

Visible Language

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involved in our being literate*

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Visible Language: Freud's Imprint

Mary Lydon

*It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.
The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.*

– Oscar Wilde, in a letter

Wilde's aim is here as always true, which is not to say that it is straight. Rather it is by virtue of a certain obliquity, one might call it a bias, that he hits the mark. Privileging looks (the word is to be taken in both its verbal and nominative functions, subsuming subject and object) Wilde runs the risk of being taken amiss, his obliquity rewarded by the obliquity that the earnest (themselves pledged to depth) heap on the superficial. Yet the point of his trope is not that it denies mystery, what is hidden, the figurative, but rather that it affirms the presence of the mystery, the figure in the appearance.

And it is perhaps Wilde's most brilliant stroke to have embodied the figurative capacity of appearance in a figure of speech – paradox – which has been described as “a statement which seems untrue but proves valid under close inspection,” or again as a “kind of indirection.”¹ (Obliquity?) It is in seeing and being seen that the mystery of the world resides, Wilde insists, and not in being seen through. As Heidegger has it, “Circumspection discovers.”

It seems to me that the notion of visible language is entirely consonant with this view, and that “depth psychology” notwithstanding, the same might be claimed for psychoanalysis as elaborated by Freud: a practice equally preoccupied with appearance, with the sign (clinical, linguistic, alphabetical) with the “facade”² of the dream and the hysterical symptom, a practice which focuses on the “visible fictions”³ of the analysand's reported speech (*oratio obliqua*), aiming, by the indirections of dream-work and story “to find directions out.”

Language has rarely been more visible than in the tics, the paralyzes, the coughs, the false pregnancies, the *arc de cercle* of the hysteric: “Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences”⁴ Freud wrote of his first patients, a formula he was later obliged to revise as follows: “Hysterical symptoms are not attached to actual memories, but to fantasies erected on the basis of memories.”⁵ (The writing of the hysteric is thus both inscription and fiction.) Speechless (aphonia is a classic symptom of hysteria) but not unlettered, Frau Emmy von N., Anna O., Miss Lucy R., et al (how gratifying, in the present context, that Freud gave

to each a “discreet and ladylike letter of the alphabet”⁶) recorded their painful pseudo-memories on what Joyce called “the only foolscap available,” their own bodies.

Writing of those “mnemonic symbols” that are the hysteric’s symptoms, Freud likened them to “the monuments and memorials with which large cities are adorned,”⁷ citing the Gothic column at Charing Cross in London as an example. The last in a series of monuments punctuating (appropriately *nachträglich*, after the event) the passage of Queen Eleanor’s funeral cortege through the city, Charing Cross derives its name, Freud points out, from the French “*chère reine*” (“dear queen”). The association with Eleanor Honig Skoller’s essay, which would graph New York City as the network of Frank O’Hara’s memory traces, is too euphonious to be resisted, while the same train of thought might lead to the London architect par excellence, Sir Christopher Wren (*reine?*), whose epitaph, inscribed over the interior of the North Door of St. Paul’s, reads: “Si monumentum requiris, circumspice” (“If you would see his monument, look around”) – an invitation to circumspection, if not to being circumspect. Thus, in Jacques Lacan’s phrase, does “the ring of meaning fle[e] from our grasp along the verbal thread,”⁸ and we are both captives of and captivated by the signifying chain.

“(It is a rule of psychoanalytic technique that an internal connection which is still undisclosed will announce its presence by means of a contiguity – a temporal proximity – of associations” writes Freud, “just as in writing, if “a” and “b” are put side by side, it means that the syllable ‘ab’ is to be formed out of them).”⁹ I would add that the syllable “ab” is also a synecdoche for the entire twenty-six letters (alpha beta: alphabet) and that furthermore, it is a precedent established in rational thought that “a” and “b” are instrumental in disclosing the properties of those unknown quantities traditionally designated “x” and “y”. Freud’s algebra obeys the laws of poetry rather than the formulae of logic, however, and in this it reflects the structure of the unknown quantity it seeks to (de)cipher: the unconscious. That is the view of Jacques Lacan, whose seminal essay “The agency of the letter in the unconscious, or reason since Freud” applies a Freudian torque to the myth by which the French, as heirs of Descartes and the Enlightenment, pretend to a privileged relationship with Reason.

Re-reading Freud across the structural linguistics of Saussure, Lacan dwells on the insistence of the letter (that is to say, visible language) in the unconscious, and takes aim at Descartes. Echoing the poet Rimbaud, as Andrew J. McKenna demonstrates, Lacan rails at the *ergo* of the *cogito* for positing an autonomous ego, whereas (so

poet and psychoanalyst would claim) “‘Je’ est un autre,” “‘I’ is another.” The grammatical dislocation of the formula is nothing less than the visible sign of that riven self which it articulates. After Freud’s mapping of the unconscious, Lacan avers, any claim that we control language in pursuit of our reasonable purposes must be null and void. Far from being the tool of rational humanity, he declares, language is rather a Heraclitean flux which pre-exists us, into which we must leap, yet in which we already have a berth, if only nominally, in name. As Lacan formulates it: “Thus the subject, too, if he can appear to be the slave of language is all the more so of a discourse in the universal movement in which his place is already inscribed at birth, if only by virtue of his proper name” (148).

But as AJMcK (himself, like everyone, a slave to the letter) unwittingly points out, “one’s aim, in seeking out the author’s intention, would always be amiss”: that is to say, oblique, on the bias. The trajectory of the Oedipal desire, which aims at origin, is deflected onto another target, woman – a miss, represented in the idiom of George H. Bauer’s essay as the “feminine third eye,” both letter O and zero. Are we not, as Lacan insists, “at the mercy of a thread woven with allusions, quotations, puns and equivocations”? (169) I suggest that we follow this particular thread on a detour around Lawrence Sterne, since there is an argument to be made for *Tristram Shandy* as an embodiment not only of visible language but also of Lacanian theory, both, of course, *avant la lettre*.

GHB takes as his point of departure Robbe-Grillet’s triangle in *Souvenirs d’un triangle d’or*, describing it as “three-legged, a cauldron, an easel, a tripod, a stool on which the sybil sits to speak oracles. . . .” Robbe-Grillet’s triangle becomes in GHB’s reading a vantage point from which to view the V, the lady as “Delta, opening, door surmounted by triangle and O eye.” But the position has already been occupied by Sterne, who writes in *Tristram Shandy* of the “Argumentum Tripodium [the argument to the third leg] which is never used but by the woman against the man; – and the Argumentum ad Rem [the argument to the thing in hand] which contrary-wise is made use of by the man only against the woman. . . .”¹⁰

The double entendre here which takes visible form in the letter (or more accurately, number, hence, as EHS points out, poetry) of Robbe-Grillet’s text as GHB recounts it, might risk being taken amiss. Like psychoanalysis itself it might be dismissed as mere sexual innuendo tricked out as logic, a foe disguised in Flanders lace. But “reason since Freud” takes things at once more and less literally than the Cartesian version. Thus Sterne’s “Argumentum ad Rem,” when read across

"The agency of the letter," is seen to embody all the pathos of the human relationship to language, a relationship that mirrors the splitting of the subject as s/he comes under the rule of the signifier. What is at stake is no less than "the possibility I have, precisely in so far as I have this language in common with other subjects, that is to say, in so far as it exists as a language, to use it in order to signify *something quite other* than what it says" (154). In other words, the argument to the thing in hand could equally well be called the argument to the O, the no thing, as Lacan, with his customary virtuosity demonstrates:

One cannot go further along this line of thought than to demonstrate that no signification can be sustained other than by reference to another signification. . . . If we try to grasp in language the constitution of the object, we cannot fail to notice that this constitution is to be found only at the level of the concept, a very different thing from a simple nominative, and that the *thing*, when reduced to the noun, breaks into the double, divergent beam of the 'cause' (*causa*) in which it has taken shelter in the French word *chose*, and the nothing (*rien*) to which it had abandoned its Latin dress (*rem*). (150)

It is from this *faille* (at once fault and fabric, cloth, material) that styles are fashioned. Looks are everything. Thus the cut of the double-breasted jacket worn by *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* catches Jane Gallop's practised eye and the *clinamen* of sexuality, propped against the mother's bosom, becomes visible in the crossing, the obliquity, of the letter "chi," χ . (JG's text is utopian, in the Freudian sense, which is that the truth never appears where we expect to find it.) In the same line of sexual haute couture, the work of Defoe's pen, busy at fashioning a dress in which Moll Flanders is "fit to be seen," prompts Susanna Bartmann to ask, echoing Freud, "How that strange being the poet comes by his material," and to conclude, as Freud did, that he weaves it from the string or the thread of a wish, an operation that is transferred onto the surface of the page as a spelling out of the "specular name." As SB discovers, for Daniel Defoe to become Moll Flanders, his one "L" must subsume her three, and the letters left over from this imperfect anagram yield "MRS," and "I," locus of both subject and gaze. But the "divergent beam" of the I/eye reveals an abyss. "It is the abyss opened up at the thought that a thought should make itself heard in the abyss that provoked resistance to psychoanalysis from the outset," Lacan writes, "And not, as is commonly said, the emphasis on man's sexuality" (170). Sanford S. Ames's essay, a variation on this theme, might be read as the question of sexuality *mise-en-abîme*. "Is there anyone there?" the lover asks, "any *one*." "Is it *you*, dear?"

“Can I count on your pleasure?” Knowledge of the Other can only be skin-deep, “à fleur de peau.” Momus’s glass is unavailable to us. Had it been, according to Sterne,

nothing more would have been wanting, in order to have taken a man’s character, but to have taken a chair and gone softly, as you would to a dioptrical bee-hive, and look’d in, – viewed the soul stark naked; – observ’d all her motions, – her machinations; – traced all her maggots from their first engendering to their crawling forth; – watched her loose in her frisks, her gambols, her capricios; and after some notice of her more solemn deportment, consequent upon such frisks etc. – then taken your pen and ink and set down nothing but what you had seen and could have sworn to: but this is an advantage not to be had by the biographer in this planet. . . .¹¹

In vain the son strikes the bow (“lance un coup d’archet”) as Rimbaud did, he cannot fail to copy the father’s hand. The word *archet* means pantograph, as well as bow; a pantograph is an instrument for the mechanical copying of a design. Instead of the dioptrical bee-hive we have a swarm of “mobile characters which, in a jumble of lower-case Didots or Garamonds, render validly present what we call the ‘letter’, namely, the essentially localised structure of the signifier” (153).

“Est-ce un?” Thus SSA puts the question of the subject, in Lacanian algebra, S¹ (S – un). That lettered bourgeoisie, H. D., had put it earlier, to Freud himself, its reversed unfinished S with a dot beneath it having appeared to her as writing on the wall, in Corfu.¹² These transfers, decalcomanias, she calls them, lead her to S for Sigmund, “Sieg-mund” as she spells it out, “the victorious voice of utterance.” Curious how H. D. reverses the usual pattern. It is she herself, not Freud, who writes her case history, she, not he, who has chosen her initials, and her object in doing so is not the preservation of her anonymity, rather the reverse. She writes:

(I have used my initials HD consistently as my writing signet or sign-manual, though it is only, at this very moment, as I check up on the word ‘signet’ in my Chambers’ English Dictionary that I realise that my writing signature has anything remotely suggesting sovereignty or the royal manner.) (66)

H. D. was clearly a queen bee. Like the heroine of her poem *Helen in Egypt*, “She herself is the writing” and Professor Freud’s consulting room at 19 Berggasse is, in both the popular and the Derridean senses, her scene.

The printed page varies, cheap news-print, good print, bad print,

smudged and uneven print – there are the great letter words of an advertisement or the almost invisible pin-print; there are the huge capitals of a child's alphabet chart or building blocks; letters or ideas may run askew on the page, as it were; they may be purposeless; they may be stereotyped and are not meant for 'reading' but as a test, as for example the symmetrical letters that don't of necessity 'spell' anything, on a doctor's or oculist's chart hung on the wall in an office or above a bed in a hospital. There are dreams or sequences of dreams that follow a line like a graph on a map or show a jagged triangular pattern, like a crack on a bowl that show the bowl or vase may at any moment fall in pieces; we all know that almost invisible thread-line on the cherished glass butter-dish that predicts it will 'come apart in me 'ands' sooner or later – sooner, more likely.

There are all these shapes, lines, graphs, *the hieroglyph of the unconscious*, and the Professor had first opened the field to the study of this vast, unexplored region. He himself – at least to me personally – deplored the tendency to *fix* ideas too firmly to set symbols, or to weld them inexorably. It is true that he himself started to decipher or decode the vast accumulation of the material of the unconscious mind; it was he who 'struck oil' but the application of the 'oil,' what could or should be made of it, could not be entirely regulated or supervised by its original 'promoter.' He struck oil; certainly there was 'something in it'; yes, a vast field for exploration and – alas – exploitation lay open. There were the immemorial Gods ranged in their semicircle on the Professor's table, that stood, as I have said, like the high altar in the Holy of Holies. There were those Gods, each the carved symbol of an idea or a deathless dream, that some people read: Goods. (92-93)

H. D.'s vision of the reversed half s-pattern of the question mark was preceded by a pattern which she identified as the base of her travelling "spirit-lamp," a tripod. She does not fail, of course, to make the connection with Delphi, so near, yet out of reach because of war-time travel restrictions. The link between the spirit and the letter, the visible and the invisible, receives this commentary from Lacan:

Of course, as it is said, the letter killeth while the spirit giveth life. We can't help but agree, having had to pay homage elsewhere to a noble victim of the error of seeking the spirit in the letter; but we should also like to know how the spirit could live without the letter. Even so, the pretensions of the spirit would remain unassailable if the letter had not shown us that it produces all the effects of truth in man without involving the spirit at all. (158-59)

Envoi

"Synthesis," wrote Proudhon, "is always on the side of government." I have therefore eschewed it in this introduction. Believing that the highest form of practice is theory (a formula singularly appropriate to the psychoanalysis of Freud) I have sought, by observing the two maxims of the psychoanalytic rule: free association (the burden of the analysand) and equally floating attention (the responsibility of the analyst), to put psychoanalytic theory into practice to the letter, in order that my preface might serve as a Rosetta Stone to the hieroglyphs that follow.

A distinction must be drawn between reading coffee grounds and reading hieroglyphics, by recalling to its own principles a technique that could not be justified were it not directed towards the unconscious.

It must be said that this is admitted only with difficulty and . . . that today's psychoanalyst can be expected to say that he decodes before he will come around to taking the necessary tour with Freud (turn at the statue of Champollion, says the guide) that will make him understand that what he does is decipher; the distinction is that a cryptogram takes on its full dimension only when it is in a lost language.

Taking the tour is simply continuing in the *Traumdeutung*.

Jacques Lacan in "The agency of the letter"

1. "Paradox," *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 1974 ed.
2. The architectural image of the facade was a favourite of Freud's. See especially *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (1953; rpt. New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 529, where the facade of the dream is juxtaposed in his text with hysterical symptoms.
3. See William H. Gass, "The Anatomy of Mind," in *The World Within the Word* (1978; rpt. Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1979), pp. 208-52, p. 231.
4. Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (1955; rpt. New York: Avon Books, 1966), p. 42.
5. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 529.
6. Gass, "The Anatomy of Mind," p. 209.
7. Freud, *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (1957; rpt. New York: Norton, 1977), p. 16.
8. Jacques Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 146-78, p. 166. Subsequent references in text.
9. Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier, 1963), p. 55. See also *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 349. The alphabet, and especially its first two letters, were frequently invoked by Freud.

10. Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, ed. Howard Anderson (New York: Norton, 1980), p. 51.
11. Sterne, p. 53.
12. H. D., *Tribute to Freud* (1956; rpt. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), p. 30, "a writing-on-the-wall, a curve like a reversed, unfinished *S* and a dot beneath it, a question mark, the shadow of a question – *is this it?*" For a full description of the "writing-on-the-wall" see pp. 39-56. Subsequent page references appear in the text.

Lex Icon: Freud and Rimbaud

Andrew J. McKenna

Rimbaud's project of "Voyance," as articulated in certain letters and poems, engages linguistic processes which are proper to the activity of "unconscious ideation" which Freud discovers in jokes and dreams. For both writers, it is largely a matter of seeing as well as hearing language, a matter of language as matter, as writing. Freudian theory thus intersects with Rimbaud's practice, both writers suggesting something like an iconic experience of language. Their common opposition to a pointedly Cartesian mode of discourse binds desire with violence, of which the letter is the single, uncanny mark. When Rimbaud renounces his apocalyptic vision of a fleshly Word incarnate, we find that his flight to Africa connects with Freudian theory at another level: his letters home reveal his poetic adventure, and his rejection of it, as an encounter with the alien and familiar language of his father.

In the *Cours de linguistique générale*, Saussure juxtaposes the schematic image of a tree drawn from the realm of nature and the Latin word "arbor" drawn from his Latinate culture as a means of visually demonstrating the heterogeneity of words and things, in order to illustrate the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign.¹ It is the nature of a tree to generate from the seed and take root in the ground, but the word "tree" has no roots in either tree or ground. It owes its existence to cultural conventions whose origins are not the concern of the structural linguistics Saussure is in the process of elaborating. What we learn from Saussure is that language is a form, not a substance; a word signifies by its difference from other words in any given lexicon rather than by any resemblance to the object to which it allegedly refers. Negative, opposite, relative in its very being, in its never quite being, it is the nature of the sign to have no nature of its own, no meaning which it has by its own as its own property. Language is unnatural, improper. There are words, there are signs, but what they are we cannot properly say. The linguistic sign is uncanny in the self-contradictory sense that Freud, through his consultation of multiple dictionaries, uncovered in that word: strange and familiar, ordinary and sinister.² It is out of such a sense of the disquieting familiarity of language that a certain kind of poetry is born, which takes issue with its own means of expression as

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well as with a world of forms external to it. As Rimbaud wrote in his famous "lettre du voyant":

Trouver une langue – Du reste, toute parole étant idée, le temps d'une langue universelle viendra! Il faut être académicien – plus mort qu'un fossile, – pour parfaire un dictionnaire de quelque langue que ce soit. Des faibles se mettraient à penser sur la première lettre de l'alphabet, qui pourraient vite se ruer dans la folie (p. 271).³

(It's a matter of finding a language. What's more, since every word's an idea, the time of a universal language will come! You'd have to be an academician – deader than a fossil – to perfect a dictionary in any language whatsoever. For the weak, merely to begin to think about the first letter of the alphabet might make them run mad forthwith.)

What is especially sinister about the uncanny, "das Unheimlich," is its very familiarity, its "Heimlichkeit" or homeliness, such that anything, even a word, even a letter, can be uncanny.

The uncanny thus finds its theoretical prototype in "The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words" of which Freud speaks in his essay on Karl Abel's book by that title. Such words are to be found near the origins of culture; they are endowed with opposite meanings, like the Latin "sacer," which evokes something both terrible and wonderful, equally dangerous and beneficent in its potential. It is in this essay too that Freud, quoting Abel, registers his own perception of the diacritical character of words: "Man has not been able to acquire even his oldest and simplest conceptions otherwise than in contrast with their opposite: he only gradually learned to separate the two sides of the antitheses and think of the one without comparison with the other."⁴ Saussurian linguistics, with its structural notion of the differential, oppositional character of the sign, is but a programmatic revival of this consciousness. It is at this point that both Freud and Rimbaud part company with Saussure; in their view, consciousness is as problematic, as opaque, as the structure of discourse itself.

Primal words, "première lettre," dictionaries: in their refractory interrogations of culture, which both Rimbaud and Freud regard as repressive – the academy fossilizes language for the one, civilization represses primary impulses for the other – both authors are embarked on a problematic of origins centered on language, and more particularly on the alphabet in which language takes visible form. If a meditation on the alphabet can lead to madness for Rimbaud, the representation of the unconscious in Freud's essays frequently takes the form of writing. In the *Interpretation of Dreams*, he speaks of their symbolism

as a kind of hieroglyph, pictographic script, cryptography or rebus.⁵ In the case of each figure – Freud’s figures for language as figure, as trope – it is a question of stopping short before the accepted meaning of a word so as to apprehend language in its material density. For, “it is true in general that words are treated in dreams as though they were concrete things, and for that reason they are apt to be combined in just the same way as presentations of concrete things.”⁶ Words are present in the unconscious in a way they are not for consciousness, which looks past them or through them for their lexically coded signification. Invisible to consciousness, language is visible in the unconscious and one can describe Freudian interpretation as an effort to make language uninvisible. This effort is in many ways closely akin to Rimbaud’s project of “Voyance,” as it is legible in the poetic homonym of that project, in the sonnet called “Voyelles.” A reading of these texts with Freud in mind will take us far afield – as far as Africa where Rimbaud spent the second half of his life – and bring us home again, to questions of family relations, homely relations – of father, mother, brother and sister – which is the specialty of Freudian psychoanalysis. This essay, then, is not centered on Freud but between Freud and Rimbaud, focusing on the interrogation of the letter common to their texts, on the laws and transgressions sanctioned by that interrogation.

In a letter just prior to his famous “lettre du voyant,” Rimbaud writes:

Je veux être poète, et je travaille à me rendre voyant: vous ne comprendrez pas du tout, et je ne saurais presque vous expliquer. Il s’agit d’arriver à l’inconnu par le dérèglement de tous les sens. Les souffrances sont énormes mais il faut être fort, être né poète et je me suis reconnu poète. Ce n’est pas du tout ma faute. C’est faux de dire: Je pense. On devrait dire: On me pense. Pardon du jeu de mots.

JE est un autre. Tant pis pour le bois qui se trouve violon, et nargue aux inconscients, qui ergotent sur ce qu’ils ignorent tout à fait! (p. 268).

(I want to be a poet, and I am working on making myself a seer: you won’t understand this at all and I wouldn’t know how to explain it to you. It’s a question of reaching the unknown through the derangement of all the senses. The sufferings are enormous but one must be strong, must have been born a poet and I know myself to be a poet. That is not at all my fault. It is false to say: I think. One ought to say: one thinks me. Pardon the play on words.

I is an other. It’s too bad for the wood which finds itself a violin

and a fig for the thoughtless who argue about what they are altogether ignorant about.)

Critics have rightly insisted of late on the manner in which Rimbaud performs a deconstruction of Cartesian philosophy, particularly in its psychological implications.⁷ The formula herein, later to be elaborated as “un long, immense, et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens” (a long, immense and systematic deregulation of all the senses) constitutes a rereading of Descartes’ *Règles pour la direction de l’esprit* as well as of his *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire la raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences*. “Tous les sens” is preferred to Descartes’ “bon sens,” synonymous with “raison.” The logic which establishes “Je est un autre” proceeds from a literal disarticulation of the formula, “Cogito ergo sum”: “et nargue aux inconscients qui ergotent sur ce qu’ils ignorent tout à fait!” It is a very literal transformation: the anagrammatic play silences the “g” and “t” of “ergotent,” whence “ignorent,” such that “ce qu’ils ignorent” emerges by another name which Rimbaud anticipates Freud in calling “inconscient(s).” Otherwise stated, the “ergo” of the cogito is “nargué” as “ignorent,” “narguer” meaning “railler, braver avec insolence”: to mock.

Rimbaud’s word play makes the cogito, which gives pride of place to rational consciousness, the butt of a hostile joke of the kind that Jacques Lacan played on Descartes in the formula, “Je pense où je ne suis pas, donc je suis où je ne pense pas.”⁸ The anagrammatic technique, or let us say, in deference to Descartes, method, that Rimbaud employs in verbally deconstituting consciousness, is precisely of the kind that Freud analyzes in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. In order to more directly represent the linguistic distortions at work in jokes, Freud had recourse to a graphic demonstration in the form of a diagram. Thus the witticism by which Heine avenges himself on the snobbery of a rich man – “I sat beside Solomon Rothschild and he treated me as his equal – quite famillionairely” – is illustrated as follows:

FAMILI AR MS SSNNÄ R <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> FAMILIONÄR.	FAMILI ÄR <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> MILIONÄR FAMILIONÄR
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Figure 1: “It is true in general that words are treated in dreams (and jokes) as though they were concrete things. . . .”

Freud’s recourse to visible language is accentuated by his stipulation of the use of regular capital letters for the first printing, gothic type for the second, and thick letters for the third (Figure 1). Rimbaud’s anagrammatic play lends itself to similar schema:

cogito	ergo	sum
	ergotent	
	ignorent	inconscient
	nargue	

Reading his text “dans tous les sens,” it follows that “sum inconscient, ergo JE est un autre.”

Such mechanisms of condensation and displacement, which Freud locates in “unconscious ideation” common to dreams and jokes, have been found by subsequent speculation to resemble the operations of metaphor and metonymy in formal rhetoric.¹⁰ We are dealing with tropes: literally “turns,” “twists,” “torsions.” What Freud’s joker and Rimbaud’s “voyant” do is to contort the bar separating signifier and signified so as to engage other signifiers, and consequently other signifieds, other meanings which are within the same phonemic vicinity. Other meanings are engaged, meanings other than conscious ones, meanings emerging from the other of consciousness, or the unconscious, of which the letter, in its mute facticity, is the mark or the representation. Rimbaud’s retort to Descartes is a genetic theory of the unconscious, just as Freud’s interrogation of the linguistic distortions operative in jokes and dreams is a genetic theory of poetry. For as Jacques Lacan has observed, Freud’s notion of condensation, “Verdichtung,” translates as a synonym for poetry (“dicht”: close, dense; whence “Dichtung”: packing, compacting, poetry; and “dichten”: compose).

It is in view of the tropes that are, as it were, built into language that Rimbaud makes his claim, in this same letter, for an “objective poetry” which he contrasts to “subjective poetry,” the expression of individual feelings. No such individual ego or cogito, identical to itself in its linguistic utterance, is in evidence. We are dealing rather with an objective necessity (“il faut”) which is no fault of the subject (“ce n’est pas de tout ma faute”). Rather it is a fault *in* the subject, through which language speaks. We are dealing with a breach of the kind that geologists discover beneath the surface of the earth, and Freud beneath the surface of consciousness; a lapsus, filled by language on its own, between what we call the subject and his discourse, whereby it is false to speak as if one speaks on one’s own authority: “C’est faux de dire: Je pense. On devrait dire: on me pense. Pardon du jeu de mots. Je est un autre.” “Je pense donc je suis” becomes “on me pense donc je est un autre” – “par don du jeu de mots.” The “I” (“je”) is the site of a play (“jeu”) of language, a necessity (“il faut”) and a lack (“c’est faux”) in whose ontological contradiction we recognize the force of a desire. It is just such a desire that speaks for itself, in place of the subject, in the progressive vocalization of consonants (from “p” to “b” to “v”) from

“pis” to “bois” to “violon”: “Tant pis pour le bois qui se trouve violon.” “On” stands out by its resonance earlier in the text as the suffix or precipitate of “viol” (rape), which stands out in turn for the violence of the desire it connotes. Rimbaud twits Descartes not by contradicting his logic but by representing his text phonically. It is like a musical performance, playing along the vertical axis of phonological associations as along the bass and treble clef of a musical scale. His reading of the Cartesian text is in every sense its violination, as he sounds out and strikes chords resonating unconsciously within it. In this rupture with linear syntax, “raison,” as Michel Deguy says of another poet, is made to “résonner.”¹¹

Desire, music, poetry: Rimbaud’s ambition is to unite the force of the first with the form of the second, so as to create a poetry which is “Vie harmonieuse.” As he writes in his “lettre du voyant,” “En Grèce, ai-je dit, vers et lyres rythment l’Action” (p. 270). In this text, his tone is more peremptory, more strident, as brass replaces wood of the earlier letter, and the ascendancy of “on” is more telling:

Car JE est un autre. Si le cuivre s’éveille clairON, il n’y a rien de sa faute. Cela m’est évident: j’assiste à l’éclosiON de ma pensée: je la regarde, je l’écoute: je lance un coup d’archet: la symphONie fait sON remuement dans les profONdeurs, ou vient d’un bOND sur la scène (p. 270).

(I is an other. If brass wakes up as a trumpet, it is not its fault. This is obvious to me: I am present at the birth of my thought: I watch it, I listen to it: I strike with the bow: the symphony stirs in the depths, or bounds onto the stage.)

The raised lettering, except in the instance of “JE,” is my own. It is meant to represent the objective effects of language as it is seen (“je la regarde”), as it is heard (“je l’écoute”) and above all as it is written (“je lance un coup d’archet”). For it is as a kind of ultimate writing, a visible language that would be fully telling to all five senses, that Rimbaud’s project is best imaginable: “Cette langue sera de l’âme pour l’âme, résumant tout, parfums, sons, couleurs, de la pensée accrochant la pensée et tirant” (p. 270). (This language will be of the soul for the soul, containing everything, smells, sounds, colors, thought grasping thought and pulling.) The bow of the violin is also that of the archer, whose explosive force is omnidirectional – “tous les sens en un” (all meanings/directions in one).

The sonnet “voyelles” is just such an explosion of meanings. The poet commands by the imperative anagrammatically inscribed in the title that we see language – “voy-elles” – even as we see a woman – “voy-elle(s).”

*A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes:*

The desire of a text reads as a text of desire; Rimbaud's exploration of the letter serves as well to emblazon the body of a woman, from abdomen through lips to eyes:

*A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,*

*Golfes d'ombre; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,
Lances de glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombelles;
I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;*

*U, cycles, vibrations divins des mers virides,
Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux;*

*O, suprême Clairon, plein de strideurs étranges,
Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges:
– O l'Oméga, rayon violet de Ses Yeux.*

*(A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels,
Some day I'll speak your hidden births:*

*A, black hairy corset of shining flies
Which buzz around cruel stench,*

*Gulfs of darkness; E, whiteness of vapors and tents,
Lances of proud glaciers, white kings, shudder of flowers;
I, purples, spat blood, laughter of beautiful lips
In anger or penitent drunkenness;*

*U, cycles, divine vibrations of verdant seas,
Peace of pastures seeded with animals, peace of wrinkles
Which alchemy prints on great studious brows;*

*O, supreme Clarion full of strange strident sounds,
Silences traversed by worlds and angels,
– O, the Omega, violet beam of Her/His Eyes.)*

It is not my aim to explore all the senses of this poem, but only to iterate the sense of language it betokens. For analysis here, like the Freudian kind, is interminable, and one's aim, in seeking out the author's intention, would always be amiss. We are in a realm very much like that of the Freudian unconscious, to which the poem seems to make a discreet allusion with its evocation of "hidden births." It is the realm of "indirect representation," where the rule of negation governing the identity of objects and the stasis of meanings is not in force; nor is the dia-

chronic temporality of linear syntax.¹² The disposition of Rimbaud's poem, with the vowels running horizontally across the page and then in somewhat irregular fashion vertically down the page, suggests a multi-dimensional reading. This is what Robert Delaunay has tried to capture in his 1914 rendering of a related text by Rimbaud, which the painter entitles "*L'Alchimie du verbe. Recherche calligraphique sur 'Une Saison en enfer'*" (Figure 2). Were polychrome reproduction possible, one could show that Delaunay makes of Rimbaud's text a play of light and color in a fashion analogous to Rimbaud's play with language. Delaunay, for whom "nature is no longer a subject for description but a pretext" for colorist exploration,¹³ is contemporary to the cubist painters and participates in their break with fixed, figurative, "realist" representation. Whence the cubists' playful fondness for inserting words – bits of newspaper, shards of labels – in their paintings (Figure 3). Language no longer names the world as a transparent instrument of thought, as a mental tool of the uniquely thinking subject; it is an object in and of the world, and shares with the world an enigmatic opacity.

For the adolescent poet Rimbaud, language is already an object, much as for the child – and the schizophrenic and the dreamer – whom Freud describes as being closer to primary processes. At this stage,



Figure 2: "Language . . . shares with the world an enigmatic opacity."

what Freud calls “visual and acoustic memory traces” embedded in language emerge at every level of the sign – down to the letter. Thus in “Voyelles,” “U” evokes “cycles” by its provenance from the Greek upsilon (“y grec”), leading to “vibrements divins” and “virides” by the “i” sound as well as the “v” shape of Latinate “u.” The reversal of “U” and “O” in the order of vowels takes us virtually through all meanings, from the alpha through the omega of language. These letters are coterminous with the totality of the Greek alphabet, whose conjunction is a textual figure of the Supreme Being, the Lord God in His



Figure 3: From rhumb to delir(i)um.

ultimate revelation: "I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end," we read in the beginning, the middle and the end of the Book of Revelation, which closes the Christian canon of sacred scripture with the announcement of Parousia, the fulfillment of all creation in the divine Logos. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . .": Genesis (1:1); "In the beginning was the Word . . .": John (1:1), the presumed author of Revelation. Rimbaud's "verbe accessible à tous les sens" would be such a Parousia, in which signs would both be and signify – and be their signification. Nothing opposite, or relative, in the Kingdom: "Le poète . . . est chargé de l'humanité, des *animaux* même; il devra faire sentir, palper, écouter ses inventions; si ce qu'il rapporte de là-bas a forme, il donne forme; si c'est informe, il donne informe. Trouver une langue . . ." (p. 270). (The poet is responsible for humanity, even for animals; he will have to have his inventions smelled, felt, heard; if what he brings back from beyond has form, he gives form; if it is formless, he gives formlessness.) "Forme" and "informe" are absolute givens, not binary opposites. In its appeal to virtually all five senses ("puanteurs cruelles," "sang craché," "strideurs," "Yeux"), "Voyelles" is a search for such a vital language, and can be legitimately described as an essay in the mystery of the Incarnation, the word made flesh. The triumphal "clairon" announces this apocalypse and recalls as well the language of the "lettre du voyant." This language is present again in the chiasmic relation of "rayon" and "violet," which thus reads as the blue of the heavens (darkened by multiple superimposition, as read into "pourpres"), the music of the "violon" and the violence ("viol," "violé[t]") of the poet's desire for fulfillment.

The violence which largely informs Rimbaud's project of "Voyance," and which resurfaces in "Voyelles," emerges fully in "Conte," the apologue from *Illuminations*:

Il voulait voir la vérité, l'heure du désir et de la satisfaction essentiels. Que ce fût ou non une aberration de piété, il voulut. Il possédait au moins un assez large pouvoir humain.

Toutes les femmes qui l'avaient connu furent assassinées. Quel saccage du jardin de la beauté! (pp. 178-79).

(He wanted to see the truth, the hour of essential desire and satisfaction. Whether or not it was a pious aberration, he wanted it. At least he has sizable human power.

All the women who had known him were murdered. What havoc in the garden of beauty!)

Desire realizes itself here as violence, violence is unimpeded desire, of which the woman is the symbolic goal only as she remains unattain-

able, inviolate. For as we read in the preface to *Une Saison en enfer*, “Un soir, j’ai assis la Beauté sur me genoux. – Et je l’ai trouvée amère. – Et je l’ai injuriée” (p. 219). (One night, I sat Beauty down on my knees. – And I found her bitter. – And I cursed her.) “The violent bear it away,” as scripture reads; the kingdom will not be taken by force, still less by the force of a desire which is violence itself. After an orgy of destruction, the Prince meets a Genie who seems to promise a “multiple and complex love,” but instead of a glorious consummation, there is natural demise:

Le Prince et le Génie s’anéantirent probablement dans la santé essentielle. Comment n’auraient-ils pas pu en mourir? Ensemble donc ils moururent.

Mais ce Prince décéda, dans son palais, à un âge ordinaire. Le Prince était le Génie. Le Génie était le Prince.

La musique savante manque à notre désir (p. 179).

(The Prince and the Genie probably vanished into ideopathic health. How could they not have died of it? Together therefore they died of it.

But this Prince passed away in his palace at a normal age. The Prince was the Genie. The Genie was the Prince.

Our desire lacks skillful music.)

“Manque” combines phonetically the elements of “musique” and “savante,” as what is lacking to his desire, which is the very name for that lack, that “béance” or abeyance in the human being who differs from all other beings in the abysmal violence of his desire. It is by the violence of their desire, princely in its imperiousness, that children differ from adults, who are schooled and repressed by the law, by civilization, which structures discontent and masters it by productive displacements. It is this subtler violence that Rimbaud rejects, and with it the prestige that will attach itself to his writings. As he writes in his “Adieu” to poetry in *Une Saison en Enfer*, “J’ai essayé d’inventer de nouvelles fleurs, de nouveaux âstres, de nouvelles chairs, de nouvelles langues. J’ai cru acquérir des pouvoirs surnaturels. Eh bien! je dois enterrer mon imagination et mes souvenirs! Une belle gloire d’artiste et de conteur emportée!” (p. 243). (I tried to invent new flowers, new stars, new flesh, new languages. I thought I took on supernatural powers. Well! I have to bury my imagination and my memories. So much for the glory of the artist and the storyteller!)

In “Alchimie du verbe,” Rimbaud restores the proper order of the vowels: “A noir, E Blanc, I rouge, O bleu, U vert.” It is the given order in a series of letters to whose contingency, as to that of all creation, he declares himself reconciled: “Il faut être absolument moderne. Point

Haufen zusammengestellt. Späterer Zusatz: Die beiden Mädchen gehen Wasser holen und müssen dabei wie in einen Fluß steigen, der bis ins Haus oder in den Hof reicht*.

b) Haupttraum** : Sie steigt von hoch herab*** über eigentümliche Geländer oder Zäune, die zu großen Karos vereinigt sind und aus Flechtwerk von kleinen Quadraten bestehen. Es ist eigentlich nicht zum Steigen eingerichtet; sie hat immer Sorge, daß sie Platz für den Fuß findet, und freut sich, daß ihr Kleid dabei nirgends hängen bleibt, daß sie im Gehen so anständig bleibt††. Dabei trägt sie einen großen Ast in der Hand†††, eigentlich wie einen Baum, der dick mit roten Blüten besetzt ist, verzweigt und ausgebreitet§. Dabei ist die Idee Kirschblüten, sie sehen aber auch aus wie gefüllte Kamelien, die freilich nicht auf Bäumen wachsen. Während des Herabgehens hat sie zuerst einen, dann plötzlich zwei, später wieder einen§§. Wie sie unten anlangt, sind die unteren Blüten schon ziemlich abgefallen. Sie sieht dann, unten angelangt, einen Hausknecht, der einen eben solchen Baum, sie möchte sagen — kämmt, d. h. mit einem Holze dicke Haarbüschel, die wie Moos von ihm herabhängen, rauft. Andere Arbeiter haben solche Äste aus einem Garten abgehauen und auf die Straße geworfen, wo sie herumliegen, so daß viele Leute sich davon nehmen. Sie fragt aber, ob das recht ist, ob man sich auch einen nehmen kann§§§. Im Garten steht ein junger Mann (von ihr bekannter Persönlichkeit, ein Fremder), auf den sie zugeht, um ihn zu fragen, wie man solche Äste in ihren eigenen Garten umsetzen könne**†. Er umfängt sie, worauf sie sich sträubt und ihn fragt, was ihm einfällt, ob man sie denn so umfassen darf. Er sagt, das ist kein Unrecht, das ist erlaubt**†. Er erklärt sich dann bereit, mit ihr in den anderen Garten zu gehen, um ihr das Einsetzen zu zeigen, und sagt ihr etwas, was sie nicht recht versteht: Es fehlen mir

* Zur Deutung dieses als „kausal“ zu nehmenden Vortraumes siehe S. 215.

** Ihr Lebenslauf.

*** Hohe Abkunft, Wunschgegensatz zum Vortraume.

† Mischgebilde, das zwei Lokalitäten vereinigt, den sogenannten Boden des Vaterhauses, auf dem sie mit dem Bruder spielte, dem Gegenstand ihrer späteren Phantasien, und den Hof eines schlimmen Onkels, der sie zu necken pflegte.

†† Wunschgegensatz zu einer realen Erinnerung vom Hofe des Onkels, daß sie sich im Schlafe zu entblößen pflegte.

††† Wie der Engel in der Verkündigung Mariä einen Lilienstengel.

§ Die Erklärung dieses Mischgebildes siehe S. 218: Unschuld, Periode, Kameliendame.

§§ Auf die Mehrheit der ihrer Phantasie dienenden Personen.

§§§ Ob man sich auch einen herunterreißen darf, i. e. masturbieren.

**† Der Ast hat längst die Vertretung des männlichen Genitales übernommen, enthält übrigens eine sehr deutliche Anspielung auf den Familiennamen.

**† Bezieht sich wie das Nächstfolgende auf eheliche Vorrichtungen.

ohnedies drei Meter — (später sagt sie: Quadratmeter) oder drei Klafter Grund. Es ist, als ob er für seine Bereitwilligkeit etwas von ihr verlangen würde, als ob er die Absicht hätte, sich in ihrem Garten zu entschädigen, oder als wollte er irgend ein Gesetz betrügen, einen Vorteil davon haben, ohne daß sie einen Schaden hat. Ob er ihr dann wirklich etwas zeigt, weiß sie nicht*.

Ich habe natürlich gerade an solchem Material Überfluß, aber dessen Mitteilung würde zu tief in die Erörterung neurotischer Verhältnisse führen. Alles leitete zum gleichen Schluß, daß man keine besondere symbolisierende Tätigkeit der Seele bei der Traumarbeit anzunehmen braucht, sondern daß der Traum sich solcher Symbolisierungen, welche im unbewußten Denken bereits fertig enthalten sind, bedient, weil sie wegen ihrer Darstellbarkeit, zumeist auch wegen ihrer Zensurfreiheit, den Anforderungen der Traumbildung besser genügen.

e) Die Darstellung durch Symbole im Traume. Weitere typische Träume.

Wenn man sich mit der ausgiebigen Verwendung der Symbolik für die Darstellung sexuellen Materials im Traume vertraut gemacht hat, muß man sich die Frage vorlegen, ob nicht viele dieser Symbole wie die „Sigel“ der Stenographie mit ein für allemal festgelegter Bedeutung auftreten, und sieht sich vor der Versuchung, ein neues Traumbuch nach der Chiffriermethode zu entwerfen. Dazu ist zu bemerken: Diese Symbolik gehört nicht dem Traume zu eigen an, sondern dem unbewußten Vorstellen, speziell des Volkes, und ist im Folklore, in den Mythen, Sagen, Redensarten, in der Spruchweisheit und in den umlaufenden Witzten eines Volkes vollständiger als im Traume aufzufinden. Wir müßten also die Aufgabe der Traumdeutung weit überschreiten, wenn wir der Bedeutung des Symbols gerecht werden und die zahlreichen, größtenteils noch ungelösten Probleme erörtern wollten, welche sich an den Begriff des Symbols knüpfen**. Wir wollen uns hier darauf beschränken zu sagen, daß die Darstellung durch ein Symbol zu den indirekten Darstellungen gehört, daß wir aber durch allerlei Anzeichen gewarnt werden, die Symboldarstellung unterschiedslos mit den anderen Arten indirekter Darstellung zusammenzuwerfen, ohne noch diese unterscheidenden Merkmale in begrifflicher Klarheit erfassen zu können. In einer Reihe von Fällen ist das Gemeinsame zwischen dem Symbol und dem Eigent-

* Ein analoger „biographischer“ Traum ist der unter den Beispielen zur Traumsymbolik als dritter mitgeteilt; ferner der von Rank ausführlich mitgeteilte „Traum, der sich selbst deutet“; einen anderen, der „verkehrt“ gelesen werden muß, siehe bei Stekel p. 486.

** Vgl. die Arbeiten von Bleuler und seinen Züricher Schülern Maeder, Abraham u. a. über Symbolik, und die nicht ärztlichen Autoren, auf welche sie sich beziehen (Kleinpaul u. a.). Das Zutreffendste, was über diesen Gegenstand geäußert worden ist, findet sich in der Schrift von O. Rank und H. Sachs, Die Bedeutung der Psychoanalyse für die Geisteswissenschaften, 1913, Kap. I.

de cantiques. Tenir le pas gagné" (pp. 243-44). (We have to be absolutely modern. No hymns! Hold on to the ground we've gained.) Modernity is, etymologically, temporality: hold to the given line, moment after moment, and pursue it; a matter of coping, not troping. "Moi! moi qui me suis dit mage ou ange, dispensé de toute morale, je suis rendu au sol, avec un devoir à chercher, et la réalité rugueuse à étreindre! Paysan!" (p. 243). (I! I! who called himself angel or magus, dispensed from all morality, I'm back down to earth, with a duty to find and rugged reality to embrace! Peasant!) It is as if he is renouncing, with "alchimie du verbe," the "syllabic chemistry" by which Freud describes the linguistic distortions of the unconscious.¹⁴ The word "distortions" is repeatedly Freud's own, and we have seen that it implies turns, figures, tropes, substitutions, short-cuts. Dreams, according to Freud, are "the royal road to the unconscious," and jokes are its rising to the surface of everyday life, as "short circuits" in the economy of thinking, as transgressions, violent or obscene, of cultural taboos.¹⁵ Dream-work, joke-work and art work, in their multifarious distortions, are subject to the law of torts, to which the author of *Une Saison en enfer* submits in the very last words of that text: "– et il me sera loisible de posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps" (p. 244). One body and one soul, according to law: "loisible."

The arbitrariness of the law follows upon that of the sign, in which the law conceivably originates. Both Freud and Rimbaud were exposed to cultural phenomena which, in different ways, would have brought that arbitrariness home – to the letter, in which it stands out most flagrantly. The German tradition of variegated typeface and spacing in which Freud is reading and writing, and which he exploited amply (Figure 4), lends a text to multiple readings. With the spacing nearly equidistant between whole words and single letters, with the varying sizes and density of the letters themselves, the "free-floating attention" which Freud pays to the dream narrative of the analysand is induced to roam over the printed page in similar manner. There is also the fact of his inevitable exposure to Hebrew scripture, a signifying system utterly alien in its form and import to the profane intellectual tradition of his adoption. When Freud was given to conceive himself as Moses, it was perhaps less as founding father than as parricide, exile, wanderer. It is in this homeless direction that he recalls the experience of Rimbaud.

The inspiration of "Voyelles" is notoriously multiple. Sources range from the multicolored alphabet books to which children of Rimbaud's era, as of our own, were exposed, to an esoteric tradition which attached hieratic, substantial significance to individual words and even letters. This tradition is somewhat continuous with that of Hebrew

scripture via the Kabbalism and illuminism which meander alongside the mainstream of Western thought from the Middle Ages through surrealism. Knowledge of this tradition is something which Rimbaud shares with a number of nineteenth-century French writers, Balzac, Nerval, Baudelaire, and Hugo among them. Hugo, in his late maturity, his visionary period, embarked on an exploration of the meaning of letters. In the case of Nerval, the quest is more poignantly bound up with his madness, as he desperately searches for meaning in a desacralized universe.¹⁶ An analogous source of Rimbaud's inspiration is suggested by the title of the collection of poems from which "Génie" is taken. *Illuminations*, according to Verlaine, is to be understood as "painted plates," as with illuminated manuscripts of medieval times. In this textual tradition, which predates the printing press and the standardization of the printed book, the word is literally filled with images, letter by rubriced letter (Figure 5). The universe is circumscribed by a transcendent deity, origin of language as of all things, and its space is full; its every object and every sign are eschatologically meaningful. Rimbaud's apocalyptic aspirations are accompanied by a yearning for this semiological pleroma, which he advertises sardonically in "Solde": "A vendre les applications de calcul et les sauts d'harmonie inouïs. Les trouvailles et les termes non soupçonnés, possession immédiate" (pp. 208-9). (For sale applied computation and unheard of flights of harmony. Unsuspected finds and terminologies, immediate possession.) This continuum of sign and image is preserved, if only vestigially, in the rubrics of Catholic missals and hymnals past the middle of this century.

But Rimbaud's linguistic adventure differs even from this western tradition by an experience we deduce from his correspondence from Africa. The poet Gérard Macé has suggested convincingly that the straight and narrow path upon which Rimbaud embarks after *Une Saison en enfer* is one already described by his own father.¹⁷ When he is seeking employment with the American navy, he identifies himself as a member of his father's regiment in the French army. If the quest for origins is always ultimately the quest for the father, Rimbaud continues that quest via his African adventure. He writes home of returning to Europe to marry a widow – which his mother had become as a result of his father's eventual desertion of the family household – and of having a son, an engineer; and he dies, upon his return, of gangrene poisoning, at thirty seven, his father's age when he married his mother. Rimbaud repeats in reverse the career of his father, who prior to his marriage was stationed in North Africa and became an accomplished Arab linguist. Thus Macé rightly regards Rimbaud's progress through Africa as a regression. One need only consult the literal, letterly facts to see this is the case.



Figure 5: The Full Letter.

Even while in Africa, Rimbaud never abandoned his metaphysical quest for a knowledge that would be at once universal and practical. In his letters home, his range is encyclopedic in his request for useful, summary manuals: engineering, chemistry, forestry, astronomy, ordinance, optics, architecture – God only, in His presumed omniscience, knows what. His most insistent request is for a *Dictionnaire de la langue amhara*, “avec prononciation en caractères latins.” An utterly foreign language in its inscrutable script, doubled by its western vocalization. Grammé and phoné as alien to each other as both are to their reader. The experience of a language, which presumably Rimbaud needs to learn for his explorations, could never be more foreign, more strange. What is uncanny is that it connects with an experience familiar to Rimbaud as a child. For this linguistic doubling repeats another, familiar, paternal doubling: he also requests from his sister a copy, from among the papers, his father’s, at home, of the Koran, with the “Arabic text on the opposite page.” It is a manuscript, lost to us, which Rimbaud must have seen as a child. One need only consult an edition of Islam’s Holy Book to conceive of the effect of its ornate, elegant pages, overflowing with object-signs, on the child’s illiterate imagination (Figure 6). The son’s quest is a request, as for the holy book of the father – “cela en manuscrit très soigné,” as Isabelle Rimbaud tells us of her father’s copy, the copy of the father’s own hand. The son is the copy of the father. His vaunted cognition – “Car il arrive à l’inconnu! Puisqu’il a cultivé son âme, déjà riche, plus qu’aucun!” (pp. 270-71). (Because he arrives at the unknown! Since he has cultivated his soul, already rich, more than anyone!) – is a desperate, refractory, failed recognition. The poet is truly a stealer of fire: “Donc le poète est vraiment voleur du feu” (p. 271), but the father in fact has stolen his thunder. This son, in his revolt against the mother, against her narrow piety, is but a bastard copy of the father, who is himself, for the son, but a copier of the bastard wisdom of Islam, the bastard son of Christendom in which the son refuses to recognize himself: “Je n’avais pas en vue la sagesse bâtarde du Coran,” we read in *Une Saison* (p. 240). (I had not in view the bastard wisdom of the Koran.)

“Il arrive à l’inconnu, et quand, affolé, il finirait par perdre l’intelligence de ses visions, il les a vues!” (He reaches the unknown and when, maddened, he finishes by losing the intelligence of his visions, he has seen them), writes the “voyant”: “Qu’il crève dans son bondissement par les choses inouïes et innommables: viendront d’autres horribles travailleurs; ils commenceront par les horizons où l’autre s’est affaissée!” (p. 271) (Let him die in his leap through unheard of and unnamable things: other horrible workers will come; they will begin with the horizons where the other collapsed!) “L’Autre,”

(سورة المؤمنون)

عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرْجٍ مَلَّةً أَيْبِكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ
 الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا
 عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
 وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَى
 وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٧٨﴾

(٢٣) سُورَةُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ مَكِّيَّةٌ
 وَأَيَّاتُهَا ١١٨ نَزَلَتْ بَعْدَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ
 خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾
 وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ



(الجزء السابع عشر)

الْمُنْكَرِ يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا
 قُلْ أَفَأَنْتُمْ بِشِرِّ مِمَّنْ ذَكَرَ النَّارُ وَعَدَّهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا وَيَسَّ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٧٦﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضَرْبَ مَثَلٍ
 فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ
 يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ ۗ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْعًا
 لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ ﴿٧٧﴾
 مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٧٨﴾ اللَّهُ
 يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ
 بَصِيرٌ ﴿٧٩﴾ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ
 تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٨٠﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا
 وَعِبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَأَفْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨١﴾
 وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۗ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ



Figure 6: Considerations of Unreadability.

the other, turns out to be the father, whom the son did not have "en vue," to whose holy book he nonetheless returns, "texte arabe en regard," as to the origins of his "madness," his "delirium," his verbal alchemy, as he describes the visible language of his poetic inspiration in *Une Saison*:

J'aimais les peintures idiotes, dessus de portes, décors, toiles de saltimbanques, enseignes, enluminures populaires; la littérature démodée, latin d'église, livres érotiques sans orthographe, romans de nos aïeules, contes de fées, petits livres de l'enfance, opéras vieux, refrains niais, rythmes naïfs (p. 232).

(I loved idiotic paintings, door panels, stage sets, curtains of travelling circuses, signs, popular engravings; outmoded literature, church Latin, erotic books with bad spelling, novels of our grandmothers, fairy tales, little baby books, old operas, dumb refrains, naive rhythms.)

"Romans de nos aïeules" and "contes de fées" might come under the heading of what Freud has called "family romance," by which he means the delusions conjured up by the child as to his origins and prestige.¹⁸ Rimbaud's story is a family romance with a difference, with the difference that writing makes as it repeats and masks an origin, denies and returns to the father by turns, twists, tropes and figures, metaphors, substitutions, *qui pro quo*, whose fabulous beginnings can be traced to the adventures of the father:

Je m'habituai à l'hallucination simple: je voyais très-franchement une mosquée à la place d'une usine, une école de tambours faite par des anges. . . .

Puis j'expliquai mes sophismes magiques avec l'hallucination des mots! (p. 234).

(I got used to hallucination, pure and simple: I saw, frankly, a mosque where a factory should be, a school for drummers taught by angels. . . .

Then I explained my magic sophisms with the hallucination of words!)

For the hallucination of words is incarnate in writing. For Saussure, as for Plato and Rousseau, writing is the usurper of the law become a law unto itself.¹⁹ It is double talk, devil talk: "'Tu resteras hyène, etc. . .,' se récrie le démon qui me couronna de si aimables pavots. 'Gagne la mort avec tous ces appétits, et ton égoïsme et tous les péchés capitaux'" (p. 219). ("You'll remain a hyena, etc. . .," yells the demon who crowned me with such delightful poppies. "Get to your death with your lusts, your egoism and all the deadly sins.") Rimbaud "le voyant," *Rimbaud le voyou*,²⁰ the bastard, the son of a bitch, the blasphemous,

obscene rebel who writes “Merde à Dieu” on the park benches of his native Charleville, cannot recognize his own poetry – “Absurde! Ridicule! Dégoutant!” he is recorded as responding to later inquiries about it – any more than he can recognize the hand his father had in the writing of, say, “Mauvais Sang”: “J’ai horreur de tous les métiers. Maîtres et ouvriers, tous paysans, ignobles. La main à plume vaut la main à charrue. – Quel siècle à mains! – Je n’aurais jamais ma main. Après, la domesticité mène trop loin” (p. 220). (I loath all trades. Foremen and workmen, all peasants, base. The hand at the pen is no better than the hand at the plough. – What a century of hands! – Afterwards, domesticity takes you too far.) Too far, even to far off Africa. One wonders, with Freud, where domesticity, homelife, does not lead, since Rimbaud’s poetry and his renunciation of poetry, since even his flight to Africa, show signs of his father’s handiwork. One wonders too, with Rimbaud, where family romance ends in a desacralized universe, since he cannot have his say, since he is already spoken for in a dead language – “Moi, je ne puis pas plus m’expliquer que le mendiant avec ses continuels *Pater* et *Ave Maria*. *Je ne sais plus parler!*” (p. 242). (I can no more explain myself than the beggar with his continual *Paters* and *Ave Marias*. *I no longer know how to speak!*) – which tells of another relation to father (“fiat voluntas tua . . .”) and to mother (“ora pro nobis peccatoribus . . .”), in which desire has no role.

1. (Paris: Payot, 1965), p. 97.
2. Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), XVII, 217-53, henceforth: *S.E.*
3. *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 1963). All subsequent references to Rimbaud are to this edition.
4. *S.E.*, XI, 155.
5. These references are to be found in the J. Strachey translation (New York: Avon, 1971), pp. 130, 312, 386. A more global version of the unconscious as writing is put forth in “A Note on the Mystic Writing Pad,” *S.E.*, XIX, 227.
6. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 330.
7. My reading of Rimbaud in this regard is much illumined by the essays of Jean-Louis Baudry, “Le Texte de Rimbaud,” *Tel Quel*, No. 35 (1968) and No. 36 (1969), and of Shoshana Felman, “Arthur Rimbaud, Folie et modernité” in *La Folie et la chose littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1978).
8. “L’Instance de la lettre dans l’inconscient” in *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 517.
9. *S.E.*, VII, 16-19. For alternate configurations of word play anent Freud, consult Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, *La Fourche* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), pp. 138-69, in which Figure 1 is to be found as well.
10. Lacan, “L’Instance de la lettre,” p. 516.

11. *Tombeau de Du Bellay* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 25. Consider as well Jacques Lacan on the linearity of the signifying chain in Saussure: "Mais il suffit d'écouter la poésie, ce qui sans doute était le cas de F. de Saussure, pour que s'y fasse entendre une polyphonie et que tout discours s'avère s'aligner sur les plusieurs portées d'une partition. Nulle chaîne signifiante en effet qui ne soutienne comme appendu à la ponctuation de chacune de ses unités tout ce qui s'articule de contextes attestés, à la vertical, si l'on peut dire, de ce point" (p. 503).
12. "The Unconscious," *S.E.*, XIV, 205, et passim.
13. *Du Cubisme à l'art abstrait* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1957), p. 66.
14. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 332.
15. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 647; *Jokes*, Chaps. III, IV.
16. A certain sense of the mysterious density of language is thus common to a number of nineteenth-century French writers, whose conception and experience of language differs radically from its normative conception as a transparent instrument of communication between autonomous subjects. For Hugo, consult Guy Robert, *Quelques Remarques sur l'oeuvre de Victor Hugo, Annales littéraires de l'université de Besançon*, 1976; for Nerval, Michel Jeanerret, *La Lettre perdue: Ecriture et folie dans l'oeuvre de Nerval* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).
17. "Rimbaud recently deserted," *Nouvelle Revue Française*, No. 303 (April 1978) and No. 304 (May 1978).
18. *S.E.*, IX, 235-44.
19. Consult Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967).
20. The title of Benjamin Fondane's provocative essay on Rimbaud, reprinted by Ramsay (Paris, 1979).

Figure 1: *Diagram from Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious.*

Figure 2: Robert Delaunay, "L'Alchimie du verbe: Recherche calligraphique sur 'Une Saison en enfer' d'A. Rimbaud," 1914 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

Figure 3: Juan Gris, "The Bottle of Martinique Rum," 1914 (The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice). Reproduced from the catalogue, n.p., n.d.

Figure 4: Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Leipzig, 1921)

Figure 5: Initial "S" from the *Livre des Miracles de Ste. Foy*, XIth century (Bibliothèque Humaniste, Celestat)

Figure 6: Koran, circa 1900.

Sanford S. Ames

Jacques Lacan's *Encore*, read across French and English, disperses being in an insect-like suspension, a swarm of signifiers inflecting sexual division and mortality. Love would hide the sting of lives exiled in language, overrun the enigma of script in a smarm of incorporation. Visible language is contingency, encounter with the cells of abandoned hives, the serial surreality of the ubiquitous: the letters through which meaning comes to life. Today demographic mutations appear to rival the infinite combinations of words. Microchip humming extensions of biological man stir the breeze with unthinkable cross pollination, to end in honey or ashes. The killer bees are us.

*We are the bees of the Invisible.
Nous butinons éperdument le miel
du visible pour l'accumuler dans la
grande ruche d'or de l'Invisible.*

– Rilke

By prospecting outside the bodily envelope, the cranial, sexual bumps and cavities, Jacques Lacan leads psychoanalysis to visible mysteries: the text of language as unconscious mind. Lacan insists that his reinterpretation of the psychoanalytic canon is faithful to the potential of Freud's most revolutionary discoveries. The traditional rallying points of instinctual drives, scientific modesty and the therapeutic goal of a unified ego, held back for Lacan a vision of the radical complexity of being and its scattering in the material of language. In Lacan's view, the exterior extensions of man, the linguistic and cultural codes which signify the sexed biological organism in private imagination and public representation, are all important. The imaginary unified self is to be dissolved in the scene of the Other, which is discourse soliciting response, an invitation to float the mirage of the subject, already undetermined.

That which looks without seeing, that which we usually look at without seeing, is that through which meaning comes: the materiality of the text, the signifier. The incarnate unity that speaks and resonates subcutaneously, reproduces itself in the body, but exists as a subject outside in a field of language also known as the Other or the Symbolic Order.

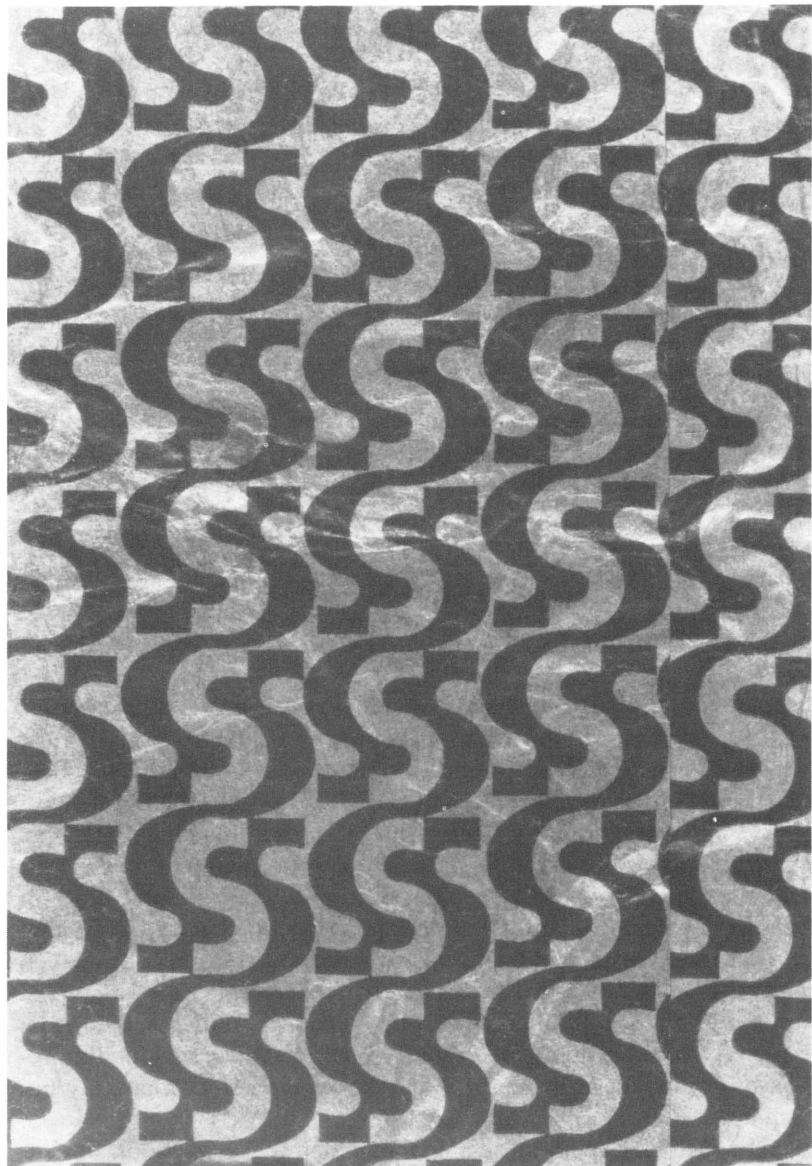


Figure 1: A Master Signifier or *S₁ S_{un}* contains the homonym *essaim* in French, in English, swarm.

To look at language and not beyond it, is to encounter emptiness of meaning, to ask how that we know, how we claim possession of knowledge. A word or a name under which we try to incorporate our knowingness, a master signifier or S_1 , *Sun*, in the French of Jacques Lacan's *Encore*,¹ contains the homonym *éssaim*, in English, swarm, as well as the question in French, *Est-ce un?* Is it one? These extremely suggestive homonyms serve to disperse the alleged subject in a multitude of words that hover, take flight, and are soon out of sight and mind. So does a swarm of bees from a hive fly off, accompanied by a queen, to start a new colony. The abandoned hive, often an artificial shelter, can reappear multiplied, as in the eruptive skin disease, hives. These pimples, *capitons* on the surface of the text/skin, are those mattress anchoring points that would pad being with substance.

The drone of language goes beyond hearing, the hearing of some "getting off" (*de la jouissance*)? Or worse, it sighs ("ou pire, ça s'oupire"), says Lacan. Speaking of Bernini's Saint Theresa (Santa Teresa in Agone) in *Encore* (a title which, of course, can be translated, *In the Body*, from the French homonym, *en corps*, so that we read, *Again/In the Body*), Lacan affirms peremptorily that "she's coming, there's no doubt about it" (*elle jouit, Sainte Thérèse, ça ne fait pas de doute*). Is the look of the other coming the look of writing, of the Other with a big *O*? Must pleasure and meaning coincide for there to be knowledge that knows that it knows? What of pleasure that is apparently experienced but which cannot be reported? It may be the refinding of the forgotten in a knowing that is not yet conscious.

Sexual pleasure (*jouissance*), can also be seen as an "out," the omission of a word or words in printing. This printer's out is translated in French as *bourdon*, which also means bumblebee, not to be confused with *un faux bourdon*, the drone or male honeybee, *abeille*. If orgasm does not write, the blank cusp of pleasure is nonetheless overrun by the presumed author, eager for the score of a copyright. But the "not writing" of pleasure does not mean its non-existence. It suggests that the other's pleasure is the enigma of script, the ambiguous smile of the textual Other, the surface that without seeing or knowing, enjoys, stung by the signifier alone. Contingency of encounter begins the unconscious deployment, the knitting, knotting, scanning, i.e. "writing," between two speaking subjects, largely outside of their conscious control or awareness. To stop not writing ("cesse de ne pas s'écrire") means to have the occasion to be open, thanks to corporeal propinquity, to symptoms and signs, to discourse. The displacement of the not (*ne* is a homonym in French for *noeud*, knot in English) in "does not stop writing" ("ne cesse pas de s'écrire"), marks the conscious will

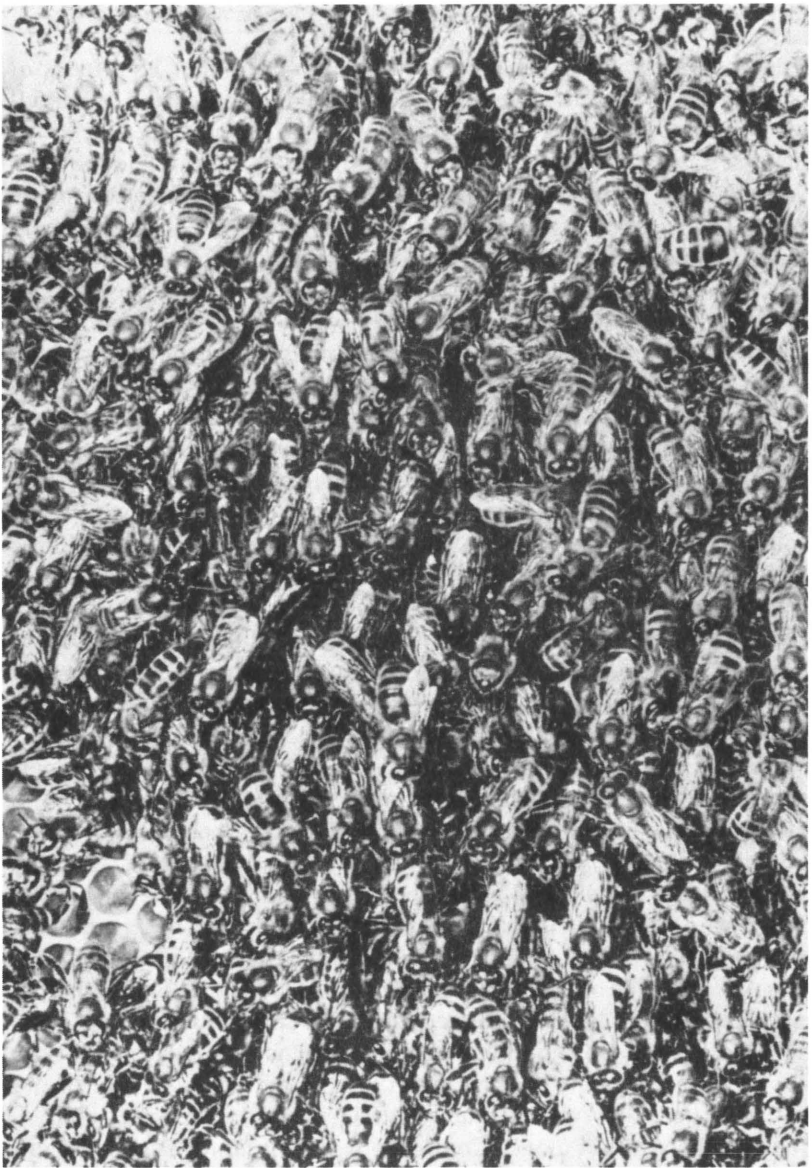


Figure 2: "Demographic mutations appear to rival the infinite combinations of language."

to connect, communicate, possess – “write” as a felt necessity, in other words, to love. Lacan maintains that the destiny and drama of love is the substitution of this negation, as in not/knot (*ne/noeud*), for the nothingness our apprehensions corroborate in the flash point of pleasure.

We identified being with body, it was up to us to know what kept us going, our god, our pleasure, but we have always been bodies in trouble with language. We would throw off the hive, *jeter un essaim*, with a master signifier *encore*. We would begin again writing, knotting into the loop, the noose, meeting ourselves coming, “cesse de ne pas, ne cesse pas,” the knot follows and precedes the stoppage, always already there, in spite of the little death of orgasm, *la petite mort*, always the trace we would idealize, incorporate as coming from us.

Strategies of self-preservation have kept the subject from knowing too much. The belief was circulated that sexuality was instinct, function, biology – a drive grounding the *élan* of a beautiful personal soul. Sexual pleasure was contained in a narcissistic auto-erotic communion with the dream of the continuous self, ignoring the death of the individual encoded in sexual reproduction. *Jouissance* has been hedged with legal, commercial language, seen as an economy of pleasure to be enjoyed without diminishing its substance, pleasure as usufruct. The essence in question being the sanctity of the subject as “used fruit,” never oversqueezed or spent. May we run out of ink before we overwrite, Derrida seems to be suggesting in *Limited Inc.*²

The relation of love to knowledge is the repetitive articulation that separation makes necessary. In the question *Tu m'aimes?* (Do you love me?), the beautiful soul, maimed, named, can't see the Other for the partner, his reflection hiding the impersonal nots/knots on the noose from the B-for-being, scene/seen. The drama of love is that articles of incorporation hide the noose in a seeming suspension of negation, it is slippage from unconscious tangency to self-conscious possessiveness. Internalized is the loneliness of capital, of that which counts, the One. “Y a de l'un,” says Lacan, there is some one, or is it two? Is it from them? Is it God? (*Est-ce deux? d'eux? Dieu?*) Is it you, dear? No, it is just the one, not the double you of swarm, but the letter “m” (pronounced as *aime* in French), the love of *smarm*, of cloying sentimentality and affectionate service. UN DO IT! the ad screams. It is the division of the subject *smarm* would deny.

What is the distinguishing sign that, like the omen of a circling vulture, or a bee in a bonnet, makes the signifier into a subject for another signifier? It is the phallus, son of the unmentionable mark of sexual difference, that would be the guarantee of meaning, the scepter (except

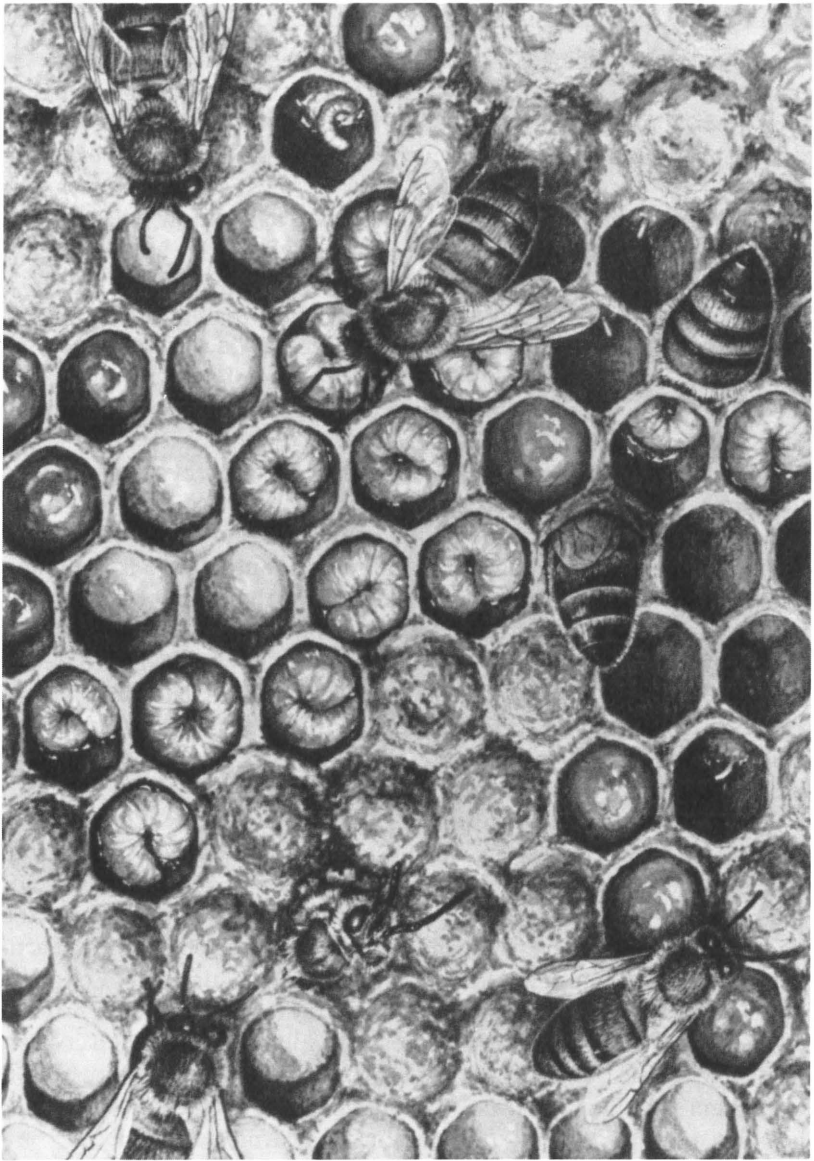


Figure 3: Visible language is an encounter with live, the hive.

her), that lets her come, not knowing, not having less or more than the limited ink that signs the name of the father that copies right. Lacan promotes the notion that consciousness can become the awareness that the place of speech, of some one (*de l'un*), is not the place of being. No, that rock, that island, bunched muscle, pumped-up senescence is not. The condition of language is that it exists without us, in spite of us, the letter can be read in the absence of sender and receiver. Life, the biological life of sexed reproduction, has to be ambivalent about the inscription of language which distributes its being as a subject and is at the same time, visible evidence of death, of the disjunction between meaning and the marks on the gravestone. The signifier inflects the relation of the subject to a sex, to the Symbolic Order and to desire. The topological knot that structures the evanescent mirage of the subject is a drift of differential relations that exceed and fall short of the one, of the one-on-one, or one on/in of sexed pairing. Love swarms over suspension, the void or *béance* of abeyance, the omission/emission of *jouissance*; it is the after effect linked with the always already of the continuous one, now two, incorporated.

Life infected by language must hide the sting, the *pique*, the pique cure of bee-ing, the resentment of the subject's dispersion. Some love is the effort to side step the always threatening crisis to/of being. Pleasure has been enmeshed in laws of self-preservation, continuous dispensing provided capital is untouched. The distributive chains of signifiers that put the play and the name, the one, in the game that gives being to life, are the only experience of death consciousness can have.

Visible language is contingency, the chance encounter with the bones of being, the empty cells of the live, the hive, stumbled on in the abeyance of a misreading, a wretched pun, difference passing as the same in a homonym. As Michèle Montrelay puts it, "It is revolting to think that desire, that which man imagines is his most precious possession, fixes itself in the minuscule debris of little sense that are words."³ The effect of seeing the production of meaning writ large, those mute, dead, graphic materials, is reminiscent of science fiction, entomology as etymology: enormously enlarged insects, mutants from atomic radiation, their grinding mandibles and hairy antennae striking terror or hilarity into the hearts of warm-blooded, smarmy humanists, affectionate mammals with beautiful souls and imperishable prose.

La Belle Histoire d'amour, as Edith Piaf called it, lovingly, bitterly, can be ravished again. It suffices to bring to the fore the serial surreality of the trivial arrangements through which meaning comes to life, as in visible language, that which abides usually unnoticed, a sightless nightwatch, a scattering of dots as in the blown-up replications of

newspaper photos. Dotted rectangles of bone, twenty-eight of them arranged by chance in a chain, make up the game of dominoes. Lovers play such a game with the bones of language, twenty-six letters and their two initials. Letters of desire are like the hooded capes of the masquerade ball also known as dominoes. Lost in the multiplying sameness of dancers, the lovers must struggle to recognize each other. Love is the contingent encounter that inaugurates the necessity of close reading, the writing of difference as style, the phantasm of destiny discovered . . . *encore*.

There is a radical outside of thought that a self-possessed subject cannot imagine, but the riddle of life and death is not buried at the end of earth or time, it repeats itself in our every attempt to articulate the world. This perpetual cleaving of being makes us cling to what separates. Relation is totally democratic: difference and interval are equally distant from nothing. This very egalitarianism, however, may now be threatened.

Living human organisms have multiplied in such numbers that a balance between human host and language virus could be upset. The word has not been recognized as a virus because it has enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the host, speculates William S. Burroughs.⁴ While the ultimate goal of a virus may well be the consumption of the host cells, the host, too, in this instance, has metastasized so that a shifting imbalance, a rivalry, is observed. Something like this may in fact be taking place.

Illusions of speech-centered individual sovereignty have given way. The constant playback of word and image and the information explosion, have given us the daily *frisson* of mobs swarming the representatives of incorporated impaction. Consciousness and conscience had been thought to be a private relation to language and the writing it inferred. Today the human languages are like the sound of tiny wings amplified to the roar of electric static broken only by the harsh bark of the police radio. Words fry like bacon on airwaves drowned out by the sound of tramping feet writing a wordless future. Demographic mutations appear to rival the infinite combinations of language. Yet, solid-state, microchip humming extensions of biological man, ubiquitous, insect-like, stir the breeze with unthinkable cross-pollination to end in honey or ashes. The killer bees are us.

1. Jacques Lacan. *Le Séminaire livre XX: Encore*. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975). My reading of *Encore* across French and English is an effort to connect it with contemporary mutations and knottings, private and public, of being and language. All subsequent references to Lacan are from this text.
2. Jacques Derrida. *Limited Inc: a b c ...* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1977).
3. Michèle Montrelay. *L'Ombre et le nom: sur la féminité*. (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), p. 10.
4. William S. Burroughs advances this idea in "Playback from Eden to Watergate," the introduction to the revised edition of *The Job* (New York: Grove Press, 1974).

Figure 1: S pattern wrapping paper, Christmas 1980, in flight between San Francisco and San Diego.

Figure 2: H. Doering, *A Bee is Born* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 1962).

Figure 3: Ibid.

Robbe-Grillet on Target Or Interrogation by the Numbers

George H. Bauer

Numbers as visible language are at the center of one of the legs of Robbe-Grillet's recent triangular novel which focuses on verbal-visual relationships. The work of Jasper Johns provokes a visit to a recent retrospective exhibition from which Robbe-Grillet draws an enigmatic detective tale linked with narratives provoked by the work of Irina Ionesco and René Magritte. The focus of the enigma is on painting by the numbers that lead to both writing and painting. This essay visibly plays with 3 and/or more problems suggested in re-counting.

4-thoughts

Freud is our old modern master when it comes to the investigation of verbal-visual relationships. The dream is visual. The analyst cannot see, but tries to catch a glimpse of the things seen by the dreamer during his "sleep of reason" by demanding that he recount, on the couch, the pictures of his dream. This is to invert the dream process in which the dreamer, by dreaming, paints, and thereby denies grammatical sequence and explicit meaning, transforming the sweet reason of life and language into the surrealist visual. The dreamer revels in the short-circuited and the enigma it produces. The "sleep of reason" is a slip from the certainty of logic, grammar and numerical sequence into the mystery of the plastic. That mystery then becomes detective-object – of a reductive-seductive quest.

Unlike the analyst, I am not interested here in the language of the visible, the restoration of meaning and reason, but in the overdetermined visual of the dream text: that which loses its unknowability in language become transparent, whose visibility, whose enigma is denied by investigation, re-counting, final solution. Freud himself was tempted by the process of translating image into word (a new field for detection) but continually foiled by the superior cunning of the visual, the dreamed. The dreamer, by a consistent denial of grammatical and logical sequence, leads astray with word the detective who attempts to *solve* inscribed plastic unreadability. The anal detective can only reach and deflate the enigma by obliging the dreamer to reduce the seen-

scene to words said and mean meaning; a science, it seems, of one-for-one symbolism, of finality and guilt. In *Studies on Hysteria* Freud writes, "Once a picture has emerged from the patient's memory, we may hear him say that it becomes fragmentary and obscure in proportion as he proceeds with his description of it. *The patient is, as it were, getting rid of it by turning it into words*" (Avon, p. 325, Freud's emphasis).

Robbe-Grillet, probing Jasper Johns's plastic images, his dreams, follows Freud in the role of investigator, but disguises himself as Inspector Duchamp. He, like Freud, takes the found (dream) object as point of departure for a re-counting, but the answer to the sum is not $1=1$. There is, Robbe-Grillet intimates, no one-for-one symbolism. Freud, in spite of his Faustian temptation, would have agreed. In distinction to some of his epigones, he did not opt for sense. Wanting the certainty of meaning in his struggle, he set out to look for the murderer, to find that there isn't one, only a myster. Hence even he, the Great Detective, is obliged to point out that a cigar is sometimes a cigar: a clue is not a clue.

The Detective and the Numbered Target

The old dilemma of the relationship between pictures and words is at the center of the work of Marcel Duchamp, godfather of Jasper Johns and Alain Robbe-Grillet. In *La Boîte Verte* (*The Green Box*) and *Le Grand Verre* (*The Big Glass*) as in the rectified ready-made, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, the artist investigates and plays with the interaction between writing and the plastic arts, coupling this concern with the erotic and the verbal-visual pun. Alain Robbe-Grillet as Rem Brandt, as Ironing Board, writes, paints and scorches in red, black and white the *toile vierge*, the *page blanche*, with memories of a triangle of gold. Three texts are the matrices of his recent novel, *Souvenirs d'un triangle d'or*, published in 1978 by Les Editions de Minuit.

Until now the writer's concern with the materiality of language has been concentrated to a large extent on the letter. Robbe-Grillet adds a new dimension by obliging us to view geometrical forms and numbers in their plasticity giving rise to gesture and story. The triangle – whether Bermuda, drug, platonic, or erotic – is novel box-housed as are Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages*, the ultimate inquiry into the accuracy and distortion of measuring devices. In his *1914 Box*, Duchamp writes on the idea of (its) fabrication: "If a straight horizontal thread one meter long falls from a height of one meter onto a horizontal plane distorting itself *as it pleases* and creates a new shape of the meas-

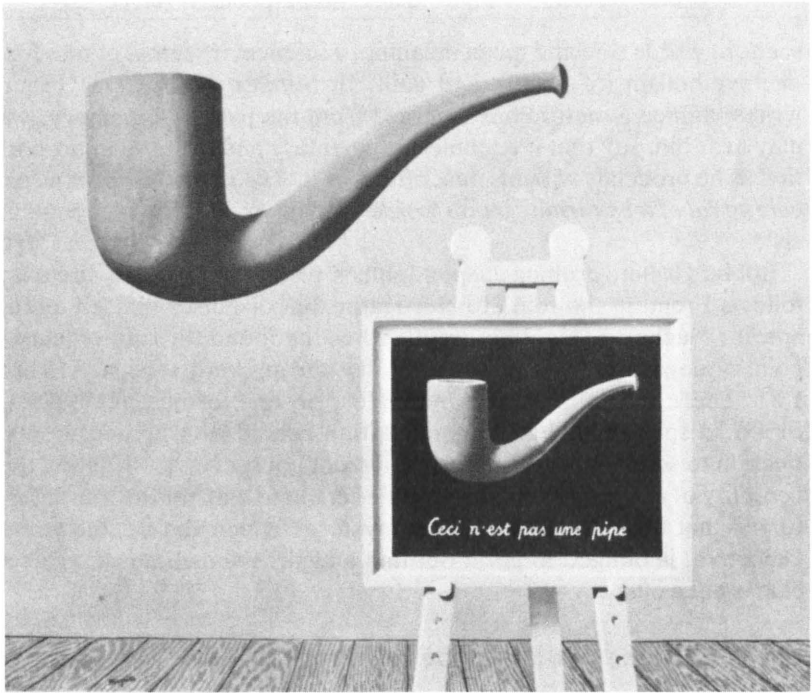


Figure 1: *Two Mysteries*



Figure 2: *The Critic Sees*

ure of length – 3 patterns obtained in more or less similar conditions: considered in their relation to one another they are an approximate reconstitution of the measure of length” (*The Salt Seller*, p. 22). It should come as no surprise, then, to stumble on a Monsieur Duchamp as perverted voyeur, as Prefect of Police, in Robbe-Grillet’s most recent enterprise. The Golden Triangle Remembered as “or” object – this or that or these or those – combines three legs from Robbe-Grillet’s recent past: the first is his text of *La Belle Captive* (Magritte); the second is *Temple aux miroirs* (Irina Ionesco); the third is *La Cible* (Jasper Johns). In search and memory of his youthful experience as a painter, (“Between 10 and 15, I did some painting. / Entre 10 et 15 ans j’ai fait de la peinture.” *Le Monde*, September 22, 1978, p. 17), la belle *Alaine* (à l’aine, our N) creates an easel (Figure 1) from stories aroused in his flashlight memory by the work of these artists where word and painted image complement and compete with one another. His golden triangle is three-legged, a cauldron, an easel, a tripod, a stool on which the sybil sits to speak oracles, and there he inscribes his own phantasms in words.

Here I will deal only with one leg of this triangle, avoiding stability – psychological or otherwise. That leg is *La Cible*, Robbe-Grillet’s preface for an exhibition of Jasper Johns’s work at the Beaubourg reproduced as essential third leg of his *Souvenirs d’un triangle d’or*. I leave for another time the relationship between the 3 except where the numbers of Robbe-Grillet-Jasper Johns invite a foray into this interlocking debris. *The Critic Sees* (Figure 2), but with his mouth, with words: image versus word, an interesting rivalry in the past, but Robbe-Grillet, our Rem Brandt, inspired by Jasper Johns, takes a new tack. He does not write *about*, but *on* and pillages, combines, and transforms the images seen. The exhibited work of an artist, in this case Jasper Johns, is used to generate a new work – a word-work. As reader-spectator-writer, Robbe-Grillet formulates his own récit-recette: “Browsing through a retrospective exhibition of a painter he loves, the writer immediately chooses objects and stories from it. The figures come alive, the recurrence of a motif becomes diachronical development; the title of one of the paintings looms as a password. / Traversant l’exposition rétrospective d’un peintre qu’il aime entre tous, l’écrivain aussitôt y choisit des objets, des histoires. Les figures s’animent, la répétition d’un thème devient développement diachronique, le titre d’un surgit comme un mot de passe” (Back cover, *La Belle Captive*).

When Robbe-Grillet sees, he becomes an Alice in Wonderland, a Morgan le Fay, entering the work of the artist a mirror where he is temporarily caught amid these treasure-objects. His only recourse is to

become a fabulist. In the process he produces in words and in images inspired by his experience a new insight into Jasper Johns's letters and numbers, indeed his work as a whole, and writes/paints himself into and out of the cubicle of the galleried spaces into which he has fallen.

Locked up, in a prison cell (for a crime, a sex crime?), the narrator of *Souvenirs d'un triangle d'or* is drugged, questioned, and begins a description of his cell in an attempt to prove his innocence. There in that space, the mirror of his cell is placed so that he sees only his own eyes reflected. "It is hung so high that I have to stand on the chair (bent wood, lacquered white) in order to see the upper part of my face, cut by the lower curvilinear edge at about the middle of my nose. *Note well this detail which is important.* / Il est placé si haut que je dois monter sur la chaise (en bois tourné, laqué de blanc) pour apercevoir, interrompu par le bord inférieur curviligne et coupant, le haut de mon visage, jusqu'au milieu du nez environ. *Notez bien ce détail, qui a son importance*" (STO, p. 126). (My emphasis) This "detail," I suggest, is a *souvenir* of Jasper Johns's *The Critic Sees*. The doubled mouth as eyes replace the mouth of the narrator cut by the partial mirror's edge. In this image is embodied a Freudian *modus operandi*. The dream seen is recounted in words. The analyst obliges the visual to become verbal (Jackson Pollock is the great exception) as the patient becomes narrator. The parallel with the critic, the writer *on art*, is clear. The difference is that with the aid of mechanical reproduction, the recounting of what has been seen is accompanied in art books, in newspapers, and in journals by copies (whose quality is often dubious) of the images themselves (as here). Robbe-Grillet's game is multiple. First, he gives us the text and image together as in the three texts to which I have referred: *La Belle Captive*, *Temple aux miroirs*, *La Cible*. Then he combines the texts and absents the reproduced generating images and gives us his easel remembrance: *Souvenirs d'un triangle d'or* as novel – a traversal of pictures at an exhibition now absent and remembered. His *ciné-roman* is now embodied in a movie, a traversal, a narrative where images have a mixed, complex relationship with each other and with words.

In his cell, a Judas hole and a screen resembling a mirror (oh the silver screen) join the broken mirror that only returns his eyes. Sight, the eye, the I, number I, dominates, inventories, and interrogates the objects of his situation. The Judas hole is filled intermittently with a pair of eyes facing the "mirror"-screen. In the paintings of Johns the Judas holes reveal mouths or other parts of the body; the eye, the "I", is always absent, present only as other, target eye (Figure 3). Inspection, surveillance, and projection are visual. The narrator speaks of insistent questions organizing these images. "What is the mechanism



Figure 3: *Target with 4 Faces*

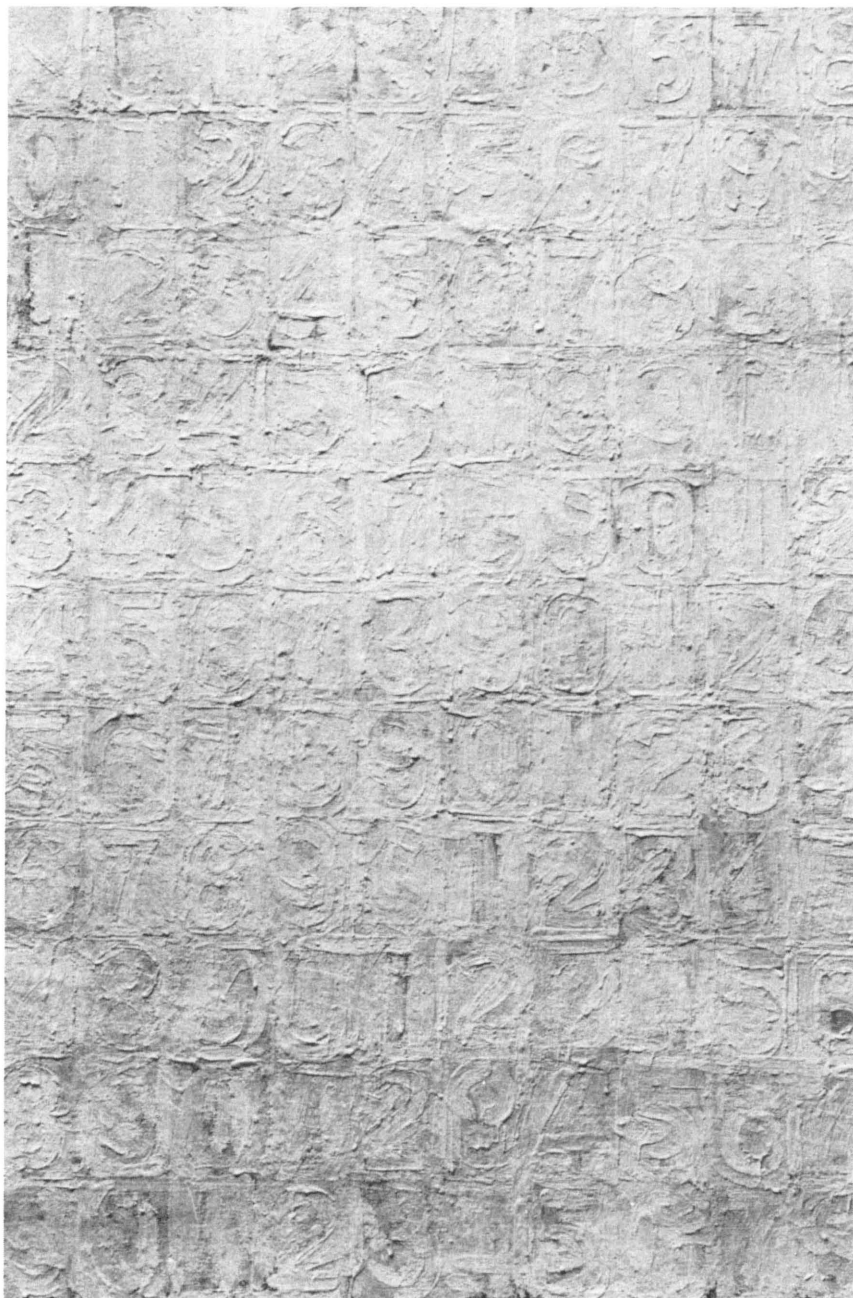


Figure 4: *White Numbers*

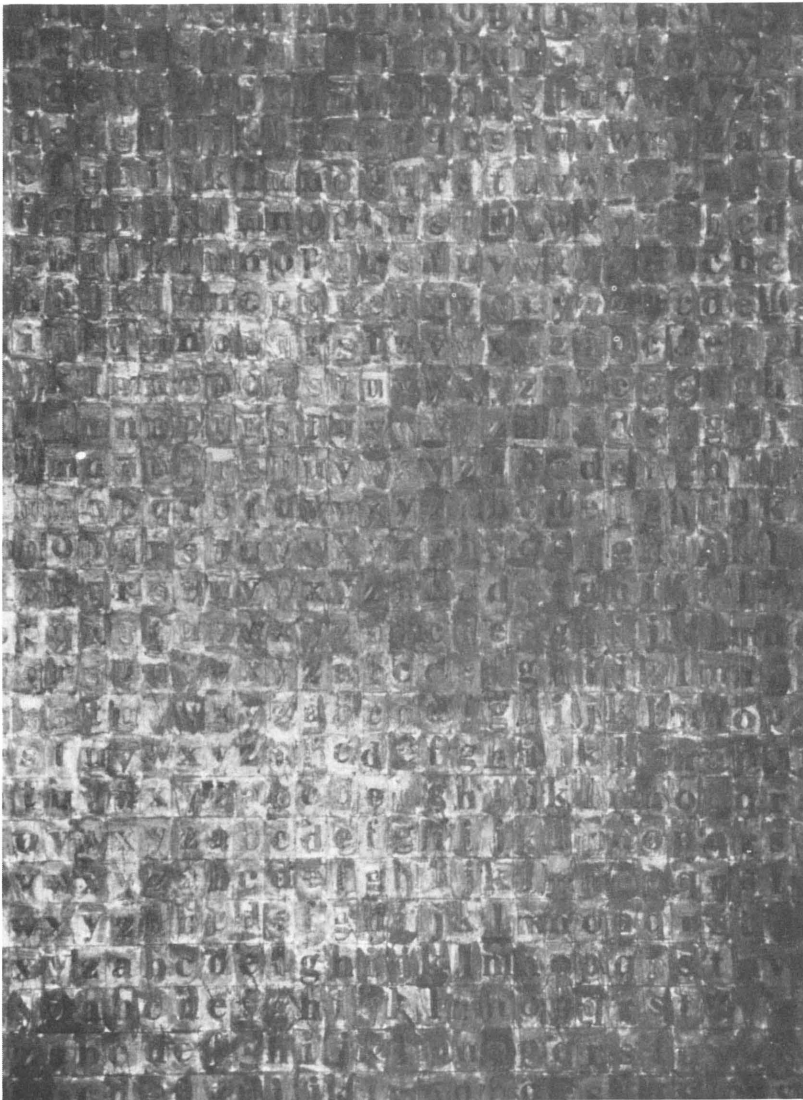


Figure 5: *Gray Alphabets*

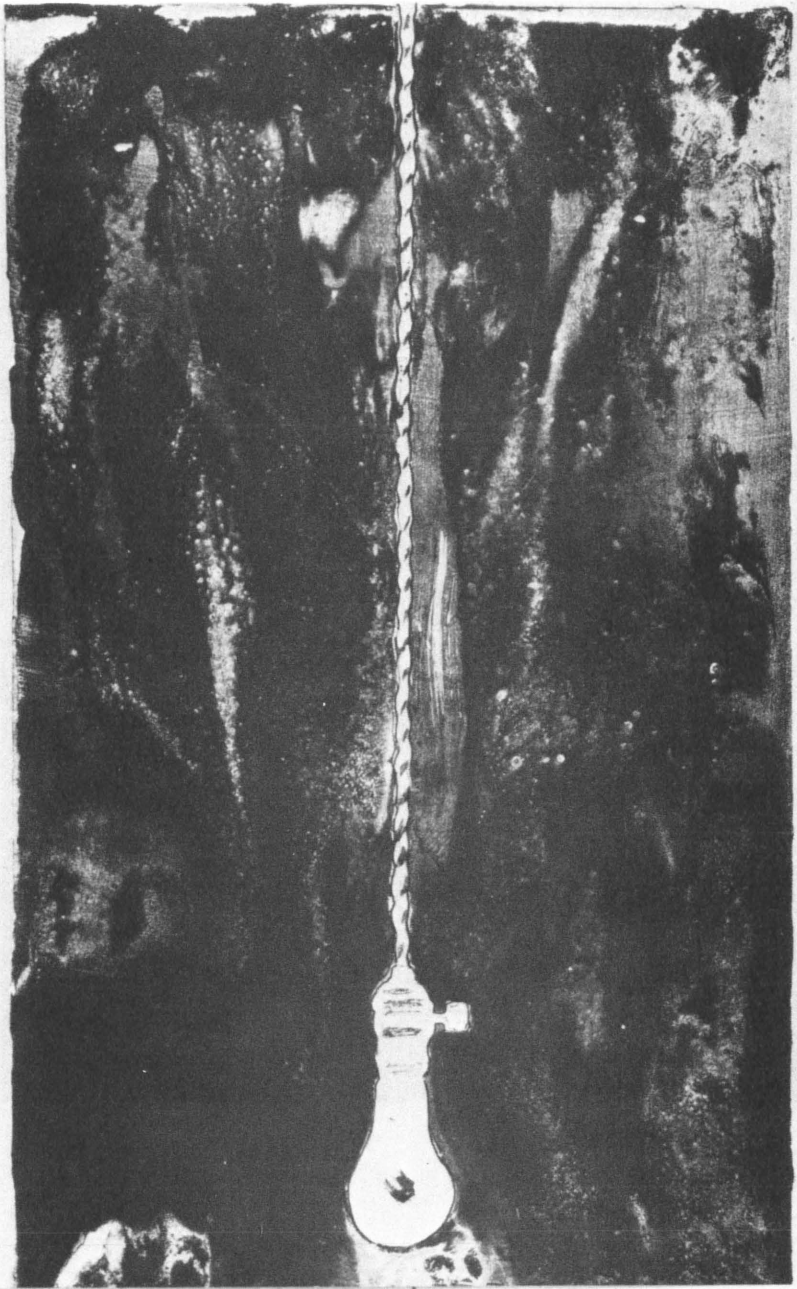


Figure 6: Detail of *Light Bulb*

organizing these elements? Do they really give the complete illusion of [a] reality? Why did I write like a mirror? / Quel est le mécanisme qui en organise les éléments? Donnent-elles vraiment l'illusion totale d'une réalité? Pourquoi ai-je écrit comme un miroir?" (*STO*, p. 126). The answers relate to images made visible by words, of things seen as numbers read and distorted in an attempt at interpretation, and to a 0 degree of writing (Figure 4). In the Jasper Johns leg of the tripod, the slip and play of letters combines, perhaps gives way to the central preoccupation of making numbers visible, only to free them for endless, multiple interpretation. Robbe-Grillet like Jasper Johns places on the page the numbers themselves as objects and takes us through the traversed visual base of 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. The move is from and back to 0, to absence, to cipher and visible but coded writing. 0 as absence is a blank canvas, a space and beginning point where adjustment and reckoning of positive and negative quantities occur on a graduated scale of temporal, diachronic (but enigmatic) narration that leads to naught. But the naught is double, 00, mirrored, and returns us to EYE glasses and spyglasses.

Robbe-Grillet as Rem Brandt builds his story on the words and images of the painter. Title and object in the work of Jasper Johns are clues to the enigma. In *Broken Target* the eye is metamorphosed into target and underscores the conflict between the seer and the seen. Newspaper-frame and target-eye give rise to mouth- and eye-target as in *The Critic Sees*. Robbe-Grillet derives his Judas hole from multiple mouths that become eyes and are seen. The spy cipher is not alphabetical but numerical. Here the philosophy is not from A to Z, letter-based; a Duchamp-inspired undercutting of letters read but not seen results in toying with these alphabet blocks in their plastic dimension in a number of Johns' works: for example his *Gray Alphabets* of 1960 (Figure 5) where he shakes up letters into a new type face. Robbe-Grillet opts for painting by the numbers, another Duchamp-inspired enterprise of Jasper Johns. The 5 concentric rings (Figure 3), the 0 eyes of Johns's targets are doubled (mirrored) by Robbe-Grillet to 10: 9 plus 1/0 or 0/0 with 0 at the edge and yet physically present in each ring as 0 ring itself. The rectangle of letters alphabetical is challenged as diachronical, numerical sequence is eroded by the simultaneity and ambiguity of numbers seen. Drawing on the Johns *0 Through 9*, a re-count begins.

The 0 as pearl of light dropped through the Judas hole (Figure 6), an echo of the squaring of the circle, provokes a vision of whirlpool eddies, 9 in number, as target. The light bulb as precious stone drops through the square Judas and falls but does not break, creating on the floor of the cell "the 9 circle target, imagined by Prefect Duchamp, used by elite marksmen for military target practice. /la cible à neuf

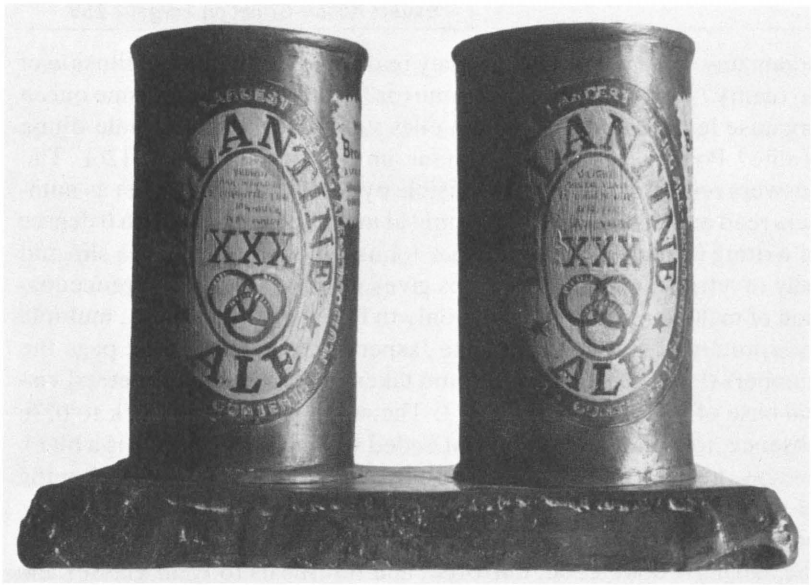


Figure 7: Painted Bronze



Figure 8: Study for Skin

cercles, imaginée par le préfet Duchamp, dont se servent les tireurs d'élite pour l'entraînement au fusil de guerre" (*STO*, p. 132). Each circle is point-numbered 0 where objects read as numbers replace the military scoring system of numbers and Maggie's drawers.

I will not, for reasons of space, dwell on each circle of the ciphered target, but quickly enumerate the richness of object read as number, of number seen in objects. At first an apparent stability of interpretation. Outside in. 0 becomes 9. The doubled, mirrored Ballantine Ale cans (Figure 7). "And moreover on looking closely at the trademark which ornaments the soft metal cylinder, one can ascertain that its oval circumference contains within it a circle, tangent to or rather coincident with it over half the circumference of the curve of the oval of which it occupies the upper half constituting precisely the number 9, made even more visible by a slight interruption in the series of words printed in capitals making up the lower ring. / Et d'ailleurs à mieux observer la marque de fabrique qui orne le cylindre en métal léger, on constate que son pourtour ovalaire contient à l'intérieur un cercle tangeant, ou plutôt coïncidant sur près d'une demi-circonférence avec la courbure même de l'ovale dont il occupe toute la moitié supérieure, ce qui compose justement le chiffre 9, rendu plus perceptible encore par une petite interruption dans la suite des mots imprimés en capitales formant la boucle inférieure" (*STO*, p. 132). 8. The *Voyeur's* cord. 7. Twisted

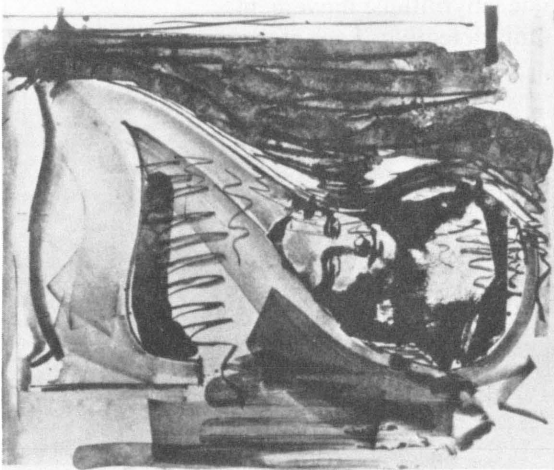


Figure 9: *Figure 7*

hanger. 6. Bent spoon. 5. Handprint (Figure 8). 4. White chair. 3. Apple bitten into. 2. High-heeled shoe (Figure 9). 1. Flashlight (Figure 10).

Bit by bit, numbered security is eaten away and the clarity of the object read as cipher disappears to be replaced by a flickering, a shifting of meaning. The presence in the cell-text of objects read as number, then of the problematic reading of the numbers themselves, literally depends on illumination. The 0 drop cord of constant light (Figure 6, *Recent Still Life*) initially provides Cartesian clarity as numbers successively enumerated, but in that apparent certitude, a growing hunger, dizziness, and intermittent flashes of light change the fixed interpretation of object-number. The apple of knowledge (Figure 11) is 0 whole, Cartesian jewel light, and Omega beginning. Eve-given, it becomes obsessive clue, grows larger, and is remembered eaten. Coming out of Magritte and *La Belle Captive*, where the apple is room-sized, it blocks the view, fills the mouth until it is bitten into and discarded as the number ∞ . Like the 0 apple, each number is transformed through the act of looking. In his "Sketchbook Notes," Jasper Johns writes: "The watchman falls 'into' the 'trap' of looking. The 'spy' is a different person. 'Looking' is and is not 'eating' and 'being eaten'." The 1 of flashlight yields to the 1 of the "double décimetre" of Johns's *Painting with Rule* where the ruler measures the 0 target, multiple 0's, impossibly measured, ambiguous targetted naught seen by the single 0 lens of flashing light. The 0 eye remains. Object fixation, number fixation become the same labyrinthine movement.

Reading the clues of this detective / I spy story, our 0 EYE becomes

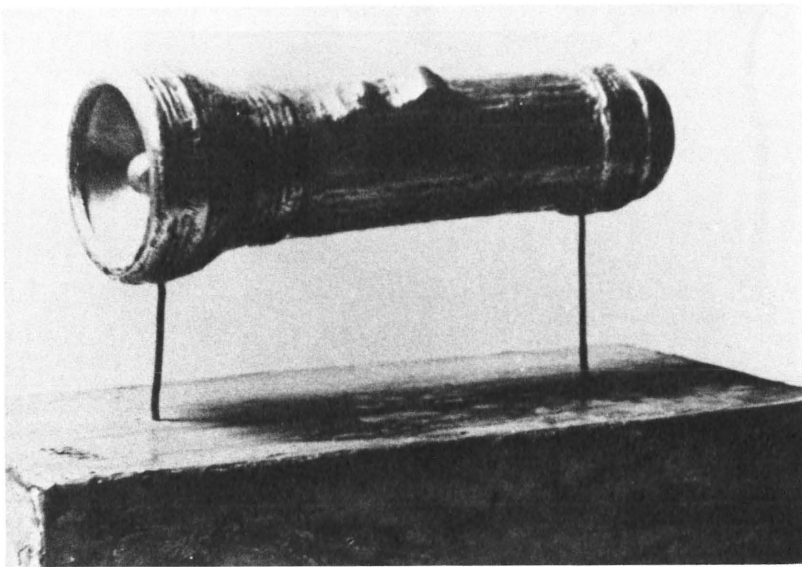




Figure 11: *The Great War*

Figure 10: *Flashlight*

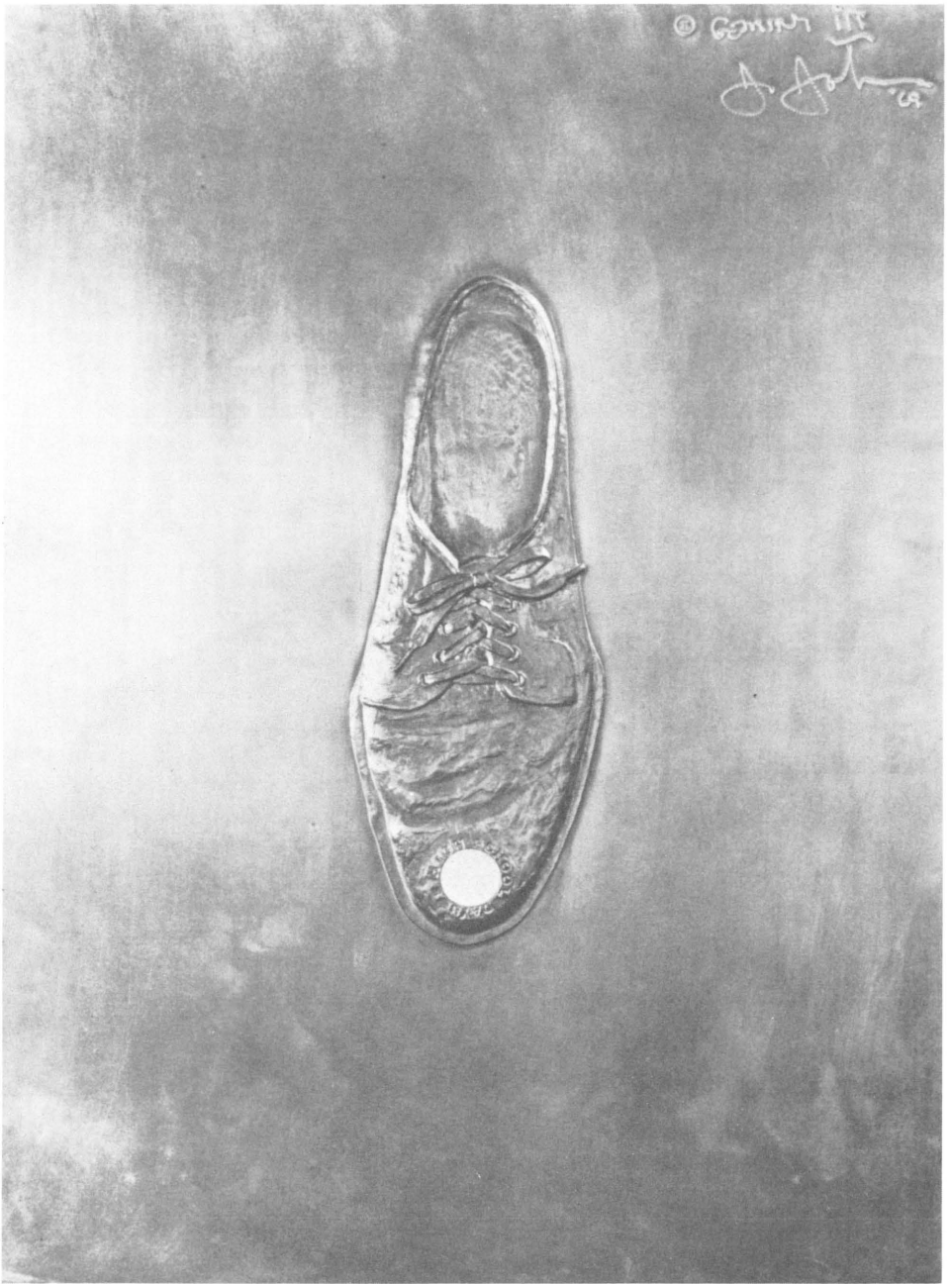


Figure 12: *High School Days*

betraying Judas. The familiar objects float and change as 0 becomes 3. The lady (la-dit, la-dite) eaten apple now is 3. “Indeed it (the number 3) is easily made out in the remains of the half-eaten apple (according to what has been said, but where and when). / On l’identifie en effet sans mal dans le résidu de la pomme à demi croquée (selon ce qui a été dit, mais où et quand)” (STO, p. 136). The worn blue lady shoe as 2 shifts from 2 to 7 (Figure 9). “And moreover it is the number 7 (without the bar, American style) that its profile takes on, whereas the 2 would require a turned-up toe like *poulaines*, [a kind of slipper] which was not the case, the only feature of this shoe tip being a mirrored circle as big as a half-dollar set into the leather which I had first taken for a cabochon of cut crystal. / Et c’est d’ailleurs bien davantage la forme du chiffre 7 (sans barre, à l’américaine) qu’affecte ici son profil, alors que le 2 nécessiterait une extrémité recourbée à la poulaine, ce qui n’est pas le cas, la seule particularité de cette pointe de soulier consistant en un miroir rond, large comme une pièce d’un demi-dollar, qui se trouve enchâssé dans le cuir et que j’avais pris d’abord pour un cabochon de cristal taillé” (STO, p. 137). Souvenir of Jasper Johns’s *High School Days* (Figure 12) and customized blue suede shoes, the lady (la-dit) is contained, reflected in the 0 mirror EYE. The numbers 7-2, 2-7, these tricks (Figure 13) mirror and enclose the Prefect of Police Duchamp’s *La Giaconda* (his con-con joke) (Figures 9, 12 and 13) reminding us of the boyish skirt inspectors of the 50’s who artfully stood or sat in attempts to con the con, to briefly view the lady as ship’s head, as delta, opening, door, the V, in their game of I Spy, I see the V, I see the door surmounted by triangle and 0 EYE.

Through object numbers, the narrator-detective seeks to escape the cell, to wander in their labyrinthine meaning (Figure 14) in order to prove his innocence. But it is a trick, an *attrape-nigaud* (booby trap). Shots ring out as he stumbles, guided by the 0 light ring of the flashlight (Figure 10): broken shoe (Figure 9), the members of a wax mannequin used for target practice, then back to 0, the light bulb and its violet, violating cord (Figure 6) (I leave aside the number color combinations that govern the récit-recette), a target-door-text composed of printed lines from a newspaper. All are seen, scrutinized, and read as the 1 of rule and flashlight dims before looking into the latter’s 0 face and the former’s lying numerical, diachronic edge. “Of course, it was in vain; I couldn’t see the slightest redness. I ended up by throwing it somewhere behind me, that useless device, remaining obstinately before this flat surface that had seemed to me to be a door. / C’est en vain, bien entendu: je ne perçois pas la moindre rougeur. Je finis par jeter au hasard, derrière moi, l’appareil inutile, demeurant moi-même avec obstination contre cette surface plane qui m’a paru être une porte” (STO,

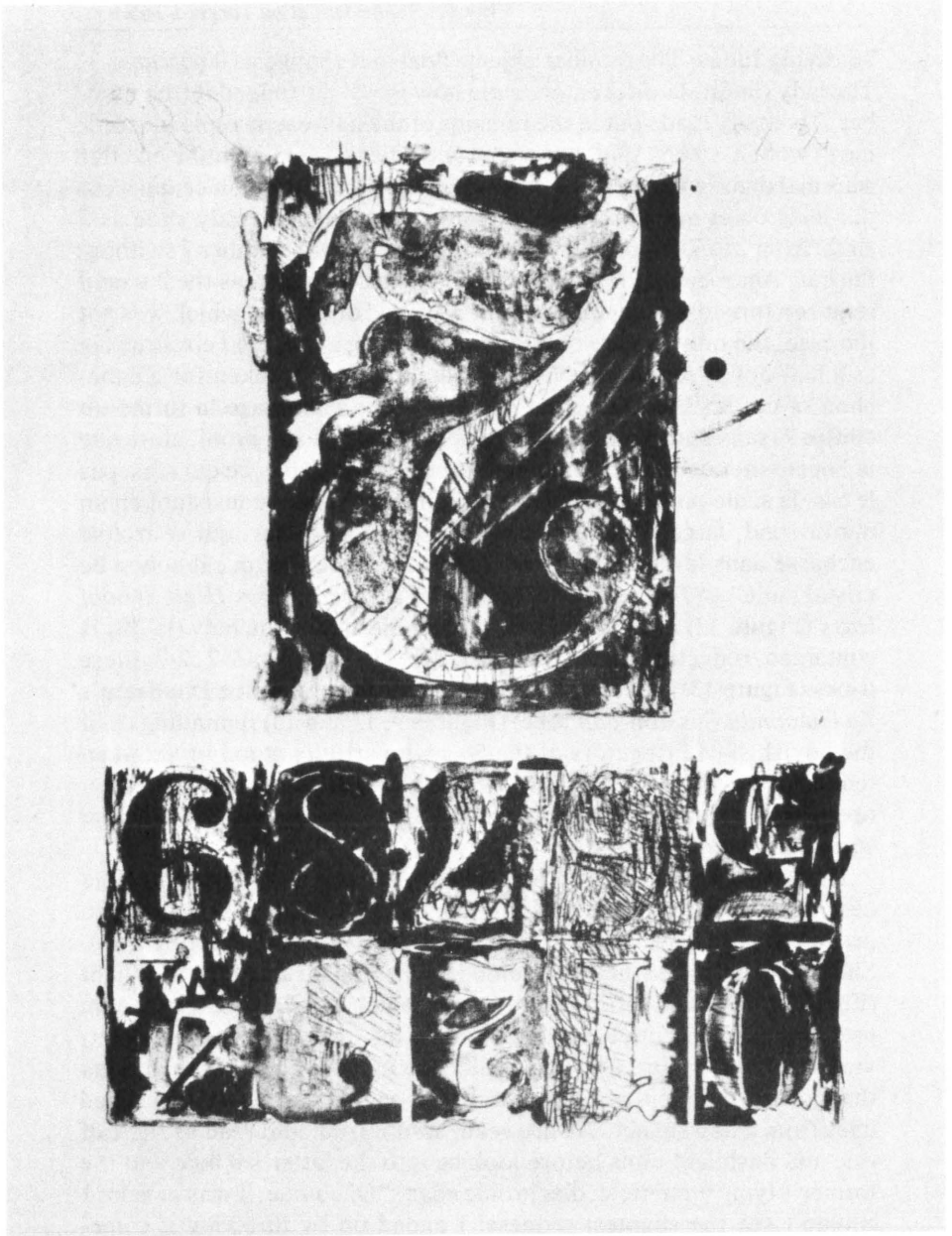


Figure 13: 0 Through 9

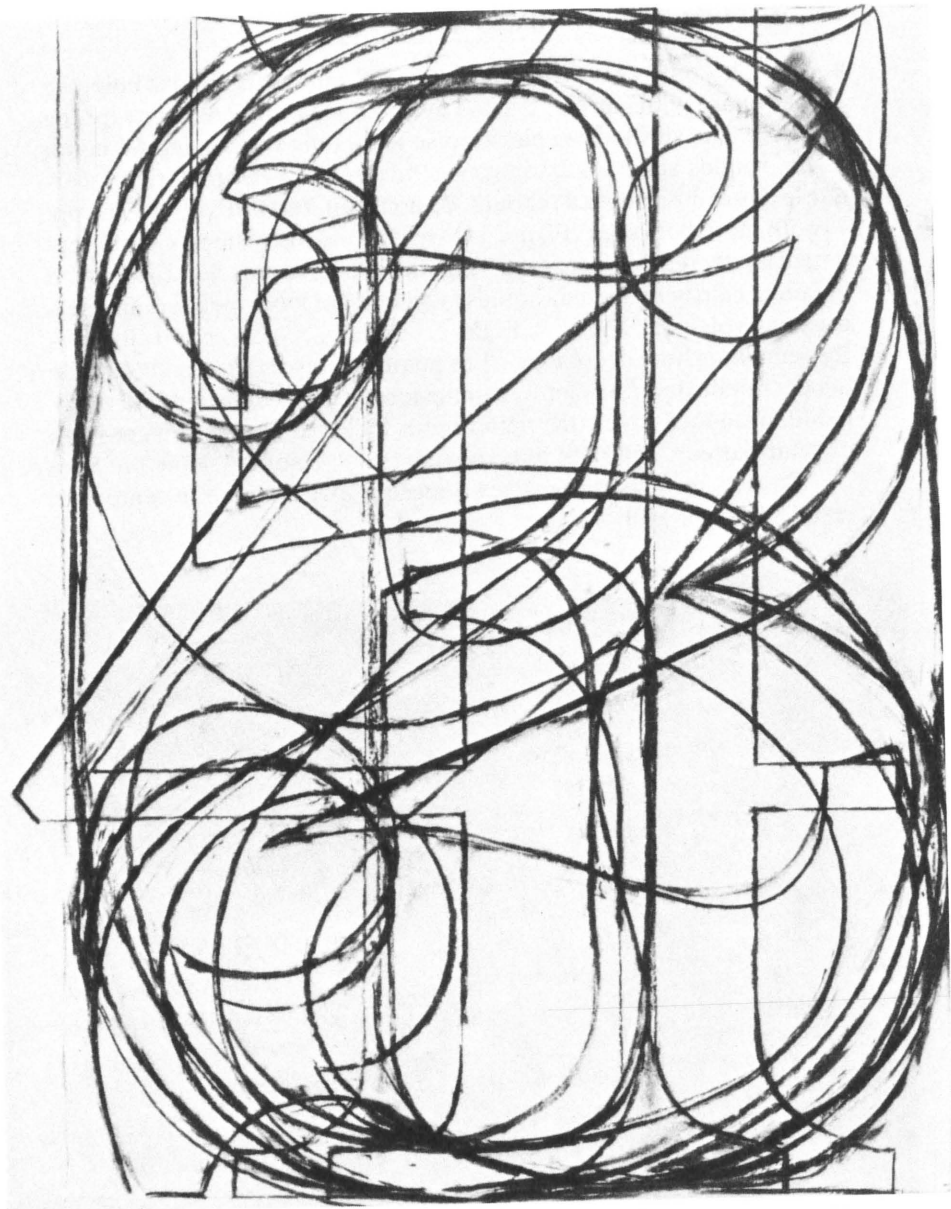


Figure 14: 0 Through 9

p. 148). The door, that delta, both page and canvas, the Judas hole, the Judas square with staring, jealous eyes remains. Sounds interrupt the silence. "The shrill alarm clock noise marks the beginning of a count down, sounds again. / La sonnerie stridente de réveil-matin, qui marque le début du compte à rebours, de nouveau, retentit . . ." (*STO*, pp. 149-50). Numbers seen (Figure 14) are now heard. "The numbers, separated by decreasing intervals, begin their reverse parade, spoken with unfailing clarity by the passionless voice of the loud-speaker, an interrogatory voice . . . Nine . . . Eight . . . Seven . . . Closer and closer as the remaining time decreases. / Les nombres, séparés par un intervalle qui décroît de degré en degré, commencent à nouveau leur défilé rétrograde, prononcés avec une netteté sans faille par la voix sans passion du haut-parleur, celui des interrogatoires . . . Neuf . . . Huit . . . Sept . . . De plus en plus rapprochés à mesure que diminue le temps qui reste" (*STO*, p. 150).



Figure 15: *Passage II*

Objects as ciphers incite investigation and result in dream enigmas (tales told), but the pseudo-Freudian interpretation of seeing, remembering, and dreaming that would reduce the visual to verbal knowable threatens. Through loudspeaker voicing, traditional analysis reduces to naught the central visual 0 and () opening of seen and mirrored eroticism. Freud himself avoids a dictionary key, a key of one for one meaning, of interpretation and solution to the investigations of visual, Orphic descents. Robbe-Grillet's detectives are gumshoes, who "gomment," who in their resistance to reductive interpretation, hurl, in their cells, the 9 of Ale cans into the eye and mouth of the 0 target and erotic spy hole. "With all the energy I could muster, I threw the beer can against the strong door, right at its center; it resonates long and deeply, majestically like the bronze door of a cathedral. / Avec toute la vigueur dont je suis capable, je lance la boîte de bière contre le panneau blindé – juste en son centre – qui résonne profondément, longuement, majestueusement comme la porte d'airain d'une cathédrale" (*STO*, p. 150).

The disembodied voice of interrogation and search for sense and guilt provokes the seeing-seen, guilty-innocent, watchman-spy-detective to confront the conflict and collusion of things verbal and visual, whether it be number or letter (Figure 15). Franck V. Francis, FVF, is only a public detective who would be a private EYE with multiple aliases. Numbers, letters, objects are "incompréhensible détrit" that appear, disappear, combine, and separate as fragments of the inexplicable whole. "The system (of maintaining a certain kind of freedom within an ideological prison) is born of the New Novel and of all of modern art – of pop art in American painting, and of modern music, too. It consists of detaching fragments from society's discourse and using them as raw materials to construct something else" ("What Interests Me is Eroticism" in *Homosexualities and French Literature* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell, 1979), p. 93).

The novel's distinctive beginning is a black lacquered door (Delta) frame capped by a classic triangular pediment in which resides the 0 eye turned on its side to become vulval matrix (Figure 16). The narrative is a mirrorical return of the golden triangle built on an easel (tripod), a parenthetical depth and surface of seen female third eye, through which and on which the recounting is projected. Mirrored Shirley Temple, Magritte captive False EYE, O woman target of Jasper Johns's *High School Days* are laid over, delayed in the red-dream violence of imagined, remembered images recounted in the black and white numbers and letters of Robbe-Grillet as novelist-painter (Figure 17). *Souvenirs d'un triangle d'or* stirs up the "incompréhensible débris" and is the other half of the diptych for the plastic creations of

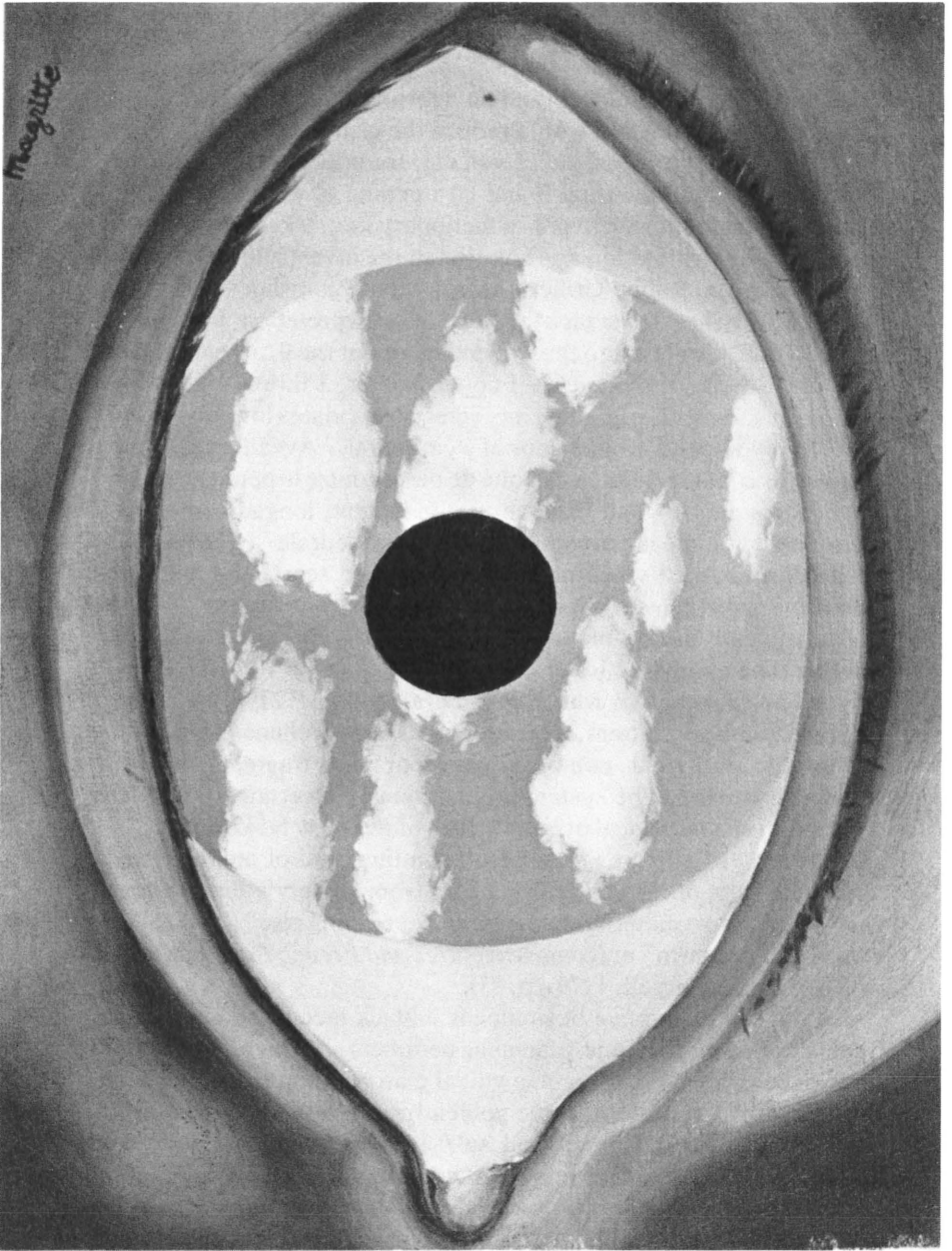


Figure 16: *The False Mirror*

Robbe-Grillet alias Rem Brandt in which words torn from *Le Monde* are heightened and haunted with red images and given to be read in the problematical visual-verbal relation where an N, an *aïne*, breathes (ha-leine) new life into the temptation to be both painter and novelist or novelist-painter. "Browsing through a retrospective of a painter he loves, the writer immediately chooses objects and stories from it. The figures come alive . . . etcetry, etcetry.

Figure 1: Detail of Magritte's *Two Mysteries*, in Suzi Gablick, *Magritte* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1970), Pl. 110.

Figure 2: *The Critic Sees* in Max Kozloff *Jasper Johns* (New York: Abrams, 1969). Pl. 28. All reproductions of the artist's work are from Kozloff except where noted.

Figure 3: *Target with 4 Faces*, Kozloff, Pl. 2.

Figure 4: *White Numbers*, Kozloff, Pl. 16.

Figure 5: *Gray Alphabets*, Kozloff, Pl. 8.

Figure 6: Detail of *Light Bulb*, Kozloff, Pl. 45.

Figure 7: *Painted Bronze*, Kozloff, Pl. 25.

Figure 8: *Study for Skin*, Kozloff, Pl. 38.

Figure 9: *Figure 7*, in *Jasper Johns: Prints, 1960-1970* (New York: Praeger, 1970), Pl. 101.

Figure 10: *Flashlight*, Kozloff, Pl. 72.

Figure 11: *The Great War*, Gablick, Pl. 144.

Figure 12: *High School Days*, *Jasper Johns: Prints, 1960-1970*, Pl. 118.

Figure 13: *0 Through 9*, Kozloff, Pl. 44.

Figure 14: *0 Through 9*, Kozloff, Pl. 27.

Figure 15: *Passage II*, Kozloff, Pl. 48.

Figure 16: *The False Mirror* in Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Belle captive: roman* (Lausanne & Paris: La Bibliothèque des arts, 1975), p. 63.

Figure 17: Robbe-Grillet, *Peinture*, Supplément aux Nos. 16-17 d'*Obliques* (1978), pp. 240-41.

Freud's Invisible Chiasmus, or You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover

Jane Gallop

On the bookjacket of the English translation of Jean Laplanche's *Vie et Mort en psychanalyse* appears the Greek letter *chi*. By paying attention to this most visible, most superficial, and most extrinsic of signs, we find that it represents a certain "return of the repressed": a return of something that is invisible in Laplanche's text, and perhaps beyond that something that, although absent, haunts the text about which Laplanche is writing, Freud's "Project for a Scientific Psychology." This "find," although theoretically predictable, nonetheless operates as an uncanny effect, and opens for us the question of the relation between theory and practice at the intersection of visible language and psychoanalysis.

I need to begin this text with a statement of my discomfort, of my fear that I am simply doing something trendy, lots of flash and little substance. "Visible language" is one of the newest line of fashions from Paris. To combine that line with another recent Parisian trend – French Freud – is, I am sure, to make matters worse. The texts I work with are predictable (Jean Laplanche's *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*,¹ Freud's "Project for a Scientific Psychology"²); the style of reading and writing I pursue recognizable to anyone who peruses the literary equivalents of *Vogue*; the inspiration in the work of Jeffrey Mehlman and Tom Conley is all too incestuous, all too *heimlich* (of course incest is the resurgence of the *unheimlich* in the home, in the family, but there *is* a major and a minor mode of incest).

Now, this same question of fashion appears problematic in *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*. Laplanche's text exhibits a certain self-consciousness about intellectual fashions on at least two occasions. Actually, the problem with fashion is not very noticeable in the French edition of Laplanche's book, but becomes more visible in Mehlman's translation of it (from which we derive our quotations), because of the translator's introduction. Yet it is worthwhile to remember that the author of the original is already writing somewhat as a translator, a translator of Freud, that the problem of translation is not contingent on Mehlman's project, but already involved in Laplanche's effort. That

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our problematic should become visible in the American translation of a French text seems all too appropriate to our concern, which is, the vicissitudes of French intellectual trends in America.

In his introduction, Mehlman writes that the thesis of Laplanche's book is that "Freud's theory of repression, the heart of his discovery, was itself constantly and necessarily threatened with being repressed" (p. ix). Mehlman, suddenly cognizant of his audience's resistance, continues: "Now that statement might strike a skeptical Anglo-American reader as the sheerest Parisian extravagance were it not for the precision of the analyses in this book" (p. ix). It is Mehlman's phrase, "sheerest Parisian extravagance," conjuring up images of some exotic, diaphanous evening gown, that evokes, for me, the *haute couture* Paris can represent for America.

Mehlman recognizes Anglo-American skepticism and parries the anticipated accusation of facile fashion by reference to the "precision of the analyses." I tend to agree. When one searches for some assurance that one's trendy work is not facile, the greatest and perhaps only assurance is in the care, the precision, the meticulousness with which the work is done. Any work which can be understood, any work which can be used at all, can be placed in some tradition and is thus, in its broad outlines, predictable. What remains to surprise is the detail, the precise and specific analyses, the little "finds" that crystallize trends – those little "finds" that in French are called "*trouvailles*."

It is to the letter of the text we must look for its originality, its precision, its work. This attention to the letter of the text, which we call "visible language," is a method for gathering such *trouvailles*. As a generality, as a structure, it is predictable and repetitive: there *will be* witty and appropriate *trouvailles*, found where one least expects them, in marginal places, which then become exactly where one most expects them. But in its specificity, each "find" is a surprise, a treasure. This differentiation between theoretical predictability and practical surprise resembles the problem, already alluded to, of distinguishing between a major and a minor mode of incest. Anyone acquainted with Freudian theory will expect everyone to have an Oedipal complex, expect everyone to be structured by unconscious incest fantasies. That is the minor, domesticated mode of incest – incest where it is "supposed to be." But even the most informed Freudian will inevitably be radically unsettled upon the discovery (the *trouvaille*) of some specific erratic effect of incestuous desire acted out in her own life. The major mode of incest is this: its uncanny insistence where it is not expected.

The rather tenuous link I've made between *trouvailles* and incest can be strengthened by a look at the theory of discoveries, of "finds" in

Laplanche's book. Laplanche uses the word "trouvaille" at the end of the first chapter where he states: "a *trouvaille* is always a *retrouvaille* (refinding, "rediscovery," translates Mehlman) of something else" (p. 22). My own "find" is that when Laplanche uses the word "trouvaille" he places it "clearly" in an Oedipal context. The entire first chapter of *Vie et mort* is an attempt to show that when the child passes out of "primary narcissism" and into object relations (the Oedipal moment), he is merely re-finding an original object, in this case mother's milk. The original object is non-sexual. The new object, the sexual object (the "find") – mother's breast and then mother herself – is a displaced substitute by contiguity, a metonym, for the original object. Sexuality, for Laplanche, is in the slight displacement, the movement of metonymy between the lost object and the contiguous re-found object. Now, what is so predictable about a "find" (what is so repetitive about sexuality) is that the "find" is never something new, but always a re-finding, a repetition. But also what is so surprising is that what is "found" is something displaced from what was lost: that is why the "trouvaille" is always where it is not expected, always marginal.

In my introductory remarks I used the words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* to talk about incest. *Unheimlich*, uncanny, is the word Freud uses, in the essay that is now very fashionable, to talk about the *retrouvaille*, the re-finding, the return of something lost there where it is not expected, where it is displaced, what we conventionally refer to as "the return of the repressed."³ That word "uncanny" returns, slightly displaced into adverbial form, at the end of Mehlman's introduction to Laplanche, where he writes: "it is not the least aspect of this work to provoke in the reader the disquieting sense that . . . the principal thrust of Freud's theory may have been uncannily lost in translation" (p. x).

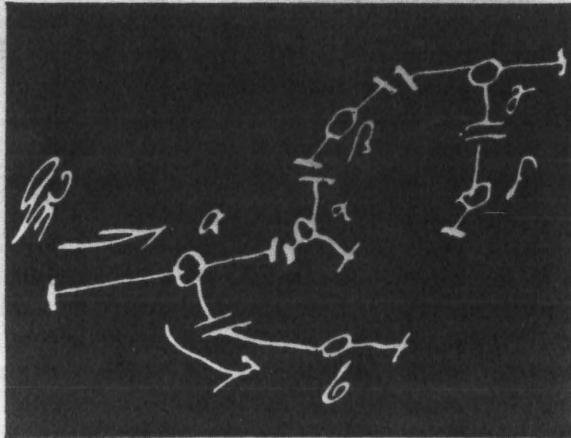
I will not belabor the obvious excitement of any sentence which combines the words "exhilarating," "provoke," "disquieting," and "thrust." Instead my surprise, my excitement arises from Mehlman's haunting phrase "uncannily lost." From post-structuralist French Freud, I expect "uncanny" to be linked with a *refinding*, a *retrouvaille*, a return, as it is in Freud's "The Uncanny." What is uncanny about Mehlman's sentence is that the word "uncanny" has been displaced onto the contiguous moment of loss, rather than the moment of rediscovery. Now having our expectations unseated seems at once good and disquieting, for the movement of the "uncanny," which is to say "the repressed," is such that the re-finding is experienced as an unsettling, a displeasure, a loss: loss of certainty, loss of stability, loss of self-possession.

This "find" which is a loss (but also, and this is disquieting on another

Yale
French
Studies

French Freud

Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis



One Dollar and Fifty Cents Per Copy
All Articles in English

Figure 1: Design by Sigmund Freud.

er level, also an exhilarating gain for anyone who theorizes about the uncanny, about visible language), this *trouvaille* which is a loss occurs in translation. Thus one could say about translation that the something that is "lost in translation" is "uncannily lost" – which is to say that it will turn up somewhere else, displaced, where least expected (which here in this context is where it is most expected). The *trouvailles* that I have to show you all manifest this uncanniness by which a translation is the site of a return of something, specifically a letter, which is lost in the original.

Translation is not just Mehlman's project, nor even just Laplanche's, but is used within Laplanche's text in another important, less marginal, less external context. Laplanche's book is a careful analysis of certain ambiguous terms in Freud's work. Laplanche shows that their ambiguity responds to the slipperiness of the thing Freud is trying to conceptualize, that the ambiguity of the concepts is an ambiguity of the things themselves. In the first chapter he distinguishes the instinct – a biological, vital function – from the drive. And in his discussion of the two close terms instinct and drive, the notion of translation reappears: first of all in reference to the translations of Freud that have not represented the fact that he uses two terms – *Trieb* and *Instinkt*, translating both as "instinct"; and secondly, in a discussion of the drive itself, the notion of translation appears. He writes: "[the source of a drive] is an unknown but theoretically knowable somatic process, a kind of biological *x*, whose psychical translation would in fact be the drive" (p. 12). The drive, which, according to Laplanche, is always sexual, is a "translation" of a "source," of some original, which is not sexual. Thus the drive, sexuality, libido, manifests itself as a "translation." No wonder it is "exhilarating" when something is "lost in translation." But what is specifically interesting is that the drive is the translation of "a kind of X," that is, of a letter, visible language if you like.

"A kind of X" turns up again later in Laplanche's book, in the third chapter, during his exposition of Freud's "Project for a Scientific Psychology." In explaining that difficult, dry, scientific text Laplanche begins with an introduction of the two basic concepts in Freud's system: neurones and quantity. Laplanche writes: "Each neurone corresponds to a bifurcation, with one entry path and two exit paths, a scheme most simply represented by the form "Y" (p. 55). So the letter Y, taken as a visual form, represents the neurone. It is then not surprising that Laplanche goes on to say of the other basic concept that "this pure quantity. . . is always designated as a kind of hypothetical X" (p. 55). If one element is "most simply represented by the form Y," it is convenient, simple, conventional to designate the other as an "X". Yet

Life
AND
Death
IN
Psycho-
analysis
Jean
Laplanche

TRANSLATED
AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JEFFREY MEHLMAN

Figure 2: Design by Susan Bishop.

what is not so simple is the fact that, contrary to what Laplanche implies, Freud in the "Project" did *not* represent quantity by an "x," but used another letter, in fact two other letters, one of which is very mysterious indeed. The "kind of X" that Laplanche refers to is his own addition to Freud, and constitutes an ignoring of the literal letter of Freud's text, despite Laplanche's proud protestation that "we have systematically undertaken to enter into the complex labyrinth of the text, submitting to its 'technicality' in the offensiveness of its detail" (p. 31).

A large part of the "offensive detail" of Freud's "Project for a Scientific Psychology" consists in the various abbreviations and symbols in the text, particularly all the letters, both German and Greek. It is wholly predictable that *Visible Language* should include a paper on the "Project," for this text includes so many letters that Freud in a letter to his friend Fliess refers to it as "the alphabet." In Jacques Derrida's "Freud and the Scene of Writing," the "Project" is a fundamental text, although Derrida is not interested in the strange letters themselves.⁴ Derrida's reading of Freud's visible language is translated by Mehlman in the issue of *Yale French Studies* he edits called *French Freud*. The cover of that issue includes a diagram from the "Project," which might seem appropriate on the cover of his translation of Laplanche's book where the diagram appears and is discussed, rather than on the cover of *Yale French Studies* in which it is not discussed (Figure 1). This diagram includes lots of letters, among which is the single most puzzling letter-symbol of the "Project." When the diagram appears in Laplanche's book it is simplified, and the mysterious letter-symbol is absent. Laplanche submits to all the offensive details of the "Project" except for the most disturbing, most unreasonable one of all. And although this offensive symbol is visible on the cover of Mehlman's *French Freud*, he does nothing in his translation to remedy Laplanche's various elisions of it.

We are made aware of this puzzling notation by James Strachey, the editor of the Standard Edition, in his translator's introduction to the "Project": "Last of all among these alphabetic signs come Q and its mysterious companion Q̇." Both of them undoubtedly stand for 'quantity.' But why this difference between them, and above all, why the Greek *eta* with the smooth breathing. . . . Evidently the reader must be left to find his own solution for this enigma, and we therefore scrupulously follow the manuscript in printing 'Q' or 'Q̇' or 'quantity.'"⁵

I am not here to propose a solution to Strachey's enigma. But I can trace its vicissitudes. Laplanche suppresses the mysterious "Q̇" from

his book. When he finally does come, in the last chapter, to mention the two signs for quantity, he prints them as Q and "Qn," which Mehlman faithfully repeats in his translation. A small "n" looks a lot like a small "eta," and so rather quietly a mystery becomes invisible.

But, if, as Mehlman puts it, something that is "lost in translation" is "uncannily lost," I would like to suggest that the enigma in the "original," which is lost in both Laplanche's and Mehlman's translations might also be found, displaced and uncannily visible, in their double translation.

Laplanche operates this displacement by referring to quantity as "a kind of X." In the place of Q and Q η Laplanche gives us "a kind of X." We find that "X" not only in the text but in what is at once the most obvious and the most marginal of places, not merely in the translation of a translation, but worse (better) yet, on the book jacket – on that contingent, detachable, extrinsic surface. Rather than the diagram of the cover of *French Freud*, which includes Q η , on the bookjacket of Mehlman's translation of Laplanche is the Greek letter chi, writ large, the sole decoration on a jacket that otherwise includes only the pertinent information (Figure 2). A chi is a kind of 'X', not phonetically, but visually. The sound of our "X" was represented in Greek by the letter "Xsi," but the chi is visually recognizable as "a kind of X."

Now, to base a reading on a jacket decoration of a translation seems, in Mehlman's words, "the sheerest Parisian extravagance." It is most likely that neither Laplanche nor Mehlman is the author of that letter. Quite likely the author is Susan Bishop who gets credit for "jacket design." Although it seems at once too far-fetched and too predictable that I should owe my reading of an important and serious book to a designer of jackets, I will now analyze the "chi" embroidered on the jacket of Jean Laplanche's *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*.

The last chapter of *Life and Death* ends thus: "If we place face to face the terms constituting the constant pairs of opposites in Freud's thought, the genealogy takes the form of a strange chiasmus whose enigma we, as Freud's successors, are beginning to decipher" (p. 124). Strachey's enigma – Q η – may be lost by Laplanche, but the latter has found another in the shape of a strange chiasmus, some kind of x. Laplanche finds that what is called Eros in Freud's last version of drive theory is not the same as what is called sexuality in the earlier versions. Eros is opposed to the death drive; the death drive, on the other hand, "is the very soul, the constitutive principle of libidinal circulation" (p. 124). Laplanche's strange discovery, his *trouaille*, is that in Freud's theory sexuality has switched sides of the opposition. It is precisely there where it is not expected to be. This is the final chiasmus La-

planche finds, the only one called by that rhetorical name, but over and over the movement of the book is one of crossings and inversions among pairs of terms. Certainly this book is itself a translation of "a kind of x."

Now, the rhetorical term for such an "X" is "chiasmus," meaning "an inversion of the second of two parallel structures." It comes from the Greek *chiasmus*, meaning "Marked with the letter chi." And to complete the picture, Mehlman's translation with its jacket design makes the book as a whole into a graphic chiasmus, marks it with a chi.

As anyone following our "uncanny" argument might expect, Laplanche's chiasmus, his brilliant and original contribution to an understanding of Freud, the chi he adds to Freud's "alphabet," his great *trouvaille*, like any *trouvaille*, is but a *refinding* of something that was already, in a way, present in the original, in Freud's "Project."

Freud frequently refers to the "Project," which he never titled, as the " $\phi\psi\omega$," always in that order. Commenting on these three Greek letters, Strachey writes: "Here is a plausible theory. . . . Freud had started with two 'systems' of neurones, which, for fairly obvious reasons, he named ϕ and ψ ."⁶ The reasons are not quite so obvious. One guesses that the ϕ is for *physis* and the ψ for *psyche*, but a reading of Freud's text makes any such simple attribution problematic. Strachey continues: "[Freud] then found that he required a symbol for a third system of neurones, concerned with perceptions. Now . . . another Greek letter would be appropriate – like the other two, perhaps, from the end of the Greek alphabet."⁷ The "perhaps," thrown in so casually, marks the phrase as real speculation, at the edges of Strachey's scruples as merely a meticulous translator and editor. This very modest flight of fancy intersects with our own. ϕ , ψ , and Ω are three of the last four letters of the Greek alphabet: those last four letters in order are ϕ , χ , ψ , and Ω . If one imagines, as Strachey does, Freud conjuring up the end of the Greek alphabet in his search for symbols, one can only speculate that Freud considered and did not choose the χ . Regardless of Freud's consciousness, the group of letters, always appearing in alphabetic order – ϕ , ψ , Ω – bear with them a contiguous, absent "chi," which does not become visible until Mehlman's translation of Laplanche sports Susan Bishop's uncanny letter jacket in 1976.

If the drive is a translation of "a kind of X," if the repressed returns in the uncanny *trouvaille*, then the "find" of something displaced from but contiguous with the original, lost, offensive details of Freud's alphabet, this exercise in visible language, is a momentary "find" of the repressed, the momentary discovery, which *must be made over and over and always where it is not expected*, the momentary discovery of psychoanalysis.

1. Jean Laplanche, *Vie et mort en psychanalyse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
2. Sigmund Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), I, 283-95, henceforth: *S.E.*
3. Freud, *S.E.*, XVII, 217-53.
4. Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, *Yale French Studies*, No. 48 (1972), pp. 73-117.
5. "Project," p. 289.
6. "Project," pp. 288-89.
7. "Project," p. 289.

Defoe's *Daydream*: Becoming *Moll Flanders*

Susanna Bartmann

Donning the layman's cloak of naiveté, Freud sets out to characterize the "stuff" of which literature is made in his 1908 essay "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming." He traces the connection between the act of daydreaming and the act of writing: writing is the formal transformation of the wish into the text, the work of art. The materiality of language gives the literary text a hide-and-seek quality. It is possible that one might look into the text just as the analyst might decipher the text of the dream, for writing is daydreaming on paper. The proper moment for pinpointing Daniel Defoe's wish as he wrote *Moll Flanders* has arrived, heralded by Geoffrey Hartman's directive that there is a name (a "specular name") hidden within the folds of the text which calls out to be read. This piece seeks to illustrate the transformation of wish into writing by way of the specular name; to deconstruct by staging a brief unveiling of *Moll Flanders*, text of lace,—of desire.



Figure 1: "The text, while it is being produced, is like a piece of Valenciennes lace created before us under the Lacemaker's fingers. . . ." — Barthes

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Nearing sixty, Defoe began to write pseudo-autobiographical narratives. Within a period of six years, the following works, usually referred to as "novels," were published:

The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe and *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *The Life, Adventures, and Pyracies, of the Famous Captain Singleton* (1720), *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722), *The History and Remarkable Life of the truly Honourable Col. Jacque, Commonly Call'd Col. Jack* (1722) and *The Fortunate Mistress [Roxana]* (1724).

These are now recognized as Defoe's greatest works.

Moll Flanders, in particular, has enjoyed quite a resurgence in the twentieth century, and has received a continued variety of readings from critics such as:

Denis Donoghue
E.M. Forster
Mark Schorer
James Sutherland
Dorothy Van Ghent
Ian Watt
Virginia Woolf

(Roland S/Z) [Inset]

“A text only exists, resists,
 consists, represses, lets it-
 self be read or written if it
 is

elaborated [*travaillé*]
 by the
 unreadability [*illisibilité*]
 of a proper name.¹”

It is the subject
 of names:
 their visibility/invisibility
 I wish to investigate here.
 Taking my cue from Defoe's
 Preface and in the interest of
 operating with fashionable gear,
 I will lace this article with
 sewing notions.
 The title page of the first edition of
Moll Flanders read like this:

*The Fortunes and Misfortunes of
 the Famous Moll Flanders, & c. Who
 was Born in Newgate, and during a
 Life of continu'd Variety for
 Threescore Years, besides her
 Childhood, was Twelve Year a
 Whore, five times a Wife (where-
 of once to her own Brother)
 Twelve year a Thief, Eight Year
 a Transported Felon in Virginia,
 at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest,
 and died a Penitent. Written from
 her own Memorandums.*²

[Inset]

Barthes,

and others. Much of the critical investigation which has been carried out seeks to expose the contradictions of the novel, of Moll herself, and of her "author." In the Preface, Moll Flanders the "author" writes:

"The Pen employ'd in finishing her Story, and making it what you now see it to be, has had no little difficulty to put it into a Dress fit to be seen, and to make it speak Language fit to be read . . . an Author must be hard put to it to wrap it up so clean, as not to give room, especially for vitious Readers to turn it to his Disadvantage."³

[Fig. 5]

of

The writer requires imagination for the fashioning of the disguise/text. [Figure 1]

Defoe was well-suited to the task.

It is Freud who invites us to consider the connection between the imaginative writer (the poet) and the act of day-dreaming.

He tells us that just as nocturnal dreams are fulfillments of desires, so too are day-dreams, "those phantasies with which we are all so familiar."⁷

of gradual

The name of the
 "author," Defoe,
 is notably absent
 from the title
 page. I will re-
 turn to this ab-
 sence later.

Defoe was, from personal experience, well acquainted with prisons and criminals for much of his life. He had, in fact, spent eighteen months at Newgate Prison, shortly before writing *Moll Flanders*.

"[I]t is not to be expected I [Moll] should set my Name, or the Account of my Family to this Work; perhaps, after my Death it may be better known, at present it would not be proper, no, not tho' a general Pardon should be issued, even without Exceptions and reserve of Persons or Crimes."⁴

In finishing Moll's story the "author" employs Defoe's distinctive pattern of irony ("a form of mockery by means of deception and trickery"⁵) and personal experience to create an acceptable disguise (veil) for the "real" Moll.

*"We laymen have always wondered greatly – like the cardinal who put the question to Ariosto – how that strange being, the poet, comes by his material."*⁶

invasion meaning.

a

course

“Writing upon Trade was the Whore I really doated upon.”

Her world is, after all, a mercantile one, and is, as Denis Donoghue has pointed out “utterly faithful to its own terms.” On the surface of a looking-glass Moll writes to a lover: *[But] Money’s Vertue; Gold is Fate.* Moll is nearly always figuring.

Defoe was a master illusionist and a careful dreamer.

He skillfully threaded his desire to be Moll Flanders into the work, into *Moll Flanders*, the imprint of her name on every page.

As the “author” of *Moll Flanders* cautions in the “Preface”: “An Author must be hard put to wrap it up so clean, as not to give room, especially for vitious Readers to turn it to his Disadvantage.”

is
progress each
out,
is
and the
the
brings back

thread marked

foe. Thus Defoe, already in the habit of writing and armed with the materials of experience and imagination (a wish clearly had designs on suiting himself in writing this novel. "Language," writes Freud, "in its unrivalled wisdom, long ago decided the question of the essential nature of dreams by giving the name of 'day-dreams' to the airy creations of phantasy" (p. 49).

of

the

The string of the wish is loosely tied in *Moll Flanders*.

Like lace. [Figure 2]

pattern filled

"[T]he day-dreamer hid his phantasies carefully from other people because he had reason to be ashamed of them. I may now add that even if he were to communicate them to us, he would give us no pleasure by his disclosures. When we hear such phantasies they repel us, or at least leave us cold.

as

frame;

But when a man of literary talent presents his plays, or relates what we take to be his personal day-dreams, we experience great pleasure. . . .

to

How the writer accomplishes this is his innermost secret; the essential ars poetica lies in the technique. . . .

it

We can guess at two methods used in this technique.

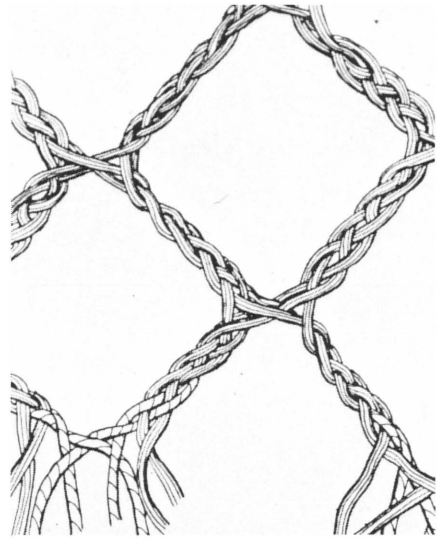


Figure 2: The string of the wish is loosely tied in *Moll Flanders*. Like lace.

“The Author is here suppos’d to be writing her own History, and in the very beginning of her Account, she gives the Reasons why she thinks fit to conceal her true Name, after which there is no Occasion to say any more about that.”

again,

the

Virginia Woolf, praising Defoe, makes the following suggestion:

“On any monument worthy of the name of monument, the names of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, at least, should be carved as deeply as the name of Defoe.”¹⁰

takes

It is an interesting notion.

But *Moll Flanders* is just a trade name . . .

“They all knew me by the Name of *Moll Flanders*, tho’ even some of them rather believ’d I was she, than knew me to be so; my Name was publick among them indeed,” says Moll of those in the criminal circle in which she moved, “but how to find me out they knew not, nor so much as how to guess at my Quarters, whether they were at the East-End of the Town, or the West. . . .”¹¹

the

turn

“I had dress’d myself up in a very mean Habit, for as I had several Shapes to appear in I was now in an ordinary Stuff-Gown, a blue Apron and a Straw-Hat. . . .”¹³

when

The writer softens the egotistical character of the daydream by changes and disguises, and he bribes us by the offer of a purely formal, that is, aesthetic, pleasure in the presentation of his phantasies.

I am of the opinion that all the aesthetic pleasure we gain from the works of imaginative writers is [a] type [of] fore-pleasure, and that the true enjoyment of literature proceeds from the release of tensions in our minds. . . . Here we reach a path leading into novel, interesting re-searches. . . .”⁹

Elements of disguise figure noticeably in her account of the “Scenes of Life” she engages in.

“I had taken up the Disguise of a Widow’s Dress; it was without any real design in view, but only waiting to any thing that might offer, as I often did . . .”¹²

These are the moments in which the ‘forepleasure’ Freud speaks of is experienced by the reader.

It is the pleasure of deception.

It is the pleasure of a cleverly
maneuvered exchange.

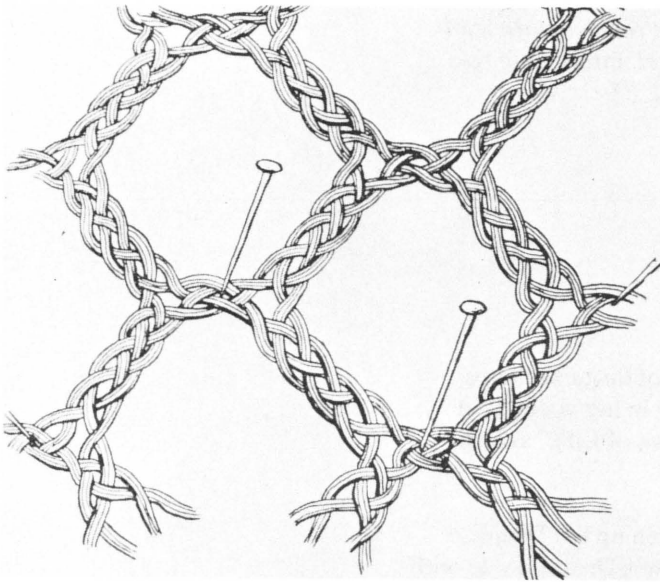
then,

Playing with her name she mocks
herself:
“What! Mrs. *Flanders* come to *New-*
gate at last? what Mrs. *Mary*, Mrs.
Molly, and after that plain *Moll*
Flanders?”¹⁴

by changes and disguises . . .

bor

[Figure 3]



neigh-

while

Figure 3: A paper of lace.

Who is Moll Flanders?

What does she represent?

(Moll, to a lover):

works;

Among her recollections of criminal life is the account of her partnership with another "man" in committing crimes. "For about three Weeks we did very well together. . . . And as we kept always together, so we grew very intimate, yet he never knew that I was not a Man; nay, tho' several times I went with him to his Lodgings, according as our business directed, and four or five times lay with him all Night: But our Design lay another way, and it was absolutely necessary to me to conceal my Sex from him . . . and as it was I effectually conceal'd my self."¹⁵

its

Moll Flanders then, is a double-agent.

She is the undercover agent of Defoe's desire.

“I gave him a Direction how to write me, tho’ still I reserv’d the grand *Secret*, and never broke my Resolution, which was not to let him ever know *my true Name*.”¹⁶

bobbin

Under the cover of her name, his wish to be *her* is hidden.

temporarily

The wish, previously invisible, can be read, illuminated by Freud’s musings.

She ^{seems} to be Other.
seams

Moll/L. *mollis* / to soften

like

“[I]n a Word, I grew more hardn’d and audacious then ever, and the Success I had, made my Name as famous as any Thief of my sort had ever been at *Newgate*, and in the *Old-Bayly*.”¹⁹

m

taken

Moll was a common nick-name for female underworld characters.

Moll Flanders, however, signifies more than one or two glances at her name might suggest.

As dream-girl, she is (essentially) faceless.

waiting

But she has a voice . . .

As readers we share the peculiar intimacies of the transactions of her life, yet we never learn the color of Moll's hair.

inactive

But she has form . . .

"[T]he text generated by the name is bound to enlase and so to bury it."¹⁷

the

This is the mission of *Moll Flanders*.

She is hard to figure out.

hangs

f Flanders/a comprehensive term covering several varieties of lace.¹⁸

"I found means to slip a Paper of Lace into my Pocket, and come clear off with it. . . ."²⁰

Moll Flanders.
Not simply a suitable pair of names for a whore's tale,²¹ but a name embodying a wish.

The account of her gains and losses is told in a voice so distinctive that it is clear that Defoe has created, as Donaghue noted, “a world which bears his [Defoe’s] sole patent.

Moll Flanders.
Born in Newgate Prison of a criminal mother.
Father unknown.

It is her sister criminals, “those hardn’d Wretches,”: “that gave me the Name of *Moll Flanders*: For it was no more of Affinity with my real Name, or with any of the Names I had ever gone by, than black is of Kin to white, except that once, as before, I call’d my self Mrs. *Flanders*, when I sheltered myself in the *Mint*; But that these Rogues never knew, nor could I ever learn how they came to give me the Name, or what the Occasion of it was.”²³

It is this sort of name-game which characterizes *Moll Flanders*.

Our subject, Moll Flanders, is not simply the woman she appears to be.

under-

each

lacemakers

under

The specular
name is a
name more gen-
uinely one's
own than a
signature or
a proper name,
according to
Hartman; it
is the hidden
name of the
text. The
name of Moll

Flanders is the authenticating
seal of the text, which bears
the same name.

sequence

Daniel Defoe.
Son of James and Alice Foe.
Born in London in 1660.
James Foe was a butcher.

Daniel Defoe was a name, in
fact, not really his own.

fingers;

"[H]e could not leave even
his adopted name alone; he seems
to have been about forty when he
first changed his signature
"D. Foe" into the surname of
"Defoe;" . . . it is a character-
istic circumstance that his name
is not his own, except in the
sense that it was assumed by
himself."²²

the

It is a circum-
stance of her
character, *Moll*
Flanders, that her
name is an assumed

name. It is a name intimately
connected with Defoe
and I wish to pursue the connec-
tion.

us

She is an/other as well, as a gentle pull at the string of the text will reveal.

before

“Every literary narrative contains another narrative: however continuous or full the one seems to be, the other is discontinuous and lacunary.”²⁵

Moll Flanders is a day-dream.

“[I]f there is a key, the author has locked the text and, as it were, thrown the key away – into the text.”²⁶

lace

Placing the name of Moll Flanders next to that of Daniel Defoe, the specular name of the text comes into focus.

of

piece

The exceptional case is the letter “i”, which, in light of the first person narration of the “novel” can be nominated to the upper case (I).

like

I will reproduce the anagram here, inserting numbers which signify the order of reading the letters.

produced,

is

Admittedly less-than-perfect (one “I” of Daniel must cancel three of Moll’s) the anagram appears as a notable sign.

while

"[T]he proper name affixed to a text . . . is its authenticating seal."²⁴

[Figure 4]

created

How the writer accomplishes this is his innermost secret.

Valenciennes

Literature: gold mine of wishes gilded by
Language: treasury of signifiers.

"The repetition of a specular name gives rise to texts that seem to be anagrammatic or to conceal an unknown – unknowable key, a "pure" signifier, writes Hartman. These texts are called literature."²⁷

a

It is the watermark of the text, this name.

is

For *Moll Flanders* is an anagram, the letters of which can be arranged in such a way that they contain all the letters of the name of the "author"

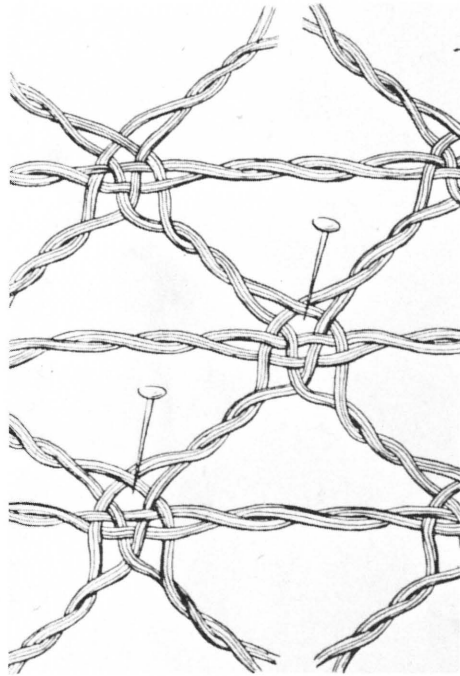


Figure 4

being

D	A	N	I	E	L	D	E	F	O	E				
											I			
M	O	L	L			F	L	A	N	D	E	R	S	(4)
	6	6				9	6	2	3	1	5			
	10									7	8			
													11	

it

The common letters of their names constitute the key which Defoe threw into the text (into the body) of *Moll Flanders*. They spell his previously unreadable secret identity.

Just as the recounting of a dream may produce readable material, so too does the text of the day-dream when it is dressed up in the garb of literature.

In considering her name, the reader need not look any further than the lacy associations Flanders draws to mind.

But there is another name, buried within itself, enshrouded in the text, obscured by the lace connection.

Lifting the veil which connotation holds fast we read the wish and arrive at the scene of recognition.

*'day-dreams' / the airy creations
of fantasy*

displaced from right to left. . . ."³⁰

text

Mrs. is the way the reader should use the three letters which remain; this was the manner of addressing both married and single women in Defoe's time.

[Inset]

"[K]now me by the Name of *Moll Flanders*; so you may give me leave to speak of myself, under that Name till I dare own who I have been, as well as who I am."²⁸

Behind the hints
of the "author"
and between the slips in her
"memorandums" the string of
the wish is visible.

*"called an 'incitement premium'
or technically, 'fore-pleasure.'"*

"I could fill a larger History than this, with the Evidences of this Truth, and but that I doubt that part of the Story will not be equally diverting as the wicked Part I have had thoughts of making a Volume of it by itself."²⁹

Moll Flanders / Other

"[T]he 'scene of writing' never takes place in one place: its locus (corpus) is always also 'ein anderer Schauplatz,' as Freud put it:

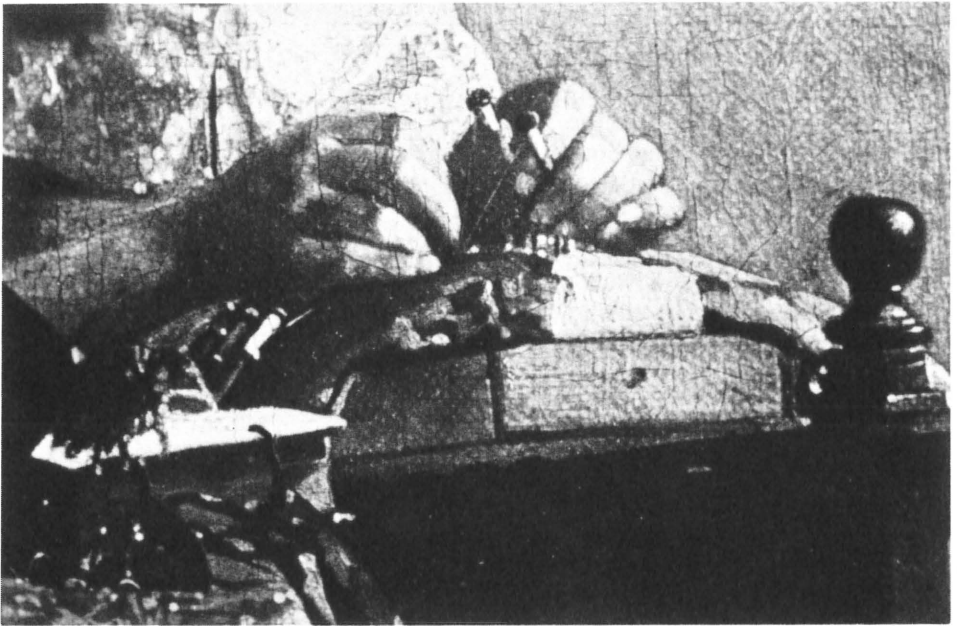


Figure 5: "The progress of each thread is marked with a pin. . . ." – Barthes

1. Jacques Derrida, quoted by Geoffrey Hartman, "Psychoanalysis: The French Connection," in *Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978), p. 95.
2. Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. J. Paul Hunter (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Inc., 1970), xvi. All quotations from the novel, unless otherwise noted, are taken from this edition. I will retain the capitalizations and spellings of the 1722 edition.
3. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 4.
4. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 9.
5. Defoe used irony in a particular sense. He quotes from rhetorician Gerardus Vollius, who defined it as a form of mockery by means of deception and trickery.
6. Sigmund Freud, "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming (1908)" in *On Creativity and the Unconscious* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 44.
7. Freud, "Poet and Day-Dreaming," p. 50.
8. Freud, "Poet and Day-Dreaming," p. 48-9.
9. Freud, "Poet and Day-Dreaming," p. 53-4.
10. Virginia Woolf, "Defoe" in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Moll Flanders*, ed. Robert C. Elliott (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 12.
11. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 174.
12. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 189.
13. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 187.
14. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 215.

15. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 169-70.
16. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 127.
17. Hartman, "The French Connection," p. 95.
18. See Thomas Wright, *The Romance of the Lace Pillow*, 2nd ed. (Olney, Bucks: H.H. Armstrong, 1924), p. 14, which gives this account of Flanders lace: "The oldest Flemish laces seem to have had as foundation a braid or tape, whence the name Pillow Guipure, but a 'Trolly,' or heavy *cordonnnet*, sometimes took the place of tape. . . . The principal later laces of Flanders are Brussels (of which there were two leading kinds; Point à Aiguille or Needle-made Lace, and Point Plat or Bobbin-made, though the needle-work and the bobbin-work were often mingled), Mechlin and Antwerp, which were pillow laces."
19. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 205.
20. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 201.
21. See, for example, the commentary of Kenneth Rexroth in his Afterword to the Signet edition of *Moll Flanders* where he notes: "we seem to see Defoe's characters through the crystal-clear medium of his style with perfect verisimilitude, as real as if we saw them in a mirror that was invisible. *Moll Flanders* is considered the most authentic portrait of a prostitute in English literature." It has been called "the truest realism in English Literature" and, on a more sensational level, "red-blooded realism," "the tale of a hot, earthy wench . . . the book is full of things, material things" (p. 305).
22. According to biographer William Minto, *English Men of Letters: Daniel Defoe* (London: Macmillan, Pocket edn., 1909), pp. 2-3.
23. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 169.
24. Hartman, "The French Connection," p. 95.
25. Hartman, p. 102.
26. Hartman, p. 99.
27. Hartman, p. 94.
28. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 9.
29. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, p. 264.
30. Hartman, "The French Connection," p. 98.

Figure 1: Vermeer, "The Lacemaker," (about 1665). Reproduced in Lawrence Gowing, *Vermeer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952, 1970).

Figure 2: Valenciennes, Square Mesh. Illustration appearing in Margaret L. Brooke, *Lace in the Making* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1923) p. 89.

Figure 3: Valenciennes, Round Mesh. Brooke, *Lace in the Making*, p. 88.

Figure 4: Boule de Neige. Brooke, *Lace in the Making*, p. 98. The ground of this net should look like minute cobwebs. It is also known as "fausse Valenciennes," a most valuable lace.

Figure 5: Vermeer, "The Lacemaker," (detail). Reproduced in Pierre Descargues, *Vermeer* (Geneva: Editions d'Art Albert Skira, 1966).

Frank O'Hara

STANDING STILL
AND WALKING
IN NEW YORK

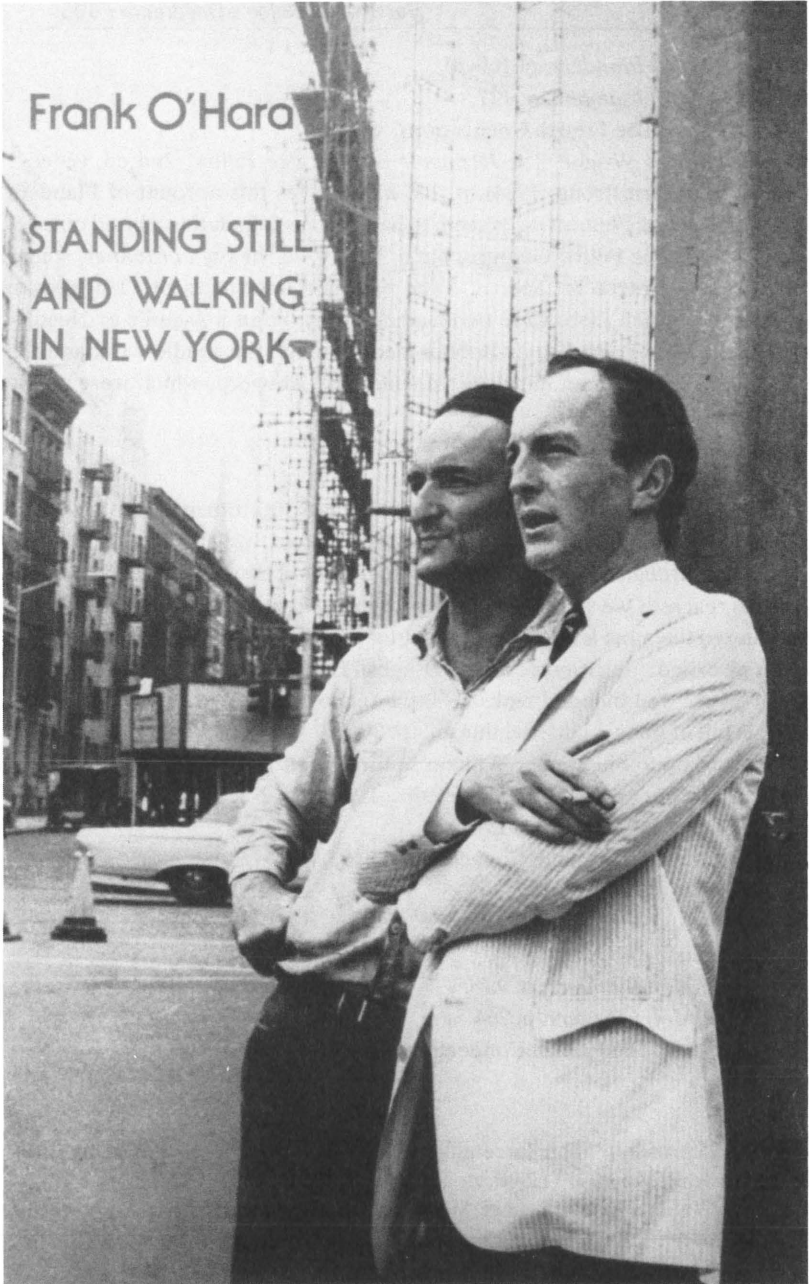


Figure 1: "By nature (he) was a city-dweller. . . ."

Franked Letters: Crossing the Bar

Eleanor Honig Skoller

The discontinuity of consciousness in Freud's theory of memory which may lie "at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time" is manifest in Frank O'Hara's New York poems, especially his walking lunch-hour poems. The inscription of memory traces on the unconscious at the instant of perception (the model for which is the child's toy, the Mystic Writing-Pad) is homologous to the crowd's inscription upon the streets, the paving stones of the city. As Paris was the cityscape of Baudelaire's unconscious so was New York that of O'Hara's. The paper, the poem, is the Barthesian third term: a translation of the surface of the city onto that of the page, a translation into time, measure, number: from stone/city to paper/poem. Frank O'Hara's visible language is New York City on the page.

*The monument of psychoanalysis
must be traversed – not bypassed –
like the fine thoroughfares of a very
large city, across which we can
play, dream, etc.: a fiction.*

– Roland Barthes

*I am for an art that tells you the
time of day, or where such and
such a street is.*

– Claes Oldenburg

"By nature [he] was a city-dweller. . . . He loved the endless cavalcade of the boulevards, the midnight brilliance of talks in the artists' cafés. . . . The atmosphere of [the city] was the native element of his inspiration."¹ Christopher Isherwood might have written this about the New York poet Frank O'Hara, but, in fact, he wrote it about another poet [Baudelaire] who lived and wrote in another city [Paris] one hundred years earlier. Baudelaire and O'Hara were both unremittingly urban; both were poets and art critics, but one of the strongest links between them is incarnated in the figure of the *flâneur*: an idler, a stroller, a man about town. The work of Constantin Guys, a contemporary water-colorist and illustrator, inspired Baudelaire in his essay "The Painter of

Visible Language, XIV 3, pp. 306-319

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Modern Life” (published in 1863), to celebrate the *flâneur* as a uniquely urban figure. It was not just Guy’s finished works that interested Baudelaire, but his method of composition: “in the daily metamorphosis of external things, there is a rapidity of movement which calls for an equal speed of execution from the artist.”² Speed of composition and movement in the poem through the city streets are cornerstones of O’Hara’s New York poems. He wrote “Adieu to Norman. Bon Jour to Joan and Jean-Paul” in forty-five minutes. It begins like a wire service bulletin clicking away time and place: “It is 12:10 in New York and I am wondering/if I will finish this in time to meet Norman for lunch. . . .”³ But that is not all, as Baudelaire pointed out about this kind of artist: “observer, philosopher, *flâneur* – call him what you will . . . sometimes he is a poet; more often he comes closer to the novelist or the moralist; he is the painter of the passing moment and of all the suggestions of eternity that it contains.”⁴ O’Hara pinpoints the passing moment, tells (recounts) the time, names it to the minute like a digital readout: “it is 12:10,” “12:20,” “5:30” and sets it into Time – all time, perhaps eternity. He does this most often in his walking lunch hour poems like “A Step Away from Them”:

*It’s my lunch hour, so I go
for a walk among hum-colored
cabs. First down the sidewalk. . . .
Then onto the avenue. . . .*

On

*to Times Square where the sign
blows smoke over my head, and higher
the waterfall pours lightly. . . .*

Everything

*suddenly honks: it is 12:40 of
a Thursday. . . .*

*There are several Puerto
Ricans on the avenue today, which
makes it beautiful and warm. First
Bunny died, then John Latouche,
then Jackson Pollock. But is the
earth as full as life was full, of them?
And one has eaten and one walks. . . .*

*A glass of papaya juice
and back to work. My heart is in my
pocket, it is poems by Pierre Reverdy.*

(SP, 110-11)

The vibrance of the passing moment is pitted against the finality, the

stillness of death, as if the vitality of each instant in and of which he is writing and in which the reader is reading all merge to create a force that might push death away to make room on the street for life. So in the very transitory, there is a sense of now and always. Life, in all its specificity and linearity is superimposed upon death in “The Day Lady Died”:

*It is 12:20 in New York a Friday
three days after Bastille day, yes
it is 1959 and I go get a shoeshine
because I will get off the 4:19 in Easthampton
at 7:15 and then go straight to dinner
and I don't know the people who will feed me
I walk up the muggy street beginning to sun . . .
I go on to the bank . . .*

*I just stroll into the PARK LANE . . .
then I go back where I came from to 6th Avenue . . .
and I am sweating a lot by now and thinking of
leaning on the john door in the 5 SPOT
while she whispered a song along the keyboard
to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing.*

(SP, 146)

What is extraordinary about this poem (seemingly concerned with the ordinary – shopping, choosing gifts, the heat and humidity) is the excruciating irony that while Lady Day’s voiced breath, her singing, her consummate artistry stopped everyone’s breathing, now *she* breathes no more and everyone else takes another breath. *We* and everything go on (an irony even more sharply honed by the added knowledge that O’Hara himself died prematurely at the age of forty).

Time and experience does not flow smoothly like a river, but rather, it is, as Rilke writes, “from a million tiny unsuppressible movements [that] a mosaic of most convincing life is assembled” and that the realities of so many unique particulars are “slow and indescribably detailed.”⁵ Each named moment – a numerical transfer from clock to page – in O’Hara’s poems is a *freeze frame* in a moving picture, not a still photograph. The background out of which the moment emerges moves on in time (in the reader’s mind) while the poem holds the moment, filling it and elongating it. The printed numerals scattered throughout his lines jump out to catch the reader only to spur her on by having visually contracted the naming process. The discontinuities caused by the arresting of motion in the midst of movement produces, for and in the reader, a vertiginous, breathless, often disorienting effect. Mary Ann Caws, commenting on Rudolph Arnheim’s apt obser-

vation that "if a still picture is inserted in a film sequence, it will exhibit frozen motion rather than stillness," points out that "the flow of poetry prevents the image from conveying a static sense – it seems rather to be *suspended movement*."⁶ For O'Hara, death alone is unregenerative stillness: the stopped clock, the end-stop, end of the line, neither mess nor measure, the last number – "(no new poems for him)" (SP, 120).

O'Hara takes the past and the future with him into his captured moments, his *now*, where all the parts are in paratactic relation to each other, laid out flat on the surface of the poems, like the surface of the city, street after street after street. Nothing is hidden; there is no hierarchy of value or syntax of valuation in his lines. There is only the surface flattened out on the page like a cubist painting showing every plane at once. The reader is surrounded by the poem, that is to say, she is inside it moving on its surface as though on the city streets. It is the cumulative effect of the movement and the discontinuities that produce meaning for the reader who has to look back to see where she has been while continuing to move on.

In his work on memory, Freud theorized that in the process of perception there is a "flickering-up and passing away of consciousness," a result of "cathectic innervations that are sent out and withdrawn from within the system Pcpt.-Cs. [Perceptual-Conscious]." (The system Pcpt.-Cs. stands for the perceptual systems Freud postulated, others being the "'mnemonic systems' lying behind the perceptual system.") When the system Pcpt.-Cs. is cathected, consciousness is there to receive the stimulus, to cushion its shock by passing the excitation on to the unconscious mnemonic system where a permanent memory trace is inscribed. No traces are left in the system Pcpt.-Cs. which is once again ready to receive and parry stimuli. When the "cathexis is withdrawn, consciousness is extinguished and the functioning of the system [Pcpt.-Cs.] comes to a standstill." Freud concludes his essay, "Note upon 'The Mystic Writing-Pad'" with a "suspicion that this *discontinuous* method of functioning of the system Pcpt.-Cs. lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time" (emphasis added).⁷

Baudelaire seemed to have a presentiment of Freud's theory when he wrote that poetic prose "would have to be . . . supple and resistant enough to adapt to . . . the *shocks of consciousness*" (emphasis added); it would be a kind of writing which "will grip especially those who are at home in the giant cities and the web of their numberless interconnecting relationships."⁸

Commenting on this passage in a signal essay on Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, conversant with Freud, sees "close connections in Baudelaire between the figure of shock and contact with the metropolitan

masses . . . the amorphous crowd of passers-by, the people in the street.”⁹ Baudelaire writes of the *flâneur* that he “enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy.” He likens him “to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.”¹⁰ Benjamin sees Baudelaire as always fencing with the crowd, parrying and thrusting his way into it, making a path for himself, for his poems – even when the crowd is not there and the streets are deserted:

*Le long du vieux faubourg, où pendent aux mesures
Les persiennes, abri des secrètes luxures,
Quand le soleil cruel frappe à traits redoublés
Sur la ville et les champs, sur les toits et les blés,
Je vais m'exercer seul à ma fantasque escrime,
Flairant dans tous les coins les hasards de la rime,
Trébuchant sur les mots comme sur les pavés,
Heurtant parfois des vers depuis longtemps rêvés.*

*Along the old faubourg where the masonry is tented by
Shutters, sheltering secret pleasures,
When the cruel sun's redoubled beams
Are lashing city and field, roofs and grain,
I go, alone, to practice my curious fencing,
In every corner smelling out the dodges of rhyme,
Stumbling over words as over cobblestones,
Colliding now and then with long-dreamed-of verses.¹¹*

Like the evanescence of time and experience, the phantasmagoria of the crowd is within Baudelaire; the actual crowd is repressed. Its traces are etched in his unconscious. He has long forgotten it and is, thus, emancipated from it; rather, it flows in his bloodstream (Rilke), activates his muscles (Nietzsche), and is “imprinted on his creativity as a hidden figure” (Benjamin). The “meaning of the hidden configuration,” Benjamin suggests, is “the phantom crowd of the words, the fragments, the beginnings of lines from which the poet, in the deserted streets, wrests the poetic booty.”¹² Writing is the appearance of consciousness, letter by letter, by imprint and space, the punctuation of time; movement and suspended movement bears time into space and place: Frank O’Hara’s visible language is New York City on the page.

A topography, from the Greek *topos*: place, locality and *graphos*: written and writing, is a writing of place, a place of writing, a written place. Freud laid out a topography of the psyche upon the Mystic Writing-Pad, an apparatus he found that served as a mechanical representa-

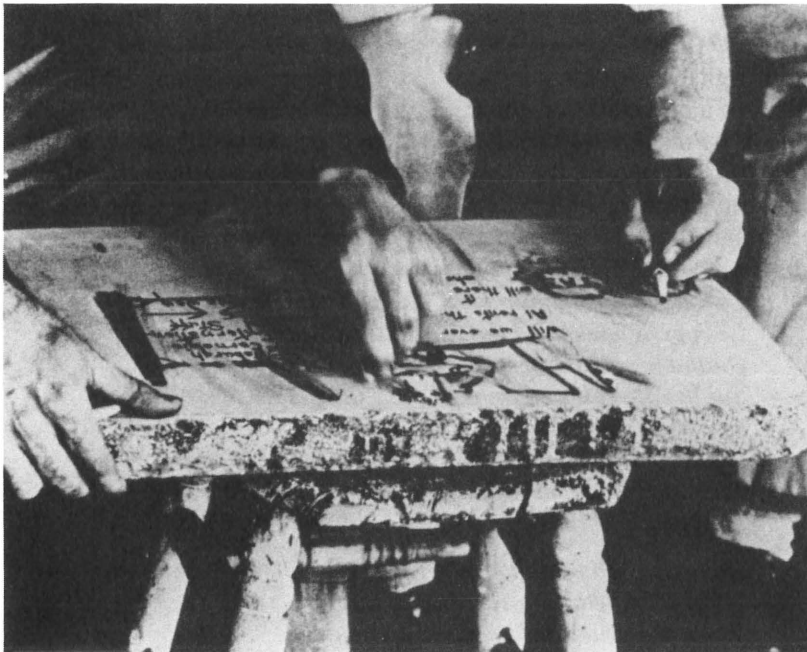


Figure 2: "The stone is a piece of paper."

tion of the way memory is constituted. The Mystic Writing-Pad (a child's writing or drawing toy still available today) consists of a block of dark resin or wax which has layered upon it, attached only at one end, a thin translucent sheet of paper followed by a transparent piece of celluloid. One can write on the pad with any pointed object (a stick is usually provided); customary writing implements are not necessary because the writing is made visible by the pressing of the paper into the wax surface. The celluloid protects the paper beneath it from tearing. When both sheets are lifted away from the wax, the writing disappears, leaving these surfaces blank and ready for further writing. The wax slab beneath, however, retains the traces, the impressions of the inscriptions that have been made. The construction of the Mystic Writing-Pad, Freud writes, "shows remarkable agreement with my hypothetical structure of our perceptual apparatus; . . . it can provide both an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the notes that have been made upon it."¹³ There is an important limitation in the analogy that Freud, of course, recognized: lack of spontaneity – that is to say, the mechanism has no internal energy with which to activate itself. Once the writing has been erased, it cannot be reproduced from



Figure 3: “door to heaven? . . .” “A number is not simply a number.”

within; it has no memory. In the very limitation of the model, however, lies its demonstrative value.

“Imagine,” Freud writes, “one hand writing upon the surface of the Mystic Writing-Pad while another periodically raises its covering sheet from the wax slab.”¹⁴ Because the writing can only be applied and erased manually, the principle of the discontinuity of consciousness is clearly shown; every trace has a temporal position on the wax slab. Moreover, the connection and separation of the layers is visible as writing. The tracery is produced by these relations. The wax slab is thus a topography of the unconscious. But while the analogy between the Mystic Writing-Pad and the unconscious may be exhausted here, its system of relations and Freud’s mapping of the psyche can be seen as corresponding to another system of relations of surface and meaning, that of Frank O’Hara’s topography of New York City upon the surface of the page: his lines – composed upon the sidewalks of New York (as Wordsworth composed his upon Westminster Bridge).

The stones of the city, that “does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the street, . . . every seg-

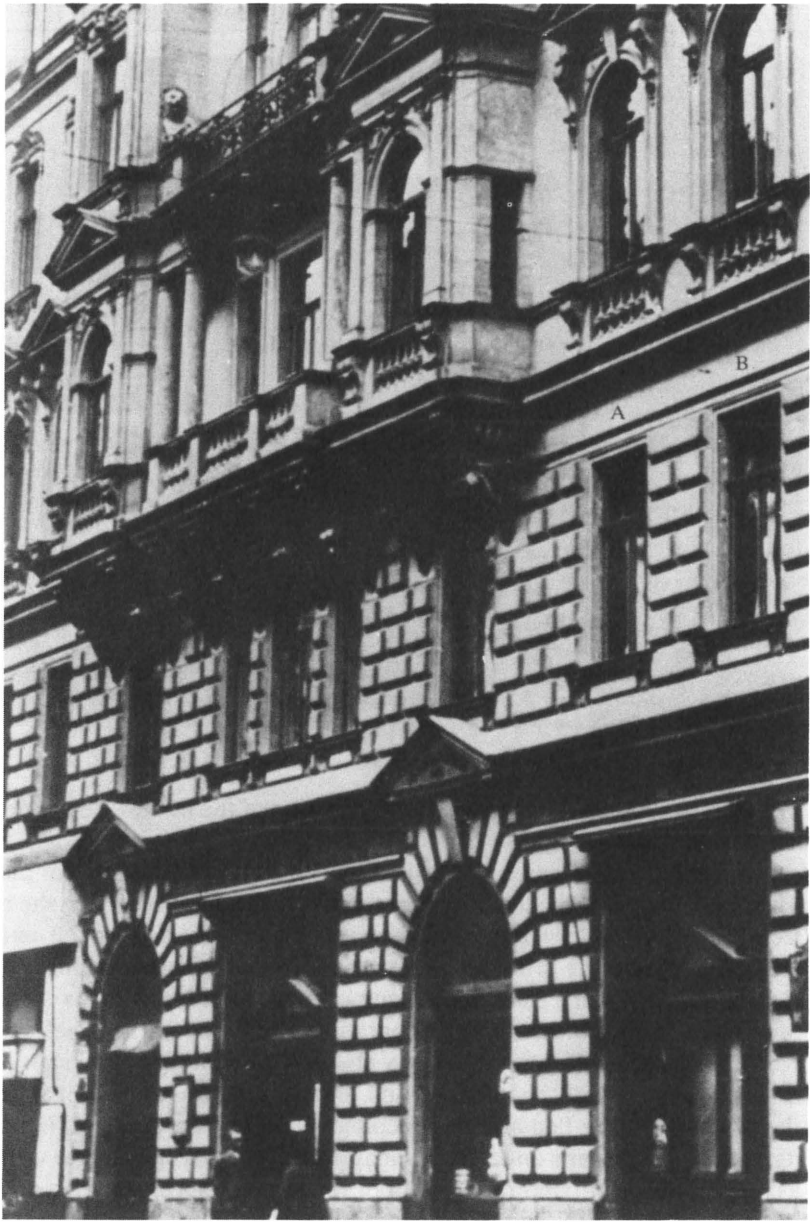


Figure 4: The Facade of Freud's house at 19 Berggasse. The windows of the consulting rooms are designated A and B.

ment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls,"¹⁵ are the sidewalks, the cobble or paving stones; *les pavés* (ripped out of the Paris ground and turned into barricades [standing stones] against the police in '68) that pave the way of and for civilization are written stones, not only as symbol or stele, but as invisible graffiti: stone written upon: lithograph. Barnett Newman, the painter, once said, "unlike Gertrude Stein's rose, the stone is not a stone. The stone is a piece of paper."¹⁶

While like Baudelaire, O'Hara's unconscious is inscribed by the traces of the crowd, it can be said further that O'Hara's unconscious, homologically, is the pavements of New York City, is its named and numbered streets whose surfaces the multitudes have etched and scored. The scoring of the city's surfaces is a numbering; number is an abstraction that allows the city to be erected stone after stone. Who can imagine a city without numbers? The least likely would be O'Hara for whom New York is a *mélange* of numbers:

515 Madison Avenue

door to heaven? . . .

while everywhere love is breathing draftily

like a doorway linking 53rd with 54th

the east-bound with the west-bound traffic by 8,000,000s

o midtown tunnels and the tunnels, too, of Holland . . .

I am getting into a cab at 9th Street and 1st Avenue

and the Negro driver tells me about a \$120 apartment

"where you can't walk across the floor after 10 at night

not even to pee, cause it keeps them awake downstairs"

no. I don't like that "well, I didn't take it" (SP, 147)

A number is not simply a number; according to the Oxford English Dictionary a number is also a poem. (A number can be a work of art, too: 0-9, a series of lithographs on Arabic numbers by Jasper Johns.)

O'Hara's page is a Barthesian third term that translates. Barthes considering dialectics writes: "Everything seems to suggest that his discourse proceeds according to a two-term dialectic. . . . The contradiction of the terms yields in his eyes by the discovery of a third term, which is not a synthesis but a *translation*: everything comes back, but it comes back as Fiction, i.e., at another turn of the spiral."¹⁷ Just as the imprinted paper is peeled from the surface of the marked stone, so is the printed page of poetry (numbers) wrested from the poet's inscribed unconscious. (Johns's 0-9 are both peeled and wrested.) The comparison here is once more homological. Barthes: "he enjoys *deporting* the object, by a kind of imagination which is more homologic than metaphoric (we compare systems, not images); . . . he functions by sliding over the entire surface, he caresses."¹⁸ As if skin, the surface

of the stone is the most flexible, responsive surface there is. As Robert Rauschenberg was moved to remark, "the stone is so heavy and clumsy and immobile, and yet at the same time. . . . It's like you're drawing on the skin of the stone."¹⁹

O'Hara did write on stone when he collaborated with Larry Rivers on a series of lithographs published as *Stones*. In his account of the collaboration, "Life Among the Stones," Rivers writes that

we were fully aware by now that Frank with his limited means [as a painter] was almost as important as myself in the overall *visual* force of the print. . . . Frank without realizing it was being called upon to think about things outside of poetry. Besides what they seemed to mean he was using words as a visual element. . . . If a self-conscious display of growing grass can be presented as an experience and shown in an art gallery and we seriously consider a composer's score as a visual phenomenon, it is apparent that a poet will begin to see his writing in a little wider scope than the level of his semantic struggle.²⁰

That this was indeed one of O'Hara's abiding concerns is evident from his "Notes on 'Second Avenue'" (some remarks on his poem of that name):

the verbal elements [of the poem] are not too interesting to discuss although they are intended consciously to keep the surface of the poem high and dry, not wet, reflective and self-conscious. Perhaps the obscurity comes in here, in the relationship between surface and the meaning, but I like it that way since the one is the other (you have to use words) and I hope the poem to *be* the subject, not just about it. (CP, 497)

The letter insists in the surface and has to be read. If "the dream is the royal road to the unconscious" (Freud), so too is the city:

With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.²¹

The writing that is visible on the page is a transference, a movement of meaning from one place to another. The transport of meaning (over royal roads) is the work of metaphor whose Greek root means to bear or to carry. Metaphor incites movement on the page, crosses the bar (Lacan), induces the production of meaning: *signifiance* (Kristeva). Fluidity, the freedom of movement, the right of passage is the superposition of the name on the surface – the privilege of the franked letter. Or

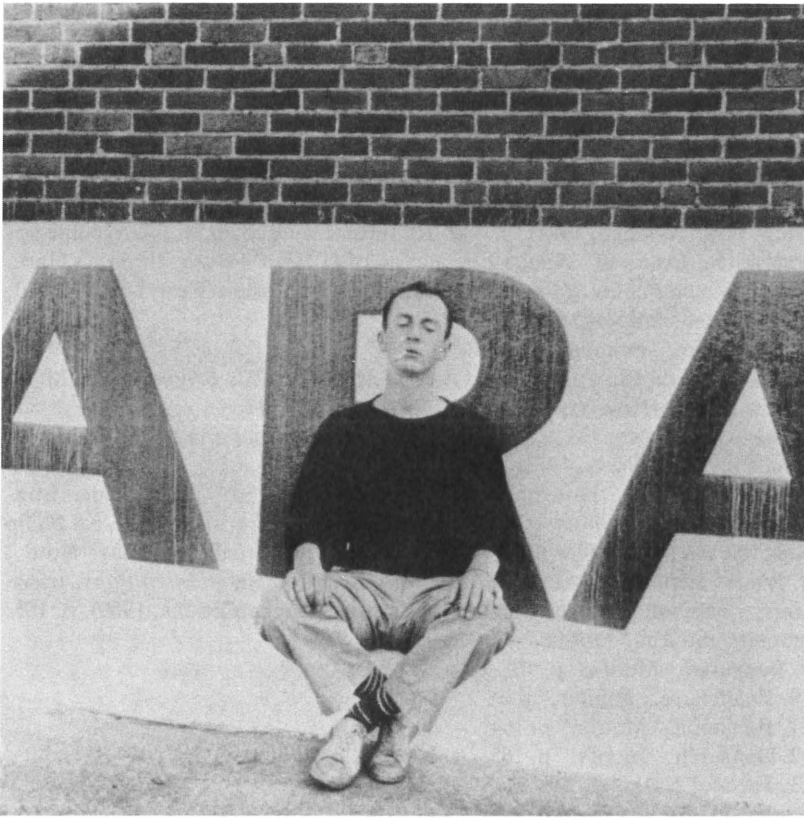


Figure 5: "Writing is the appearance of consciousness, letter by letter, by imprint and space. . . ."

AS PLANNED

*After the first glass of vodka
you can accept just about anything
of life even your own mysteriousness
you think it is nice that a box
of matches is purple and brown and is called
La Petite and comes from Sweden
for they are words that you know and that
is all you know words not their feelings
or what they mean and you write because
you know them not because you understand them
because you don't you are stupid
and lazy and you will never be great but you do
what you know because what else is there? (CP, 382)*

1. Christopher Isherwood, translator's pref., *Intimate Journals*, by Charles Baudelaire (New York: Howard Fertig, 1977), p. vii.
2. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1964), p. 4; hereafter cited as "Painter."
3. Frank O'Hara, *The Selected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, ed. Donald Allen (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 149. All further references to this volume appear in the text as SP. Another collection of O'Hara's work, Frank O'Hara, *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, ed. Donald Allen (New York: Knopf, 1971) is cited in the text as CP.
4. Baudelaire, "Painter," pp. 4-5.
5. Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: Norton, 1949), pp. 138, 173.
6. Mary Ann Caws, *The Inner Theatre of Recent French Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), p. 116, n. 5.
7. Sigmund Freud, "Note upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad,'" trans. James Strachey, in *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963), pp. 211-12; hereafter cited as "Note."
8. Walter Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 165; hereafter cited as "Motifs."
9. Benjamin, "Motifs," p. 165.
10. Baudelaire, "Painter," p. 9.
11. Benjamin, "Motifs," p. 164.
12. Benjamin, "Motifs," p. 165.
13. Freud, "Note," p. 209.
14. Freud, "Note," p. 212.
15. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 11.
16. Herbert Mitgang, "Tatyana Grosman: The Inner Light of 5 Skidmore Place," in *Artnews*, 73 (March 1974), p. 31.
17. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 69; hereafter cited as *RB by RB*.
18. Barthes, *RB by RB*, p. 58.
19. Calvin Tompkins, *The Scene: Reports on Post-Modern Art* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 78.
20. Larry Rivers, "Life Among the Stones," in *Location* (Spring 1963), pp. 94-96.
21. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, p. 44.

Figure 1: O'Hara, Frank. *Standing Still and Walking in New York*. Ed. Donald Allen. Bolinas, California: Grey Fox Press, 1975. The cover photograph.

Figure 2: Berkson, Bill, and Joe LeSueur, eds. *Homage to Frank O'Hara*. *Big Sky* 11/12 (1978), p. 61.

Figure 3: Freud, Ernst, and Lucie Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis. *Sigmund Freud: Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976, p. 140.

Figure 4: Freud, Ernst, Lucie Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis. *Sigmund Freud: Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976, p. 141.

Figure 5: Berkson, Bill, and Joe LeSueur, eds. *Homage to Frank O'Hara*. *Big Sky* 11/12 (1978), p. 19.

THE CONTRACT

THE FIRST IMAGE

THE MASK

THIS MAKES MANIFEST THE EXCHANGE
ON WHICH COLLECTIVE LIFE IS BASED

BETWEEN PEOPLE THE CONTRACT REG-
ULATES RELATIONS, PROVIDES SECURITY,
LIBERATES THEM FROM THE IMAGINARY
EMBARRASMENTS OF THE ENCOUNTER

(WHAT AM I TO COUNT ON IN THE OTHER'S DESIRE?)
(WHAT AM I FOR HER?)

THAT OF THE EGOIST

WHO GIVES BUT FORBIDS HERSELF EVER
TO DEMAND

NO WILL-TO-SEIZE

THE SITE OF THE CONTRACT OF LANGUAGE
IS ELSEWHERE

THE CONTRACT

SIGN, LANGUAGE, NARRATIVE,
SOCIAL WRITING, SOCIAL FUNCTION

SINCE THE CONTRACT IS MASKED, THE
CRITICAL OPERATION CONSISTS IN
DECIPHERING THE CONFUSION OF
REASONS, ALIBIS, AND APPEARANCES

THE SHARED CONTRACT IS THE ONLY
POSITION WHICH THE SUBJECT CAN
ASSUME WITHOUT FALLING INTO TWO
INVERSE BUT EQUALLY DESPISED POSITIONS

WHO DEMANDS WITHOUT CARING THAT
SHE HAS NOTHING TO GIVE

THAT OF THE SAINT

IT OBSERVES THE RULE OF HABITATION

YET NO OBLATION

THE SITE OF THE CONTRACT OF LANGUAGE
IS ELSEWHERE



Overlay: *A Stele for Roland Barthes*

which is indeed his subject, to which he constantly returns.

I believe that Barthes, who relished being photographed among his students, for whom the seminar was a space filled with “‘the tangle of amorous relations’” (RB, 171), would have liked his stele: the finished form certainly, so uncannily like something out of his own image-repertoire, but more especially perhaps its production. Had he not, after all, defined meaning as

any kind of intertextual or extratextual correlation, that is every feature of the narrative which refers to another moment within it or to another locus of the culture required in order to read it. . . . Meaning for me (that is the way I live it in my research) is essentially a *quotation*, it is the point of departure of a code, that which allows us to set out in the direction of a code and what a code implies, even if the code has not been reconstructed or cannot be reconstructed (EH, 185-86).*

In other words, the name Roland Barthes led to no code for Jeanette's husband. It was for him, in effect, unreadable. This was not the case for Jeanette. For her “Roland Barthes” was a quotation: she had read it before. So too for readers of Barthes, the text of Lori and Susan's contract was a constellation of codes (Barthes speaks throughout *S/Z* of the “starred” text, in which the orbit of meaning is plotted) codes for which words such as “oblation,” “will-to-seize,” “alibis” are all points of departure.

Readability, the conditions of readability were Barthes' central concern. Reading is a “labor of language” and to read, for him

is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept towards other names; names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming: I name, I unname, I rename: so the text passes: it is a nomination in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic labor. (*S/Z*, 11)

So too the world passes, the world which is for Barthes a vast text, hence reading is not and must not be limited to the printed word. Women's clothes, margarine, soap powders, plastic, strip tease are also signs or sign systems to be read. Reading therefore is seen to be a vital activity, passionate and political.

But so too life passes. The reading subject, “This ‘I’ which approaches the text,” in Barthes' words “is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost)” (*S/Z*, 10). Thus reading is always re-reading, recognition, in the same way that Freud tells us finding is always finding again. It is no wonder then that Barthes favors the word “text,” insisting on

its etymology, its derivation from the latin *textus*, tissue, suggesting weaving or braiding, as in the word “textile.” It is the play in the word “text” that allows Barthes to produce one of the most illuminating and thrilling descriptions of reading and its complement, writing, that have ever been given:

The text while it is being produced is like a piece of Valenciennes lace created before us under the lacemaker’s fingers: each sequence undertaken hangs like the temporarily inactive bobbin waiting while its neighbour works; then, when its turn comes, the hand takes up the thread again, brings it back to the frame; and as the pattern is filled out, the progress of each thread is marked with a pin which holds it and is gradually moved forward: thus the terms of the sequence: they are positions held and then left behind in the course of a gradual invasion of meaning. This process is valid for the entire text. The grouping of codes, as they enter into the work, into the movement of the reading, constitute a braid (*text, fabric, braid*: the same thing); each thread, each code, is a voice; these braided – or braiding – voices from the writing: when it is alone, the voice does not labor, transforms nothing: it *expresses*; but as soon as the hand intervenes to gather and intertwine the inert threads, there is labor, there is transformation. We know the symbolism of the braid: Freud considering the origin of weaving, saw it as the labor of a woman braiding her pubic hairs to form the absent penis. The text, in short, is a fetish; and to reduce it to the unity of meaning, by a deceptively univocal reading, is to *cut the braid*, to sketch the castrating gesture. (*S/Z*, 160)

What “nomination in the process of becoming” is involved in the production of that very text itself! The reader-producer, if she is truly to read, must pass from Valenciennes lace (Vermeer’s portrait of the lacemaker, bent over her pillow) to Freud (psychoanalysis—humbag or genial discovery, depending on the codes which constitute the reading “I” – his essay on femininity, for the “I” which recognizes weaving as the departure of a code) to fetish (the absent penis of the mother, that which is present and absent at once, if the code is Freud, object of unwarranted veneration if it is Le Président de Brosses: *Le Culte des dieux fétiches*, 1760).

The text as fetish is probably still one of Barthes’ most scandalous pronouncements, at least for Anglo-Saxon readers, yet which of us, student or teacher, has not asked ourselves “What to write now? Can you still write anything?” (RB, 188). The text, whether term paper or magnum opus is always woven over an absence. “One writes with

one's desire" (RB, 188) and where nothing is lacking, nothing is desired. How much of writing is intended to hide the scandalous fact that we have nothing to say? Like the cuttlefish, we eject our ink and dart away under its cover: writing as alibi: "The site of the contract of language is elsewhere."

And if we may have nothing to say, then how to begin? Barthes writes appreciatively of the rules established by classical rhetoric to facilitate beginnings: "In my opinion," he writes, "these rules are related to a feeling that there is an aphasia native to man, that it is difficult to speak, that there is perhaps nothing to say, and that it is necessary, therefore, to have a whole set of rules, a protocol, in order to find out *what* to say: *invenire quic dicas* (EH, 192).

Language is an infinite structure, how therefore justify beginning here rather than anywhere else? The anxiety attendant on beginnings is clearly related to the castrating gesture. One must "cut in," but at precisely the right point, and as it were, on the bias, lest the whole fabric (braid) come away in the hand, the threads (hairs) inactive, dead.

It is curious that there is one book in Barthes' corpus which is rarely commented upon (it is one of the two which have not been translated into English). I refer to his book on Michelet, number 19 in the series of which *Roland Barthes* is number 96. The format of this series is quite strictly homogeneous: the first image is always the subject's handwriting, the second his portrait. This is the order followed in Barthes' *Michelet*, but in *Roland Barthes* the portrait of the artist is supplanted by a photo of his mother, clad in a full-skirted dress. The last image in the book is an anatomist's sketch of the human body, showing only the veins and arteries; the effect is of a shaggy anthropoid. The accompanying text reads as follows:

To write the body.

*Neither the skin, nor the muscles, nor the bones,
nor the nerves, but the rest: an awkward, fibrous,
shaggy, raveled thing, a clown's coat*

The final words of the text, written in white on the black surface of the inner back cover are, "I am not through desiring." From the mother's skirts to the clown's coat, so passes Roland Barthes' text: a trajectory of desire, as all texts are, a quest for the object irremediably lost, the mother. Born naked into the world, we must write our garment, leap into language, weave our text. Barthes, by articulating his own metonymic process, his own text, provides us with a new rhetoric, a new code of rules, a safety net.

The consequences of Barthes' work for practice, both pedagogic and critical, are therefore enormous. He chose for his adversary Doxa, received opinion, "what goes without saying," the tacit tyranny of ideology. His goal, like Freud's, was articulation: speech, writing, movement. The contract whether social, personal, or pedagogic must be articulated, then labored over and transformed.

The epigraph to the book on Michelet is one of Michelet's own sayings: "I am a complete man possessing the two sexes of the mind." Let it stand as epitaph for the man who could read it in Michelet's text, for whom it was a quotation, the departure of a code, Roland Barthes.

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and is reprinted by permission
of the editors.)

RB: *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

PT: *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

WDZ: *Writing Degree Zero* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

SZ: *SZ* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

EH: *Exégèse et Hermèutique*, 1971.

Lex Icon : Freud et Rimbaud

par Andrew J. McKenna

La "voyance" dont il est question dans certaines lettres et dans certains poèmes de Rimbaud suppose des processus linguistiques qui sont proprement le jeu d'idées que Freud découvre dans les rêves et dans les mots d'esprit. Pour l'un et l'autre auteur il s'agit essentiellement de voir aussi bien que d'entendre le langage – de considérer le langage comme matière d'écriture. La théorie freudienne recoupe ici la pratique rimbaldienne, l'une et l'autre invitant à une expérience iconique du langage. L'opposition qu'ils partagent contre le discours purement cartésien associe désir et violence, dont la lettre est la marque, unique, insolite. Lorsque Rimbaud renonce à sa vision apocalyptique d'un verbe charnel incarné, nous découvrons que sa fuite africaine recoupe encore une fois la théorie freudienne mais à un autre niveau : ses lettres aux siens révèlent que son aventure poétique – et son désaveu – est une rencontre avec le langage à la fois familier et étranger de son père.

Les abeilles mortifères : une ontologie à béances
par Sanford S. Ames

La lecture croisée en anglais et en français de *l'Encore* de Jacques Lacan disperse l'être en une nuée comme d'insectes, en un essaim de signifiants infligeant la division sexuelle et la mortalité. L'amour tend à cacher l'aiguillon des vies exilées dans le langage, à recouvrir l'énigme de l'écriture d'un essaim d'incorporations. Le langage visible est contingence, rencontre fortuite avec des cellules de ruches abandonnées, surréalité sérieuse de l'abiquité : les lettres par quoi le sens prend vie. A présent les mutations démographiques semblent rivaliser en nombre avec les combinaisons infinies des mots. Les microprocesseurs, bourdonnantes extensions de l'homme biologique fertilisent la prise d'une impensable pollinie pour finir sous forme de miel ou de cendres. Les abeilles mortifères, c'est nous.

Robbe-Grillet comme cible ou Interrogatoire
par les nombres

par George H. Bauer

Les nombres en tant que langage visuel sont au centre d'un volet du roman triangulaire que Robbe-Grillet vient de consacrer aux relations entre la parole et la vue. Une exposition rétrospective de l'oeuvre de Jasper Johns lui donne l'idée d'un roman policier dont l'intrigue est en outre nourrie de récits inspirés par les oeuvres de Irina Ionesco et de René Magritte. L'énigme est centrée sur la peinture par le moyen de nombres qui débouchent sur l'écriture et sur la peinture. Cet essai joue visiblement avec 3 et/ou davantage de problèmes suggérés par le compte-rendu.

L'invisible chiasme de Freud ou Il ne faut pas
juger un livre par sa couverture

par Jane Gallop

Sur la jaquette de la traduction anglaise de *Vie et mort en psychanalyse* de Jean Laplanche figure un khi grec. Pour peu qu'on y prenne garde, on peut voir dans ce signe, le plus visible, le plus évident, le plus apparent de tous les signes, la représentation d'un "retour du refoulé," le retour de quelque chose qui n'est pas apparent dans le texte de Laplanche, et qui va peut-être même au delà de cela qui, quoique absent, est omniprésent dans le texte de Freud, "Projet en vue d'une psychanalyse scientifique" qui fait l'objet du travail de Laplanche. Cette "découverte" était prévisible; elle n'en est pas moins insolite, car elle pose la question de savoir quels sont les rapports entre la théorie et la pratique à la charnière du langage visuel avec la psychanalyse.

Le rêve de Daniel Defoe : devenir Moll Flanders

par Susanna Bartmann

Dans un essai daté de 1908 : "Le Poète et le rêve éveillé" Freud, feignant un naïveté de profane se proposait de décrire de quoi est faite la substance littéraire. Il retrace le rapport qui existe entre le rêve éveillé et l'acte d'écrire : écrire consiste à imposer une forme au rêve en le transformant en un texte, en une oeuvre d'art. La matérialité du langage con-

fère au texte littéraire une existence évasive. On peut analyser un texte comme on analyse un rêve, car écrire c'est rêver sur le papier. Le moment est venu de mettre le doigt sur le voeu secret de Daniel Defoe lorsqu'il écrivait Moll Flanders, comme l'avait annoncé Geoffrey Hartman quand il affirmait qu'un nom spéculaire est caché dans le texte et qu'il ne demande qu'à être déchiffré. L'essai tend à illustrer le passage du voeu à l'écriture par la voie du nom spéculaire et à le déconstruire en procédant au dévoilement de Moll Flanders, un texte qui est une dentelle et l'expression d'un désir.

Affranchir les lettres : passer la barre
par Eleanor Honig Skoller

La théorie freudienne de la mémoire et de la discontinuité des états de conscience "qui est peut-être à l'origine de la notion de temps" est manifestement présente dans les poèmes new-yorkais de Frank O'Hara, et plus particulièrement dans ses poèmes de la promenade à l'heure du déjeuner. L'inscription de traces dans la mémoire, inconsciente au moment de la perception (les modèles étant le jouet de l'enfant et les Tablettes Mystiques) est homologue à l'inscription de la foule dans la rue, sur le pavé des rues. New York City est pour O'Hara ce que Paris était pour l'inconscient de Baudelaire, le papier, le poème est le troisième terme, au sens barthésien : une transposition de la surface de la ville sur la surface du papier, une transposition dans le temps, dans le nombre, dans le rythme : de la pierre/ville au papier/poème. Le langage visible de Frank O'Hara, c'est New York City sur la page.

Kurzfassungen der Beiträge Übersetzung: Dirk Wendt

Lex Icon: Freud und Rimbaud
von Andrew J. McKenna

Rimbaud's Vorstellung von "Voyance," die in bestimmten Briefen und Gedichten zum Ausdruck kam; löst sprachliche Prozesse aus, die der Aktivität der "unbewussten Vorstellungen," die Freud in Witzen und

Träumen entdeckt. Für beide Autoren ist es weitgehend eine Frage des Sehens wie des Hörens der Sprache – eine Frage der Sprache als Material, wie Schrift. So überschneidet sich Freud's Theorie mit Rimbaud's Praxis, beide Autoren legen so etwas wie eine ikonische Spracherfahrung nahe. Ihr gemeinsamer Gegensatz zu einer ausgesprochen Cartesischen Rhetorik besteht in der Vereinigung von Wunsch und Ungestüm, für welche der Buchstabe den einzigen unheimlichen Hinweis bildet. Wenn Rimbaud seine apokalyptische Vision einer fleischlichen Wort-Inkarnation leugnet, so finden wir, dass seine Flucht nach Afrika auf einer anderen Ebene Verbindung mit der Freud'schen Theorie hat: Seine Briefe nach Hause offenbaren sein poetisches Abenteuer – und seine Ablehnung desselben – als eine Begegnung mit der fremden und vertrauten Sprache seines Vaters.

Die Mörder-Bienen: Eine Ontologie im Ungewissen
von Sanford S. Ames

Jaques Lacan's "Encore," in Französisch und in Englisch gelesen, verbreitet das Sein in einen insektenartigen Schwarmzustand, ein Schwarm von Bedeutungsträgern, die geschlechtliche Teilung und Sterblichkeit kennzeichnen. Liebe würde die Schwierigkeiten der Leben verbergen, die in die Sprache verbannt sind, würde das Rätsel der Schrift in einem Schwarm von Einverleibungen überrennen. Sichtbare Sprache ist Zusammenhang, Begegnung mit den Zellen verlassener Bienenstöcke, die seriale Surrealität des Allgegenwärtigen: die Buchstaben, durch welche Bedeutung lebendig wird. Heutzutage scheinen demographische Wandlungen in ihrer Zahl mit den unendlich vielen Kombinationen der Worte zu wetteifern. Ausweitungen des biologischen Menschen mit summenden Mikro-Chips wirbeln den Wind auf mit undenkbarer Kreuz-Bestäubung, die in Honig und Asche endet. Die Mörder-Bienen sind wir – und wenn Sie das nicht verstanden haben: Dem Übersetzer dieser Kurzfassung ging es ebenso.

Robbe-Grillet als Ziel, oder: Befragung
nach Zahlen

von George H. Bauer

Zahlen als sichtbare Sprache stehen im Mittelpunkt einer der Stützen von Robbe-Grillet's neuer Dreiecks-Novelle, die sich auf verbal-visuelle Beziehungen konzentriert. Das Werk Jasper Johns fordert einen Besuch einer neuen rückblickenden Ausstellung, aus dem Robbe-Grillet eine rätselhafte Detektiv-Geschichte macht, mit Darstellungen, die durch die Arbeiten Irina Ionesco's und René Magritte's beeinflusst sind. Im Mittelpunkt des Geheimnisses steht das "Malen nach Zahlen," die sowohl zum Schreiben wie zum Malen führen. Dieser Aufsatz spielt sichtbar mit drei und/oder mehr Problemen, die sich beim Nachzählen ergeben.

Freud's unsichtbare Spaltung, oder: Man kann ein Buch nicht nach seinem Einband beurteilen

von Jane Gallop

Auf dem Schutzumschlag der englischen Übersetzung von Jean Laplanche's "*Vie et Mort en Psychoanalyse*" erscheint der griechische Buchstabe *Chi*. Bei Beachtung dieses höchst sichtbaren, höchst oberflächlichen, höchst äusserlichen Zeichens finden wir, dass es eine gewisse "Wiederkehr des Verdrängten" darstellt: eine Wiederkehr von etwas, das in Laplanche's Text unsichtbar ist, und vielleicht darüber hinaus ein Etwas, das – trotz seiner Abwesenheit – den Text verhext, über den Laplanche schreibt, nämlich Freud's "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*." Dieser "Fund", obgleich theoretisch vorhersagbar, wirkt dennoch als unheimlicher Effekt und stellt uns die Frage nach der Beziehung zwischen Theorie und Praxis am Schnittpunkt zwischen sichtbarer Sprache und Psychoanalyse.

Defoe's Tagtraum: Moll Flanders werden

von Susanna Bartmann

Freud zieht sich den Mantel der Naivität des Laien an und beginnt, in seinem Aufsatz "*Die Beziehung des Dichters zu Tagträumen*" von 1908 das "Material" zu charakterisieren, aus dem Literatur gemacht wird. Er verfolgt die Beziehung zwischen

dem Vorgang des Tag-Träumens und dem des Schreibens: Schreiben ist die formale Umsetzung des Wunsches in den Text, das Kunstwerk. Die Materialität der Sprache gibt dem literarischen Text die Möglichkeit, darin Versteck zu spielen. Es ist möglich, so in den Text zu blicken, wie ein Analytiker den Text eines Traums ausdeutet, denn Schreiben ist Tag-Träumen auf Papier. Der passende Augenblick, um auf den Wunsch von Daniel Defoe hinzuweisen, als er "*Moll Flanders*" schrieb, angekündigt durch Geoffrey Hartman's Hinweis, dass ein Name (ein "glänzender Name") in den Falten des Textes verborgen sei, der gelesen werden wolle. Dieser Aufsatz versucht die Umsetzung des Wunsches in das Schreiben an Hand eines glänzenden Namens zu demonstrieren, durch eine kurze Enthüllung von "*Moll Flanders*," eines Textes voller Feinheiten – voller Wünsche.

Frankierte Buchstaben: Grenzüberschreitung

von Eleanor Honig Skoller

Die Diskontinuität des Bewusstseins in Freud's Theorie des Gedächtnisses, die "am Grunde des Ursprungs des Zeitbegriffs" liegen mag, wird greifbar in Frank O'Hara's New-York-Gedichten, besonders in denen über Mittagsspaziergänge. Die Vertiefung von Gedächtnisspuren in das Unbewusste im Augenblick der Wahrnehmung (für welche ein Kinderspielzeug, die "mystische Schreibtafel" ein Modell bildet) ist homolog den Markierungen der Menschenmenge in den Strassen auf den Pflastersteinen der Stadt. So wie Paris die Stadtlandschaft des Unbewussten von Baudelaire war, so war es New York für O'Hara. Das Papier, das Gedicht, ist der dritte Barthesische Begriff: eine Übersetzung der Oberfläche der Stadt in die eines Blattes, eine Übersetzung in Zeit, Mass und Zahl: von Stein/Stadt zu Papier/Poem. Frank O'Hara's sichtbare Sprache ist New York City auf der Buchseite.

Resúmenes de los Artículos

Traducción: Ana Fisch

Un ícón léxico: Freud y Rimbaud

por Andrew J. McKenna

El proyecto de Rimbaud sobre “videncia” articulado en ciertos poemas y cartas, emplea procesos lingüísticos que son apropiados a la actividad de la “noción inconciente” que Freud descubre en chistes y sueños. Para ambos escritores es en gran parte un asunto de oír la lengua – un asunto del idioma como tema, como escritura. Así la teoría freudiana se cruza con la práctica de Rimbaud, sugiriendo ambos escritores algo así como una experiencia iconográfica del lenguaje. Su oposición común a un modo de discurso marcadamente cartesiano une el deseo con la violencia, de la cual la letra es una marca única y misteriosa. Cuando Rimbaud reuncia a su visión apocalíptica de una Palabra encarnada encontramos que su vuelo a África se conecta con la teoría freudiana en otro nivel: sus cartas a su país revelan su aventura poética – y su rechazo de la misma – como un encuentro con el lenguaje extraño y familiar de su padre.

Las abejas asesinas: una ontología en suspenso

por Sanford S. Ames

Encore de Jacques Lacan leído a través en inglés y francés se dispersa estando en una suspensión tal como de un insecto, un enjambre de significadores que modulan la división sexual y la mortalidad. El amor ocultaría el aguijón de las vidas exiladas en el lenguaje invadiendo el enigma de la escritura en un enjambre de incorporación. El lenguaje visible es contingencia, un encuentro con las células de las almenas abandonadas, la surrealidad consecutiva de lo ubicuo: las letras a través de las cuales revive el significado. Hoy en día las mutaciones demográficas parecen rivalizar en número las infinitas combinaciones de palabras.

Robbe Grillet sobre el objetivo o la interrogación de los números

por George H. Bauer

Los números como lenguaje visible están en

el centro de uno de los ángulos de la reciente novela triangular de Robbe Grillet que enfoca las relaciones verbo-visuales. El trabajo de Jasper Johns provoca una visita a la reciente exposición retrospectiva de la cual Robbe Grillet saca un cuento policíaco enigmático ligado a las narrativas provocadas por el trabajo de Irina Ionesco y Rene Magritte. El foco central del enigma está en el pintar de los números que conduce a la escritura y a la pintura. Este ensayo juega visiblemente con tres y/o mas problemas sugeridos en el recuento.

El ‘chiasmus’ invisible de Freud, o usted no puede juzgar un libro por su cubierta

por Jane Gallop

En la cubierta de la traducción del libro *Vie et Mort en psychanalyse* de Jean Laplanche aparece la letra griega *chi*. Prestando atención a este signo tan visible, superficial y extrínscico encontramos que representa un cierto “retorno de lo reprimido”: un retorno de algo que es invisible en el texto de Laplanche y quizás mas allá de aquello que, aunque ausente persigue al texto sobre el que escribe Laplanche, “el proyecto para una psicología científica” de Freud. Este “hallazgo” aunque teóricamente es predecible opera sin embargo como un efecto misterioso y nos abre a nosotros la pregunta sobre la relación entre la teoría y la práctica en la intersección entre el lenguaje visible y el psicoanálisis.

El sueño de Defoe: convertirse en Moll Flanders

por Susanna Bartmann

Poniéndose la capa de ingenuidad, Freud se pone a caracterizar el “material” con el que está hecha la literatura en su ensayo de 1908 “La relación del poeta con el sueño.” Él descubre la conexión entre el acto de soñar y el acto de escribir: escribir es la transformación formal del deseo en el texto, una obra de arte. La materialidad del lenguaje da al texto literario una calidad de juego de escondite. Es posible que uno pueda estudiar el texto justo cuando el analista esté por decifrar el texto del sueño, ya que el escribir es el soñar en el papel. Ha llegado el momento propicio para señalar el deseo de Daniel Defoe mientras

escribía *Moll Flanders* presagiado por la directiva de Geoffrey Hartman que dice que hay un nombre (un "nombre especulativo") escondido dentro de los pliegues del texto que exige ser leído. Este trozo busca ilustrar la transformación del deseo en la escritura por medio del nombre especulativo; desconstruir representando una breve relación de Moll Flanders, un texto de encaje ... de deseo.

Cartas franqueadas: cruzando el obstáculo
por *Eleanor Honig Skoller*

La discontinuidad de la conciencia en la teoría de la memoria de Freud que puede hacerla fondo del origen del concepto de tiempo se manifiesta en los poemas Nueva York de Frank O'Hara especialmente sus poemas de sus caminatas a la hora del almuerzo. La inscripción de rastros de memoria en el subconciente en el instante de la percepción (siendo el modelo para el mismo el juguete del niño, las Cuartillas Místicas) es homólogo a la inscripción de la multitud sobre las calles, el empedrado de la ciudad. Así como Paris fue la ciudad del inconciente de Baudelaire para O'Hara lo fue Nueva York. El artículo, el poema, es el tercer término. Barthesiano: una traducción de la superficie de la ciudad sobre aquella de la página, una traducción dentro del tiempo, la medida, el número: desde la piedra/la ciudad hacia el papel/el poema. El lenguaje visible de Frank O'Hara es la ciudad de Nueva York sobre la página.

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