is meant to con-

19 "Les petits jeux de mots de Leiris n'ont en fait à voir avec la subversion du langage et des langues que Joyce est alors en train de réaliser: subversion qui met en jeu un matériau culturel et langagier énorme, traité dans une incessante parodisation, dont la démesure est exactement proportionnée à la lucidité maitrisant qu'elle implique et contient pour aussitôt la détruire et l'excéder dans son rire. C'est précisément en ce point que la divergence est effectivement totale, absolue, entre l'écriture joycienne et l' « écriture automatique » des surréalistes, avec ses effets de pacotille et banalité précieuse, dont participe entièrement le *Glossaire* de Leiris" (*EL,* 165).

20 "La différence entre l'économie du sujet de l'inconscient et celle du sujet de l'écriture réside essentiellement dans le fait que la première est réglée par l'assujettissement du sujet à *lalangue* (en un seul mot), tandis que la seconde suppose la traversée de la première pour qu'y advienne le sujet, non plus d'une *lalangue*, mais de ce que Solles a appelé pour Joyce: *l'élangues*" (*TQ* 94: 39).

vey "the way a body can understand," a project viewed by Houdebine as a process of a textual "Incarnation" of the female body, what he also terms the "Incarnation of the Word."[21] Turning to the *Wake*, Houdebine notes how the Freudian definition of the "dream" has only partial applicability – Joyce's multilingualism shows not so much a "language of the dream" at work as a "language of the people":

> Manifestement, ce n'est pas à ce niveau que se situe l'écriture de *Finnegans Wake*, ou du moins pas seulement : le recours à un plus-de-langues possible, qui a été soutenu systématiquement par Joyce, laisse à penser au contraire que loin d'écrire (dans) une « langue de rêve », il poursuit un projet beaucoup plus ambitieux, qui ne peut se définir en termes de *linguae gentium*, chacune d'entre elles fût-elle affectée de sa propre déformation onirique. (*EL*, 242)

Returning to the topic of *obscenity*, Houdebine insists that it should be viewed as "a gesture of language," whether verbal or non-verbal – the status of the obscene, in Joyce, is always of the semiological order. This inscription of the obscene has, then, the function of providing access to the sexual prohibitions and taboos:

> dans une écriture comme celle de J, dont je rappelle que ce n'est pas un hasard si elle s'est chargée, *du même geste*, des spéculations théologiques les plus sublimantes, l'obscène constitue un moyen d'accès privilègié à la symbolicité, et au lieu même de son intensité maximale : celle de l'inscription des interdits sexuels. (*EL,* 244)

"La signature de Joyce" focuses entirely on the *Wake*, viewed as "une multiplication du récit," a multiplication which is a function of a certain type of excess, defined as follows: "multiplication/division des paradigmes narratifs, qui correspondraient assez bien à ce qu'on a pu appeler « mythèmes », « par filtrage et agglutination » de langues" (*EL*, 199). This multiplication is of a twofold order: "polynomination" and "polyglossie." The former takes place "au niveau de la trame narrative qui en est intérieurement et constamment secouée, inquiétée, ironisée, aux enquêtes toujours reprises, interrogatoires, tentatives d'analyse d'un document retrouvé par hasard," on the level of the narrative thread, constantly shaken, disquieted and ironised (*EL,* 200). The latter echoes Sollers' observation about Joyce using English as a filter through which to process dozens of other languages in a syntax which is "ni la syntaxe anglaise proprement dite, ni même la syntaxe de quelque langue naturelle que ce soit" (*EL*, 206).

Here, Houdebine's conception of Joyce's signature as precisely the operation of "filtrage" through which some "one" becomes a plurality of voices, "'quelque un' est en train de passer, en pluralité de voix," a parodic plurality of multiplied signatures.[22] Joyce's *Wake* is portrayed as the idea of the post-universal singularity that exists in a temporality of the *pressant*, the infinity of texts pressing behind the moment of writing, a temporality of the *dépense* of the anterior texts. The singularity of the exception, for Houdebine, is a post-intertextual singularity, what is described by a word from the *Wake* as "meandertale": "Énigme, car cela revient à (se) demander : « qui suis-je ? ». « Joyce, » bien sûr, « James Joyce ». mais « qui suis-je-Joyce » quand « j' » écris ? Qui *joys* quand ça s'écrit, quand ça s'écrit « James Joyce » ? […] On pourrait appeler cela : écrire son nom comme un *meandertale*" (*EL*, 208-9).[23] Houdebine's treatment of Joyce's signature as intertextual and polyglotal multiplication of the many individual signatures preceding him resonates with some of the crucial concerns of *Tel Quel*'s chief fiction practitioners.

"DIS: YES – I.R.A.": MAURICE ROCHE

Maurice Roche (1925-1997) was a writer (and musical composer) of prolific output, a "*bricoleur* with words, letters, drawings, signs, and symbols."[24] Apart from his experimental novel triptych, published between 1966 and 1974, his works include *Opéra bouffe* (1975), *Mémoire* (1976), *Macabré* (1979), *Testament* (1979), *Maladie mélodie* (1980), and

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21 "Elle nous introduit au contraire à l'ordre de ce que j'ai appelé une Incarnation du Verbe, de Joyce devenant Verbe dans l'écriture même d'une énonciation féminine, c'est-à-dire maternelle, dans la traversée incestueuse d'une chair enfin parlante, au sein de laquelle il accède à l'infinité « post-humaine » du langage. Ce qui signifie qu'il se donne à lui-même, et par un geste de *paternité* logique finalement très clair à mes yeux, la possibilité d'écrire *Finnegans Wake*" (*EL,* 239).

22 "Si l'on peut caractériser *Finnegans Wake* comme un ensemble infini (mais théoriquement dénombrable) de séries de signatures, le texte, quant à lui, ne se borne nullement à les amonceler, à les juxtaposer : il les *re-signe*, au contraire, de la même façon que chaque nom s'y trouve *re-nommé*" (*EL*, 207-8).

23 In this context, Patrick Ffrench writes about Joyce's traversal treatment of language, which takes place both within one single language or across a linguistic multiplicity: "This traversal is neither metaphoric nor real. It is not a question of a discourse that is consciously aware of copying all other languages—the *traversée*, moreover, exists within one language, although there are exceptions, of which Joyce is the obvious one—but of a writing that has no consciousness of itself as pure origin and does not close itself off from other texts, or any writing that can be read in these terms. It reveals itself as within the same general corpus (language) as the infinite texture of human interaction" (Ffrench, *The Time of Theory*, 247).

24 Dina Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986) 50.

Camar(a)de (1982), all of which are intended to form a single work made up of interdependent panels. *Compact*, *Circus* and *Codex*, Roche's first three experimental texts explicitly tied with *Tel Quel*, use "deconstructed narratives, typographical music, extended puns, and systematic disfigurations of the white page"[25] and Joycean verbal neologisms to communicate the "dance of death" of our civilization.

In *Compact* (1966), Roche draws on his background as a musical composer to structure the novel with alternative narratives, each with a specific voice, tense, and typeface. The thin storyline revolves around a blind, dying man whose recourse to imagination enables him to create erotic sensations as he deals with a Japanese tattoo collector who seeks his tattooed skin. The textual collage of fragments that forms the texture of *Compact* is reminiscent of the Burroughsian technique of the cut-up – referred to via allusion to the Beat Hotel: "Sans arriver à oublier complètement que j'occupe, couché sur un grabat, une mansard d'hôtel (rue Gît-le-Coeur, au centre de Paris), je m'imagine gisant de marbre au fond d'une crypte obscure" (*Co,* 27). Joycean paronomasia is redeployed by Roche as "calembours": e.g. *douleur*, "pain," becomes variously transcribed as "doux leurre" or "d'où l'heure?" (*Co,* 31). Joycean portmanteaux appear not packed together, but as simultaneously presented alternatives: e.g. "A peine per$\frac{\text{due}}{\text{çue}}$" (*Co,* 102) or "Perçer le cont$\frac{\text{i}}{\text{e}}$ nu de la vie," and very often the text branches into neighbouring columns. Where Joyce packs meaning into the word and includes a vast number of oblique and direct allusions to "molecular" details, Roche depends more on the technical shaping, the sentence as polyseme, the text as variable image or gesture. Via the motif of the tattoo collector, the surface on which writing is inscribed becomes none other than the body, human skin and flesh – a "bodily" language of yet another order is presented on page 55, with a whole passage transcribed in Braille. Punning, however, is also ample, and quite palpably Joycean: "ET VÉNUS EST VENUE ÈVE NUE AI VEINE EUE" (*Co*, 87), as is mythological parody: "ARIANE EN SOLDE, ISOLDE AU RABAIS, BÉATRICE À CRÉDIT, DIDON BON MARCHÉ, SCHÉHÉRAZADE – RAMENTEUSE DE DORMEUR ÉVEILLÉ" (*Co*, 48). The concluding macaronics, combing the French basis with Italian and German admixture (the discourse and catchphrases of Nazi rallies), ties in with *Tel Quel*'s belief in the *Wakean* multilingualism as an anti-fascist strategy:

> EVVIVA ! – « Noi, ci sentiamo forti – W ! – Questa mattina, siamo comunicati – W ! – Quando buffiamo del buon dio possiamo inghiottire qualsiasi cosa – EVVIVA !
>
> … (hou ! hou ! hou !
>
> hou ! ouououououououn goth et magoth mit uns ! – HEIL ! – Wir versprechen tausendundeine Nachtjahre in der Wüsten ! – HEIL ! – jezt und immerdar ! – HEIL ! – und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit ! – AMEN –… (*Co*, 158)

Circus (1972) further reduces the narrative drive in presenting just the labyrinth of the brain filled with noxious and voided commonplaces, a novel made up of the detritus of novels. Its visual presentation looks like the manuscript of a book proofread and corrected, ready to be typeset, with the mistakes and their corrections appearing together on the pages and yielding two meanings. As critic Diana Sherzer notes, Roche calls these *coquilles creative*, drawing attention to the double meaning of *coquille* as a typographical error and as a protective shield for male genital organs.[26] *Circus* mingles fragments of discourse (advertisement, history textbooks, lewd songs) in different languages (again, English, Italian and German are prominent), as well as in different registers and styles of French. However, *Circus* goes beyond *Compact* in featuring also various languages, both ancient and modern, in their original script: Arabic, Chinese, German, Gothic, Aztec glyphs, Egyptian hieroglyphs. Moreover, there are the artificial indexical or symbolic languages in their graphic representation: road signs, chemical formulas, mathematical and physical symbols and formulas, shorthand, labels of products, pieces of music, symbols from the Michelin guide, and signs of the zodiac. The typography is also a kind of textual carnival: there are italics, boldface, large and small lowercase and uppercase

25 Hayman, "Introduction," *In the Wake of the Wake* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978)28.

26 Content-wise, Sherzer has wittily suggested that "one way to prepare oneself to enter *Circus* is to think of the memorable Dada evenings of the Zurich Cabaret Voltaire. The readings of prose and poetry in several languages; the shaking of bells and the beating of drums; the use of puppets, masks, and costumes; the interest in nonsense […] all these created a multimedia, heterogeneous atmosphere. This is what is found in *Circus*" (Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 50).

letters; horizontal, vertical, and sideways writing; passages put in parentheses, brackets, braces, and boxes; underlining, arrows, and oscillograms. Examples of Joycean wordplay again abound:

r
EcouXter le Laïus (*Ci*, 25)

Écouter, notes Sherzer, means "to listen to," whereas *écourter* is "to shorten"; the capital L of Laïus makes it a proper name, the father of Oedipus, but juxtaposed with *écouter* or *écourter* it takes on the meaning *laius*, a familiar word for a long-winded speech. Roche's typographical emblem (his surname signature arranged so as to form a picture of a skull) is here present on the textual level in passages like "Grossièrement fait ? De cinq lettres (C$\frac{r}{\hat{a}}$n E) dont une canine, celle de l'œil. $\frac{\text{Démontable}}{\text{Incassable}}$!" (*Ci*, 22). Or, more complexly, in bilingual passages:

qu'eSt-ce QUE LETTrE
entre
le ! objet sujet le ?
« l'intérieur est à l'extérieur et l'extérieur n'existe pas… »

Schrift**K**örp**E**r**LETT**ern
zwischen
dem ! dem ?
Objekt
Subjekt

« Das Innere ist außen
und das Außen
existiert nicht. »
(*Ci,* 32)

Here, not only does the inscription form a calligramic structure reminiscent of a skull, but the clever capitalisation of selected letters spells out SQUELETTE and SKELET. There is also the Joycean blasphemous parody, a détournement of e.g. the first line of the Lord's Prayer, "Notre père qui êtes aux cieux," which underlies "Notre Père qui êtes aux yeux du monde sans effet" (*Ci*, 34). In her detailed analysis of the text, Sherzer speaks of *Circus* as constituting "a semiographic space, a constant visual spectacle, in which a compendium of signs and symbols create a polysemiotic environment, a kind of *intersignalité*, comparable to the one that readers are exposed to every day in their lives."[27] The most striking aspect of *Circus*, its material presentation of the text, has been unambiguously linked by critics with that of Joyce's.[28] So long as sexual references and innuendos are present on almost every page of the text, then the Eros of the language is closely accompanied by Thanatos or Death. The last page features an image of skull preceded by an inscription and Roche's emblematic signature:

Toucher à ce terme emblématique – à l'idéogramme, hiéroglyphe d'un (dernier) soupir, d'un souffle (contenant tous les sens – y compris celui de l'histoire, de toutes les histoires possibles et magina$\frac{\text{bl}}{\text{ir}}$es). Majuscule-Capitale par excellence la figure du [IMAGE OF SKULL]
)m(on signe)
(*Ci*, 72)

Codex (1974) is a schematic apocalypse in which a dying man meditates upon the last things of a civilisation which he gradually comes to represent. Here, frequently the language becomes one of chemical equations and compound symbols. Again, the focus is the inside of the skull, the workings of the imagination, the structuring of language. This is brought across in the following pun regarding the "infinite proportions between *nothing* and *deny*": "Entre *rien* et *nier* les proportions étant tellement infinies, la cervelle la plus aiguë n'y pouvant pénétrer, devoir—pour échapper à ce labyrinthe inexplicable—admettre une manière" (*Cx*, 48). The apocalyptic dimension of the text is brought home in the

27 Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 56.
28 "Its constant play with signs, letters, and space, and the facile and irritating play with and on words that creates endless polysemies. It is undeniable that the writing appears overtly as techno-narcissism, exhibitionism, mannerism, contrived exaggeration, and constant fireworks. It is also the production of someone who enjoys mixing, cutting, splicing and "joycing" (in the sense of James Joyce) words, languages, sings and symbols" (Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 59).

long “Cantate funèbre,” which is structured by means of a punning transcription of the sections of the Requiem Mass. Thus, “Requiem aeternam” becomes “Recuit, aimer terne âme”:

> **Relax(e) quand tout est terminé bien**
> **Fini car il faut bien que cela**
> **Finisse le dernier terme apportant**
> **La grande lueur d’espoir au napalm**
> **Ou à l’hydrogène.**
> (*Cx*, 105)

“Kyrie eleison“ becomes “**Qui riez (patron), réveillez – il sonne ! –**,” “Dies irae,” “**DIS, EST-CE IRÉnique, la rogne**,“ “Tuba mirum,” “**TUBE, AMI, RHUM – per sepulchra Regionum –**,” etc. (*Cx* 105-6). This “Cantate“ also includes a most direct allusion to Joyce in that it buries the concluding line of *Ulysses* within the sado-religious context of the bitterly comic funeral: “LA CRIME Ô SAD – DIS: YES – I.R.A” (*Cx,* 111) transcribes the Latin “Lacrimas a Dies Irae” as a calembour of Joycean and Irish themes. As Hayman has noted, unlike the *Wake*, however, which builds toward a reawakening from the thunderous fall, “Roche’s texts build toward a spine-chilling conclusion full of political overtones.”[29] His favourite image is the skull with its terrible grin, the clown’s totem, inevitably turning it into an anagram for his own name. In the final double hieroglyph of *Codex*, a radar screen (posing as a TV screen) alongside which is written VIDE PARTOUT! is followed on the next page by a skull made of words for peace in many languages, punctuated by bomb-shaped exclamation points.

Roche’s is a broadly experimental, multi-medial and visually innovative poetics whose concrete typography, however playful and funny, serves its serious political message: a humanist warning against civilisation’s drive toward self-destruction, and an elegy for all it has already destroyed.

“IF ONE REFLECTS ON WORDS, IF ONE WARMS THEM LIKE A HEN, ONE ENDS UP UNDERSTANDING THEM”: HÉLÈNE CIXOUS

Hélène Cixous (*1937) is an author of an astonishing number of works of multiple (even hybrid) genres, most prominent among them, fiction, theory, drama and opera libretti. The range and complexity of Cixous’ body of work presents several difficult challenges for any critical summary. First, simply her productivity: she has written more than forty book-length works, more than a dozen major plays, and vast numbers of articles and reviews. Second, her works blur typical demarcations between critical and creative endeavour. Despite the convenience of having a neat demarcation line separating her fiction from her theoretical and critical enterprises, Cixous has never respected such taxonomic categories.[30]

If one were to pinpoint merely one notion uniting her critical/theoretical writing with her fiction, one would single out her cause of *écriture féminine*, a feminist concept elaborated in the early-to-mid-1970s, in works like *Le Rire de la Médusé* (1975) and *La Jeune Née* (1975). In close, oftentimes personal, association with the work of other French philosophers and post-structuralist theorists—in particular, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Lacan—and in a constant dialogue with her predecessors—most prominently, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Karl Marx—Cixous’ writing is similarly informed by the desire to dismantle philosophical, social, and cultural orthodoxies in order to develop theoretical systems capable of delineating the complexities of cultural signification. Unlike them, however, Cixous’ is a ubiquitous interest and investment in feminist issues, usually explicit, and powerfully expressed in her writing; the structures she seeks to deconstruct are those culpable in the oppression of women and marginalised social groups, and her deconstruction, first and foremost, is designed to challenge social and cultural patriarchal structure. For her cause of *écriture féminine*, Cixous is not content with enlist-

29 Hayman, “Introduction,” *In the Wake of the Wake*, 34.
30 As Ian Munro has observed in a biographical entry on Cixous, in her work, “fiction blends into literary criticism, into cultural theory, into feminist manifesto, into political analysis, and into personal history, with no clear boundaries separating the different genres of writing,” and so, in the broadest terms, “Cixous could be perhaps most accurately described as a cultural philosopher, as long as that label is not thought to depend on a narrow, discrete, or even cohesive theory of culture” (Ian Munro, “Hélène Cixous,” *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 242: Twentieth-Century European Cultural Theorists*, ed. Paul Hansom [University of Southern California: The Gale Group, 2001] 83).

ing female writers only (most prominent among whom would be the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector), but also a whole genealogy of male writers whose linguistically experimental work underscores, attack and ridicules the many various forms of Western phallocentrism – most prominent among whom would be James Joyce. Morag Shiach has aptly outlined the crucial interdependence between Cixous' fiction and theory as a joint exploration of "the transgressive potential of language."[31] Like Derrida or e.g. Albert Camus, Cixous was born in French Algeria and only moved to France at the age of 18 (already married to Guy Berger) – her childhood and youth spent in the colonised North Africa is a constant reference throughout her work, as is, according to critic Verena Conley, her threefold stigmatisation:

> Her radicalism spills over the boundaries of a narrowly defined feminism. As an Algerian, Jew, and woman, she finds herself thrice culturally and historically marked and vows to fight on all fronts against any form of oppression. […] Though there is a shift in her work from a covert to an overt "feminism," Cixous has always been interested in the inscription of the feminine in text and society.[32]

In 1959, at the age of twenty-two, Cixous became the youngest-ever *agrégée de lettres* (holder of the *agrégation* in literature) in France, a distinction she repeated in 1968 when she completed her doctoral thesis on James Joyce (under the supervision of Jean-Jacques Mayoux) and became the youngest-ever *docteur-ès-lettres*. Her thesis, published in 1968 as *L'Exil de James Joyce ou l'art du remplacement*, proceeds by examining selected themes from the Joyce oeuvre using a method purportedly borrowed from the author himself. If Joyce, in *Ulysses*, has his alter ego Stephen deploy a "biographical method" in order to analyse Shakespeare's life by using his writings, then for Cixous, the life and work of Joyce himself are consubstantial, his work functioning as a copy of his life and his life a repetition of his writing. As Geert Lernout, in the Cixous section of his overview of *The French Joyce*, has noted, "although it is based on extensive research," Cixous' thesis "tends to be more a reflection of the author's preoccupations than of those of his subject."[33]

L'Exil de James Joyce is basically a study of the relations between Joyce's writing and his life, where Cixous reads Joyce's fictional texts in the context of letters and diaries, written by himself and by his brother Stanislaus. Cixous divides her material into four sections: first the nexus out of which the individual is to develop, the family; next the individual in three developing stages, the heroic, the heretical (or rebellious), and the exilic. Finally, Cixous concludes with the "poetics" of this development. The "family cell" becomes subject to a consideration of the artist's formative years as history and a discussion of his first poem; the concepts of private and public heroism include Joyce's "choice of heresy" and the creed of *non serviam*; the concept of exile as recovery is understood as flight, as a position of critical realism, and ultimately as the exile of the soul which provides the energy and the structures of Joyce's writing; and the poetics of this development concerns the concept of reality in Joyce, his approach to and transcendence of reality by means of the reality of language and linguistic symbolism. Cixous ties the Joycean position of *non serviam*, a refusal of all orthodoxies and commitment to doubt as the only attitude consonant with reason, with his engagement with the Augustinian concept of "*felix culpa,*" a positive outlook on sin as necessarily linked to the possibility of redemption, or, in Joyce's case, to spiritual growth and finally to an exploration of the constitutive nature of language in relation to reality. Joyce's exilic mode of life, in Cixous' biographic approach, makes of Joyce's play, *Exiles*, a crucial text, both in relation to Joyce's biography and in terms of his representation of subjectivity. Shiach has pointed out an important one of the pitfalls of Cixous' biographical/textual method.[34] The difficulty lies also in the teleological structure of developing creativity that Cixous reads into Joyce's life, all of whose tensions, conflicts and contradictions, no mat-

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31 Cixous' explorations of the transgressive, and the transformative, potential of language, take place in the context of a sustained engagement with other fictional and theoretical writers. Her readings of Kleist, or Joyce, or Lispector, are always linked to her desire to theorize the power of language to evade the habitual, to move beyond the hierarchies of dual opposition, and to challenge the deathly economy of intersubjectivity" (Morag Shiach, *Hélène Cixous – The Politics Of Writing* [Routledge: London and New York, 1991] 40).

32 Verena Andermatt Conley, *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) 4.

33 Geert Lernout, *The French Joyce* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990) 42.

34 "Cixous' conviction that Joyce wrote his life, rather than living it, leads her to read biography and literary text together, using in particular the figures of Stephen Hero and Stephen Dedalus as a means to open out Joyce's aesthetic and ethical commitments. The drawback of this procedure is that it leads to a dissipation of Cixous' own critical voice, which often seems to be swamped by the plethora of texts with which she is engaging. This dilution seems particularly disabling when Cixous seeks to analyse the sexual politics implicit in Joyce's aesthetic practice" (Shiach, *The Politics Of Writing*, 41).

ter how random and aleatory, are subsumed into the grand narrative of the development of Joyce the artist. Departing from Lernout's observation, Lynn Perod makes the following claim about Cixous' use of Joyce as backdrop for the articulation of her own creative practice:

> While it is not necessarily true that what Cixous has said about Joyce can be used to describe her own fictional world, the affiliation is clearly there. Both Joyce and Cixous express in their writing the sense of exile or marginalization – Joyce for a set of motives admittedly quite different from those expressed by Cixous. Both Cixous and Joyce are deeply involved in the creation of a fictional "reality" through the most radical and experimental use of language itself.[35]

Just as Cixous' Joyce devoted an entire writing career to making a connection between life and art, so do the works of Cixous herself, even though in a quite different set of cultural constructs, reach toward this same goal. Also, Cixous' concluding consideration of Joyce's innovative approach to representation of the relation between language and subjectivity, including his foregrounding—throughout *Dubliners*—of the physical power of words, his dissociation of signifier and signified through unconscious association or pun, and last but not least, his challenge to language as a net, limiting rather than reflecting experience of the real – all form the basis of Cixous' subsequent dealing with Joyce in both her theory and fiction.

The next step in Cixous' theoretical treatment of Joyce came in her *Prénoms de personne* (1974), a collection of critical essays containing twelve major texts, grouped into three divisions, where "Sorties," the opening piece, encapsulates Cixous' creed as writer and thinker:

> Je demande à l'écriture ce que je demande au désir: qu'il n'ait aucun rapport avec la logique qui met le désir du côté de la possession, de l'acquisition, ou meme de cette consummation—consumation qui, si glorieusement poussée à bout, lie (mé)connaissance avec la mort. (*PP,* 5)

In contradistinction to the readings presented in her Joyce thesis, the essays here are much more densely textured and deeply informed by readings of Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, and Georges Bataille. Following sections on E.T.A Hoffmann and E.A. Poe is an "ensemble Joyce," featuring the four texts, "Texte du hors," "Les hérésistances du sujet," "La crucifiction," and "Trait portrait de l'artiste en son autre j'aimot." The first essay, "Texte du hors," provides a short introduction to the essays that complete the section, praising Joyce's originality and his work's resistance to interpretation or translation. The second essay, "Les Hérésistances du sujet," is a very detailed analysis of the concept of "subjectivity" in Joyce's *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. A third essay, "La Crucifixion," is a discussion of Joyce's "comedy of castration," which questions the very idea of logocentric mastery and phallocentric concepts of "possession" or property and economic exchange. The final essay of the volume, "Trait—Portrait de l'artiste," is a reading of a small fragment from *Finnegans Wake* (*FW* 164, the "Casseous/Burrus" passage) which uses this section as the basis for an exploration of the disturbance caused to patriarchal thought by the representation of female subjectivity.

Cixous here begins to explore Joyce's writing in a more deconstructive manner, stressing the ways in which he challenges readability, resists narrative structure, and interrogates the processes of naming. As Shiach perceptively notes, this deconstructive turn is also one away from "Joyce the Artist" and toward "Joyce the writer: his texts are valued as the point of intersection between fiction and theory, between art and revolution."[36] Joyce's writing practice is described as a form of "permanent revolution" in its resistance to codification, to imperialism, to familialism, and to all forms of propriety (*PP,* 233-4). Cixous analyses the way in which narrative point of view is multiplied, unsettled, undermined, particularly in the "Circe" chapter of *Ulysses*, where Joyce dramatizes the collision of all of the subjectivities represented in the text, both living and dead, in a brothel scene involving erotic fantasy and sex change. Her holistic approach to the entire Joyce oeuvre reveals an evolution in degree rather than kind, without however downplaying the departures undertaken in the *Wake*. Cixous critiques Joyce's early negative theology, his need to ruse with words in a double gesture, both *capable* and *coupable*, capable and guilty. In the resulting "machine of cruci-fiction," Cixous finds a disquieting eroticism predicated on phallogocentrism and castration, which gradually gives way, from *Exiles* to *Finnegans Wake*, to the writing of a new affective economy. In the *Wake*, where there is no more subject/object division

35 Lynn Kettler Penrod, *Hélène Cixous* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996) 21.
36 Shiach, *The Politics Of Writing*, 45.

and where desire based on respect of otherness outweighs desire of recognition, Cixous reads the possibility for a change

> on the invisible line separating light from shadow [...] where the limitless 'begins' multiply [in] neither gift nor loss, but a sort of errant grace; and it is only there, but hardly begun in the mixture of singularities, that finally phallogocentrism unhooks and blows off course from one to the other border.[37]

If in *A Portrait* Joyce had explored the relation between naming and fixity as an unstable process devolving upon convention, then for Cixous, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* dramatizes the refusal of such naming, the journey of "Personne" (*PP,* 262). A fitting, albeit belated, illustration (in English) of Cixous' deconstructive practice vis-à-vis her selected literary canon, came in the form of *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, a collection of her 1980-86 lectures delivered at Sorbonne VIII. Cixous starts off her piece on Joyce, "Joyce's *Portrait*: Silence, Exile, and Cunning," by approaching the *Portrait*'s opening scene through "a kind of multiple reading," which yields a reading of it "as a kind of embryonic scene" in that "the entire book is contained in the first pages, which constitute a nuclear passage" (*R,* 3). Cixous' is a psychoanalytic approach, founded on the conviction that even though denying it, Joyce was "impregnated" by psychoanalysis and despite "writing when Freud's texts were not yet well known," Joyce is claimed to have been "in a kind of intellectual echo with him." Cixous pays acute critical attention to even the minutest detail:

> The text begins with an enormous *O* that recurs in the first pages. It can be taken as a feminine, masculine, or neuter sign, as zero. The *o* is everywhere. One can work on the *o-a*, on the *fort-da*. I insist on the graphic and phonic *o*'s because the text tells me to do so. With all its italics and its typography, the text asks the reader to listen. (*R,* 4)

Cixous' close familiarity with both the Joyce canon and his biography enables her to make perceptive general observations and intriguing comparisons.[38] Houdebine's and Sollers' insistence on Joyce's Catholicism are echoed in Cixous' observations on how Joyce "puts the artist into rivalry with God since both are creators" (*R,* 8). Joyce, first and foremost, is a creator of words, and the lesson Cixous draws from *A Portrait* is that

> if one reflects on words, if one warms them like a hen, one ends up understanding them. The little boy is constantly before a secret constituted by signifiers or by words. Over hundreds of pages, for Stephen Dedalus it is but a question of enigmas. Where there is a primal scene, there are also primal words, since the two are equivalent. The words hold back, they bind the future artist as young man. (*R*, 9)

How is Cixous' engagement with Joyce symptomatic of her of practice of writing? *Dedans* (1969), Cixous' first novelistic text, appeared in the aftermath of May 1968, participating in the spirit of rethinking and revolution that was then happening across the entire French society and culture. Just as Cixous' Joyce, the novel is profoundly autobiographical in complex and indirect ways, charting as it does the female narrator's strong feelings evoked by the passing of her father. *Dedans* is an experimental text; like all of Cixous's writing, the label "novel" seems inadequate to its rewriting of literary genre. The connection between revolutionary literary style—countering and undoing the realism of the still-dominant *nouveau roman*—and revolutionary politics is a clear one for Cixous, and her narrative is composed of fragmented blocks of text, coherent within themselves but often inconsistent or random in their relationship to each other. What is sketched, precariously, through these juxtapositions is a provisional and improvisational account of an emotional experience and a psychic journey dealing with loss and aiming for recuperation. The narrative line is bifurcated, revolving around two periods in the narrator's life separated by twenty years, the second section functioning as a return, a rewriting of the first section and the past that reinforces the novel's structuring by means of themes of repetition and remembering. Splitting, fracturing, and dividing are significant dynamics in the book, but so are themes of enfolding and hybridizing. As Ian Munro has observed, the title, meaning "Inside," has a few ambiguous implications.[39]

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37 Qtd. in Conley, *Writing the Feminine*, 24.

38 "'Apologise' is the last word of this short introduction and the first word with which Joyce played, which he rolled on his tongue. […] Joyce, as a Catholic, is never done with the law. His unconscious is completely taken into the Christian space of the fault. […] Instead of giving up the law [like Kafka], Joyce puts in place an enormous system of transgression. And there can be no transgression without law. It all remains very masculine. At the end, in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce even managed to make of transgression his law" (*R,* 7).

39 "this text is one of transformation and initiation, of passing through thresholds and becoming new. The title could be interpreted as indicating some sort of interiority, a place for the self, but it is also a confining within, a prison, and so on. The self is always necessarily in motion; on one

Dedans is also a text invested in the theme of writing, about coming to writing and about the precarious power of words to create, to explain, and to speak. Writing appears as the only possible solution; writing is produced by the pain the narrator feels, and writing is the ability that is celebrated at the end of the novel: writing allows one to say, as Cixous puts it, "merde merde merde à la mort" (*D*, 208). As Munro shows in his detailed overview, the issues and concerns central to *Dedans* animated Cixous' writing through the next decade, although her literary strategies became more explicitly theoretical and her style more radically innovative. *Le Troisième Corps* and *Les Commencements*, both published in 1970, blur the boundaries between fiction and theory and extend Cixous' interrogation of writing, selfhood, and the place of the feminine.

It is only in *Souffles* (1975) that Cixous' fiction starts taking aboard further levels of meaning-production and narrative structuration, as well as some explicitly Joyce-indebted linguistic experimentation.[40] *Souffles* deals with the mental and physical experiences of an anonymous female narrator, who is never situated or described and who, sometimes in first person and sometimes in third, recounts experiences that take place or took place. Cixous' style can be described as "poetical, harmonious, and lyrical, shifting abruptly into vulgarity and obscenity and becoming violent and disjointed"[41] here – with the important admixture of wordplay and allusiveness to various frames of reference (philosophical, psychoanalytic, literary, etc.). The opening is an ironic echo of the gender stereotype in which the passive female is awoken by an outside voice: "Là! c'est la voix qui m'ouvre les yeux, sa lumière m'ouvre la bouche, me fait crier. Et j'en nais" (*S,* 9). The narrator inscribes images, visions, and scenes as they arise without motivating or explaining their appearance; following her creed, "passons-nous de causes" (*S,* 114), *Souffles* is a text in which the unexpected becomes a structuring device, in which cohesion is achieved by the fact that all the experiences the narrator describes share the ecstatic feature of transporting her into intense and exhilarating states. Punctuating, the narrator's ruminations are adaptations of well-known utterances to her won text and context: "Encore un effort mon corps allons, porte-moi" (*S,* 217) recalls Marx's famous exhortation to the working class; "Écrire, ne pas écrire. Angoisse" (*S,* 217) is modeled on the beginning of Hamlet's soliloquy. One of the neologisms running the length of the text is "origyne," rewriting "origine" as female (*gyne*) ori-fice. These and other examples corroborate Sherzer's evaluation of *Souffles* as a complex intertextual web.[42] Eroticism and sexuality, then, are presented by Cixous as an ecstatic experience disrupting the functioning of the symbolic order, a complete experience affecting the whole body and implying activity, equality, and reciprocity in both partners. Cixous writes about bliss, about sexual activity and satisfaction in a fashion unsettling of the norms of appropriateness in Western society, letting her narrator repeatedly point out what major satisfaction she achieves by using vulgar language. Following Joyce's *Wakean* lesson of desire based on respect of otherness, *Souffles* neither rejects masculinity, nor does it privilege femininity, valorising reciprocity instead.

In her 1977 novel, *Angst*, Cixous deals with the breakdown of a love relationship, whose pain and anguish are not expressed in existential, representational terms, but in a metaphoric exchange of letters; her own *écriture féminine* again engages critically with Freudian psychoanalysis. The narrator explores her responses to the loss of her father and her separation from her mother. As Munro has noted, what makes this work an example of *écriture féminine* is Cixous' profound treatment of the psychodynamics of the narrator's pursuit; but *Angst* is also adventurous stylistically, a stylistic daring that works to further its *écriture féminine*. Much of the novel occurs in dream states and recollected images whose effect is similar to Joyce's use of stream-of-consciousness narration. This technique effectively serves the role of psychoanalysis in the narrative. The narrator achieves finally a kind of rebirth and subjecthood only after she works through her neuroses and anxiety in psychoanalytic terms. In constructing the narrative in such a way,

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level, engaged in a process of evolution and initiation, but also an unstable, rickety place of construction and deconstruction, forced to keep moving in order to survive" (Ian Munro, "Hélène Cixous," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 87).

40 What Sherzer identifies as "play and manipulation with words, which produce excess and multiplicity of meaning" (Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 158).

41 "A web of allusions, references, and modified quotations that index a host of meanings. In addition, the narrator's verbal texture mingles flowing passages of sensuous lyricism, didactic essays, pornographic slang, and prose poems with dislocated syntax – with the consequence that rhythms, tones, syntax, registers, and styles constantly shift" (Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 147).

42 Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 153-4.

Cixous both accepts and appropriates Freud by showing how the tools of psychoanalysis can be made to deconstruct rather than promote the masculine forces that oppress the narrator and women in general. The text, as always one of transformation, led Cixous to another phase in her consideration of women's issues. For the next few years Cixous espoused the cause of women in a more militant language, which also entailed a gradual shift in medium – and Cixous' output from the early-1980s onward is predominantly theatrical and aimed at collaboration with directors (such as Ariane Mnouchkine or Simone Benmussa) rather than literary and based on critical engagement with writers. Still, however, Cixous' theatre work is one which challenges gender roles, subverts patriarchal rule, continuing in her life-long project,[43] one which was crucially informed by her early exposure to, and extended engagement with, Joyce's literary experiment.

"A SUBJECT I WOULD CALL ILLIMITABLE, NUMBERLESS": PHILIPPE SOLLERS

It is difficult to overstate Philippe Sollers' (*1936) importance for *Tel Quel*, a journal he co-founded, edited and used as his mouthpiece for the entirety of its existence (1960-82), not only as a tool for disseminating his fiction and literary criticism and theory, but also as a platform for propagating his political beliefs. These were far from unified and consistent, and so accordingly, *Tel Quel*'s political/poetic tenor underwent a multiple-stage evolution. In the account of Roland Champagne, author of the first book-length study on Sollers in English, just as Barthes, Sollers too begins his literary career by opposing his chief concerns from those of Jean-Paul Sartre's purported Marxism.[44] Sollers' early *nouveau-roman* stage was did not last long, nor did Sollers' affiliation with the PCF. The events of May 1968 in France, in which university students and workers in Paris cooperated in social revolt without the leadership of the PCF, were pulls in the direction of revolutionary history and the Maoism advocated by Sollers for *Tel Quel* during most of the 1970s, seeking new directions for French Communism in China where Mao was leading what he called his Cultural Revolution. Sollers' vehemence and despotism in his advocating of Mao were what ultimately brought about, in the consensus of many critics, *Tel Quel*'s demise: "By 1980, Sollers became aware that he was himself guilty of what he had earlier attributed to a bourgeois mentality."[45]

For Sollers, Joyce is not only a source of creative inspiration, but an object of critical and theoretical investigation. As he confided to Hayman, there are chiefly three aspects in which the *Wake* concerns Sollers the critic and writer: "its tendency to dissolve linguistic barriers through multilingual puns, the rhythmic qualities through which subjectivity is projected, and the manner in which it telescopes history to create the effect of a unified historical (or 'epic') dimension."[46] It is essential to add to these interests the biographical connection between the two: Joyce's and Sollers' shared Catholicism.[47] The inception of Sollers' literary career predates the founding of *Tel Quel* by two years: in 1958, with the psychological novel *Une curieuse solitude*, applauded by François Mauriac or Louis Aragon, whose praise launched his literary career. At the time of its publication, the name "Sollers" was a *nom de plume*, a mask behind which to hide his real name Philippe Joyaux. *Une curieuse solitude* addresses the issues of masculinity and secrecy surrounding erotism—combined with the fascination for pornography as a means to desacralise sexuality—that will continue to inform Sollers' writing throughout his entire oeuvre. Here, Sollers' examination is centred around language and eroticism, exploring the issue of whether the narrator should avoid saying certain sexually explicit things or talk

43 In this project, according to Conley, "writing attempts to break away from cultural stereotypes, essentializing concepts and their attributes such as man/woman, masculine/feminine, active/passive. She tries to displace the conceptual opposition in the couple man/woman through the very notion of writing and bring about a new inscription of the feminine" (Conley, *Writing the Feminine*, 6).

44 "Instead, Sollers proposed a type of Communism that would clearly be an alternative to either Fascism or colonialism and would be dedicated through *Tel Quel* to inspiring the French Communist Party. In 1960, he began that journal by aligning it with the poet Francis Ponge and his ahistorical literary poetics which soon led Sollers and his colleagues toward the *nouveau roman*, structuralism, Derrida's deconstructive poetics as an affirmation of the text's integrity, and other intellectual positions that diverted the *Tel Quel* group away from history and into formalist exercises subverting the ideologies of bourgeois and capitalist ways of thinking" (Roland A. Champagne, *Philippe Sollers* [Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996] 21-2).

45 Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 22.

46 Qtd. in Hayman, "Introduction," *In the Wake of the Wake*, 25.

47 "Both educated by Jesuits, Joyce and Sollers have strong ties to Catholicism. As Sollers indicates in *Paradis*, Joycean Christianity, like Sollers' Catholicism, participates in the comic and the pathetic. Christian ritual, symbolism, and especially theology play a large part in Joyce's narrative stances. Sollers especially appreciates the comic subversion of Catholic seriousness" (Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 16).

circumspectly and thus avoid using certain words, either too sacred or too sinful, and participate in a moral agenda. After two texts further exploring—à la *nouveau roman*—the nature of subjectivity and linguistic representation of space (*Le Parc* and *Drame*), came a striking new departure in Sollers' writing and its experimental/Joycean peak between 1968 and 1973, with the three hybrid, visually and conceptually innovative texts, *Nombres, Lois,* and *H*.

The creation and publication of *Nombres* (1968) was marked by the May 1968 unrest and social protest among university students and workers, especially in Paris, and the lesson Sollers drew was that the political tide was turning eastward, especially toward Chairman Mao's Communist China – and the most striking visual aspect of the text of *Nombres* are the Chinese ideograms punctuating it throughout. The noteworthy property of the function of these Chinese ideograms is that they usually repeat what has just been mentioned in French, operating as a provocation to the reader in a stance of unreadability.[48] The title suggests the mathematical realm from which *théorie d'ensemble* (set theory) is also derived, the word "numbers" referring to "digits," but at the same time, *Nombres* is also the French title of the Biblical book of *Numeri*, the census of the Hebrew nation and thus an accounting of the constituent tribes. The text is constructed in the sequential alternations of four voices, identified by the numerals one through four, in twenty-five repetitions, with the first three voices speaking in the imperfect tense while the fourth voice is in the present tense. The plural voices of *Nombres* are part of the *Tel Quel* project to undermine the "novel" as merely the perpetuation of such bourgeois values as a unified subject in control of its desires, goals, and speaking voice, values which Sollers perceived as propagated by the structuralism so rampant in the mid-1960s in France, which assumed a cohesive self and language its expression. This destabilisation is furthered by the text's radically intertextual nature – *Nombres* is a patchwork of quotations from an array of texts from the most variegated sources and belonging to a multitude of discourses. Thereby, *Nombres* inaugurates a process crucial to what Champagne identifies as "the second spire" of Sollers' writing, devoted to "separating self from language,"[49] setting the stage for Sollers' crucially Joycean texts. As Sollers' biographer Philippe Forest corroborates in his magisterial study of the author, *Nombres* participates in a "mouvement par lequel l'écriture se prenait elle-même comme objet, pour, dans la proximité essentielle avec le Joyce de *Finnegans Wake*, s'engager dans l'aventure d'une épopée moderne."[50]

Lois (1972) was written during a personally trying period for Sollers, the aftermath of the death of his father in 1969, after which he rewrote this whole text. The text can be seen today as a cry for action to the young revolutionaries in Paris, a repudiation of "laws" in favour of unhindered action, textual as political. *Lois* continues the fragmentation of *Nombres* while adding the important aural dimension, introducing as a major element the exclamation mark as the instance of a percussive rhythm. In *Lois*, Sollers presents a text working as much on the level of sound/rhythm as on a conceptual level.[51] Champagne has tied this oral/aural dimension of *Lois* to its overall concern with challenging the literary traditions of the French letters.[52] Sollers devises an interesting mode of structuration similar to Joyce's in the "Sirens" episode in *Ulysses* by using the opening sentence "NE FACE A FACE NIANT LA MEMBRANE L'ENTRÉE" as a sort of verbal acrostic whose individual words stand at the beginning of each of the six "books" that form *Lois*:

> NE (*L* I.1 5)
> FACE dévidée frappée de plein fouet catapulte sèche en gazeux mouillé (*L* II.1, 25)
> A FACE de face et b à l'envers et c en surface pour couper l'endroit (*L* III.1, 41)
> NIANT cervelle os en tout temps cosmos, frappe de plein fouet son éther de vent (*L* IV.1, 61)
> LA MEMBRANE autour juste avant après (*L* V.1, 89)
> L'ENTRÉE nous apprend d'abord que ce n'est pas la nature en soi mais les transformations réalisées par l'homme qui sont les fondements de la pensée. (*L* VI.1, 116)

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48 As Champagne puts it: "the reader cannot choose how to read this text, the text itself is deciding what is readable and unreadable" (Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 43).
49 Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 36,
50 Philippe Forest, *Philippe Sollers* (Paris: Seuil, 1992) 167.
51 As Ffrench has noted, "written mostly in decasyllabic phrases, the text of *Lois* is humorously scanned by a repetition of sounds, principally the past participle ending in é, *alliteration, and rhyme*" (Ffrench, *The Time of Theory*, 196).
52 "One of the techniques introduced in *Lois* that Sollers would develop in his later work is a writing that is sensitive to the ear, that is, a poetic writing that records how people speak French rather than how it has been traditionally written. Effectively, oral language, like that of the medieval troubadours of whom Sollers would like to be recognized as the modern equivalent, is the basis for what Sollers claims in this text as 'une sort d'explosion de comédie, de parodie'" (Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 47).

As is explained in Sollers' own pedantic back-cover blurb, "on reconnaît le commencement d'un 'livre' à un mot écrit en capitales reproduisant l'un des mots de la première phrase du texte." Book I, Sollers informs, is dominated by "cosmo-theogony" (Hesiodic prehistory). Book II insists on Greece-christianity. Books III-VI deal with the epoch of modern capitalism, marked by the "accentuation transversale de la réalité révolutionnaire (Chine)." Then, after quotes from Marx and Engels, comes the avowal that "rappels techniques" are derived from "Rabelais, Joyce"; the decasyllabic verse, from "chanson de geste, chanson de Roland, vers shakespearien";"actualisation du lexique (depuis mai 68)." This explicit statement has led Philippe Forest to believe that it is in *Lois* that Joyce's presence "is inscribed most profoundly."[53] The history that forms the subject of *Lois* is far removed from that of schoolbooks. The focal point of Sollers' examination of the various discursive strata whose superposition comes to form the official historical accounts is the taboo of incest, its "prohibition or rather subtilized recommendation" regarded as the inaugural moment of civilisation and its organising principle:

> Soit : la prohibition ou plutôt la recommandation subtilisée de l'inceste, à savoir les rapports cochons et cachés mère-fils-père-fille ou plutôt mère-fille-père-fils, racontent la signature du contrat fondu dérivé, l'autre parent n'étant apparemment posé comme désiré qu'afin de produire le masque de son répété… (*L* I.1, 6)

The taboo of incest, then, is "the key by which intelligibility is conferred upon social network," the mechanism by which "the infant is inscribed into an Oedipal triangle," out of which there is no escaping, which is merely perpetuated through the generations (*L* I.3, 11). Thus, while addressing the larger issues of the relationship of literature and propaganda after May 1968, *Lois* reflects a lust for sexual innuendo and scatological detail. Sexuality is part of all this because both men and women, in their multiform quests for each other, repeat the traditional roles passed on by their society, as the text's voice observes: "En réalité, elles vont chercher plus loin leurs effets, elles n'oublient jamais l'antiquité réglée" (*L* I.3, 12). So *Lois* is staging the text's own search for a form appropriate to the struggle for social renewal, as incomplete and transitory as so many of *Lois*'s contestations of the laws of conventional literary discourse. From *Nombres*, *Lois* takes over the idea that the writing of any text takes place with/through other texts – hence the constant presence of quotations, rehashed, reshuffled, rewritten in what Forrest terms "la réécriture parodique."[54]

How, then, does *Lois* rewrite *Finnegans Wake*? There are, chiefly, two strategies. One is an homage-cum-translation of selected sections of the *Wake* (the opening of *FW* I.1 and IV.1). It is no coincidence that the 1972 publication of *Lois* was simultaneous with the propagation, in the pages of *Tel Quel*, of Joyce's *Wake* through Stephen Heath's influential study "Ambiviolences." It was with Heath that Sollers undertook (and published the next year) a translation of excerpts from the last section of the *Wake*. One finds fugitive allusions to and borrowings from the *Wake* in many different places ("Gulls. Gulls. And gulls" [*L* V.1, 89]), but most explicitly at the beginning of book III, where the beginning of *FW* I.1 and *FW* IV.1 are conjoined in translation-cum-pastiche:

> en rune et rivière pour roulant courant, ravage battant dans le rebaignant, *passée la douadouane du vieux de la vielle*, de mèrève-adam se repomnifiant, recyclons d'abord, foutrement commode, circulés viciés *ou gesticulant*, le château-comment sous périphérant, *là où ça méthode, où ça joue croulant… Il y va-repique au volant*… Sandhyas! Sandyas! Sandyas! dourmourant le bas, appellant l'eau bas, résuractionné l'airveilleur du bas, ô rallie-rallie, ô rellie-ravis, ô reluis pleinphix tout brilliant luilui, soit l'oiseau en vie, notre râle écrit, nos sémématières sur l'ossiéanie…
> (*L* III.1, 41, my ephasis)
>
> riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs. […] Sandhyas ! Sandhyas ! Sandhyas ! Calling all downs. Calling all downs to dayne. Array! Surrection! Eireweeker to the wohld bludyn world. O rally, O rally, O rally! Phlenxty, O rally! To what lifelike thyne of the bird can be. Seek you somany matters. Haze sea east to Osseania. (*FW* 3.1-3; 593.1-5)

This passage runs for three pages total (and includes parts of the *Wake* other than the two crucial ones, e.g. "Sacer esto? Semus sumus" from the end of *FW* I.6 [*L* III.1, 51]), but the above excerpt will suffice. The emphasised parts in the Sollers text mark passages that are creative elaboration upon the Joyce passage rather than attempt at translation. Sollers' strategies of pastiche concern rhythmical/associative properties of language (reduplication in "douadouane";

53 "Des toutes livres de Sollers, *Lois* est celui où la référence à Joyce est la plus profondément inscrite. Comme dans *Finnegans Wake*—et souvent selon des procédés similaires—la langue éclate pour se reconstruire et se faire entendre en une musicalité étrange et violente. Une épopée inédite s'invente à la mesure de l'histoire et de ses rêves" (Forest, *De Tel Quel à l'Infini*, 548).
54 Forest, *Philippe Sollers*, 180.

alliteration in “vieux de la vielle”; rhyme in “croulant/volant,” etc.). There is also a tendency toward expansion, “unpacking” of the Joycean portmanteau into its multiple components (“recyclons d’abord, foutrement commode, circulés vicités ou gesticulant” for “commodious vicus of recirculation”). Several of Sollers’ punning neologisms have a poetic potential equal to that of their Joycean counterparts (“résuractionné” for “Array! Surrection!” and “l’airveilleur” for “Eireweeker” are particularly apt).

Apart from translation and incorporation of a fragment of the *Wake* into its own textual body, *Lois* “countersigns” Joyce’s *Wakean* signature in a far more relevant manner – by borrowing and re-using its compositional strategies, its project of writing by which the text is constructed and reproduced. Like the *Wake*, *Lois* relies on a series of mythical narratives and allusions that provide the narrative framework for the text, and engages in a similar kind of parodic appropriation of their styles and discourses, and a similar deformation on the level of the signifier that brings them into mutual interaction, so much so that the critical element entailed in parody gives way to the undifferentiated blend of the pastiche. The minimal reference, the elementary particle out of which *Lois* is construed, and the most common target of its playful variations, is the proper name:

> Buongorno giordano ! Guten tag friedrich ! A nous la transmute, l’éternieretour par le sous détour. C’est pas tous les jours. Au permier qui mute. Farewell ezra ! welcome jimmie ! C’est l’aurore monsieur isidore… (*L* IV.12, 87)

Giordano Bruno, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ezra Pound, Joyce and Lautréamont – there are many more other passages in which Sollers expresses his admiration for and alliance with these writers/thinkers. Added to these is Hesiod, whose *Theogony* forms the intertextual scaffolding of *Lois* – disguised in passage such as “lui dont le cadavre *hési*tant sentant l’*iode* a été porté par les dauphins dans un cortège marin” (*L* I.2, 8, my italics). This paragrammatic dispersion of an author’s name is a common strategy in *Lois* (another Lautréamont example: “Il s’y dore. Conte, chante ça, horreur, mâle, dehors! L’autre est en amont si je suis en aval” (*L* V.2, 92), proof of Sollers’ familiarity with Saussure’s *Anagrammes*.

A second-type reference is formed by Sollers’ rewritings of famous quotations, oftentimes with a parodic oppositional twist, functioning as both homage and ridicule; cf. “My little sleep is rounded by a life” (*L* VI.6, 130) or “Le reste n’est jamais silence” (*L* VI.8. 81), in terms of Shakespearean parody, or Sollers’ version of Lacan, “le docteur flacon,” and his rewriting of Lacan’s famous prosopopoeia in “La Chose freudienne” (“Moi la vérité, je parle”) as “moi l’aspérité, je parle, je parle, mais ça vient d’ailleurs, de tout autrefois, de futur en courbe et retourne-moi” (*L* III.9, 58). A third-type reference is Sollers’ punning, whether via paronomasia or the portmanteau. To take but a few examples:

> Jasons, jasons, il en restera pour nos argonotes. (*L* VI.9, 136)
> Progressant dans sa conne essence! (*L* II.2, 27)
> Tandis qu’argostronautes pansementés piochent lune ombilic limbé, terriens regardant performance bébé déjà face drapeau enfliqué. (*L* II.11, 38)
> Mordre! Femmille! Patrie! (*L* III.9, 54)

Then there are the many passages in which the textual flow breaks up into isolated exclamations, as in the following passage from the age of the dinosaurs to the Neolithic age: “Débuts rageurs cavernés caveurs. Chimie-tic! Anthropo! Dinobronches! Iganonde! Ptérodoctes! Azor! Popo! Pipi! Tec! Tec! Paleo! Neo! Et au lit! Tic-Toc!” (*L* I.5, 15-6) Or, finally, passages in which articulated language breaks down altogether (as e.g. in the famous *Wakean* “thunderwords”), what Forrest terms Sollersian “glossolalia”[55]:

> broum schnourf scrontch clong pof pif clonck alala toc toc toc cling skock bing glup burp snif pout pout paf crac pot clic crac tchhhh hé hé guili sluuiirp aaa mhouh mmouhou mouh plouts gnouf snoups tchi tchit chiiiiii ê ê ê ê slam ga hou gnin hop drelin drelin braang fochloour badabang ! (*L* V.10, 107)

Lois, like the *Wake*, becomes an assemblage of deformed quotations, of fragments of displaced discourse – a product of aesthetics of appropriation and détournement, in that it occupies what the *Wake* refers to as the “trancitive spaces” (*FW* 594.3) – those textual spaces based on silent quotation and pastiche, through the reworking of mythical narratives and the material deformation of the signifier. What to make of Sollers’ subversive strategies in *Lois*? Pure de-

55 Forest, *Philippe Sollers*, 193.

struction, notes Forrest, of habitual forms of language has—in the overriding ideology of the *Tel Quel* magazine and of Sollers of the period—a value in itself, resisting as it does the alienation entailed in any passive acceptance of a code which determines us from the outside as speaking subject. Still, *Lois* is no more than a limit—never did Sollers repeat or go beyond the radical degree of its linguistic deformation—and a stage in Sollers' development, whose direction was in fact away from the Joycean multi-layering of the written signifying matter toward forms that would allow a complex voicing to the spoken word.

H (1973) is a text whose most striking visual aspect is its lack of punctuation, capitalisation, or paragraph division, with which the text continues for a whole 185 pages. All external punctuation is abandoned, Sollers explains, in order for *H* to become injected with the gestural rhythm of writing, its melodic effects, and to perform its non-linear movement across themes, allusions, scenes from the present and the past. This foregrounding of the oral and aural aspects of discourse is the result of Sollers' conscious effort to create "the equivalent of a musical act."[56] From the narrative viewpoint, *H* is the production of an anonymous narrator defined as "the upsurge of the subject."[57] The form *H* adopts, Sollers says in the text, is not the "monologue intérieur" much used by early modernists—which often tended to reflect a notion of subjectivity prior to language—but rather what Sollers calls the "polylogue extérieur" (*H*, 42). *H*'s "illimitable subject" develops a highly mobile and differentiated idiom which touches upon a wide range of issues: literary, political, sexual, and historical. "Polylogue extérieur" grows out of Sollers's understanding of the *Wake*'s political achievement in misappropriating language, of freeing language from what Sollers views as its subjective underpinnings, even though "la question reste posée comment dire ça dans quel rythme comment transformer la langue écrite et parlée dans le sens d'une respiration" (*H,* 83). This freeing of language is a political undertaking – *H*'s narrative, blending the plethora of voices reportedly overheard by Sollers in the streets of Paris in May 1968, brims with references and allusions to Mao Zedong, Marx & Engels, whilst its literary pantheon contains figures such as Artaud, Montaigne, Nerval, Pascal and of course Joyce. The freeing of language also takes place on a personal level. As Champagne and others have noted, Sollers experimented with drugs for a period of time in early 1970s, the title "H" thus possibly referring to hashish or heroine, for "sometimes the text makes such widely disparate references that one is even reminded of the visions produced by LSD."[58] *H* continues Sollers' acknowledgement of the rebellious figure of Giordano Bruno, whose 1588 *Figura* adorns the cover, its intersecting circles representing the intellect, which sees and distributes everything, corresponding to the structure of *H*.[59]

The crucial Joycean feature of *H* is not so much its unpunctuated form—even though *Ulysses* is recalled verbatim and in the original, e.g. "limit of the diaphane why in diaphane adiaphane if you can put your five fingers through if it is a gate if not a door shut your eyes and se*e*" (*H*, 29)—as its various types of play with sound which foreground the text's aurality. There are units in which sounds are juggled: "faudrait pas confondre les *populations laborieuses* du *cap* avec les *copulations laborieuses* du *pape*" (*H,* 111); the repetition of one affix or letter: "nag*eur* travaill*eur*, gland*eur* rêv*eur* et touch*eur* ment*eur* et cherch*eur*" (*H,* 120); verbal skiddings involving the recurrence of one word in a series of words: "la période où nous vivons a un nom *bou*leversement sans precedent sur la *boule* qui se met en *boule* d'où *bou*lon *bou*loner *boulo*tter cham*bou*ler sa*bou*ler le camp impérialiste" (*H,* 121, my italics), etc. Exploiting and foregrounding the various properties and possibilities of language in general, *H* mimics the phases of linguistic awareness and performance experienced by individuals in their consciousness and unconsciousness. Sollers enjoys puns that play on culture and how culture forms the self, daring to make his texts unreadable, that is, so representative of con-

56 "It is the equivalent of a musical act, an act that I perform after having listened to music: Haydn, Monteverdi, Schoenberg, Stockhausen […] My dream would be to succeed in creating a sort of opera of language […] Thus since *Lois* as I draft I use a tape recorder in order to rework different passages according to their sound effects. It was somewhat like the technique developed by Joyce for *Finnegans Wake*" (Jean-Louis de Rambures, "Interview with Philippe Sollers," *Le Monde* [November 29, 1974]: 24).

57 "It is the upsurge of the subject; or of what I have been calling the subject; the possibility of saying 'I' within, at the heart of language. Language is not neutral, but it needs to be taken over by a subject, a subject I would call illimitable, numberless, rather like in *Finnegans Wage*. This is not a biographical subject, it is not a 'me'" (David Hayman, "Interview with Philippe Sollers," *Iowa Review* [Vol. 5 no. 4, 1974]: 101).

58 Champagne, *Philippe Sollers,* 47.

59 As Sherzer points out, "there is no main or single organizing principle at the center; rather, many satellites with their own centers are copresent, forming a polygon. *H*'s structure is precisely that" (Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 67).

temporary life as to be reflective on the nature of the self as it is produced and directed by mores and language. As Sherzer argues, succesions of sounds like "flouc floc" and "noum toum atoum" are like the babble of an infant; successions of words like "oui melissa dorée le miel des abeilles la paillettes ruche cueillie dans les fleurs abeille abeille" (*H,* 105) are similar to the ludic glossolalia of children. Further, the play with sounds, free associations, constant disjunctions, puns, and anagrams found in *H* are "characteristic of dreams and hallucinatory states; they are, as Freud and Lacan taught us, manifestations of the unconscious surfacing in signifiers."[60] However, Champagne is correct in tying Sollers' project in *H* together with Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (published in 1972) and reading *H*'s opening, "qui dit salut la machine" as reference to their concept of "desiring machine" functioning through the intersection of capitalism and schizophrenia induced by the need to conform to some model of the ideal family.[61]

Typographically *H* is a thick, dense, continuous flow of words. Rather than a long sentence, it is more appropriate to call it a long clause without interruption. For 185 pages there are no paragraphs, no punctuation marks, no capital letters; the only diacritical elements utilized are accent marks. In addition to the lack of punctuation and paragraph structure, there are never any quotation marks to identify someone else's spoken or written words. The book is a large intertext in which the surfaces are ingeniously tied together to create an ironic commentary on the madness of modern culture – a madness without beginning or end, a point brought home by the fact that the text does not open with a capital letter, nor does it end with a full stop. The text finishes with the questions "que crierai-je" (*H*, 185), a question answered by an intimate who says: "crie-lui toute chair est comme l'herbe l'ombre la rosée du temps dans les voix" (*H*, 185). These voices remain to haunt and to defy the text, which, in a sense, can never end.

Joyce's ear for homonyms that go beyond individual written words appeals to Sollers who admires Joyce's discovery of "cette espèce de surface qui doit se voir mais qui doit en même temps s'entendre comme si l'oeil et l'oreille étaient en train de déraper sur quelque chose…" (*TQ* 79: 44). This surface slippage ("déraper") of meaning is one of the strengths of Joyce that Sollers continually admires and seeks to follow. David Hayman was correct when guessing, in 1978, that "*H* is not a passing phase in Sollers' development" since "his current work-in-progress, *Paradis*, points toward more radical departures in post-*Wake* fiction" – that is, toward important modifications in the method of his novels. Significantly, he also suggested that the movement generated by *Tel Quel*, and now called the "new-new novel," should be called the "Wake" in a punning allusion to the book of puns.[62] *Paradis* can be regarded as consummation of the *Tel Quel* era of Sollers' writing as well as the beginning of a new one, bound with the *L'Infini* magazine. Marking the inception of Sollers' post-*Tel Quel* phase, *Paradis* is also a turning point in the direction away from Joyce's materialist textuality toward further exploration of orality and aurality of the spoken word. Houdebine has pointed to this difference:

> Sollers: là encore, stratégie très différente; pour m'en tenir à ce seul aspect de la question: non pas tant des récits, que leurs thèmes, ou séquences, repris essentiellement au niveau de leurs charges discursives, et donc articulés – notamment par le *rythme* (cf. le rôle de la syllabe comme lieu nodal des scansions) qui est en l'occurrence l'opérateur de différenciation-intégration privilégié – sur d'autres discours, à statut scientifique ou philosophique, par exemple, lesquels impliquent le jugement rationnel comme « moment » obligé de la lecture aussi bien que de l'écriture ; ce qui n'est pas vraiment le cas chez Joyce, me semble-t-il ; on pourrait presque dire que celui-ci est encore chronologiquement trop contemporain de Freud, et donc pas assez.[63]

"THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT IS A BASE OVER WHICH SOMETHING SLIDES": BEYOND *TEL QUEL – L'INFINI* & *PARADIS*

60 Sherzer, *Representation in Contemporary French Fiction*, 69.
61 Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 49
62 Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," 25.
63 Houdebine, *L'excès de langage*, 199.

Two events following the experimentalist/political peak in his fiction (*Lois* and *H*) in the course of the 1970s alienated Sollers from his *Tel Quel* enterprise: the 1974 visit (together with Kristeva, Barthes, Marcelin Pleynet, and François Wahl) of Peking to see for himself the results of Mao's revolution. Although fascinated by the exposure to such a radically different language and culture, the social problems of the workers and the women and the Maoist hegemonic political purges brought a certain sober tone from the returning group to the *Tel Quel* agenda, attenuating the harsh cries for Maoist revolution. Then, in 1979, Sollers converted to Catholicism, and started working on his Dantesque/Joycean Christian epic, *Paradis*. It was the installments of *Paradis I* and *Paradis II* in the last *Tel Quel* issues and the negative feedback from Sollers' editors at Seuil that led, in October 1982, to discontinuation of *Tel Quel*'s publication. Sollers realised that there was another way to attain his goal of social reform, and the opportunity for exploring another venue was provided by the journal *L'Infini*. Sollers directed sixteen issues of the new journal for Denoël until Fall 1986 when he moved the journal to the prestigious publisher Gallimard, where it has continued to flourish until this day.[64] *L'Infini* offers the possibility for an open forum of selected writers who share a vision for an infinity of affirmation even if it involves contestation and Sollers appears to be less involved in ideological control with *L'Infini* than he was with *Tel Quel*, concerned instead with a humanism that is tolerant in the spirit of the pamphleteer Voltaire and the Montesquieu of *Lettres persanes*. *L'Infini* has continued the work of *Tel Quel* in publishing texts by incisive young writers (e.g. the work of Bernard-Henri Lévy and his group of "new philosophers"), encouraging the blending of philosophy, history, and politics: a vision endorsed by Sollers from the beginning of *Tel Quel* without, however, continuing its political and literary radicalism.

The two interviews with Jean-Louis Houdebine from 1980 and published as "La Trinité de Joyce" (*TQ* 83 & 84 [Spring & Summer 1980]) offer much insight into the gradually transformed importance of Joyce for Sollers. The chief focus is "l'élément catholique" in Joyce's work and Sollers voices the conviction that "un tel débordement, un tel excès et, surtout par rapport aux dames, une telle aptitude à se balader dans la cochonnerie, ne peut venir que d'une éducation catholique, et par conséquent est prise comme un avatar de la catholicité" (*TQ* 83: 37). The focus, in the first interview, is primarily *Ulysses*, the point of departure being the conviction that "bien entendu tout ce livre, beaucoup plus qu'à Homère, est dédié à Shakespeare" (*TQ* 83: 39). Analysis of the opening pages of *Ulysses* and the strained exchange between Dedalus and Mulligan show, for Sollers, how

> le catholicisme de Joyce […] c'est bel et bien le refus de tout ce qui se ramène au paganisme dans le catholicisme. L'intégration du substantialisme maternel païen par le catholicisme est une de ces ruses par où il s'est donné le temps de révéler en quoi il est porteur d'une vérité insoutenable. (*TQ* 83: 41).

Joyce's project in *Ulysses* is ultimately "faire changer d'époque à l'inconscient. Il s'agit d'attraper ledit inconscient en formation nouvelle par le biais indirect de la parodie, qui consiste à lui dire ce qu'il ne pourrait en aucune façon entendre" (*TQ* 83: 42-3). Sollers reviews in detail all the various heresies broached in Stephen's early musing, as well as his rethinking of the incarnation and transsubstantiation doctrine, which all point to "une disjunction entre les fonctions du Fils, du Père, et de ce qui éventuellement ferait Verbe dans cette affaire" (*TQ* 83: 47). In the second interview, the attention turns to Joyce's scatological letters to Nora, which for Sollers are proof that "l'entreprise de Joyce quant au langage retrouve quelque chose qui aurait été perdu […] dans les siècles précédents" this being "l'affaire du sexe" (*TQ* 84: 64). Joyce's obsession with the language of transgression attests to how "dans le cas de Joyce […], ce qui revient sous une forme particulièrement bizarre, ça n'est ni plus ni moins que le bric-à-brac théologique" (*TQ* 84: 66). Moving on to the *Wake*, Sollers identifies its main theological problem in the concept of *felix culpa*: how does *guilt* become a *happy* one? Joyce's method of solving this problem in the *Wake*—unlike in *Ulysses* where he juxtaposed and combined the various heresies and orthodoxies, as it were, from the outside—is to treat this affair from *within*: "il est complètement dedans, il ne la présente pas comme une représentation, il la représente comme un événement de la voix

64 See more in Ffrench, *Time of Theory*, 22-3.

en elle-même" (*TQ* 84: 73). In Sollers' understanding, the voice—in the Catholic dogma as well as for Joyce—is that by which the paternal body manifests itself in the son.

After his conversion to Catholicism in 1979, Sollers wrote what he considers to be his best novel, *Paradis* (1981). He emulated Joyce and Dante for their impassioned involvement of Catholicism in their epic visions. The title *Paradis* is derived from Dante's *Paradiso*, but Sollers' work purports to be a parody of the modern conception of heaven. A continuation with *H* is established by the repeated suspension of visual punctuation, each page of *Paradis* is an unpunctuated block of words, whose visual density is further emphasized by the use of bold italicized typescript. This suspension of "visible punctuation" is, according to Sollers' back-cover blurb, in the service of a "readable eloquence."[65] Its textual material is composed of a series of catalogues about life in Florence and in Paris, based on Sollers' extensive research—undertaken while travelling between the two cities for an extended period of time—about the nature of "culture" in these two capitals of Western civilization. The work reads like a computerised database of the most banal to the most sophisticated details – an encyclopaedic parody of Christianity in Joyce's mode, which is counterpointed with Dante's work, on whose command of language and erudition Sollers based his portrayal of the pathos of modern Christianity. The text is an "artificial paradise" of messages embedded in sequences of ideas gleaned from throughout literary and philosophical history, one with a particular flavour because the narrator is similar to a troubadour singing the story of modern times:

> ***il faut être non seulment chanteur mais aussi d'abord écrimeur où vois entendez crime rime escrime mais aussi crème et crieur écriveur rivé au rêveur écriteur critère du tireur en tout cas plutôt écririen écrimien plutôt écrisseur crispeur que scribeur plutôt cricin que critien*** (*P*, 102)

That Sollers' gradual distancing from the Joycean model—begun in *H*—is furthered in *Paradis*, has been corroborated by himself in an interview with Hayman where, although so far always careful and explicit about his ties with Joyce, Sollers specifically contrasting his texts to the *Wake*: "To read my texts you should be in a state something like a drug high. You're in no condition to decipher, to perform hermeneutic operations […] The language of the text is a base over which something slides. That's why you don't have polysemic concretions."[66]

Thus, if in the *Wake* one encounters polysemy, the existence of many meanings in a single word, whether pun or portmanteau, and this practice of polysemy multiplies interpretations, then in *Paradis*, on the other hand, one can speak—together with Hilary Clark, author of a comparative Joyce/Sollers study—of a "polysensibilité," a sensitivity to literary texture, to the lapping and overlapping of phrases, stymying interpretation by a seemingly endless sameness, an impenetrable verbal surface.[67] A standard *Paradis* passage reads as follows:

> ***que la cause trébuche d'effet en effet toboggan lapsus décalé et plue elle se prend pour l'effet et plus elle s'y fait et plus elle y tient et s'y entretient et plus qu'elle y colle et y caracole felix culpa péristole péristoire chlorant l'oxydé tourbillon d'éveurs d'adamnées parmi lesquels j'ai aussi mon compte gobé mouche arachné toile or donc au commencement il était une fois un commencement hors-commencement vol essaim chanté sans rien voir forêt d'ondes nuée grimémoire comme c'est vrai le vrai du ça veut dire vrai vérité du vrai dérivé comme c'est dur d'y entrer béni d'arriver au vrai ça m'a dit lequel vous prend largo des pieds à la tête in illo tempore périplum et péripétie…*** (*P,* 146)

Self-reflexively, the above passage comments upon the formal consequences of freeing the text from punctuation, calling it a "toboggan effect." To add to this effect, several words undergo reduplication and repetition: "au commencement il était une fois un commencement" or "comme c'est vrai le vrai du ça veut dire vrai vérité du vrai dérivé comme c'est dur," where the phonic properties override semantic content. This effect is not without its philosophical implications. As Clark points out, in a non-punctuated text, where units of sense are not clearly demarcated, where they often overflow or interpenetrate, the notion of cause and effect can become blurred; and once the notion of truth

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65 "Pourquoi pas de ponctuation *visible*? Parce qu'elle vit profondément à l'intérieur des phrases, plus précise, souple, efficace ; plus légère que la grosse machinerie marchande des points, des virgules, des parenthèses, des guillemets, des tirets. Ici, on ponctue autrement et plus que jamais, à la voix, au souffle, au chiffre, à l'oreille ; on étend le volume de l'éloquence lisible!" (*P1*, back cover)

66 David Hayman, "An Interview with Philippe Sollers," *TriQuarterly* 38 (Winter 1977): 129-30.

67 "Clark comments further: "*Paradis* thus presents two very different faces to the reader: the eye perceives the cryptic, crabbed surface of the page, whose unpunctuated mass recalls the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and with difficulty penetrates it and divides it into units of significance; on the other hand, the ear picks up the rhythms and intonations of speech, familiar patterns against which the verbal flow is perceived, measured, and invested with sense" (Hilary Clark, *The Fictional Encyclopaedia – Joyce, Pound, Sollers* [New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1990] 129-30).

("la vérité") has been caught up in the verbal play and ambiguity of the text, the term loses its privileged status and becomes reduced to being one word among others, susceptible to transformations and manipulations.[68] Very early on in *Paradis*, punctuation is linked to the repression of unconscious desires, and the practiced lack thereof is portrayed as a form of "jouissance." The text brims with erotic situations, oftentimes juxtaposed with evocations of paradise, the two often being indistinguishable. The text speaks of a "relation between punctuation and procreation":

> ***j'avais immédiatement deviné qu'il y avait une liaison entre ponctuation et procreation d'où leurs resistances… à savoir qu'ils n'enregistrent que les points de rencontre avec leur image virgule tiret point virgule conclusion… ce truc donnait directement sur leur hantise à grossesse genre sésame bloqué en deçà de telle sorte que l'inconscient est bien le non-né hors-né jamais né…*** (*P,* 8)

There is, also, a strong impulse in *Paradis* toward encyclopaedic enumeration as when the phrase "the fruit of thy womb" evokes a digression into a catalogue of types of "fruit": "jésus le fruit de vos entrailles pastèque melon pêche melba grenade est béni" (*P*, 35). Although muted in comparison with *Lois* or *H*, wordplay and punning are also present, as in the portmanteaux "la rembabelle" (*P*, 176), a composite of "remballer" ("to pack up") and "Babel," "sécréateur" uniting "sécateur" ("pruner") and "créateur" (*P*, 93), or "cranaval" combining "crâne" ("skull") with "carnaval" (*P*, 97). Nor is *Paradis* without its parodic rewriting and détournement of famous quotations, particularly Biblical passages: for instance, "au principe de tout et surtout de l'humanitout était la parole et la parole était chez je suis et la parole était je suis elle était au principe en je suis profondément dedans fiche en lui" (*P*, 46) is a rewording of John 1:1-3, without however the humorous effects of neologisms or sexual innuendo.[69] As Clark emphasises, the Word is God, the divine "je suis," and divine speech or action is linked ("profondément dedans fichée") with identity, "I am"-ness, whereas in contrast, writing is the site of the subject's traversal by all the other subjects who have ever written, a practice of self-alienation: no longer the *Wakean* striving for "verbal signature," Sollers' exploration of individuality is that of the voice. Ultimately, the most Joycean trait of *Paradis* lies, as Forest has aptly pointed out, in Sollers' treatment of Catholicism *as a myth*, akin to Joyce's "mythical method."[70]

Paradis II (1986) picks up the last word of *Paradis I* and incorporates it into a Baudelairian series of images repeated throughout this second text: "soleil voix lumière écho des lumières soleil coeur lumière rouleau des lumières" (*P II*, 7), words which are part of an ecstatic poetic vision recurrent six times at various parts of the text. This time, there are no italics to distinguish this text, as there were in *Paradis*, the text entirely set in Roman type, as if to say that these are not specially identified words, as the italics suggest. A key intertextual reference here is an "enfin navigable courageus Debussy" (*P II*, 66), the composer of "La Mer," admired by the narrator who has also engulfed the reader in a bizarre dialogue that entices with the invitation "entre ici dans mon paradis" (*P II*, 113) while suspending satisfaction even with the last words, which are not final, referring to "mon échelle bien légère et triste et bien ferme très joyeuse et vive et bien ferme veni sancte spiritus tempus perfectum tactus ciel et terre pleine de l'énergie joie d'autrefois" (*P II*, 115). And even though the repetition of "joyeuse" and "joie" may refer to either Sollers' real name "Joyaux" or to Joyce, this ocean words is Sollers' verbal "orchestration" (another recurring word) of Debussy's works rather than a *Wakean* exercise in polysemy. Champagne speaks of the two volumes of *Paradis* as constituting a verbal hologram of epic proportions,[71] and what little remains of the Joycean avant-garde heritage in Sollers' output post-*Tel Quel* lies in its

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68 "Thus hesitations and play subvert the process of defining a word. When this word is "la vérité," a powerful concept—traditionally at the base of philosophical systems and of texts—is put into question. […] A questioning of such monolithic concepts as truth, cause and effect, thought itself is thus facilitated by the practice of non-punctuation" (Clark, *The Fictional Encyclopaedia*, 131).

69 As Champagne has pointed out, the humour of *Paradis* lies elsewhere: "The humor of *Paradis* is found in its game of messages embedded in apparently unrelated sequences of spoken text. The messages are inserted by the omniscient voice of the poet/writer for the reader to decipher. These are encoded signals that the poet/writer offers as guides through the text. The poet/writer is basically saying that he is the only one who can find the way through this maze of contemporary culture's language" (Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 51).

70 "C'est que la foi catholique, telle qu'elle a été révélée par le texte biblique et théorisée par le discours théologique, joue dans *Paradis* le rôle de ce que l'on nommera du terme largement impropre de « mythologie ». dans un texte célèbre faisant suite à la publication de l'*Ulysse* de Joyce, T.S. Eliot affirmait que la littérature moderne naîtrait de l'adoption d'une « méthode mythique », qui consisterait pour l'écrivain à emprunter la structure de son œuvre aux mythologies anciennes. […] A condition toutefois d'ajouter immédiatement que *Paradis* ne vise qu'à dissiper toutes les mythologies, en prenant appui—essentiellement sinon exclusivement—sur l'une d'entre elles : la « mythologie » catholique" (Forest, *Philippe Sollers*, 241).

71 "The multiple volumes of *Paradis* indeed constitute an epic. Their epic vision is a humorous one, however, because of their positing of a heroic model in the voices of humanity and in the heroic manner in which S continues to insist on publishing subsequent volumes. Sollers presents himself as the hero, as the poet who is recording this testament of his times. […] The stream of words in *Paradis* becomes a hologram that ironically erases

epic scaffolding, the device of the catalogue and recursive structure. Here, the epic catalogue seems to reiterate phrases so as to stimulate the recognition of repetition and involvement of memory on the part of the reading subject who thereby participates in Sollers' project of writing the chronicle of the culture of his times. Repetition and recursion, as in the *Wake*, becomes the bond between writer and reader in their link to a common past.

In the 1980s Sollers' novels changed considerably. Since *Femmes* (1983), they contain language which is transparent, engage definable narrative voices, involve character development, intrigue, and a more traditional format with regard to sentence and paragraph structure. In 1984 he published *Portrait du joueur*, and in 1987 *Le Coeur absolu*, both of which sold well.[72] The subject of *Femmes* is a serious one, even though the tone of the narrator Will—an American journalist in dialogue with S., an avant-garde novelist living in Paris—is skeptical regarding the winds of style, that create the various popularized roles accessible to women. The issues are feminism and male chauvinism – essentially marketable topics. *Portrait du joueur* is Sollers' humorous take on the difficulties entailed in autobiographic writing à la *Tristram Shandy*, which Sollers respects because of the shifting narrative strategies of the writer as a gambler and player of games. Sollers' narrator, Philippe Diamant, is an autobiographical voice which could be that of Sollers: not only is he French, having been born in Bordeaux, and has two sisters as well as many of Sollers' predilections, but in the following passage Sollers ties the name to his original surname Joyaux: "Remarquez, j'aurais pu aussi bien m'appeler *joyaux*. Au pluriel. C'est le même mot que *jouer*. Ancien français *joel*. Racine latine *jocus*. *Jocalis, jocalia. Joyaux, Diamant*, tout ça c'est du pareil au meme" (*PJ*, 224). Thus, Sollers arrives at his family name via a play on words which associates *Joyaux* with *juif* (Jew), then *joyau* (jewel), and finally *diamant* (diamond). As long as the *Paradis*-series employed comic intervention through the juxtaposition of textual fragments within a parody of contemporary culture, then in *Femmes* and *Portrait du Joueur*, "the apparently serious return to a more classical style of narration is undercut by the self-deprecating tone of the narrative voice."[73] In *Le Coeur absolu* Sollers is one of the characters as well as the narrator, an aging man beset by the fear of his loss of attractiveness to women and his appeal as a writer to prospective readers. Sollers, his reputation, and his talents, are the subject of frequent discussion amongst characters. The title suggests an idealism and a personal pathos far removed from the dialectical materialism of the politically involved Sollers of the early 1970s – nor does the conventional narrative style bear any resemblance to his daring formal experiments, which the *Paradis*-series of early-to-mid-1980s seems to have brought to a close. After *Le Coeur absolu* followed four more novels in which Sollers continued in his return to formal neo-classicism, elaborating on his examinations of Catholicism (challenging the Christian repression of sexuality), whose conservative style has the primary realist function of getting the message across.

Still, critics like Forest argue for a holistic approach to the Sollers oeuvre, relating as it does one and the same experience throughout, "the mysterious plunge of the subject into the interior of his/her own speech."[74] The fact remains that never before or after the *Nombres-Lois-H* trilogy was the experience conveyed by Sollers' writing quite as Joyce-inflected. Still, as long as Champagne's retrospective view reveals the following three crucial modes of Sollers' fiction,[75] it is quite indisputable that all three of these three modes (iconoclasm, transgression, and religiosity) have been dependent if not based on Sollers' engagement with Joyce's work. Sollers is an author who, most outspokenly and steadfastly of all post-war French avant-gardists, has based his theory and practice of fiction on the legacy of the Joycean revolution of the word.

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visual clues if they are read aloud. The reader must go beyond the materialism of the visual assault of these words strung together with no apparent structure just as Sollers himself goes beyond the materialism of his Maoist cultural position in 1974" (Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 59; 60-1).

72 As Champagne observes with irony, Sollers is "certainly proud to be finally the writer of best-sellers. However […] he is also careful about what this 'popularity' means because he does want to be read" (Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 53).

73 Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 55.

74 "Cette plongée mystique du sujet vers l'intérieur même de sa propre parole, qui, lui permettant de se soustraire à la mécanique sociale qui le nie—langage pétrifié, ronde sexuelle—lui ouvre la voie vers une forme de vérité qui est aussi jouissance" (Forest, Philippe Sollers, 332).

75 "The spires of Sollers' creative writing have constituted a moving spiral of his modes of iconoclasm, transgression, and religiosity. The spiral is still evolving as his vision expands. […] And Sollers is intent upon continuing that program of making the world less stupid by implementing a type of generosity that is tolerant of differences and allows others to be other" (Champagne, *Philippe Sollers*, 101).

PASTICHE, IMITATION, UN/RECREATION: POST-2000 FICTION IN FRANCE, BRITAIN AND THE U.S.

The previous seven chapters have examined the development of post-war experimental fiction in Britain, the United States and France as departing from the Joycean revolution of the word. The nodal points of this development were found as centred around three programmatically avant-garde writers revolting against the contemporary literary mainstream of the early 1960s. B.S. Johnson in Britain, William Burroughs in the U.S., Philippe Sollers in France, each departed from one of the three central modalities of the Joycean materiality of language as manifest in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*: Johnson, from Joyce's concrete writing, his typographical foregrounding of letters and words as distinct objects; Burroughs, from Joyce's conception of writing as plagiarism, of literature as forgery, of the word as always belonging to the other and in need of appropriation; and Sollers, from Joyce's destabilisation of the signifier by means of multilingual punning and the technique of the portmanteau. Their output reached its experimental peak round the turn of the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, with Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1968) and *See the Old Lady Decently* (written 1973), Burroughs' completion of the *Nova Trilogy* (in 1967), and Sollers' experimental triptych *Nombres, Lois* and *H* (1968-73). However, with Johnson deceased in 1973, with Sollers' *Tel Quel* discontinued in 1982 and with Burroughs embarking, in 1981, on a trilogy – none of the three can be said to have continued publishing important experimental work beyond mid-1970s, and very few continued in their wake: in the U.K., there is the exceptional figure of Christine Brooke-Rose, and, appearing in the 1980s, the maverick figures of Alasdair Gray and Iain Sinclair; there are Ronald Sukenick, Kathy Acker and Gilbert Sorrentino, in the U.S.

Following and revising Harry Levin's famous observation, in "What Was Modernism?" regarding the decade-by-decade alternation between "progress" and "regression" in literary history, one can broadly sketch the alteration as happening in terms of twenty year periods: whereas the 1960s were marked by a renewed readiness for experiment in the 1960s, often drawing on the examples of modernism and its successors, and the 1970s continued in this process (even though more in France and the U.S. than in Britain) in a politically and socially more conservative environment, then the 1980s and 1990s were characterised by a return towards conservatism, and the combined heritage of these two periods contributed to the eclectic fashion in which many authors in the 1980s and 1990s emphasised literature's political engagement and examined its social status, rather than programmatically striving to advance its techniques.[1]

FRANCE: HENRI RACZYMOW & PHILIPPE HADENGUE

One can point to the year 1982 as a coincidental marker of an end to the experimental periods all three of the French avant-garde groupings under focus here. The 1982 New York colloquium of the *nouveau roman* saw Alain Robbe-Grillet, Robert Pinget, Nathalie Sarraute and Claude Simon celebrating Jean Ricardou's absence and placing a renewed emphasis on the novelist's expression of his or her personality. The 1982 death of Georges Perec was the passing of one of Oulipo's most formally inventive and linguistically oriented members – and one who was also most programmatically Joycean. The 1982 discontinuation of *Tel Quel* and the inception of *L'Infini* marked the end of Philippe Sollers' politically committed radical poetics departing from his early-1970s exposure, critical as well as translational, to Joyce's *Wake*. Last but not least, there is yet another sense in which 1982 marked an end of an era, however symbolically: Joyce's work began to be published in the French *Pléiade* series, and Sollers and *Tel Quel* had been certainly instrumental in this acceptance by sensitising the reading public to the links between the avant-garde and marginalised historical predecessors. At the same time, the effective acknowledgment of Joyce's acceptance within French intellectual circles and the official "canon" neutralised his radicalness and lessened his importance: never again after 1982 would the Joycean presence within the French letters and thought be nearly as palpable as in the *Tel Quel* years.

1 For more, see Randall Stevenson, *The Last of England?*, 85-6.

In his recent study on contemporary French fiction, *Qu'est-il arrive aux écrivains français?*, Jean Bessière devotes an entire section to "La littérature contemporaine et sa mésinterprétation des avant-gardes." This misinterpretation, for Bessière, is due to how contemporary claims to a literary avant-garde are necessarily tied with the heritage of the "avant-gardes of the 50s, 60s, 70s, and as consequence, of modernism," which heritage is only possible "at the price of distortion and reification."[2] Bessière traces the constant reappearance of Blanchot's concept of literature as "the book to come" and shows how in generalizing this thesis, writers and critics embrace both the minimalism and sparseness of the *nouveau roman* and the existentialist imperative of a socio-political engagement, thereby, however, losing the pertinence of the avant-garde project:

> On perd cependant ce qui faisait leur pertinence : la littérature était, en elle-même, un projet et, par là, un contre-projet social. Cette constitution d'un canon et cette perte de la pertinence expliquent que les écrivains et les critiques réifient de manière paradoxale ce dont ils se tiennent pour les héritiers.[3]

That which was constructed as innovative and provocative by the historical avant-gardist project, now finds itself "a constant." Contemporary French fiction is thus marked by an "infidelity to what has been called the tradition of the new," and Bessière postulates the thesis that under these circumstances, neither modernist literature, nor that of the 1960s or 1970s, can be the guarantor of contemporary literature. That part of contemporary literature which returns to the playful representation of 1960s and 1970s fiction in search for exemplars, remains trapped in contradiction.[4] Earlier on, Bessière has formulated this changed set of conditions in which literature exists in the post-2000 situation:

> On vient à un paradoxe. Il y a des oeuvres que l'on dit littéraires ; il n'y a plus de littérature. La littérature ne peut plus être pensée comme ce tout qui garantit les oeuvres et que l'on doit supposer pour en rendre compte. Qu'il y ait des oeuvres n'assure pas que la littérature soit saisissable. Ce paradoxe contemporain peut se reformuler dans des termes plus anciens – disparition, déclin de la littérature –, utilisés, par un premier paradoxe, pour caractériser l'auto-continuation de la littérature.[5]

An essay by Henri Raczymow (*1948) entitled *La Mort du grand écrivain* (1994), can be read in precisely these terms proposed by Bessière: as nostalgia for the supposed "disappearance" of literature in which there is no French writer of a status comparable to that of Sartre, Robbe-Grillet, or Queneau. The choice of framing the debate in these terms is symptomatic of what Bessière terms "the pathology of belonging to literature" – the writer claims to belong to literature, and yet cannot belong to it other than inferiorly.

A similarly contradictory "belonging" finds its fictional counterpart in Raczymow's novel *Bloom et Bloch* (1993) in which Joyce's Bloom meets Bloch, a boyhood friend of "Marcel." Raczymow, a Proust-expert, expresses his belief that Bloom and Bloch are "brothers" in that they are "personnages devenus des personnes," and entertains the idea of writing a novel—to be narrated by him—in which they will be the protagonists. For Raczymow, this is meant to provide an opportunity to discuss the work of Proust and Joyce, to compare "ses deux heros," in terms of the topics of their shared Jewishness, Hebrew history and language, love, the philosophy of art, etc. They resolve to depart for the French countryside in order to write, together, "a great work"; however, their resolution quickly dissipates into a series of procrastinations, broken off by Bloom's decision to return to Dublin and Bloch to Paris. The narrator regrets that he no longer has access to them and must "return to his own world," having failed to "kidnap" Poldy and Bloch.[6] The text, though teeming with allusions to Proust and Joyce, does nothing stylistically experimental in their wake; in fact, its narrative, tracing the gradual failure of the two protagonists' project of writing a novel, "a great work," stages the impossibility or unwillingness to do so – an inferiority complex in the face of the fetishised "greatness" of the two authors.

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2 "Les écrivains et les critiques s'autorisent à se dire modernes et à proposer une telle pensée de la littérature parce qu'ils se reconnaissent comme les explicites héritiers des avantgardes des années 1950, 1960, 1970, et, en conséquence, du modernisme. Cet aveu n'est possible qu'au prix d'une distorsion et d'une réification de cet héritage" (Jean Bessière, *Qu'est-il arrive aux écrivains français? D'Alain Robbe-Grillet à Jonathan Littell* [Loveral: Éditions Labor, 2006] 41).

3 Bessière, *Qu'est-il arrive aux écrivains français?*, 42.

4 "Ni la littérature moderniste, ni celle des années 1950, 1960, 1970, ne peuvent donc être des cautions de la littérature contemporaine. […] La part de littérature contemporaine, qui sait, de manière exemplaire, le retournement des jeux de la représentation hérités des années 1960 et 1970, reste prise dans ces contradictions" (Bessière, *Qu'est-il arrive aux écrivains français?* 43-4).

5 Bessière, *Qu'est-il arrive aux écrivains français?*, 4.

6 Qtd. in John L. Brown, "Bloom & Bloch by Henri Raczymow" *World Literature Today* 68.2 (Spring 1994): 338.

By comparison, the pastiche of some Joycean motifs in Philippe Hadengue's (*1932) first novel fares much better in terms of the original stylisation and recontextualisation these motifs undergo. Like the *nouveau romancier* Robert Pinget, Hadengue came to fiction after a long involvement with the fine arts and a career of an artist. When his first fiction, *Petite Chronique des gens de la nuit dans un port de l'Atlantique Nord*, was brought out in 1988 after two decades of editors' refusals, it immediately won a few prizes and gained him a reputation. It is an anomalous novel, written in extremely long, tortuous prose, a "long prose poem" that tells an oblique story in a painfully halting, sometimes oddly punctuated, sometimes oddly skewed syntax, meant to represent the narrator's manifest suffering. At one point, a character mentions a boat christened the Annalivia Plurabelle – a nod to Joyce's texts which, just as Hadengue's, first and foremost challenge the novel-genre. As Taylor has noted, Hadengue shares with Joyce the ability "to make his reader feel that richly evocative, intricately associated details form a projection, not only of our objective world, but also of the innermost reaches of the artist's mind. A chronicle of night people? The chronicle, also, of a strangely peopled dream."[7] Hadengue's chronicle of the night features many enigmatic, indeed disquieting characters, such as a sinister personage simply called "the docker," several prostitutes whose pseudonyms all begin with the letter "L"; the enormously obese Le Tas ("The Pile" or "The Heap") and the character named Cornac ("Mahout" or "Elephant Driver") who once helped to humiliate him and now cares for him; Jonas the narrator and Clara La Blanche; and above all the mysterious adolescent Dedalus. Hadengue continues to write his tortured first-person narratives of deranged narrators in *La Cabane aux écrevisses* (1989), a novel in the form of "four blue notebooks" purportedly penned by a young drug addict abused psychologically by his father, a narrative written in a highly suggestive, graphically authentic style, followed in 1993 by *La Loi du cachalot*, which delved into the psyches of a solitary boy and a self-torturing adult with a guilty conscience. The appearance of two additional novels in 1999, *L'Exode* and *Quelqu'un est mort dans la maison d'en face*, brought limited by way of novelty, and so the wave caused by Hadengue's. In terms of the "forcefulness and memorability" of his writing, Hadengue has, in Taylor's estimation, "few rivals in contemporary French literature" – he wrenches classical syntax into perturbing forms, at times using words oddly, both effects contributing to a prose reflects "deep, troubled, unavowable suffering and tense, suffocating atmospheres."[8]

Bessière's scepticism regarding the significance of the post-war literary experimentalism for contemporary French fiction, therefore, seems fully justified.

GREAT BRITAIN: DAVID MITCHELL & STEVEN HALL

It will be recalled that after the 1973 death of both B.S. Johnson and Ann Quin, British experimentalism, with the literary historians, critics, and the reading public, fell into a black hole of silence akin to that of the *Wake* in 1939. It was with only slight exaggeration that, in the thirtieth-anniversary re-edition of Johnson's *The Unfortunates* by Picador (1998), Coe's introduction summarised the thirty years of Johnson's "reception" as follows: "To a nation of literary amnesiacs, B. S. Johnson is already a forgotten writer. […] It's less than thirty years since he died, but his books have been out of print for most of that time, and the tides of literary fashion have ebbed and flowed often enough to wipe his name from collective memory."[9] The exaggeration was there only because in comparison with the oblivion to which Johnson's work has fallen prey, the misconception of Brooke-Rose's work (not to mention the ignorance of Brophy's or Quin's) was still orders of magnitude greater.

Chiefly responsible was the cultural and critical climate in which the 1960s and 70s experimentation was received within the U.K. Emblematic of the overall tenor is the criticism of David Lodge, whose widely influential books *The Novelist at the Crossroads* (1971) and *Modes of Modern Writing* (1977), set both the scope and the critical apparatus in which the British novel was discussed, while promoting a type of criticism prescriptive of the kind of fiction

7 Taylor, *Paths to Contemporary French Literature*, 204.
8 John Taylor, *Paths to Contemporary French Literature,* Vol. 1 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2004) 201.
9 Jonathan Coe, "Preface" to B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, v.

practised by its author. Particularly in "Novelist at the Crossroads," Lodge is explicit in doing away with the realist/experimental binary to suggest that, together with pressure coming to bear on the central "compromise" of realism, possible alternative routes have branched off into different directions – both towards the "non-fiction" novel and towards "fabulation." In addition, Lodge posits a fourth choice available for novelists: to "hesitate at the crossroads" and "build their hesitation into the novel itself."[10] This "problematic novel" label turns out to be a convenient tool of accommodating formal deviations within a basically realist tradition, since it mainly consists of self-reflexive meditation or parody of realist and modernist conventions. Realism is "the road on which [the English novelist] stands." It is the main road, and Lodge concludes with "a modest affirmation of faith in the future of realistic fiction," concluding that "if the case for realism has any ideological content it is that of liberalism."[11] The trend, in British criticism and literary history, of blurring if not eradicating the experimental/conventional opposition, has continued till the end of the millennium, and beyond.

2001 may have marked a change for the better[12] in the publication and reception of the writers loosely associated with Johnson's avant-gardist circle who finally began receiving their critical due over the ensuing decade. But still, in an uncanny echo of Lodge's prescriptive pronouncements, when in 2008, another literary practitioner-turned-critic, Zadie Smith attempts to tell the story "about the future of the Anglophone novel," she has recourse to the identical metaphor – hers are "Two Paths for the Novel,"[13] and both are explicitly "realist," even though differently. Against Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*—and its "breed of lyrical Realism"—is pitted Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* (2001), whose rejection of the tenor of O'Neill's book is described by Smith as "a function of our ailing literary culture." However, as Louis Armand's critique of Smith's position in "Realism's Last Word" argues, it is precisely such critical narrowing-down of possibilities of experimentalism engaged in by Smith that is the prevailing disease. As Armand argues in his reading, in certain respects, McCarthy's novel isn't all that remote from O'Neill's: it at least simulates all the core tropes of Realism; it presents no barrier to comprehensibility for the otherwise dispirited reader. It may go even further than this, giving the reader the comforting impression of returning his or her thoughts to her, freshly re-minted.[14] And so, however much Smith's article may try to paint the picture of *Remainder* as "experimental," Armand's exposé shows that this cannot be "only because of its continuing subscription to key tenets of realist fiction" – even though possibly "materialist" in its "thematic concerns," these are nonetheless related in "a straight-forward, one might say conventional, prose style."[15] The contrastive example is Robbe-Grillet who compensates for the lack of linguistic deviation from the norm with his deviations from the narrative norm – however, neither can be said to be present in McCarthy's *Remainder*, and, consequently, in the argument put forth by Smith. Armand's argument—which pits Smith and McCarthy against the formal and linguistically experimental work of e.g. Philippe Sollers—concludes by metaphorically applying the concluding image from McCarthy's novel to Smith's article:

> The final image of *Remainder* is perhaps appropriate here – a plane flying in an endless figure-eight, a recursive loop which will last exactly as long as the fuel in the plane's tank. It's as if McCarthy is adverting here to precisely the trap that Realism in Smith's "Two Path's" represents, in which deviation always feeds back into normalisation: the perverse logic at work in McCarthy's radical materialism remains a *depicted* logic in which the novel's language never itself partakes. The picture may be of an open figure, a jet-streamed infinity written in the sky, but the form itself is a closed circle, as Smith well knows. But

10 Qtd. Stuart Laing, "Novels and the Novel," *Society and Literature, 1945-1970: The Context of English Literature*, ed. Alan Sinfield (London: Atlantic Books, 1983) 254.

11 David Lodge, "Novelist at the Crossroads," *The Novelist at the Crossroads* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971) 33.

12 2001 saw the first book-length critical study on Johnson's work, *A Critical Reading* by Philip Tew, followed, in 2004, by Coe's own monumental biography and by Picador's reprint of *Albert Angelo, Trawl* and *House Mother Normal* as the *B.S. Johnson Omnibus*. Also in 2004, the first conference devoted solely to Johnson took place, producing the proceedings as a book publication in 2007 under the title *Re-reading B.S. Johnson* (eds. Tew and White). A complete reprint of all four Quin novels was undertaken by the Dalkey Archive Press between 2001 and 2004. Currently, a first PhD thesis devoted solely to her work is underway.12 In 2004, Dalkey Archive also reprinted Brophy's *In Transit*, with an Introduction by none other than Brooke-Rose. In the introduction, Brophy is recalled as a woman who "bathed in culture," yet also as an author who "knew deep-down that writers can be forgotten: one of her more iconoclastic non-fictions […] was *Fifty Works of Literature We Could Do Without* (1967), the reaction to such a title today being 'what, only fifty?'12 Two years later, perhaps to also prove her wrong, Carcanet re-issued a twentieth-anniversary *Brooke-Rose Omnibus*. 2010 saw the publication of the excellent book-length study of the Brooke-Rose canon, penned by Karen Lawrence. In 2007, a first book-length study on Rayner Heppenstall, written by G. J. Buckell, was published, again by Dalkey Archive.

13 Zadie Smith, "Two Paths for the Novel," *New York Review of Books*, 20 November 2008

14 Louis Armand, "Realism's Last Word," *The Organ Grinder's Monkey: Culture after the Avant-Garde* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia Books, 2013) 116.

15 Armand, "Realism's Last Word," 118.

> *Remainder* is perverse enough for Smith to detect a countervailing force in it – a force which seamlessly expropriates even that which apparently contradicts it, completing the matrix wherein *authentic* and *inauthentic* are combined with disarming facility.[16]

The two contemporary British authors that could be plausibly pitted against the kind of "normalised" experiment descried in McCarthy's novel are David Mitchell and Steven Hall.

David Mitchell (*1969) is a celebrated English writer acclaimed for his thoughtful and inventive manipulations of the novel genre. His first three novels, *Ghostwritten* (1999), *Number9Dream* (2001) and *Cloud Atlas* (2004) employ systems themes – more specifically, Mitchell's novels deal with the implications of daily global interactions between people (facilitated by modern communications technology), and the resultant co-dependence of actors within this system. The nine loosely connected stories that make up his first novel, *Ghostwritten* (1999), present a fresh take on the form of the novel. Each of the ten chapters is set in a different place, typically at an unspecified time in relation to the other chapters, and features a different narrator or protagonist, as well as a distinct genre and style (the thriller, the romance, the fairy tale). During the course of the novel, certain repeated patterns and motifs become apparent, but the larger structure of complex interconnections is not visible until the novel's conclusion. Utilising a circular structure, *Ghostwritten* opens as it will close: "Who was blowing on the nape of my neck?" (*G* 3) The very title challenges the received notions of authorial representation and narrative subjectivity – one of the stories' protagonists is a disembodied Mongolian spirit in search of its origins, confounding the notions of personal identity by inhabiting the bodies of people from across the globe, manipulating their thoughts and actions and transplanting memories from one host body to another. The interconnections among the chapters of *Ghostwritten* are thin and often aleatory (a shared train compartment, a wrongly dialled telephone number, an unexpected collision on the street, etc.), creating a collage of narrative disconnection, to be pieced together in the reading process.

Number9Dream (2001), is structurally broken down into eight full-length chapters, as well as a final chapter "nine" that is untitled and unwritten. By contrast with *Ghostwritten*, it features only one narrator, a Japanese teenager from the provinces by the name of Eiji Miyake, who encounters the Tokyo underworld in his quest to find his father. The complexity of this novel resides in its juxtaposition of Eiji's Tokyo adventures with sequences of dreams, fantasy, and memory, some of which incorporate the diary of Eiji's great uncle, written while he was aboard a Japanese suicide submarine during World War II. This all-encompassing novel even includes the entire collection of children's short stories that Eiji reads in *Study of Tales*, and the journal, further displaying Mitchell's skill and creativity in developing and combining different types of narrative.

Cloud Atlas (2004), in structure, is similar to *Ghostwritten*, consisting of six interconnected stories with separate narrators. *Cloud Atlas* is even more ambitious in scope of its time-frame: it stretches back to the South Seas of the nineteenth century, moves forward into contemporary London, Tokyo, and California, and then an apocalyptic future, before returning to its starting point. All six of the stories in Cloud Atlas are representative of what Mitchell, in his interview with Begley, described as one of his serial themes, "predacity," and the understanding thereof is close in spirit to Joyce's metempsychosis as staged in *Ulysses* on the narrative level, and in *Finnegans Wake*, on the linguistic level:

> Literally all of the main characters, except one, are reincarnations of the same soul in different bodies throughout the novel identified by a birthmark...that's just a symbol really of the universality of human nature. The title itself "Cloud Atlas," the cloud refers to the ever changing manifestations of the Atlas, which is the fixed human nature which is always thus and ever shall be. So the book's theme is predacity, the way individuals prey on individuals, groups on groups, nations on nations, tribes on tribes. So I just take this theme and in a sense reincarnate that theme in another context.[17]

The theme of reincarnation is developed in far-flung ways, ranging from a nineteenth-century island near New Zealand, where local tribes viciously subdue the Maoris, to 1970s Buenas Yerba, California, the site of a potentially deadly nuclear reactor. Similarly to Joyce, Mitchell structures his series of interlocking narratives around a few archetypical mo-

16 Armand, "Realism's Last Word," 128.
17 "Bookclub," *BBC Radio 4*. 2007-06.

tifs or situations which permeate all and provide their conceptual unity. To take but one example, the *Wakean* binary of the fall and ascension: Adam Ewing loses his footing and tumbles down into a hollow whilst ascending the volcano on the Chatham Island (*CA,* 19); Robert Frobisher is forced to jump from the first floor of a hotel to avoid paying his bill (*CA,* 43); the car of Luisa Rey is shunted off the edge of Swanekke bridge and falls into the water (*CA,* 144); the author published by Timothy Cavendish throws a literary critic off the 12th floor of a hotel (*CA,* 151); the clone, or fabricant, called Sonmi~451 ascends from the underground shopping mall in which she works (*CA,* 208), and her growing self-consciousness is also explicitly described as an "ascension." Finally, Zachry Bailey and Meronym climb and then descend the Hawaiian mountain of Mauna Kea, Zachry confronting the temptations of the devil (named Ol' Georgie in the book) (*CA,* 282). However, although frequently praised for his versatile style, what critics have called "ventriloquism" (Mitchell's ability to speak from many different viewpoints) betrays a talent for imitation, not original genius. Sam Munson observed that Mitchell's "lexical flourishes and structural baroquerie" are a poor substitute for insight into human character, and Thomas Jones complained that "all the postmodern trickery in the world can't disguise the fact that Cloud Atlas is, like a matryoshka, hollow at its core."[18] Thus, parallels with Joyce are ultimately to Mitchell's detriment, as the conceptual complexity of his narrative is very seldom matched on the linguistic level – to measure Mitchell by a Joycean yardstick would entail denouncing his novels as imitative simulation, along the lines of Armand's critique of McCarthy.

Steven Hall (*1975) is the author of one novel, a number of plays, and a range of concrete and conceptual artworks. The title of his one novel to date, *Raw Shark Texts* (2007) refers to the idea of a "conceptual shark" (after Damien Hirst's famous conceptual installation), transforming it into a book. After a motto from Borges ("*Some limited and waning memory of Herbert Ashe, an engineer of the southern railways, persists in the hotel at Adrogue, amongst the effusive honeysuckles and in the illusory depths of the mirrors*") comes the following opening:

> I was unconscious. I'd stopped breathing.
> I don't know how long it lasted, but the engines and drivers that keep the human machine functioning at a mechanical level must have trip-switched, responding to the stillness with a general systems panic. *Autopilot failure – switch to emergency manual override.*
> This is how my life started, my second life.
> My eyes slammed themselves capital O open and my neck and shoulders arched back in a huge inward heave, a single world-swallowing lung gulp of air.
> (*RST,* 3)

By means of this heave occurs the single world-swallowing plunge the fictional world of the book where human communication is a vast network of streams, rivers and oceans, in which lurk numerous species of "thought-fish," the most fearsome of which is the "Ludovician," the conceptual shark itself. This shark feeds on human personalities and leaves them empty and amnesiac, to be mistreated and misdiagnosed by psychiatrists: hence the title's punning allusion to the Rorschach ink-blot tests. The opening presents the protagonist Eric Sanderson after having been attacked by a Ludovician. Gradually he starts to receive letters from his former self, "The First Eric Sanderson," whose personality was eaten by the shark. The letters contain tips and clues to re-educate his amnesiac future self in the lore of the Ludovician, and send him on a quest to defeat it:

> Eric,
> First things first, stay calm. If you are reading this, I'm not around anymore. Take the phone and speed dial 1. Tell the woman who answers that you are Eric Sanderson. The woman is Dr Randle. She'll understand what has happened and you will be able to see her straight away. Take the car keys and drive the yellow Jeep to Dr Randle's house. If you haven't found it yet, there's a map in the envelope – it isn't too far and it's not hard to find.
> Dr Randle will be able to answer all your questions. It's very important that you go straight away. Do not pass go. Do not explore. Do not collect two hundred pounds.
> The house keys are hanging from the a nail on the banister at the bottom of the stairs. Don't forget them.
> With regret and also hope,
> The First Eric Saunderson
> (*RST,* 10-11)

18 Sam Munson, "Mitchell's Lama," *Commentary* 130.4 (November 2010): 63; Thomas Jones, "Outfoxing Hangman," *London Review of Books* 28. 9 (11 May 2006): 35.

As it proceeds, *The Raw Shark Texts* becomes increasingly a gleeful mash-up of cinematic tropes – as Steven Poole of *New Statesman* remarked in his review, "You can imagine it being pitched, with deadly accuracy, as 'Jaws meets The Matrix.'" This becomes evident in the novel's concluding emblem: it ends not with words, but with an old film still (from *Casablanca*), exploiting borrowed emotion. There is, throughout *The Raw Shark Texts* as in its opening, a sort of naive insistence on abnegating style in favour of orthographic normativity, as in "My eyes slammed themselves capital O open," where the deviation is commented upon, and thus neutralised, or when the psychiatrist warns Eric about the recurrence of his trauma, which is presented as a textual blank:

> "In the past, you've written and left letters for yourself to be read after a recurrence. I must ask you – and this is very important now, Eric – under no circumstances write or read anything like this. It could be incredibly destabilising for you, possibly even leading to another-" (*RST,* 14)

As Poole notes, Hall's pastiche of the clichéd noir-genre becomes wearisome and monotonous as the text progresses, and the saving grace is Hall's occasional employment of the affect-less descriptive style of an early text-adventure game, to eerie effect, as in the following shark chase scene:

> muddy spray of split-second impressions—rainy-day football matches, yellow stamping Wellingtons, skidding trainers—a million tiny moment fragments were being blown free from the wet grass in a fast stripe of pressure moving down the lawn from the hospital towards us. A large conceptual thing just below the soil. (*RST*, 160)

The conceptual shark "itself," again, remains outside Hall's scope of description or presentation, only referred to as "a large conceptual thing." Then, on page 327, the text is brought to a sudden halt and after the sentence, "The surface receding in hiss and bubbles below my feet," follow seven blank pages, after which the "conceptual shark begins to emerge, composed of bits of text and inky shapes arranged into a picture of the fish getting bigger as it draws near, the book becoming a flicker-book for the next 40 pages. Then, gradually, the incomplete sentence "Fingers clamped my wrist and forearm and dragged me back up towards the surface with a" starts appearing in the shark's background, dragging both the protagonist and the text "towards the surface" – after its completion, "with a tug-of-war heave" on page 380, the text resumes its typographical layout. This is the highpoint of Hall's cinematic writing, abandoning words as referential signs and using them as ink-material out of which to compose an indexical image. Yet, the experimentation remains conceptual, and little outside of the shark's attack is done with the medium of language itself – apart from its momentary abandonment.

The conceptual character of *Raw Shark Texts* also consists in its multimedia presentation: each of its thirty-six core chapters bound into the novel itself has an analogical "lost" section, known as "negative" or "un-chapter" which exists outside of the main printed text. These extra "un-chapters" (also of Hall's creation) have been found periodically since the book's initial release, hidden either online or in the real world. The text, thus, exists also as hypertext or as textual "found" object. Steven Hall wrote to following statement about *The Raw Shark Texts* negatives:

> For each chapter in The Raw Shark Texts there is, or will be, an un-chapter, a negative. If you look carefully at the novel you might be able to figure out why these un-chapters are called negatives. […]here's also sticky negative discussion thread for folks to chat and post their findings. Happy hunting. Steven H.[19]

Thus, despite its rather conservative, realist style and language, *The Raw Shark Texts* embraces the avant-garde idea of a work-in-progress, of an artwork exceeding its single-medium modes of existence or presentation.

THE U.S.: DAVID FOSTER WALLACE, KENNETH GOLDSMITH & MARK DANIELEWSKI

The death of Kathy Acker in 1997 practically overlapped with the publication of David Foster Wallace's (1962-2008) *Infinite Jest*, a monumental 1,079-page novel in the great American tradition, with a complexity of themes and styles well beyond the scope of the present résumé, yet a work ushering in a new sensibility characteristic of much of contemporary U.S. fiction.

19 http://forums.steven-hall.org/yaf_poststt52_What-are--Raw-Shark-Texts-Negatives.aspx

Prior to the publication of his *opus magnum,* Wallace had gained reputation as critic and theorist who openly rejected the postmodernist/modernist divide, or the critical casting of his work as belonging to either label. Instead, as critic Marshall Boswell has put it, Wallace

> might best be regarded as a nervous member of some still-unnamed (and perhaps unnameable) third wave of m. he confidently situates himself as the direct heir to a tradition of aesthetic development that began with the modernist overturning of nineteenth-century bourgeois realism and continued with the postwar critique of modernist aesthetics. Yet Wallace proceeds from the assumption that *both* m and pm are essentially "done." Rather, his work moves resolutely forward while hoisting the baggage of m and pm heavily, but respectfully, on its back.[20]

This became first manifest in Wallace's 1989 short-story collection, *Girl with Curious Hair*, where the last story, "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," enacts a rewriting of Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse" in an attempt to outlines a way to transcend mere self-reflexivity. Wallace's clearest, most programmatic explanation of the next step he is proposing to take came in his 1993 essay, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," included later in the nonfiction collection, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again,* one of the most important pieces in Wallace's corpus of nonfiction, preceded the publication of *Infinite Jest* and in many ways prepared the way for that career-making book, a response to John Barth's "Literature of Exaustion." For Wallace, the self-reflexive quality of Barth's work, the way it challenges the belief in literature's ability to address directly the world outside itself, serves as a necessary and even useful response to the m project. In "E Unibus Pluram," Wallace accuses television as being the primary cause of this shift from a liberating to an isolating anxiety driving the postmodern project. The salient facts about television were its emphasis on surface, and its adoption of self-referring postmodern irony as a form of self-defense. The essay primarily seeks to demonstrate how current trends in television have succeeded in dissolving the subversive power of postmodernist metafiction Wallace distinguishes among three evolutionary stages in the responses of American fiction to this medium since the 1960s: first, the early work of Gaddis, Barth, and Pynchon, which engaged with pop culture; then, in the 1970s and 80s, with the medium's increasing importance, irony became fiction's ground-clearing tool, utilised with the idealist belief that "etiology and diagnosis pointed toward cure"; in the third wave, with which Wallace associates himself, fiction does not simply use televisual culture, but attempts to restore the television-flattened world "to three-whole dimension."[21] Thus, Wallace's own method emerges, one that attempts to join "cynicism and naïveté," as Wallace puts it, or "to turn irony back on itself, to make his fiction relentlessly conscious of its own self-consciousness, and thus to produce work that will be at once unassailably sophisticated and doggedly down to earth."[22]

In this respect, *Infinite Jest,* stages Wallace's attempt to prove that cynicism and naïveté are mutually compatible by fictional means, ironising hip irony in such a way that the *opposite* of hip irony, that is, "gooey sentiment," can emerge as the work's indirectly intended mode, in the service of fiction's primary task of articulating "what it is to be a fucking *human being*."[23] The influence of Wallace's elusive style in service of conveying his very basic message has been remarkable.[24] The encyclopaedic form of *Infinite Jest* most clearly recalls the tradition of massive fictions written by older post-war American writers, beginning with Gaddis' *The Recognitions*, and later including works like Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* or John Barth's *Letters*. And lurking behind them is of course Joyce's encyclopaedic project undertaken in and between *Ulysses* and the *Wake*, with which Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, based on detailed "data-retrieval" (*IJ,* 332), overlaps. Joyce is an unmistakably important influence on Wallace, acknowledged e.g. in his repetition of Buck Mulligan's adjective "scrotum-tightening" (*IJ*, 112; 605) and his shared *Ulyssean* interest in "telemachy" (*IJ,* 249), but by the same token Wallace is keen on foregrounding the limitations of encyclopaedic impulse. As Burn has noted, "its fundamental process is to seek exhaustive accounts, and to dramatize the accumulation of information, but most of

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20 Marshall Boswell, *Understanding David Foster Wallace* (Columbia: University of South California Press, 2003) 1.
21 Qtd. in Stephen Burn, *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest – A Reader's Guide* (London & New York: Continuum, 2003) 16.
22 A. O. Scott, "The Panic of Influence," *New York Review of Books*, 47.2 (Feb 10, 2000): 40.
23 Larry McCaffery, "An Interview with David Foster Wallace, *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13.2 (Summer 1993): 131.
24 As Boswell has argued, "since *Infinite Jest*, a whole new group of emerging young writers has copied the elusive Wallace 'tone,' that paradoxical blending of cynicism and naïveté, as well as Wallace's use of self-reflexivity for the purposes of moving beyond irony and parody" and his examples include Dave Eggers' *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* and Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* as "the most prestigious confirmation of Wallace's revolution in literary sensibility" (Boswell, *Understanding David Foster Wallace,* 19-20).

these efforts (like Hal's attempt to list everything blue in the headmaster's waiting room [*IJ* 508]) prove empty and futile exercises."[25] As the narrative approaches its inconclusive conclusion, Wallace's metafictional remark observes that the narrative is moving "toward what's either a climax or the end of the disk" (*IJ,* 807). But as the reader who reaches the end realises, the final pages are not really the climax, the end having been already related a few pages before, but instead an invitation to circle back to the beginning of the narrative disk to review the crucial information from the Year of Glad. Part of Wallace's aim seems to be to break with self-reflexivity and direct the reader, in a quasi-*Wakean* fashion, outside of the book, to find what has escaped the encyclopaedia and the self-reflexive, autonomous world of fiction. Thus, even though acknowledging Joyce as creator of memorable coinages and a pioneer of the encyclopaedic fictional narrative, Wallace tries to position himself in opposition to Joyce's materialist poetics based on the autonomy of the literary idiom. The last two examples, then, will concern writers Joycean not so much by their nods to or echoes of his work, but who continue in his avant-garde project of embracing the word in its technological contemporaneity and pushing it into a multi-medial, *verbivocovisual* (*FW* 341.18) presentation.

Kenneth Goldsmith (*1961) is a poet and visual artist, the founding editor of UbuWeb (1996), a large web-based educational resource for avant-garde material available on the internet. Goldsmith is essentially the habitual editor of one large project, contributing to both the study and practice of poetry and fiction as a writer, academic, and as curator. Both his artistic and literary activity can be described as driven by a preoccupation with "Uncreativity as Creative Practice." Goldsmith's 2000 text *Fidget* opens as follows:

> Eyelids open. Tongue runs across upper lip moving from left side of mouth to right following arc of lip. Swallow. Jaws clench. Grind. Stretch. Swallow. Head lifts. Bent right arm brushes pillow into back of head. Arm straightens. Counterclockwise twist thrusts elbow toward ceiling. Tongue leaves interior of mouth passing through teeth. Tongue slides back into mouth. Palm corkscrews. Thumb stretches. (*F*, 1)

As Marjorie Perloff insists in her afterword to the 2000 second-edition of the novel, this is not literary invention or stylisation à la Beckett, this is "*poésie vérité*, a documentary record of how it actually is when a person wakes up on a given morning" (*F,* 90-1). As Goldsmith explains in a letter to Perloff:

> *Fidget*'s premise was to record every move my body made on June 16, 1997 (Bloomsday). I attached a microphone to my body and spoke every movement from 10:00 AM, when I woke up, to 11:00 PM, when I went to sleep. I was alone all day in my apartment and didn't answer the phone, go on errands, etc. I just observed my body and spoke. From the outset the piece was a total work of fiction. As I sit here writing this letter, my body is making thousands of movements; I am only able to observe one at a time. It's impossible to describe every move my body made on a given day. Among the rules for *Fidget* was that I would never use the first-person "I" to describe movements. Thus every move was an observation of a body in space, not my body in a space. There was to be no editorializing, no psychology, no emotion – just a body detached from a mind.

Divided up into 11 sections, corresponding to Goldsmith's eleven hours awake that day, in clear homage to the hour-by-hour chapters of Joyce's *Ulysses*, the epic of the body. And as in *Ulysses*, different actions dominate different hours. Goldsmith's performative Bloomsday experiment, has a number of interesting consequences. As Perloff notes, telling the "truth," Goldsmith quickly discovers, may be the biggest "fiction" of all, it being "humanly impossible to track all of one's bodily movements" (*F,* 91). As Goldsmith admits in his letter, after five hours of the experiment in which he monitors his body as it gets out of bed and interacts with objects like coffee cups, he "began to go crazy." By 6:00 PM, "as a defense my body put itself to sleep," yet upon waking, realising he still has five or six hours to go, the defense mechanism is alcohol. Later, when he plays the tapes, Goldsmith finds that in the drunk sequence, his words have become completely slurred and in the last chapter (22:00), quite incomprehensible. So, in a Beckettian move, "I ran the first chapter backwards, mirrored it, then reversed every letter," bringing the whole text to a close: ".pil fo cra gniwollof tfel ot htuom foe dis thgir morf gnivom pil rewol ssorca snur eugnoT Eyelids close" (*F,* 87). The sentences from this last chapter were then put into reverse order, with the last actions coming first, and the first coming last. The only exception is the very last line of the book, "Eyelids close," which is printed in standard order, "creating a full circle

25 Burn, *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest*, 20-1.

of closure for the day. Further editorial interventions included the elision of all articles or "unnecessary words," as well as "all possible literary and art references," with the aim to make the text "very dry and descriptive" and "to divorce the action from the surroundings, narrative and attendant morality" (*F,* 92-3).

For Perloff, the question begged by the dry and descriptive report of successive body motions "quickly takes on an air of surreality as the artist poses the question of what it would mean to be aware of every physical motion one makes," with the factual account becoming "more and more idiosyncratic," and *Fidget* ultimately celebrating "the victory of mind over matter, and the inability to convey what we call body language except through language" (*F* 93). Let us trace the process of disintegration through the use of a few passages. Here is, for example, coffee-drinking at noon:

> Back on back of chair. Legs touch legs. Arms parallel arms of chair. Hands grasp end of arms. Legs push back. Feet flat on ground. Elbow on arm. Arms out. Cup to mouth. Swallow. Cup put down. Teeth outside mouth. Legs lift. Legs stretch on legs ninety degrees. Grasp paper towels. Slide to front. Left hand grasps right. Pull away from left. Left hand stretches. Fold. (*F,* 22).

Fidget's breakdown of bodily functions into their smallest components has a strong effect of defamiliarisation, a synecdochic decentring of human subjectivity, which also marks so many of *Ulysses* descriptions of bodily movements or actions. There are some strong poetic effects present here, too: the relation of human arms and legs to the metaphoric arms and legs of a chair or a table, the place of the teeth as one opens one's mouth wide enough to drink, the movement one makes when folding a paper towel – "all these take on an aura of gravity as if something of great importance is taking place, something in need of urgent commentary" (*F*, 96). Such self-consciousness, or more properly body consciousness, is gradually abandoned, with the entries getting shorter and shorter and by the time we get to chapter 9 (18:00), we read the following: "Reach. Grasp. Reach. Grab. Hold. Saw. Pull. Hold. Grab. Push. Itch. Push. Push. Turn. Walk. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Turn" (*F,* 70). Shortly after, the language of description disintegrates into nonsense and neologism: "Spinger thumb. Now is lift. Thumb to flip. Now thumb. Indents forefinger. Crease unnaturally lumpy. Right and right is face down on ground. Riched lightly. Arching four and blade middle and not touch ground. Still harrow. Body is sit. Licks wet" (*F*, 75) or "Unpegged chip of tongue. Stealing very hard ridge. Very hard skin in its septemberary. Hoo hoo arises. Giggle hits head" (*F,* 78). Goldsmith's transcription of the first chapter in reverse order also achieves some highly poetic effects, words achieving new unexpected meanings: a key word is "morf" (from), a word highly applicable in the context along with "woble" (elbow), or "pil" (lip). There is much "dna" (and) about. When finally the language game has occluded the multiform activities of the moving body, "Eyelids close."

Perloff recalls Beckett's remark on the *Wake*, which seems applicable, but what marks off *Fidget* as new development in poetics at the turn of the twenty-first century is its existence in multiple media realisations, the textual only one of them. There is a musical version, a gallery installation at Whitney, and there is also the Java applet e-version. As Perloff describes,

> Time is speeded up in the applet so that each hour period takes approximately five to seven minutes to complete. The viewing of the Java applet from any specific site would take about eighty minutes, and then the cycle begins all over again. […] When the text's linear momentum is replaced by spatial organization, words interact in new ways. […] In the applet, words appear as words rather than signifiers of X or Y, morphology and physical appearance taking precedence over denotations. […] As a visual and kinetic space, *Fidget* has an austere and silent beauty quite different from the printed version or from its oral enactment, for, as seen on the screen, this lang has neither memory nor agency. (99-100)

Thus, what Perloff terms Goldsmith's *differential* poetics is not the usual "intermedia" poetics (i.e. the bled of word and image or word set to music or recited on film), but the production of a work that exists differentially in alternate media, "as if to say that knowledge is now available through different channels and by different means" (*F*, 101).

Having recorded every move his body had made in a day (*Fidget*), or every word he uttered over the course of a week (*Soliloquy*, 2001), Goldsmith followed with perhaps the most famous of his "uncreative projects" – *Day* (2003), where he turns his attention to quotidian documents. The back-cover blurb has Goldsmith explain: "I am spending my 39th year practicing uncreativity. On Friday, September 1, 2000, I began retyping the day's *New York Times*, word for word, letter for letter, from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner, page by page" (*D*). What Goldsmith has termed "uncreative writing," here becomes a constraint-based-process, a creative practice. As Goldsmith

claims, "It's one of the hardest constraints a writer can muster, particularly on a project of this scale; with every keystroke comes the temptation to fudge, cut-and-paste, and skew the mundane language. But to do so would be to foil the exercise" (*D*). Typing page upon page, levelling the difference between article, editorial and advertisement, disregarding all typographic and graphical treatments of the word, Goldsmith reduces the newspaper to mere text, producing an 840-page book-object. In so doing, Goldsmith again out-Joyce's Joyce in the ambition of an all-inclusive single-day record of the ephemeral, news transmitted by paper: "a fleeting moment concretized, captured, then reframed into the discourse of literature" (*D*), even though the primary fictional precursor to his undertaking is Borges' Pierre Menard transcribing *Don Quixote.* With this simple transcription, Goldsmith undermines the culturally cherished values of creativity and originality in writing – Goldsmith asks, "Nearly one hundred years after Duchamp, why hasn't appropriation become a valid, sustained or even tested literary practice?" And goes on to equal his literary practice with John Cage's mission: "If Cage claimed that any sound can be music, then by extension we can conclude that, properly framed, any language can be poetry" (*D*). Goldsmith concludes: "When I reach 40, I hope to have cleansed myself of all creativity" (*D*).

In 2002, Goldsmith created a slightly different "uncreative project." In *Head Citations*, he presents 800 variations, paronomasiac and malapropistic, on famous pop song lyrics. Christian Bök's back-cover blurb describes Goldsmith as "the Napster of the malapropism" who "downloads the poetic genius of the masses as they croon to themselves in their showers." Craig Dworkin's praise even quotes *Finnegans Wake*: "'Our cubehouse still rocks as earwitness' to this book of earrors and close listing, as Joyce would put it. So prick up your arse and glisten well. Besides, 'e'erawhere in this whorl would ye hear sich a din again?'" To equate or parallel *Head Citations*—the title coming from "11. She's giving me head citations" (*HC*, 7)—with *Finnegans Wake* is absurd, of course, although the parody of the mythology of popular song is performed with a similar ear for possible eroticised *détournement*, and to similarly amusing effect. From "1. This is the dawning of the age of malaria. 2. Another one fights the dust. 3. Eyeing little girls with padded pants. 4. Teenage spacemen we're all spacemen" (*HC,* 7) via

> 673. Are you going to Harvard or Yale.
> 673.1. Are you going to Scarlet O'Hare.
> 673.2. Parsley, sage, rosemary and Todd.
> 673.3. Parsley's age grows merry in time.
> 673.4. Parsley's angels, Mary and Tom.
> 673.5. Partly saved, Rosemary and Tom.
> 673.6. People say it was Mary and Tom.
> 673.7. Parsnips say Rosemary is blind.
> (*HC,* 72)

All the way to "800. Sleep in heavenly peas, sleep in heavenly peas" (*HC,* 87), *Head Citations* brims with punning humour with some highly destabilising effects and memorable phrases.

Most recently, 2011 saw not only the publication of the co-edited (with Craig Dworkin) *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*—an almost 600-page compendium of conceptual writing, regarded as our contemporary instantiation of avant-garde poetry, whose official debut the anthology is supposed to launch—but also Goldsmith's *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*. Its opening premise is that writing, in the digital age of the web, has "met its photography," its technological extension that can transpose it into a whole new medium and simultaneously bring about a major change in its functioning: "Today, digital media has set the stage for a literary revolution. In 1974 Peter Bürger was still able to make the claim that 'in literature, there is no technical innovation that could have produced an effect comparable to that of photography in the fine arts.' Now there is." If painting, a hundred years ago, reacted to photography by abstraction, then, Goldsmith observes, the reaction of writing could be the opposite: "It appears that writing's response—taking its cues more from photography than painting—could be mimetic and replicative, primarily involving methods of distribution, while proposing new platforms of receivership and readership" (*UW,* 15). This "mimetic and replicative" writing is then contextualised as part of the development of literary modernity:

from Mallarmé via Stein and Ezra Pound to the language-poetry of e.g. Charles Bernstein. An important step in this process has been taken by Joyce's *Wake* and its original encrypting, through writing, the medium of the voice:

> James Joyce's thunderclaps are the ten one-hundred-letter words scattered throughout *Finnegans Wake*, a six-hundred-page book of compound words and neologisms, all of which look to the uniniated like reams of nonsensical code. […] Spoken aloud, it's the sound of thunder. This, of course, goes for the rest of *Finnegans Wake*, which, on first sight, is one of the most disorienting books ever written in English. But hearing Joyce read/decode a portion of *Finnegans Wake*, most famously his own recording of the "ALP" section, is a revelation: it all makes sense, coming close to standard English, yet on the page it remains "code." Reading aloud is an act of decoding. Taken one step further, the act of reading itself is an act of decoding, deciphering, and decryption. (*UW,* 19)

The change brought about by the digital age to the functioning of writing and language, Goldsmith observes, has been (and will continue to be) momentous:

> What we're experiencing for the first time is the ability of language to alter all media, be it images, video, music, or text, something that represents a break with tradition and charts the path for new uses of lang. words are active and affective in concrete ways. You could say that this isn't writing, and, in the traditional sense, you'd be right. But this is where things get interesting: we aren't hammering away on typewriters; instead—focused all day on powerful machines with infinite possibilities—the writer's role is being significantly challenged, expanded, and updated. (*UW,* 24)

The virtual omnipresence, in the contemporary culture, of text and writing as code, calls for a consideration of what Goldsmith dubs textual ecology, "an ecosystem that can encompass language in its myriad forms." His literary analogue, again, is Joyce and his meditation on the universal properties of water in the "Ithaca" episode:

> When Joyce writes about the different forms that water can take it reminds me of different forms that digital language can take. Speaking of the way water puddles and collects in "its variety of forms in loughs and bays and gulfs," I am reminded of the process whereby data rains down from the network in small pieces when I use a Bit-Torrent client, pooling in my download folder. When my download is complete, the data finds its "solidity in glaciers, icebergs, icefloes" as a movie or music file. When Joyce speaks of water's mutability from its liquid state into "vapour, mist, cloud, rain, sleet, snow, hail," I am reminded of what happens when I join a network of torrents and I begin "seeding" and uploading to the data cloud, the file simultaneously constructing and deconstructing itself at the same time. (*UW,* 27)

Discussing the compositional procedure by means of which Joyce wrote this passage, by patch-writing an encyclopaedia entry on water, Goldsmith even enlists Joyce as a precursor to his practice of uncreative writing: Joyce "presages uncreative writing by the act of sorting words, weighing which are 'signal' and which are 'noise,' what's worth keeping and what's worth leaving. Identifying—weighing—language in its various states of 'data' and 'information' is crucial to the health of the ecosystem" (*UW,* 28) – an official acknowledgment, on Goldsmith's part, of an artistic and ideological connection with Joyce's materialist poetics, evident in both his theory and practice of fiction.

Mark Z. Danielewski's (*1966) two best-known works to date, *House of Leaves* (2000) and *Only Revolutions* (2006) face the similar dilemmas and challenges of the digital age identified by Goldsmith, even though their reactions and proposed solutions are markedly different.

After the early 1970s wax and 1980s-90s wane of textual and typographical experimentation, a similar resuscitation of innovation aiming to expand the visual possibilities of textual organisation and the material properties of book as medium takes place in works like Goldsmith's conceptual works *Fidget* (1997) and *Soliloquy* (2001), or, more recently, in Hall's *Raw Shark Texts* (2007). However, nowhere is the medial interplay more complex and more far-reaching, on both material and conceptual level, than in Mark Danielewski's *House +of Leaves*, written over the course of the 1990s and published in 2000. It was perhaps with regards to this extremeness of Danielewski's first published 709-page text that Bret Easton Ellis made the radical claim, recorded on the book's cover, that it "renders most other fiction meaningless," imagining "Pynchon and Ballard and Stephen King and David Foster Wallace bowing at Mark's feet, choking with astonishment, surprise, laughter and awe." In a more reserved manner of praise, critics have endeavoured to capture *House of Leaves*' originality by various metaphors, mostly topological, like Martyn Bedford, who observed that whilst "too often, reading a novel is a bit like strolling along a safe and familiar path," reading Danielewski, "you feel the exhilaration of entering the fictional equivalent of an earthquake zone."[26]

26 Martyn Bedford, "Novel of the week: *House Of Leaves*," *New Statesman* (July 17, 2000, Vol. 129 No. 4495): 57.

The most concise description of the book's narrative structure, provided by *New York Times Book Review*'s Robert Kelly, that *House of Leaves* is "a story about a story about a story about a film about a house with a black hole in it," already reveals it as one of multiple remove and framing – and hence also the notion of *House of Leaves* as textual labyrinth, pervasive throughout its literary criticism, which always, in one way or another, seeks to provide precursors, labyrinthine authors anticipatory of Danielewski's project.[27] The issue, however, is not whether Danielewski's Borgesian or Joycean literary ancestry—to some extent acknowledged by himself—is or is not relevant for *House of Leaves* in the form(s) of direct textual allusion, structural parallel or aesthetic/thematic affinity. These two (and many other similar) critical identifications of Danielewski's literary ancestry underplay or outright miss that, first of all, what connects Danielewski with writers like Joyce or Borges is their shared preoccupation with the book as material medium participating in the progressive technological condition of modernity—the textual presentation contained therein as endowed with distinct visual properties—with text as *hypertext*. Second of all, and more important: what makes *House of Leaves* different from, and visually and typographically more extreme than, both Borges and Joyce is its temporal placement after, and thus in full embrace of, the culture of hypertextuality and the internet medium.

A possible synopsis-outline for *House of Leaves* would run as follows. The novel is composed of an extensive narration of a film by a blind man, Zampano, who dictates his critical commentary about the documentary film "The Navidson Record" shot by photographer Will Navidson. The film details Navidson and his family's terrifying ordeal living in a house whose insides gradually grow larger than its frame; the house's hallway mutates into a labyrinthine black hole that devours sound, light, and eventually human beings. Zampano's ekphrasis of the film is a scholarly one, incorporating analyses and judgments from literary critics and scientists, both real and imagined. After Zampano's mysterious death, his scholarly manuscript, The Navidson Record, is discovered by one Johnny Truant, a psychologically damaged but highly literary maverick who, in one of the book's many self-descriptive passages, encounters Zampano's text as a collection of multimedia scraps: "Endless snarls of words [...] on old napkins, the tattered edges of an envelope [...] legible, illegible; impenetrable, lucid; torn, stained, scotch-taped" (*HL,* xvii). Piecing together these disparate fragments, Truant weaves them in his own narrative layer through a set of footnotes that describe his hyperactive sex life, traumatic childhood dominated by a deranged mother Pelafina, and devastating experience with the editing of Zampano's text. Truant's version of Zampano's Navidson Record is then edited by the corporate entity, "The Editors," whose presence is noted by the monosyllabic "-Ed." Proceeding in an objective tone that contrasts with Truant's highly emotive commentary, the Ed. produce an additional set of editorial commentary, footnotes demarcating emendations to the text or acknowledging missing information.

Of equal importance is the book's graphic outlook and textual presentation. Each of these narrative voices is identified by a different font and is associated with a specific medium: Zampano's academic commentary appears in Times Roman, the font associated with newspapers and the linotype; Truant's footnotes are in Courier, imitating a typewriter's inscription, and, as critics have noted, thematically identifying him as the middleman, the "courier" of the manuscript; the terse notations from the Ed. are appropriately presented in Bookman. Furthermore, *House of Leaves* forms a central node in a network of multimedia, multi-authored forms that collectively comprise its narrative: the *House of Leaves* website (www.houseofleaves.com), The *Whalestoe Letters* (an accompanying book by Danielewski containing a section from the novel's Appendix) containing Pelafina's letters to her son from a mental asylum (in the Dante font), and the musical album *Haunted* by Danielewski's sister, the recording artist Poe. Before its publication by Random House, *House of Leaves* was posted online, twice. Indeed, *House of Leaves* is not only a layered narrative

27 Two examples: "Mark Danielewski's debut novel, *House of Leaves*, is a work of experimental fiction [… whose] roots can be traced back to familiar themes and important literary predecessors, most notably Jorge Luis Borges. Danielewski's use of the labyrinth as a theme, symbol, and form, and the mise-en-abyme structure of the text within a text within a text, as well as more direct allusions, underscore his debt to the work of Borges" (Natalie Hamilton, "The A-mazing House: The Labyrinth as Theme and Form in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," *Studies in Contemporary Fiction* [Fall 2008, Vol. 50 No. 1]: 3).
"While these narrative games are all good fun, *House of Leaves* adds up to more than playfulness. As it should be in such a nightmarish fantasy, what appears to be a barrier is actually a gateway. Like Joyce […], Danielewski isn't rejecting narration as much as customizing and turbo-charging it" (Michael Sims, "Interview with Mark Z. Danielewski" (*Bookpage*, Sept 2, 2007), online at http:// www.bookpage.com/).

with multiple narrators, set in an elaborately visual, concrete manner; it is a book conceived as material object constructed collaboratively by multiple authors and transcription technologies.

At the same time, it is a text structured explicitly as hypertext, and this for reasons and with consequences deeper and further-reaching than the use of multiple footnoting and framing superimposition. The technology of hypertextual writing is present on the micro, textual level. Every appearance of the word "house" is blue, the colour of an active hyperlink on the Internet, inscribing the Internet's interface into the book's print pages. Besides imitating the interface and navigation structure of the Web, *House of Leaves* positions itself as a node on the information network before its narrative even begins. Beneath the copyright and publisher's information is the web address for the official *House of Leaves* website: www.houseofleaves.com. Sharing the title of the novel and its publication date, the website is its fraternal twin. Thus, rather than viewing the central symbol of the text, the eponymous House, as an updated gothic/horror version of a (Borgesian) textual labyrinth, there is evidence enough to suggest that more appropriate is to treat Danielewski's *House of Leaves* as fictional conceptualisation of the situation of the book in a digital age. In his introduction, Johnny Truant warns the reader that "old shelters—television, magazines, movies—won't protect you anymore. You might try scribbling in a journal, on a napkin, maybe even in the margins of this book. That's when you'll discover you no longer trust the very walls you always took for granted" (*HL*, xxiii). It is not just the man-eating house that haunts *House of Leaves*; it is the mutation of "old shelters" (e.g. books), induced by digital technology. Zampano identifies the digital as the ghost haunting the film "The Navidson Record": "even though the spectre of digital manipulation has been raised in *The Navidson Record*, to this day no adequate explanation has managed to resolve the curious enigma" (*HL,* 335). The real ghost in the film, and the novel that subsumes it, is the "spectre of digital manipulation"—the presence of an invisible network of technologies that infiltrate our existence, our access to information, and our ability to read our world and its narratives. The "horror" effect of Danielewski's text is achieved through the well-known identification technique – by conflating the House with the book, he casts the novel's reader in the position of a reader *within* the text. This is evident in the pivotal scene when Will Navidson's brother, Tom, struggles to save Will's daughter Daisy from certain death. The house swallows him into its dark abyss, and in this moment of horror and ontological impossibility, the house is described as a text:

> The whole place keeps shuddering and shaking, walls cracking only to melt back together again, floors fragmenting and buckling, the ceiling suddenly rent by invisible claws, causing moldings to splinter, water pipes to rupture, electrical wires to spit and short out. Worse, the black ash of below, spreads like printer's ink over everything, transforming each corner, closet, and corridor into that awful dark. (*HL,* 345)

The "black ash" of the house's internal abyss is compared to "printer's ink" whose "transforming" power rewrites every space with which it comes into contact. The house is like a book: made of ink, it becomes a thing to be read and analysed, navigated and referenced.

On a macro level, the novel achieves this haunting sense of a narrative crossover between worlds and walls through its relationship to its multimedia network and in particular to Poe's album *Haunted*. *House of Leaves* promotes a networked reading strategy not only by rewarding the reader with clues contained in its multimedia assemblage, but also by providing, in its central text, a pedagogical example of a reader learning to navigate the system.

The success of the novel's pedagogical project is evident on the *House of Leaves* Bulletin Board at www.houseofleaves.com. A virtual space where readers form a community based on real-time communication about the novel, as of September, 2013, it boasts a fellowship of 34,105 registered members and a trove of 137,795 articles. Through the interactive internet forum, the reader re-enacts Johnny Truant's rite of passage, becoming part of the network that is *House of Leaves*: "Just as you have swept through me. / Just as I now sweep through you" (*HL,* 518). Reading across this network, the reader of *House of Leaves*, "you," is not only interpolated into the reading practices of the digital network but also pushed towards heightened awareness of how these technologies inform the literature she reads. The novel's print-to-Web-to-print publication history is also depicted in the editorial footnotes by the fictional Ed. who annotates Truant and Zampano's manuscript. One such footnote states, "Following the release of the first

edition over the Internet, several responses were received by email, including this one" (*HL,* 151). The same openness works not retroactively, but proactively. The production of the novel is an ongoing process, for the Eds. not only acknowledge omissions but also promise future editions: "Though we were ultimately unsuccessful, all efforts were made to determine who wrote the above verse [...]. Anyone who can provide legitimate proof of authorship will be credited in future editions.—Ed." (*HL,* 45). Such fictional promises to amend the book acknowledge that in a digital age, wherein information can be easily altered and updated, the book is never a discrete and complete object but always a node in an ever-changing network of information, interaction, and potential or "virtual" readings. As must by now be evident, the "fall" of *House of Leaves* (Poe—not only Danielewski's sister, but also Edgar Allan—is a touchstone intertext) as a narrative comes as an aftereffect of the collapse of text and paratext: Zampano's *The Navidson Record* is pure paratext, an ekphrasis on a film; Johnny Truant's interaction with Zampano's manuscript provides paratextual commentary in the form of a personal narrative; and the Ed.'s comments on publication serve as a constant reminder of the novel's processual re-shaping by its paratext.

And the "fall" of *House of Leaves* as book comes in the wake of its collapse of text and hypertext, creating a textual assemblage that registers the influence of digital media as a source of significant and stimulating transformations for the novel in a digital age. Danielewski's own pronouncements on the subject of the novel display his broad understanding of textuality that, in accordance with the McLuhanesque tetrad of "laws of media," becomes enhanced, rather than displaced or obsolesced, by the digital. Thus, if "the analogue powers of these wonderful bundles of paper" might "have been forgotten" in the internet age, "I'd like to see the book reintroduced for all it really is."[28] What the book "really is," at the turn of the millennium, is print inserted into a contemporary context and "reintroduced" to a specific readership, one that is digitally literate. This is brought home by the novel's "envoy" – on the last page of the book, after all the appendices and extensive Index, there is the final textual hyperlink that ends by opening outwards and connecting its print body to the Internet. Following the publisher's credits and copyright information, the last page of the book contains an "imagetext" consisting of vertically arranged letters forming the inscription "Yggdrasil," together with the following quatrain: "What miracle is this? This giant tree. / It stands ten thousand feet high / But doesn't reach the ground. Still it stands. Its roots must hold the sky." This image text is accompanied, above and below, by two dots, the one full, the other empty. In Scandinavian mythology, Yggdrasil, the tree whose branches hold together the worlds of the universe, is believed to be ash – the last of the innumerable self-reflective moments, referring to the hyper-walls of the house on Ash Tree Lane. In a final punning moment, this allusion is not only ancient and metaphoric but recent and material: for Yggdrasil was the name of an early, mid-90s, version of the Linux Operating System. This subtle reference thus links a cultural myth explaining the universe as network to a computer operating system structuring our Internet culture, a reference that is further enhanced by the presentation of a large, bold O beneath the stanza describing the Yggdrasil tree as an invisible network. As Pressman has argued convincingly, "the open O corresponds to the dark dot at the top of the page and represents opposing states—absence/presence, zeros/ones—the bits of patterned information that construct the digital world."[29] *House of Leaves* is simultaneously revolutionary and representative of the state of the contemporary novel in its conscious relationship to and incorporation of emergent forms by enacting the process on the level of the medium itself: presenting the book of the 21st century as printed medium open to, and evolving into, its digital and electronic contexts.

Danielewski's second novelist text, and the most recent to date, is *Only Revolutions* (2006), another book-object of the "metatextual," concrete sort, undermining several of the basic conventions underlying the very process of reading. *Only Revolutions* is printed with both covers appearing to be the front of the book. The side with the green cover is the story as told by character Sam, and the side with the gold cover introduces the story as told by character Hailey.

28 Sophie Cottrell, "Bold Type: Conversation with Mark Danielewski," *Bold Type* (April, 2002) online: www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0400/danielewski/interview.html
29 Jessica Pressman, "*House of Leaves*: Reading the Networked Novel," 120.

Every page contains upside-down text in the bottom margin, which is actually later pages of the opposite volume: thus, the first page of Hailey's story contains the last several lines of Sam's story, apparently upside down. These double-block texts create a parallelism, as the plotline and the book as object falls into two equal 180-page halves mirroring one another. To reconstruct the parallelism, one must leaf back and forth between the two page layouts, flipping the book in the process. The book is designed to be read in both directions: beginning at the title page, one reads the top parts of every page; then, rotating the book 180 degrees and flipping it over, one *re*begins at a *new* title page, again reading only the top portions of every page. The two narratives converge in the middle, so that on pages 180-1 the same events are narrated in unison by the two characters, though in passages of opposite orientation, one upside down relative to the other; then they diverge again. As critic Brian McHale notes,

> Parallelism here is *four-fold.* Each passage has an equivalent in the *other* narrative, but it also parallels (with conspicuous variations) another passage in the *same* narrative. The effect is one of *double mirroring*, as it were: mirroring above and below the horizontal line that divides the two narratives, but also mirroring *across* each narrative, on the same plane.[30]

Only Revolutions reworks the road-movie genre as its plotline traces the journey of the teenage couple of lovers moving through various places and moments in time as they try to outrace in an effort to outrace history. Their episodic story is told twice, once in Sam's voice and from his point of view, the other in Hailey's and the two versions are often at odds: *Only Revolutions* is a classic exercise in modernist narrative perspectivism, however, transposed from the conceptual/narrative level to that of the text/book itself. Since it is impossible to read both passages together at once, in McHale's words, "to integrate them at all requires a dimensional shift from the 2-D space of the page to the 3-D space of the book," a move "beyond the space of the page to the space of the *whole book*."[31]

If *House of Leaves* invoked as its media-intertext the internet, then *Only Revolutions*' circularity and the changes evoked in its reading process recall the medium of the cinema, as is evident from Danielewski's insertion of "periods" in the upper right corner of every 20 pages, referring to the cinematic technique of movie projection, resembling the changeover cues marking the end of a reel in movie projection. The conceptual tie of this book's circularity to that of the *Wake* is evident, but as the Joyce critic Dirk Van Hulle has shown, *Only Revolutions* employs also various specifically textual references. For instance, its very opening, "Bend by bend I leave every curve / blossomingly," in the upper text (*OR, H*4), counterpointed on the same page (upside down) with Sam's text (*OR, S* 357) mentioning "swerves of Peace," echoes the *Wake*'s own opening sentence and its "from swerve of shore to bend of bay" (*FW* 3.4). Toward the very end, on page 355, with a dot in the upper right corner announcing the changeover cue, alludes to the *Wake*'s "bend of bay" again, announcing the imminent "pause" button (359), the final change-over cue: "What bending she allways resolves. / What evolving she allways ends." (S355); "What resolving he allways bends. / What ending he allways evolves." (H355). These changeover cues, notes Van Hulle, "turn the readers into projector operators […] In this way, Danielewski gives a whole new meaning to the notion of a page turner. […] Before even realizing it properly, the reader unwittingly speeds up the narrative pace and becomes the one who shuts the. Door – to paraphrase *Finnegans Wake*."[32] Another example of a *Wakean* echo would be the scene of bee-stinging: "But O what a sting! Now? Me? Over with?" (S322), ends the page abruptly, and the next page starts with the word "Wake?" (S323). The corresponding page in Hailey's part (after her fall, *H*321) opens with "Hit? / But softly," recalling Anna Livia Plurabelle's moving end on the *Wake*'s last page: "Finn again! Take. Bussoftlhee, mememormmee!" In Van Hulle's witty commentary, *Only Revolutions* is a markedly modernist text in that its

> chiastic structure has the effect of marking a centre of indifference in the middle of the whirlpool of revolutions. Joyce seems to have employed this marker as a kind of stylistic equivalent of the penciled *x* with which one marks an interesting passage in a boo, thus drawing attention to epiphanic moments, comparable to Marcel Proust's *mémoires involontaires* or Virginia

30 Brian McHale, "*Only Revolutions,* or, the Most Typical Poem in World Literature," *Mark Z. Danielewski*, eds. Joe Bray & Alison Gibbons, Alison (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2011) 153.
31 McHale, "The Most Typical Poem in World Literature," 148.
32 Dirk Van Hulle, "Only Evolutions: Joyce's and Danielewski's Works in Progress," *Mark Z. Danielewski*, eds. Joe Bray & Alison Gibbons, Alison (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2011) 130-1.

> Woolf's "moments of being." But *Only Revolutions* does not seem to imply the same modernist suggestion that a special meaning could be attached to such moments of "beeing."[33]

Taken together, Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and *Only Revolutions* present a highly imaginative reconceptualisation of the role and function of the book in the digital age, as well as an innovative project of creating a language capable of responding its many challenges.

From pastiche and simulation to "uncreation" and re-creation: such is the movement of this brief concluding overview of some of the trends of contemporary fiction in France, Britain, and the U.S. vis-à-vis the avant-garde heritage. Whereas in France, this heritage, via the figure of Joyce, is the object of nostalgia (Raczymow), or fetishisation (Hadengue), then in the work of David Foster Wallace, David Mitchell (and to a lesser extent, Tom McCarthy), his materialist poetics become the source of some of their conceptual and thematic innovation, as well as (in Wallace's case) their aesthetic programme. Ultimately, in the work of Steven Hall, Kenneth Goldsmith and Mark Danielewski, the Joycean heritage is not only revisited and acknowledged as important on the conceptual basis, but also reworked to some highly original ends in the language and narrative structuring of the work itself, serving highly variegated, independent purposes – the only way for this heritage to truly stay alive.

33 Van Hulle, "Joyce's and Danielewski's Works in Progress," 136.

CONCLUSION: JOYCE THE POST-

It is very late, it is always too late with Joyce, I shall say only two words.
(Jacques Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce")

As long as the task set by Ellmann "to become Joyce's contemporary" has been undertaken in the present thesis by mapping a genealogy of post-war avant-garde writing as a "documentary organ" of the effects of Joyce's materialist poetics practiced in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* and theorised in the pages of *transition*, the present project has been marked by the peculiar double temporality of the "future anterior" described by Lyotard as underlying the post-modern condition. To paraphrase his argument already put forth, the effects of Joyce's poetics cannot be "judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories" to them, for those rules and categories are what Joyce's fiction "itself is looking for."

Lyotard's further conceptualisation of this paradoxical temporality poses a challenge to the whole notion of modernist/postmodernist sequentiality: "a work can only become modern if it is first post-modern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant."[1] So long as the postmodern and modern co-exist simultaneously in any culture at any time, their difference is not temporal, but conceptual – and here Lyotard resorts to the notion of the sublime, marking both as different from the realist mimesis whose task is to depict the world "from a point of view that would give it a recognisable meaning" in order that its audience can "decode images and sequences rapidly" and thereby "protect [their] consciousness from doubt."[2] The sublime, characterised as a disturbance of everyday sense-making (thus strongly reminiscent of Poggioli's concept of the avant-gardist project), consists in "presenting the existence of something unpresentable. Showing that there is something we can conceive of that we can neither see nor show."[3] The difference, then, between the modern and the postmodern, for Lyotard, lies in their different employment of this unpresentable sublime – in the modern, the unpresentable is "invoked only as absent content, while the form, thanks to its recognisable consistency, continues to offer the reader material for consolation or pleasure," while the postmodern

> would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable.[4]

Remarkably for the present overall argument, when providing two contrastive examples, Lyotard pits against the modernist Proust and his *À la Recherche du temps perdu* none other than Joyce and his *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* which deploy allusions, intertexts, puns and distorted language to disrupt readers' perceptions about what a novel—or text, or language, for that matter—should be and do.

A challenge, then, to "postmodernism" in its application as a period-marker, distinguishing between the modernist and postmodernist phases of 20th-century literature and culture, is inherent to one of its canonical formulations. Still, this challenge entailed in Lyotard argument, put forth in 1979, did not prevent two other highly influential conceptualisations of the postmodern from subscribing to a periodising impetus. Ihab Hassan's 1982 revision of his *Dismemberment of Orpheus* (1971) includes the notorious list of binary oppositions in which to capture the modern/postmodern divide, e.g. form (conjunctive, closed) vs. antiform (disjunctive, open); purpose vs. play; design vs. chance; hierarchy vs. anarchy; presence vs. absence; metaphor vs. metonymy, metaphysics vs. irony, etc.,[5] where the former is evident-

1 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) 79.
2 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 70.
3 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 74.
4 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 81.
5 Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 267-8.

ly supplanted and revised by the latter.[6] Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) argues that the move from modern to postmodern fiction is one from a focus on epistemological issues to an exploration of ontological questions. Thus, whereas the modern is concerned with questions of truth, knowledge and interpretation, the postmodern asks about the following: "What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confronation, or when boundaries between worlds are isolated?"[7] Again, a clear progression from the former to the latter is implied, even though no definite lines of division are drawn.

The particular interest in exposing these arguments here lies in how both Hassan and McHale, when later on dealing with Joyce's work, enlist his *Ulysses* (MacHale) and *Finnegans Wake* (Hassan) for their postmodernist cause. Heyward Ehrlich's edited volume *Light Rays: James Joyce and Modernism* features Hassan's "*Finnegans Wake* and the Postmodern Imagination," which addresses the crucial question, "How does *Finnegans Wake* accord with, how does it make itself available to, the postmodern imagination?", bespeaking the conviction that the book "stands as a monstrous prophecy that we have begun to discover […] but have not yet decided how to heed."[8] Hassan offers seven perspectives on this central question, each of which is punctuated by a counterpoint composed of "postmodern rumours and random reflections." The first, "A Death Book and Book of Life," broaches the issue of "the secret threat of *Finnegans Wake*: "Is *Finnegans Wake* outside literature? Or is it pointing the way for literature to go beyond itself? Or, again, is it a prophecy of the end of literature as we have come to know it?" And his answer is a peremptory yes: "That is why I call *Finnegans Wake* not only a death book but also a book of life, not simply an end but a progress as well."[9] A strangely displaced type of rumination, as late as mid-1980s and especially in a volume containing the work of John Cage or Pierre Boulez. The second perspective addresses the *Wake* from the viewpoint on its negotiation of high art, popular culture, and beyond. The third perspective, "Dream & Play (And Later Structure)," discusses the contradictions inherent to "the disorder of dreams, the purposelessness of play, the cunning of structure," contradictions on which "*Finnegans Wake* balances itself." The paradox examined here is one of the *Wake* being "a dream book," and thus "an effort of huge wakefulness." However, this dream needs to be understood properly: "Whether Joyce ever dreamt or not, we must recognize that his words constitute a metalanguage, not a dream." The "dream element" in the *Wake*, is simply the author's freedom "to alter language and reality."[10]

The fourth perspective, "Structure," notes with palpable irony that "all good structuralists go to *Finnegans Wake* on their way to heaven, and that is perhaps why they are so long in reaching their destination," for *Finnegans Wake*, "supremely aware of itself as structure" though it might be, is also "aware of the more obscure need to de-structure itself." Hassan's proposed pathway is to approach the *Wake* by means of "coincidence as structural principle," which denotes "both identity and accident, recurrence and divergence," implying "the frightening disorder that every fanatic order itself implies."[11] The fifth and sixth perspectives have to do with "Eroticism" and "The Language of Babel," respectively, and in a "Counterpoint" to the latter, Joyce's "revolution of language" as an exploration of the linguistic autonomy and materiality resurfaces, this time only re-dubbed postmodernist:

> The postmodern endeavour in literature acknowledges that words have severed themselves from things, that language can now only refer to language. And what book, or rather what language, calls attention to itself as language, as ineluctably verbal and quite finally so, more than *Finnegans Wake*?[12]

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6 Even though even Hassan himself is careful to voice a caveat: "Yet the dichotomies this table represents remain insecure, equivocal. For differences shift, defer. even collapse; concepts in one vertical column are not all equivalent; and inversions and exceptions, in both modernism and postmodernism, abound" (Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 269).
7 Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987) 10.
8 Ihab Hassan, "*Finnegans Wake* and the Postmodern Imagination," *Light Rays: James Joyce and Modernism*, ed. Heyward Ehrlich (New York: New Horizon Press Publishers, 1984) 93.
9 Hassan, "*Finnegans Wake* and the Postmodern Imagination," 95.
10 Hassan, "*Finnegans Wake* and the Postmodern Imagination," 99.
11 Hassan, "*Finnegans Wake* and the Postmodern Imagination," 100-1.
12 Hassan, "*Finnegans Wake* and the Postmodern Imagination," 105.

In the seventh and last section, Hassan effectively goes on to disprove his construction of a postmodernist *Wake* by regarding it as aspiring "to the condition of a universal consciousness," and the strategies deployed in the service of this goal are "as numerous as they have grown familiar." This recourse to the *Wake*'s modernist impulse is further strengthened in how, for Hassan, "the totality of the book, its effort toward a universal consciousness, fails to parody or subvert itself, fails to ironize itself."[13] The *Wake*, then, seems to subvert not only Hassan's sense of a postmodernist "post-ness" vis-à-vis modernism (published as the apex of the modernist period by one of its supposed grandmasters), but also effectively disprove some of his binary oppositions that purported to define the postmodernist in opposition to the modern.

MacHale's *Constructing Postmodernism* devotes a whole chapter to "The Case of *Ulysses*" and commences by observing that in spite of its traditional alignment with High Modernism, *Ulysses* "has lately entered upon a strange second career as a *post*modernist text."[14] This is due to its being composed of "two differentiable texts placed side by side, one of them the hallmark of High Modernism, the other something else," a something else that has recently been called "postmodernism," the relation between these two, for McHale, being "one of *excess* and *parody*: the poetics of the postmodernist chapters *exceed* the modernist poetics of the 'normal' chapters, and the postmodernist chapters *parody* modernist poetics."[15] McHale proceeds with a discussion of these two *halves*, one after the other. He examines the "modernist *Ulysses*" by means of two formal methodological sub-categories, *mobile consciousness* and *parallax*, with McHale's "other, postmodernist" *Ulysses* both pushing "the modernist poetics of mobile consciousness and parallax to a point of excess where it topples into something else," and parodically undermining that modernist poetics.[16] For his examination, he chooses the categories of the *mobile world* and *discursive parallax*, generating a postmodernist undecidability based on how "a discourse implies a world," encoding a particular version of reality, and Joyce's multiple discursive versions of reality end up inevitably "mutually incompatible, incommensurable."[17] Instead of finding fault with the oppositionality between the modern and the postmodern and perhaps trying to reconcile them, MacHale resorts to other critics' reconcepualisations of the notion of modernism that would allow him to accommodate its supposed other, although clearly the problem identified here has clearly more to do with critical terminology and reading methods rather than with anything "intrinsic" to Joyce's text. McHale refers to Helmut Lethen's *Modernism Cut in Half*, which argues against the officially presented High Modernism of the likes of Thomas Mann, which he terms "conservative" in that it excludes its avant-garde and consequently projects it onto postmodernism. In this context, Lyotard's contention that postmodernism presents modernism in its nascent state, and therefore *precedes* modernism, resonates again: postmodernism "thus precedes the consolidation of modernism—it is modernism with the anomalous avant-garde still left in." This process, as Lyotard remarks, is constant; McHale argues that what Lyotard means by this is, in effect, "not the particular history of the phases of the twentieth century but a general historical principle whereby each successive cultural phase recuperates what has been excluded and 'left over' from the preceding phase and bases its 'new' poetics on that leftover."[18] Thus, paradoxically, the most conclusive point McHale's book seems to make about Joyce vis-à-vis postmodernism is its very title: that postmodernism itself is a *construct*, a notion within the critical discourse used as shorthand, to denote both a period and aesthetics – McHale's exemplary authors include Thomas Pynchon and Christine Brooke-Rose, to whom he devotes large sections of his study, but also many others: Acker, Barth, Burroughs, Federman, Gray, Sorrentino, Sukenick…

The present genealogy has documented the highly sceptical, if not hostile, attitude toward the postmodernist label in many various instances and with the most variegated writers. Anthony Burgess never tired of stressing the liveli-

13 Hassan, "*Finnegans Wake* and the Postmodern Imagination," 107.
14 Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992) 42.
15 McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism*, 43; 44.
16 McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism*, 47-8.
17 McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism*, 54.
18 McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism*, 56.

ness of Joyce's heritage for the literature of his day: "We should all now be writing novels like *Finnegans Wake*, not necessarily so obscure or so large, but starting on the way Joyce has shown in exploring the resources of the language," he observed in 1964.[19] Many years later, his view was quite the same: "We've got a hell of a long way to go with modernism. Some people think *Finnegans Wake* is the end of modernism [... but] I think we're still in a modernist phase."[20]

A whole section of Brooke-Rose's *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* is devoted to addressing the question, "Postmodernism – what is it?", and presenting Brooke-Rose's view. Both the terms, i.e. "modern" and "postmodern," are found "peculiarly unimaginative for a criticism that purports to deal with phenomena of which the most striking feature is imagination," this for three reasons: "They are purely historical, period words, and in that sense traditional," second, "they are self-cancelling terms, and this may be particularly apt for an art continually described as self-cancelling," and finally, "by way of corollary, the terms are simply lazy, inadequate."[21] A consequent problem arises, then, with any attempt at defining the notions in terms of canon: "[If] we are going to put D.H. Lawrence [...] and Hemingway and Proust and Kafka and Pound and Yeats and Eliot and Faulkner and Mann and Gide and Musil and Stevens and Virginia Woolf and Joyce etc. into the same modernist ragbag, the term becomes meaningless except as a purely period term, itself obsolescent since modern by definition means now." Conversely, when Ihab Hassan includes within the group of "antecedents of postmodernism" writers as divergent and variegated as "Sterne, Sade, Blake, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Jarry, Tzara, Hoffmannstahl, Gertrude Stein, the later Joyce, the later Pound, Duchamp, Artaud, Roussel, Broch, Queneau and Kafka," he has, to Brooke-Rose's mind merely "reinvented our ancestors," as one "always shall,"[22] yet it is precisely this "always" that makes Hassan's label too general for it to be applicable. Hassan is critiqued by Brooke-Rose as prone to sweeping generalisations even when focused on the postmodernism of one text – again, the *Wake*.[23]

Alasdair Gray, another frequent exemplar of Hassan's or McHale's postmodernist accounts, himself averred in an interview that "I have never found a definition of postmodernism that gives me a distinct idea of it. If the main characteristic is an author who describes himself as a character in his work, then Dante, Chaucer, Langland, and Wordsworth are as postmodern as James Joyce, who is merely modern."[24]

John Barth's 1980 essay, "Literature of Replenishment," was written as "a companion and corrective" to his 1967 "Literature of Exhaustion." Its most striking difference is its engagement with critical theorisations of so-called postmodernism, a term which Barth finds useless and subjects to mockery:

> while some of the writers labeled as postmodernists, myself included, may happen to take the label with some seriousness, a principal activity of postmodernist critics [...], writing in postmodernist journal or speaking at postmodernist symposia, consists in disagreeing about what postmodernism is or ought to be, and thus about who should be admitted to the club—or clubbed into admission.[25]

Barth approaches the modernist/postmodernist relation via a consciously Joycean simile: "one is reminded," he writes, "of the early James Joyce's fascination with the word *gnomon* in its negative geometric sense: the figure that remains when a parallelogram has been removed from a similar but larger parallelogram with which it shares a common corner."[26] This inferiority of postmodernism vis-à-vis modernism, in turn, calls for a (re)definition of modernism itself, for the "post-"ness implies that modernism is over and consummated and, as such, estimable. On the one hand, Barth agrees that the "adversary reaction called modernist art," aimed against "the rigidities and other limitations of nineteenth-century bourgeois realism," is one which nowadays has nothing to react against as "these nineteenth-century

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19 Anthony Burgess, "Speaking of Writing—VIII," *Times* (16 January, 1964): 13.
20 Samuel Coale, "An Interview with Anthony Burgess," *Modern Fiction Studies* 27 (Autumn, 1981): 444.
21 Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 344.
22 Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, 344-5
23 "Later Hassan does give us some more specific 'modern forms' arising, directly or indirectly, out of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the structure of which is 'both structurally over-determined and semantically under-determined,' but with coincidence as structural principle (identity as accident, recurrence and divergence), as well as the gratuitousness of every creative act" (Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, 349).
24 Mark Axelrod, "An Epistolary Interview, Mostly with Alasdair Gray," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15.2 (Summer 1995): 113.
25 John Barth, *The Friday Book – Essays and Other Nonfiction* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984) 194.
26 Barth, *The Friday Book*, 196.

rigidities are virtually no more." As such, "it *belongs* to the first half of our century" and "the present reaction against it is perfectly understandable," both "because the modernist coinages are by now more or less debased common currency and because we really don't *need* more *Finnegans Wake* and *Pisan Cantos*, each with its staff of tenured professors to explain it to us."[27]

With Joyce, argues Donald Barthelme, "fiction altered its placement in the world in a movement so radical that its consequences have yet to be assimilated." Departing from the well-known dictum of Beckett's essay on the "Work in Progress," Barthelme notes that the consequences of creating literary "objects" as "worlds" in themselves present a "stunning strategic gain for the writer. He has in fact removed himself from the work, just as Joyce instructed him to do." What is further characteristic of the object is

> that it does not declare itself at once, in a rush of pleasant naiveté. Joyce enforces the way in which *Finnegans Wake* is to be read. He conceived the reading to be a lifetime project, the book remaining always *there*, like the landscape surrounding the reader's home or the buildings bounding the reader's apartment. The book remains problematic, unexhausted.[28]

To these writers' theoretical concerns can be added many other examples of so-called postmodernist practice aligning itself, in a Lyotardian fashion, with some quintessential modernist/avant-gardist projects. To take but the example of the collage, speaking of Brion Gysin's discovery and his own application of the cut-up method, Burroughs notes how the modernist heritage present in Eliot's phrase, "Who is the third who walks always beside you?," was adopted by Burroughs and Gysin "to designate the collaborative consciousness which could be generated by the cut-up method: a third mind free of the restrictions of context, culture, and subjectivity."[29] In many respects Burroughs' heir, Iain Sinclair states (some forty years later) that his use of Watkins' psycho-geographical concept is a means to an aesthetic end steeped in modernist poetics of juxtaposition and collage:

> All of it to be digested, absorbed, fed into the great work. Wasn't that the essence of the modernist contract? Multi-voiced lyric seizures countered by drifts of unadorned fact, naked source material spliced into domesticated trivia, anecdotes, borrowings, found footage. Redundant. As much use as a whale carved from margarine, unless there is intervention by that other; unless some unpredicted element takes control, overrides the pre-planned structure, tells you what you don't know. Willed possession.[30]

To these can be added all three French post-war avant-gardes in their entirety the New Novelist movement's challenge to the accepted, yet highly problematic, division of 20th-century literature into modernist and postmodernist periods, sometimes seeming to unite them, sometimes seen as standing between them, but mostly simply bypassing the division altogether: the reason why Robbe-Grillet or Butor or Queneau or Sollers left no explicit address of these questions, unlike their Anglo-American contemporaries.

Hence, the argument concludes on a paradox: it has applied a chronological approach to what essentially is posited as atemporal, non-linear, a cycle of returns, a "documentary archive" of the effects of Joyce's materialist poetics in post-war Anglo- and Francophone writing. If paradox it be, it was done so in order to argue for a lasting importance of these effects, for their continuous reverberation in the post-war experimental fiction well beyond 2000. The chronological approach, to be sure, is not without its pitfalls (the teleological fallacy, for example) and its inelegancies. There were, of course, other possible modes of ordering, across individual chapters, concept- or theme-based. For instance, the triad of the crucial Joyce-effects identified in the Introduction could have yielded the following genealogy:

1) concrete writing, "metatextual," "liberary": from B.S. Johnson to Alasdair Gray, from William Gass to Raymond Federman to Mark Z. Danielewski, from Michel Butor to Maurice Roche;
2) writing as plagiarism, forgery, parody and pastiche: from William Burroughs to Kathy Acker to Kenneth Goldsmith, from the early Christine Brooke-Rose and to Iain Sinclair; Raymond Queneau, Georges Perec, and most of Oulipo;

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27 Barth, *The Friday Book,* 202.
28 Donald Barthelme, *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme,* ed. Kim Herzinger, intro. John Barth (New York: Random House, 1997) 4.
29 Qtd. in Robin Lyndenberg (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987) 44-5.
30 Iain Sinclair, *Landor's Tower: or The Imaginary Conversations* (London: Granta Books, 2002) 31.

3) words as machines generating polyvocal ever-shifting conglomerates of meanings; “techno-poetics” – Anthony Burgess and Brigid Brophy, from Robert Pinget to Philippe Sollers, from Donald Barthelme to Gilbert Sorrentino;

If one were to pair up, in a quasi-Hassanian fashion, writers according to whether their Joyce is the Joyce of *Ulysses* or the *Wake*, one could point out to some of their crucial differences. The *Ulysses* vs. *Finnegans Wake* binary would rewrite the genealogy as follows: Johnson vs. Brophy, Pynchon vs. Barthelme, Mathews vs. Sukenick, Robbe-Grillet vs. Butor, Perec vs. Queneau, Roche vs. Sollers, Goldsmith vs. Danielewski, etc. Still other possible categorisations would present themselves if one were to focus on the personality of the authors, for “experiment” is related to “experience” not only in terms of etymology. One could draw lines of development in terms of female fiction (from Sarraute to Cixous; from Brooke-Rose, Brophy and Quin to Carter, Winterson and Acker); in terms of post-colonial experimentalism (from Brophy to Gray, from Simon to Cixous); one could single out believers-turned-heretics (Burgess and Quin, Butor and Sollers); one could examine the binary of writers-nomads (Brooke-Rose, Burroughs, Robbe-Grillet, or Butor) vs. writers recluses (Quin, Pynchon, Gaddis, or Pinget). One could zoom in on cross-national ties among these writers and groups (Federman in the U.S., Mathews in the Oulipo, Brooke-Rose at Paris-Vincennes, Burroughs in Paris and London, Butor in Manchester), or even more relevantly perhaps, on affinities in terms of their practice of fiction (Aldiss and Ballard as heirs to the *nouveau roman* and Burroughs; Brooke-Rose and Federman as affiliated with the *Tel Quel*, Queneau and Perec as inspired by their Anglophone predecessors), etc. If one did indeed attempt any of the above, one would easily have eked out meaningful lines of connection that fall by the wayside of a merely chronological arrangement. The rationale, ultimately, behind its deployment is that the chronological arrangement contains, however implicitly or potentially, all of the above, with the additional advantage of allowing for the least amount of distraction (conceptual, biographical, ideological, or other) from what ultimately matters most, i.e. the writing itself, what the Joycean avant-garde was founded upon and what its effects will have resonated through: what was at the beginning and what will have been at the end – the word.

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LEO *Life, End Of* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2006)
N *Next* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1998)
RU *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)
S *Subscript* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1999)
STT *Stories, Theories and Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
T *Textermination* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1991)
V *Verbivore* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1990)
X *Xorandor* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1986)

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NS *Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings* (London: Virago, 1982)
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EO *Edge of the Orison: In the Traces of John Clare's Journey Out Of Essex* (London: Penguin Group, 2005)
LH *Lud Heat and Suicide Bridge* (London: Random House; New York: Vintage, 1995)
LOT *Lights Out for the Territory* (London: Granta Books, 1997)
LT *Landor's Tower: or The Imaginary Conversations* (London: Granta Books, 2002)
V *The Verbals – Iain Sinclair in Conversation with Kevin Jackson* (Tonbridge, Kent: Worple Press, 2003).

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CL *City Life* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1970)
DF *The Dead Father* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1975)
N-K *Not-Knowing: The Essays and Interviews of Donald Barthelme*, ed. Kim Herzinger, intro. John Barth (New York: Random House, 1997)
SW *Snow White* (New York: Touchstone, 1967)

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NE *Nova Express* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966)
Q *Queer* (London & New York: Penguin, 1985)
TTTE *The Ticket that Exploded* (Paris: Olympia Press, 1962)
WL *The Western Lands* (New York: Viking Press, 1987)

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AA *Agapē Agape* (New York: Viking, 2002)
J R *J R* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1975)
TR *The Recognitions* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1955)

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FF *Finding a Form* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996)
FFL *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1971)
TT *The Tunnel* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1995)

WMLF *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1971)
WWW *The World Within the Word* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978)

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M&D *Mason&Dixon* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1997)
SL *Slow Learner* (New York: Little & Brown, 1984)
V *V.* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963)

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CHAPTER FOUR

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LB *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*, eds. Bruce Andrews & Charles Bernstein (Southern Illinois University Press, 1984)

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AA *Alphabetical Africa* (New York: New Directions, 1974)

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ES *The Empire of the Senseless* (New York: Grove Press, 1988)
LM *Literal Madness – Three Novels: Kathy Goes to Haiti, My Death My Life by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Florida* (New York: Grove Press, 1994)
EA *Essential Acker – The Selected Writings of Kathy Acker*, eds. Amy Scholder & Dennis Cooper (New York: Grove Press, 2002)

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C *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993)
DN *Double or Nothing Double or Nothing* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1971)
JC *Journey To Chaos – Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction* (Berkeley & LA: University of California Press, 1965)
TILI *Take It or Leave It* (New York: The Fiction Collective, 1976)

S *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*, ed. Raymond Federman (1975; 2nd edition, enlarged, Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981)
VC *The Voice in the Closet* (New York: Coda Press, 1979)
WMC *To Whom It May Concern* (New York: Fiction Collective Two, 1990)

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CPM *The Case of the Persevering Maltese – Collected Essays* (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003)
J *The Journalist* (Boston: David Godine, 1994)
O *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadion and Other Novels* (London: Harper & Row, 1985)
T *Tlooth* (Chicago: Dalkey Archive, 1998)

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MS *Mulligan Stew* (New York: Grove Press, 1979)
PL *Pack of Lies* (Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 1989)
SH *Splendide-Hôtel* (New York: New Directions, 1973; Dalkey Archive, 2nd edition, 2001)

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98.6 *98.6*
C *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993)
IF *In Form: Digressions on the Act of Fiction* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985).
LT *Long Talking Bad Condition Blues* (New York: Coda Press, FC2, 1979)
MM *Mosaic Man* (Normal, IL: Illinois University Press, 1999)
N *Narralogues – Truth in Fiction* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000)
O *Out* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1973)
Up *Up* (Michigan: Dial Press, 1968)

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D *Degrés* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960)
ET *L'Emploi du temps* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1956)
M *La Modification* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1957)
MO *Mobile* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962)
P *Portrait d'artiste en jeune singe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967)
PM *Passage de Milan* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1954)
R1 *Répertoire 1* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1960)
RA *Réseau aérien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962)

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A *L'Agrandissement* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1963)
AC *L'Alittérature contemporaine* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1958)
DLAL *De la littérature à l'alittérature* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1969)
LDV *Le Dîner en ville* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1959)
MSCH *La Marquise sortit à cinq heures* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1961)
LTI *Le Temps immobile, Vol. 1* (Paris : Grasset, 1974)
O *L'Oubli* (Paris: Grasset, 1970)
TFSF *Toutes les femmes sont fatales* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1957)

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CD *Clope au dossier* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1961)
R&B *Le renard et la boussole* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1963)
GF *Graal Flibuste* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1956)
LF *Le Fiston* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1959)
L'I *L'Inquisitoire* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1962)

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J *La Jalousie* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1957)
LV *Le Voyageur – textes, causeries et entretiens (1947-2001)* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2001)
PNR *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Les Éditions Minuit, 1961)
PVE *Préface à une vie d'écrivain* (Paris: Seuil, 2005)

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ES *L'Ère du soupçon* (Paris : Gallimard, 1956)
PI *Portrait d'un inconnu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948)
T *Tropismes* (Paris: Denoël, 1939)

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H *Histoire* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967)
RF *La Route des Flanders* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1960)
T *Triptyque* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1973)

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LD *La Disparition* (Paris: Denoel, 1969)
LUM *Life: A User's Manual,* trans. David Bellos (Boston: David Godine, 2008)
LVME *La vie mode d'emploi* (Paris: Hachette, 1979)
P/C *Penser/Classer* (Paris: Hachette, 1985)

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BCL *Bâtons, chiffres, lettres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965)
ES *Exercises de style* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947)
LC *Le chiendent* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933)
LDJ *Les derniers jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936)
RQ *Oeuvres completes*, ed. Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 2002)

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CHAPTER SEVEN

TQ *Tel Quel* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil)

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D *Dedans* (Paris: Grasset, 1969)
HC *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (London: Routledge, 1994)
PP *Prénoms de personne* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974)
RM *Le Rire de la méduse* (Paris: Galilée, 2010)
R *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, ed. & trans. Verena Andermatt Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991)
S *Souffles* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1975)

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Ci *Circus* (Paris: Seuil, 1972)
Co *Compact* (Paris: Seuil, 1966)
Cx *Codex* (Paris: Seuil, 1974)

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L *Lois* (Paris: Collection "Tel Quel" aux Éditions du Seuil, 1972)
N *Nombres* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968)
P *Paradis* (Paris: Collection "Tel Quel" aux Éditions du Seuil, 1981)
PII *Paradis II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986)
PJ *Portrait du joueur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987)

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THE AVANT-POSTMAN:JAMES JOYCE, THE AVANT-GARDE & POSTMODERNISM

Résumé

La thèse, intitulée « L'Avant-Postman: James Joyce, L'Avant-Garde et le Postmoderne », s'efforce de construire une généalogie littéraire post-joycienne, centrée sur les notions de l'avant-garde joycienne et de l'expérimentation littéraire, et prend les deux dernières œuvres de Joyce, *Ulysses* et *Finnegans Wake*, pour points de départ des avant-gardes d'après la seconde guerre mondiale, une époque généralement appelée « postmoderne », en Grande-Bretagne, aux États-Unis, et en France.

L'Introduction identifie la notion d'une avant-garde joycienne à l'exploration, par Joyce, de la matérialité du langage et l'identification de sa dernière œuvre, le « Work in Progress », à la « Révolution du mot », défendue par Eugène Jolas dans sa revue *transition*.

L'exploration joycienne de la matérialité du langage se comprend selon trois orientations : l'écriture conçue comme une trace physique, susceptible d'être distordue ou effacée ; le langage littéraire compris comme une forgerie des mots des autres ; le projet de la création d'un idiome personnel, défini comme un langage « autonome », qui doit être caractéristique de la littérature vraiment moderne.

La thèse est divisée en huit chapitres, deux pour la Grande-Bretagne (de B.S. Johnson, Brooke-Rose à Iain Sinclair), deux pour les États-Unis (de Burroughs et Gass à Acker et Sorrentino) et trois pour la France (le nouveau roman, l'Oulipo, et la groupe *Tel Quel*). Le Chapitre VIII retrace l'héritage joycien pour la littérature après 2000 dans ces trois espaces nationaux. La conclusion définit l'avant-garde joycienne, telle qu'elle est thématisée après la seconde guerre mondiale comme un défi adressé à la notion de « postmoderne ».

Mots clés : James Joyce, l'avant-garde littéraire, le postmoderne, littérature expérimentale d'après-guerre, histoire littéraire, littérature comparée.

Abstract

The thesis, entitled "The Avant-Postman: James Joyce, the Avant-Garde and Postmodernism," attempts to construct a post-Joycean literary genealogy centred around the notions of a Joycean avant-garde and literary experimentation written in its wake. It considers the last two works by Joyce, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, as points of departure for the post-war literary avant-gardes in Great Britain, the USA, and France, in a period generally called "postmodern."

The introduction bases the notion of a Joycean avant-garde upon Joyce's sustained exploration of the materiality of language and upon the appropriation of his last work, his "Work in Progress," for the cause of the "Revolution of the word" conducted by Eugene Jolas in his *transition* magazine. The Joycean exploration of the materiality of language is considered as comprising three stimuli: the conception of writing as physical trace, susceptible to distortion or effacement; the understanding of literary language as a forgery of the words of others; and the project of creating a personal idiom as an "autonomous" language for a truly modern literature.

The material is divided into eight chapters, two for Great Britain (from B.S. Johnson via Brooke-Rose to Iain Sinclair), two for the U.S. (from Burroughs and Gass to Acker and Sorrentino) and three for France (the *nouveau roman*, Oulipo, and the *Tel Quel* group). Chapter Eight traces the Joycean heritage within the literature after 2000 of the three national literary spaces. The conclusion contextualises the theme of the Joycean post-war avant-garde as a challenge to the notion of "postmodernism."

Keywords: James Joyce, the literary avant-garde, postmodernism, post-war experimental literature, literary history, comparative literature.

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