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## "THE RETURN OF THE TEXT"

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## PREFACE

The papers published in this issue of SCE Reports will be discussed at the MLA Convention in New York, in session 145 (10:15-11:30 A.M., Hilton, Room 524-26). As Wallace Martin, the guest editor for this issue and moderator for the MLA session observes, these are not obvious papers, whether taken singly or as a set. I hope that this issue arrives in time for these papers to be read prior to the meeting since it was, as with other SCE programs, our primary concern to locate important issues and create an occasion to discuss them.

If you wish to respond to these papers, or to the MLA session, please do so by writing to the address printed on the inside front cover. We hope to publish the next issue of SCE Reports by early summer, so responses to these papers should be sent by May 1st.

You will find in this package a copy of SCE Reports #9, labelled, with good intentions, "Summer, 1981." It is being mailed now partly for economic reasons, but I cannot blame it all on the cost of postage.

## Of special interest to SCE members:

Nominations are now being accepted for the board of directors. Three directors will be elected to serve for five year terms. Nomination forms and information about the election procedures will be mailed in January.

The annual business meeting of the Society will be held in New York on Tuesday, December 29, 1981, 5:15-6:30 PM, Clinton room, Hilton Hotel. Please come to this meeting if you can. We have a number of important matters to discuss concerning future projects and plans for the Society.

Leroy Searle  
Secretary, SCE

## FOREWORD

Since the publication of Barthes' "From Work [Oeuvre] to Text" ten years ago, the latter word has all but replaced the former in discussions of literature. The seven propositions presented in that essay now appear to be the first and last words on the subject. The text as irreducibly plural; the text as intertextual; above all, the text as "experienced only in an activity of production"--if we have not gone beyond Barthes, it is because it is difficult to imagine how we could do so. He concluded by saying that "the theory of the text can coincide only with a practice of writing," and he has proved prophetic, even if the writing in which the word "text" is used often turns out to be a theory of something other than textuality.

To solicit discussion of "the return of the text" is thus to create a situation in which no theoretical focus is likely to emerge. By alluding to Freud's "return of the repressed," the title invites the further distortions characteristic of the unconscious, and the writers of the following papers dutifully unleashed their fantasies by playing every possible change on the meaning of the word "return." Heterogeneous as they are, these papers cannot escape the conditions of textuality itself--one of which is, as Michel Pierssens reminds us, that "it is always possible to go from one text to any other, however arbitrary the choice." In the hope of encouraging participation when these papers are discussed in New York, I would suggest that despite appearances, they do intersect in significant ways. Instances:

1. Conjunctions of American and Continental thought. Derrida's "Economimesis," which provides part of the framework of Cynthia Chase's paper, has just appeared in English (*Diacritics*, Summer, 1981); Kurt Heinzelman's *The Economics of the Imagination* appeared last year. The question of how the literary/aesthetic "work," in the Kantian tradition, set itself off from the working world of textuality and mundane exchange is thematized by both, though they share no ostensible frame of reference. American critics, caught up in the currency of imported theory or discounting it out of hand, have failed to note that native strains of thought concern the same matters. A similar situation appears in philosophy (when, for example, Derrida and Anglo-American philosophers emphasize the same aspects of Plato, and Cavell and Rorty treat themes that Continental thinkers would find congenial). Advocates of Anglo-American methodologies may find (the Frenchman) Pierssens' emphasis on "epistemological accountability" more to their liking than (the American) Chase's exorbitant reading of Baudelaire as nauseated by Rousseau. For any open-minded reader, the problem is less one of choosing which critical tradition to follow than of noting how they are interrelated, and what lines of thought they suggest that are worth pursuing.

2. Economics and psychoanalysis: master discourses or literary constructs? The "return" of the text inexorably leads us to the economic dimension of Freud's metapsychology, and to the exigencies of labor, production, and exchange as we have consciously or unconsciously understood them in the epoch of capitalism. As Heinzelman has shown with respect to economics, and as we have often been told concerning psychoanalysis, the use of these disciplines in textual analysis soon raises the question of whose discursive formation will be master. To state the question in Pierssens' form: what entitles

global systems of explanation to treat textual production as one of their sub-systems, in view of the fact that the former are themselves texts? The ease with which the question can be raised masks the difficulty of answering it satisfactorily. In point of fact, literary study and textual analysis have not produced a single explanatory system that could hope to match, in cogency and generality, the systems available in other disciplines. Until they do so, they will be enthralled by/to those disciplines.

3. Fragging: part-objects in relation to the body of the text. Some of the most brilliant readers of our time derive their insights from scrutiny of a small swatch of text, considered in relation to an encompassing linguistic, psychoanalytic, or philosophical theme. The heterogeneity of this method, characteristic of the epoch of textuality, is implicitly questioned by Felicity Baker and Pierssens. When Baker reinserts the "purloined ribbon" incident discussed by de Man back in Book II of Rousseau's Confessions, she discovers a psychic economy quite different from the one de Man is able to educe from it when he reads the incident in relation to speech-act theory, grammar, rhetoric, and Rousseau's fourth "Revery." Likewise, Pierssens' critique of Chase is based in large part on his reading of Rousseau's ninth Promenade as a whole, from which Chase has extracted one incident for discussion.

The fact that Baudelaire himself cut out a piece of "Morale du joujou" to use as the prose poem "Le joujou de pauvre," and that Rousseau dismembered Book II of the Confessions when he repeated the ribbon incident in the Reveries, may imply that it is idolatrous of us to invoke the body of the text as a whole, since authors dissect their own as morsels (the corps morcelé).

4. Holism as a return of the work (and subject).

If we are sympathetic to the positions espoused by Baker and Pierssens, we must reflect on the implications of our sympathy. Once the legitimacy of an interpretation is based on the unitary character of a text, we presuppose that completeness and coherence are necessary features of interpretive legitimacy. Furthermore, we are likely to find ourselves evoking one of the purportedly discredited entities or theories of traditional interpretation to sustain our position. Thus Pierssens openly declares his allegiance to the hypothesis of a "subject," and Baker reasserts the importance of referentiality (albeit of a "deadly kind"). This "reborn" subject is not transcendental; it is rather a theoretical nexus, "a geometric locus where lines and forces that originate elsewhere intersect," as Shklovsky remarked. Nevertheless, the possibility of vindicating certain aspects of traditional epistemology has arisen and should be faced.

5. A justification of textual defacement. The reason for seemingly arbitrary juxtapositions of texts is that it may be the only way to produce genuinely new insights. We must "shake up" theory ("the way Ivan the Terrible would 'shake up' his henchmen"--Shklovsky). For example, if the linguistic element is to be an irreducible component of an account of writing and reading, it cannot docilely submit itself to assimilation in psychoanalytic or for that matter linguistic and semiotic theories. Hence--the idea of incorporating rather than introducing signs; theories of misunderstanding; theories violating the laws of process and construction, in which a "restricted economy" of exchange and balanced books yields to a "general economy" positing absolute lack, or supplementarity and excess. How do we know that the books will always balance in the process of verbal production, consumption, and exchange?

6. Between commitment and avoidance. I have

simplified the opposition of the positions involved in order to highlight it. The stability of Baker's reading of Rousseau is one that (as I understand it) effaces the traditional "subject" in order to explain the production and effects of writing. And Pierssens' reservation about her reading--that it does not take transference into account (which would call into question her own position as reader)--shows that he does not intend to return us to some prelapsarian state of critical innocence and stability. So long as we think it possible to work out the problems posed by these alternatives--so long, the Freudian might say, as we have a problem to work through--there will be textual production and consummation.

7. For purposes of symmetry, in order to produce as many propositions as Barthes did ten years ago, I append an aside to my fellow Anglo-Americanists. I hope you will have time to reread Book II of the Confessions, the ninth of the Promenades (may Irving Babbitt forgive us), and Baudelaire's "Morale du joujou" before the session; in their fashion they repay attention. If we do not want to spend most of our time reading interesting papers about French literature, we must produce more interesting papers about English and American literature.

Wallace Martin

TEXTS THAT WE OWN, TEXTS THAT WE DO NOT OWN:

THEORIES OF ECONOMIC AND AESTHETIC RESPONSE

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The student who complains, "I worked really hard at this text, but I just didn't 'get' anything out of it," is posing in rudimentary form one of the subjects implied by the topic, "The Return of the Text." He is asking what kind of "return" he can expect from his investment of "work," and he is also asking for an account of the value of his labor expended in reading literature. Often this labor has been genuinely and earnestly expended: the student may remember events, characters, and metaphorical details from his reading; he may also be able to say something, based on his past reading experiences, about the literary work's historical significance. (I am not speaking here of the student who uses this complaint to justify not reading.) What he cannot do is to say anything about his own work's significance.

To do so, he would have to transfer value from the labor he has bestowed upon the text to the literary product that called it forth, and vice versa: this exchange, in the end, is what has not occurred. The literary process has failed, in Walter Benjamin's terms, to embody "the exemplary character of production, which is able first to induce other producers to produce" and then to turn mere consumers into producers also--"that is, readers or spectators into collaborators." For, according to Benjamin's essay "The Author as Producer," writing is a mode of production, capable of changing even the will or desire of the reader, of trans-

forming it from one kind of economic modality (consumerism) into another (collaboration).<sup>1</sup>

But the student's complaint about the insufficient economics of his reading experience must be dealt with more deliberately, for he has not even attained the level of spectatorship, the pleasure of being a consumer. That, in a sense, is his complaint, and it opens up a series of questions about the forms of thought and the discursive models we use to explain the literary process of writing and reading, Benjamin's productive collaboration. How, for instance, can one justify using economic discourse to prove, or even to describe, the validity of aesthetic response--that is, one's response to literary works? Does the economic concept of work apply to literary work at all? Or is it merely a form of catachresis--a misappropriation of metaphor--to bring notions of consumption and production, labor and exchange, to bear upon the literary process? Can there ever be an economic response to aesthetics that has functional validity as both aesthetic and economic judgment?

We can, of course, indignantly dismiss the complaining student who wants to "get" something from a literary work, to make it his own property or acquisition. In asking that a text make a "return" in the capitalist sense of the word, we could say, the student is already succumbing unquestioningly to the dominant economic mode of his time--in this case, to the capitalist ideology that, by valuing consumption as (monetary) accumulation, fosters the insidious illusion that labor should "get" a consumable product in return for its exertion. Some might also aver that the economic modeling of the student's complaint has compromised disinterested intellectual inquiry. However we answer the complaint, though, it is difficult

to dismiss the way the student has phrased his complaint without simultaneously qualifying the nature of desire itself.

Economics is, in its broadest sense, one way--and a most pervasive way--of qualifying or of parsing and structuring desire. Indeed, the part of economics which has a determinative effect on what we desire and on how our desires are distributed has always constituted the overt political component of that intellectual discipline. We have become accustomed to hearing the student's complaint in its most overt--its most ossified--political form. When a government or a governing body, such as a university's board of regents, speaks of cutting funds to the arts and humanities, it too is raising the question implied in the topic, "The Return of the Text." Moreover, when a "return to the basics" is also called for, it often means that what is rudimentary has been identified with what is economically understandable: knowledge quantified as elemental value--"the basics."

The primary danger here is such a pervasive (economic) way of parsing desire, of posing the question of "returns," or of phrasing one's reaction to literary texts may become a persuasive way of doing so, if there is no direct way of rebutting it, no equally pervasive language in which to structure desire differently. So, the student who wants to get something from a literary work in exchange for his literary labors may resemble a funding agency that wants to get something concrete for its investment in that both define ownership in elementary economic terms. But the intellectual process of definition is not advanced by snubbing what is elementary. Or by claiming that literary people--authors, scholars, and efficacious readers--have their own inviolable and privileged right of ownership to texts or to

the literary process. Left unexamined is the question of how this idea of ownership, in both its economic and aesthetic aspects, has evolved, and whether economic and aesthetic responses--these two forms of discourse--can ever be made to talk, as it were, to one another.

As modes of abstraction, these forms of discourse are historically more congruent, and the student's complaint more provocative, than one might at first suppose, according to Raymond Williams. Williams contends that "what emerges in bourgeois economics as the 'consumer'--the abstract figure corresponding to the abstraction of (market and commodity) 'production'--emerged in cultural theory as 'aesthetics' and 'the aesthetic response.'"2 Not only does the idea of an aesthetic "reader" coincide historically with the role of the consumer in bourgeois economic theory, but the field of aesthetics as a subset of cultural theory is historically analogous to the concept of production as a subset of political economy. From Williams' point of view, the aesthetic notion of the "reader" was a superstructural imitation--an ideological extension--of the economic phenomenon of the "consumer." Thus, to answer the student by trying to privilege the idea of "aesthetic response" over the student's economic metaphor of consumption is to sustain as a dichotomy what was historically analogous--namely, the relationship between economic and aesthetic response as complementary processes of figuration. In saying that the "reader" should not look for a "return" of the kind that the student (unconsciously) expects, one is merely investing that historical analogue with values to suit one's own biases.

We do not have to subscribe to Williams' view of the historical causality at work here in order to examine the effects of the historical coincidence which he observes. In fact, I would argue



that Williams' historical analogue between cultural and economic theory may be more like an identification than an analogue, for economists were the first thinkers to separate the question of aesthetic consumption from the question of economic production, a separation which necessarily polarized the concept of value; subsequently, their logic has influenced the kind of counter-logic needed to rejoin the two questions.

Adam Smith, in his lectures on rhetoric and belles-lettres, tried to link prose writing with economic utility, which necessitated a concomitant devaluing on his part of all forms of writing which were not prose. According to Smith, poetical works (like most of the fine arts) had no economic status. But David Ricardo made the most systematic economic analysis of aesthetics when he defined artistic products (such as statues, coins, and books) as economic commodities, but denied to artistic process--that is, to the labor of the artist--a similar economic identity. For Ricardo, the value of artifacts "is wholly independent of the quantity of labour originally necessary to produce them," whereas the value of other commodities is wholly dependent, according to Ricardian theory, upon their labor investment. Thus, the work of the imagination is not ultimately "labor," economically speaking. Unlike other commodities, the economic value of art objects exists beyond and apart from the artist's work and merely "varies with the varying wealth and inclinations of those who are desirous to possess them."<sup>3</sup> Ricardo tacitly assumes not only that the painter's brush consumes his dream, but that it consumes in every economically significant sense his labor as well.

Later in the nineteenth century John Stuart Mill developed a more sophisticated analysis--one that granted a certain economic value to the artist's

labor--but the analysis retained the essential polarity of Ricardo's model.<sup>4</sup> Mill conceded that poiesis, or the skill of the artist in crafting his work, was indeed a productive labor--that it possessed, by Mill's own standard, "exchangeable value." But the artist (or writer) could not claim any economic status for his mode of production, since the product he created could not be (in Mill's words) "productively consumed"--that is, it could not set in motion a quantity of productive labor equal to the original labor that produced it.

One way to counter the economic view of aesthetics advocated by classical economists is to broaden their definition of aesthetic exchange. The economists were speaking about books, not texts; thus, their economics was based upon the reification of texts into objects that are collected (but not necessarily read) and the reification of labor into a process that can be bought and sold. This procedure leaves the transmissibility of texts (as opposed to the commercial dealing in books) unexamined. If one could apply the notion of productive consumption to the way in which readers read texts, one might link economic discourse with aesthetic discourse by showing how works of literature actually work--how, as texts, they result in what Benjamin calls productive collaboration.

Before going on to examine the implicit economics of such reader-response theories, one must consider a powerful prima facie objection to any attempted linking of aesthetic and economic phenomena which makes the discourse appropriate to one dimension cross with the discourse appropriate to another. In Marxism and Form, Fredric Jameson points out how the later essays of Walter Benjamin transform critical discussions which originate "in the realm of aesthetics itself" into discussions that extend into "the study of history in general."

Specifically, Benjamin's "attention to the machine and to mechanical inventions" as ways of enhancing the transmissibility of texts is what, in Jameson's view, "signals Benjamin's passage from the predominantly aesthetic to the historical and political dimension." Jameson then offers the following critique of Benjamin's method:

It is important to point out that however materialistic such an approach to history may seem, nothing is farther from Marxism than the stress on invention and technique as the primary cause of historical change. Indeed, it seems to me that such theories . . . function as a substitute for Marxist historiography in the way they offer a feeling of concreteness comparable to economic subject matter, at the same time that they dispense with any consideration of the human factors of classes and of the social organization of production.<sup>5</sup>

This is not merely another skirmish in the esoteric struggle, best consigned to Marxists themselves, of deciding who is and is not "farther from Marxism." True, Jameson objects to Benjamin's (false) evaluation of historical causality. His deeper objection, however, is that he finds the affiliation between what I have been calling aesthetic and economic responses to be counterfeited. Benjamin has inappropriately appropriated a "predominantly aesthetic" discourse to explain historical and political phenomena that belong to another kind of discourse. In effect, Jameson is accusing Benjamin of aestheticizing his historical materialism in such a way that it becomes unable to represent how economics really affects (and oppresses) the way we live now.

Whether or not Jameson's particular critique of Benjamin is just, it calls attention to a process of metaphorizing--namely, the practice of modeling one kind of theory (say, the aesthetic) upon a set of metaphors that derive from another kind of theory (say, the economic)--which has not been sufficiently analyzed for the discursive discontinuity that inevitably ensues. Jameson assumes in the case of Benjamin that the theorist is unconscious of his own discursive paradigms, at least when his discourse is extended beyond its "proper" subject matter. As we shall see, however, discursive discontinuities do not, as it were, always go only in one direction. When we intimate that a certain kind of discourse or a certain kind of thinking "belongs" to a certain ideational dimension, it is the notion of "belonging" itself that becomes problematical. Insofar as Jameson's historiographical critique is an implicit critique of semantic usage as well, it raises the question: Are there some forms of discourse (or texts) that we own and some that we do not own? What is the effect of entailing the idea of ownership in one's discussion of authority?

Jameson's dim view of the affiliation between aesthetic and economic responses seems to be grounded in his assertion that aesthetic discourse seeks "a feeling of concreteness comparable to economic subject matter." Suppose it does. Then to overcome the poverty of aesthetic theory one might enrich its discourse with tropes that mine the politico-economic sphere. The problem here is that metaphorically extended economic discourse can privilege itself just as easily as extended aesthetic discourse can, and so accumulate an aura of concreteness that does not "belong" to it. When Jameson speaks of the "feeling of concreteness" (itself an ambiguous phrase) that pertains to "economic subject matter," his own discourse is in some danger.

"Economic subject matter" is not concrete, although the effects of that subject matter may be. We experience the effects of inflation, of the circulation of capital, of surplus value, and of the buying and selling which constitutes the labor process, but inflation, capital, surplus value, and labor are, like economics itself, ideas or representations--fictive structures whose meaning is as specialized and as playful within the imaginative field of economic discourse as the language of aesthetics is within its discursive field. "The achievement of economy is an art," observes the economist A. L. Macfie. "Economics in the full sense does not just examine facts; it rationalises, indeed creates the experience with which it deals."<sup>6</sup> Neither economic subject matter nor the discourse that attempts to explain it is univocal. This is why virtually every classical economist warns his reader that the language of economic response is formed of "unreal words"--words whose representational relationship to objects is less important than their semiotic relationship to each other. Elaborating upon Marx, Karl Polanyi has written incisively about the peculiar paradox of economics: that whereas it appears to be the most factual (most concrete) of the social sciences, it is actually founded upon a series of imaginative (Polanyi calls them fictional) structures which make economics the aesthetic activity defined by Macfie.<sup>7</sup> Whatever the exploitative potential of economic subject matter, then, it is matched by the exploitative potential of economic discourse.

So, a philosophical critique of economics, if extended into the political sphere, creates a discontinuity within the realm of economic discourse that is similar to the discontinuity which Jameson observes in Benjamin's aesthetics. E. P. Thompson sounds like Jameson when he takes Althusser to task for extending an essentially philosophical or

epistemological criticism of Marx into an essentially political theory of social action and behavior. Thompson calls this practice, rather testily, a kind of "academic imperialism," and asserts: "There is no reason why philosophers should necessarily identify their own procedures with those of every other kind of knowledge-production."<sup>8</sup> He may be right, but this effort to protect from alien incursions what "belongs" to one's own field is not exerted without a price. To speak of "knowledge-production" in the first place, as Thompson does, is to hold up all other theories of how knowledge comes about to an implicitly economic paradigm--namely, that knowledge is something that is ever and everywhere produced (as opposed, say, to being generated). Again, Thompson may be right about Althusser's "academic imperialism," but in so accusing him Thompson has exercised an imperialism of his own by taking a political term from his own discipline and extending it--identifying it--with Althusser's philosophical procedures--the very thing that he chastises Althusser for doing.

Both Jameson and Thompson, then, raise the issue of which discourse "belongs" to which ideational dimension and of how the authority of that discourse is to be established; coincidentally, their own texts return upon themselves to reveal how difficult it is to establish such authority objectively. Within the field of aesthetic theory, issues of discursive ownership and textual authority have increasingly become the provenance of so-called reader-response criticism. The following three examples of that criticism have been selected because they give us concrete evidence of how the continuity between economic and aesthetic response has been asserted and of the particular problems that follow.

John Dewey's 1932 lectures at Harvard on aesthetics--in many ways the philosophical avatar of American reader-response criticism--exemplify this continuity, this economic modeling of aesthetic response. But, like many of his epigoni, Dewey does not explicitly address any of the questions raised by the present essay, even though he does offer some implicit answers to them. These answers have often been accepted by his philosophical descendants without their recognizing that the questions were never raised in the first place.

In Dewey's view of art as experience, the reader participates in the making of meaning by bestowing a form of work that is commensurate with the author's labor in producing the text. Arguing that the reader of a literary work must "recreate" the author's initial labor, Dewey establishes a philosophical model of aesthetic response based upon a work/play dialectic. Within this quasi-economic structure, the reader acts as counter-authority:

For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artists, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced. Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction, that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place. In both, there is comprehension in its literal

signification--that is, a gathering together of details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole. There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear.<sup>9</sup>

Although Dewey argues strenuously for the necessity of reader participation, he is also at pains to prevent the original labor of the author from disappearing, Ricardo-like, into the completed artifact. To his credit, Dewey, like Mill, wants to affirm both labors at once, but this produces a strain when he has to evaluate the two kinds of labor comparatively. Thus, the reader undergoes "relations comparable" to the original producer but they are "not the same in any literal sense." What is the same is the "process of organization" that both reader and creator "consciously experienced." I do not know what this means, for it is unclear whether this process of organization applies to structural matters such as we find in texts or to a psychological parsing that occurs prior to and during the act of writing (or of reading). If the latter, then a loose paraphrase of Dewey might be that the reader and the writer undergo similar psychological organizations of desire. At least, the paragraph ends by discussing implicitly the necessity of desire. The reader must want to "to perform this work." But to understand why, we must look more closely at Dewey's rhetorical logic.

Dewey's reference to what is not the same "in any literal sense" is almost a warning that literal and metaphorical senses of language are going to be played against each other here. Indeed, Dewey's two critical points are virtually secured by puns. First, reading is intellectual work "in its literal signification," for the "gathering together" of which

Dewey speaks literally translates the Latin root of "intellectual" (lego), from which is derived the Latin word for reading (lectio). The rhetorical thrust of this verbal exchange is also operative when Dewey's aesthetics extend into economics. Dewey says that readers must work to "recreate," and this pun on recreation bestows upon the act of reading the status of pleasure, thus transforming labor into play. One now may see how Dewey's own rhetoric is trying not to become "indurated in convention," for the rhetoric that inverts the conventional (economic) semantics of these words is also what explains the reason why a reader would desire to undergo this labor. The reader, as counter-authority, recreates work-time as play-time; his logos makes time for aesthetic pleasure. To the objection that this entire transformation of rhetorical usage into logical argument (with the pun as proof) is merely a verbal equivocation, Dewey would respond that the experience engendered by the "work" of art is characterized by its nonpragmatic, non-utilitarian status--that, indeed, this is precisely what bestows value upon it and makes his catachreses wholly appropriate.

Whereas the economics of the reading process as defined by Dewey takes place at the epistemological level, in Norman Holland's theory it takes place at the psychological level. But Holland's "transactional" theory of reading also relies on an (unexamined) economic catachresis. Reading, for Holland, is in effect an act of private appropriation by which the reader transacts with the text a series of associations. It is essentially an acquisitive process with roots in the same Lockean psychology that provided the basis for classical economic theory, including to some extent Marx's. Man labors by nature, but he also labors against nature by means of the imagination, according to both Locke and Marx. For Locke, what labor appropriates from nature

is property, an acquisition which is morally propitious because it now bears the mark or sign of the human labor that went into appropriating it. Holland's theory calls nature the text, but the dynamics are the same, even though Holland justifies his theory on more modern (i.e. less associationist) psychological grounds. Beginning with the Freudian notion that every work of art originates in the repression/sublimation of a neurosis, Holland concludes that the only way to break through this neurotic concealment is to permit the reader to associate more freely in response to it. The objective nature of the text is always compromised by the sublimative activity of the creating subject (the author) and that original authorial subjectivity is precisely what the respondent's subjectivity will unlock.

The objection has been made that Holland defines "the reader" using the same "objective paradigm" that he denies to the text itself.<sup>10</sup> Texts cannot contain objective meanings, according to Holland, but one may refer objectively to a "reader" as if that word carried an objective, transhistorical referent, and we all knew what it was. In effect, such a theory tries to circumvent the student's complaint I referred to earlier by encouraging him to allow his own experiential associations to play over the surface of the text so that he "gets" the text as he draws from it his own neurotic associations--associations which can then be "redeemed" (in all senses) by interpretive transaction. This redemption is to meaning what labor is to property.

The third theory of reading that I will discuss attempts to refute both the non-pragmatic view of Dewey and the subjectivist view of someone like Holland. It is at the same time the most overt of the three theories in attempting to see economic and

aesthetic response as mutually functional. Wolfgang Iser's notion of the reader's "interaction" with the text differs from Holland's "transaction" in two important ways. First, he defines two kinds of readers for literary works: the participant, who is the contemporary reader of the work of art and who therefore shares ideological assumptions, literary conventions, and perhaps some of the doubts of the author; and the observer, who is the later, modern reader of the work and whose interaction with it can serve to demystify the contemporary participant's transaction. Subsequently, Iser is able to differentiate between the intentionality of authors and the intentionality of texts as such. For Iser, the text is not a product; rather "it offers guidance as to what is to be produced." Fulfillment of this productive process "takes place not in the text, but in the reader." Whether the reader is a contemporary or post-contemporary one, "the sentences set in motion a process which will lead to the formation of the aesthetic object as a correlative in the mind of the reader."<sup>11</sup>

As an aesthetic object, the text will be different for every reader--that is, though an object, it will never be objective. How, then, can there be any consistent readings between different readers? This, of course, is one of the questions that confronts all reader-response theories. But Iser, unlike Holland or Dewey, posits the act of reading as a form of productive exchange in which the reader enacts a dialectical struggle with himself. Consistent reading, Iser claims, occurs only when we aren't aware that we are reading consistently, when reading has produced an aesthetic object that is indistinguishable from the reader's subjectivity. The moment that one becomes aware of this "illusion"--the moment that one experiences a discontinuity between the correlates of text and consciousness--the exchange must be renegotiated. Since no text

will ever sustain this illusion for long, the act of reading is a continuing dialectical process between impenetrable objectivity in accordance with the subject that produces it and "the impenetrability of the reader's subjectivity" (p. 124).

When the text has taken the reader into its aesthetic illusion, it is wholly objective. But when the reader becomes conscious of having this illusion, that objectivity is immediately modified by the subjective consciousness of the observer. The reader is not at liberty, therefore, to free-associate with the text, for his reading is doubly conditioned by the text's objectivity (of which he can never be fully conscious) and his own subjectivity (which the text is continually delimiting).

Acknowledging that he is developing Dewey's observations "along a different line," Iser concludes that the act of reading apprehension "is not a passive process. . .but a productive response." But productive of what? To answer this, Iser must show that reading has a pragmatic status, that the aesthetic response is not divorced from socio-economic responses as well. For, in Iser's theory (and here is where he is especially informative), one cannot have non-referential principles of artistic production--that is, principles of production whose only referents are the verbal signifiers within the text. To his credit, Iser, having defined aesthetic response as a mode of production, does not abandon the model he is analogizing from; he insists that the labor exerted by the reader must effect a return to normative discourse--to the political world of choice and chance. How this productive return--this return from the text--occurs is, nevertheless, problematic.

The discrepancies and discontinuities that emerge during the interaction between text and

reader, Iser says,

have the effect of enabling the reader actually to become aware of the inadequacy of the gestalten he has produced, so that he may detach himself from his own participation in the text and see himself being guided from without. The ability to perceive oneself during the process of participation is an essential quality of the aesthetic experience; the observer finds himself in a strange, halfway position: he is involved, and he watches himself being involved. However, this position is not entirely nonpragmatic, for it can only come about when existing codes are transcended or invalidated. (p. 134)

There seem to be two conclusions here, which do not easily mesh with one another. The first is the not-very-revolutionary idea that enlightened self-awareness is its own reward. If this is Iser's final position on the question of how literary works can be productively consumed, he is right to qualify it heavily as "not entirely nonpragmatic." But Iser also intimates that a political economy does apply to the work of the imagination, insofar as reading interacts with both the social coding that is contemporaneous with the text and the social coding that is contemporaneous with the reader and has as its effect the transcending or invalidating of those social codings. Reading is not, then, strictly a labor process, even in Dewey's bivalent definition of "work." For, in reading, the reader reformulates, in terms of his own consciousness, the very nature of the exchange that he is participating in. In producing, the reader also reveals the mode of (social) production to himself. Thus, the text has authority insofar as it permits the reader to redefine, using the text as a referent, the authority of social coding as such. And this activity has a practical or

social value, as Iser concludes:

The resultant restructuring of stored experiences makes the reader aware not only of the experience but also of the means whereby it develops. Only the controlled observation of that which is instigated by the text makes it possible for the reader to formulate a reference for what he is restructuring. Herein lies the practical relevance of aesthetic experience: it induces this observation, which takes the place of codes that otherwise would be essential for the success of communication. (p. 134)

In taking the place of these other communication codes, the restructuring done by the reader's "observation" acquires a singular authority. In fact, the idea of restructuring and the idea of observing are virtually interchangeable here. Perceiving is re-making. Labor bestowed by the reader is returned by the text of the literary work in the form of a new context for consciousness itself.

But why can't this same dynamic result in support and confirmation of social coding, rather than transcendence or invalidation of it? Here, Iser's (economic) paradigm breaks down into what one might call the tautology of desire:

Expectations are scarcely ever fulfilled in truly literary texts. If they were, then such texts would be confined to the individualization of a given expectation, and one would inevitably ask what such an intention was supposed to achieve. Strangely enough, we feel that any confirmative effect--such as we implicitly demand of expository texts, as we refer to the objects they are meant to present--is a defect in a literary text. For the more a text individualizes or confirms an

expectation it has initially aroused, the more aware we become of its didactic purpose, so that at best we can only accept or reject the thesis forced upon us. More often than not, the very clarity of such texts will make us want to free ourselves from their clutches.<sup>12</sup>

This is a very odd argument, even granting that it is a philosophical and abstractive argument, not a normative and practical one. It seems not only to exclude literary texts that may be didactic (such as Vergil's Georgics or Wordsworth's Home at Grasmere) from the category of literary texts, but it also makes clarity of intention an enemy of the pleasure readers derive from reading. Iser's "interaction" requires that the reader continue to believe that the text has left him room enough for his own labor, that the authority of the text has not exhausted his labor power in too authoritarian a way. The desire for interaction with the text can only occur, then, as the reader remains convinced that his own labor power is used but not consumed by the author's mode of production. One cannot productively consume a work (a text) that has already become a reification of the author's investment--his surplus value. That sort of text one can merely consume--or worse, according to Iser, the reading process has already been consumed by it.

Iser's view of how the reader's desire is or is not aroused implies a more direct confrontation--even struggle--between authorial and readerly labor than I think Iser is aware. The desires of the author in respect to ownership of his text may be very much at odds. Iser seems to imply that when the author asserts his (individualized) authority over the text, a word that Edward Said tells us comes from the idea of auctoritas as "production . . . , in addition to meaning a right of possession,<sup>13</sup> then the text becomes less inexhaustible and more

circumscribed--more, as Iser says, like expository prose. The (re)appearance of the author marks the disappearance of the reader, and such a text offers no return. Whose desire has authority here, then? It is a question that returns us to the individualized complaint of the student which I cited at the beginning of this text: "I just didn't 'get' anything out of it."

All of the theories discussed above are based upon an exchange of labor in the reading process but none of them address how that labor is contingent upon desire--the author's as well as the reader's. Iser's interaction, Holland's transaction, Dewey's work--they all try to explain what happens when reading is effective (by their own definition of what effective means). But, like the economists from whom they have borrowed their economic argot, they do not explain why the labor process should break down, why desire should fail or resist or subvert the authority that attempts to commandeer it. While they speak of readers appropriating texts, none of these critics address explicitly the question of textual ownership or delve into the problematic capitalist paradigm that underlies the question. In one sense, all three aesthetic theorists are following economists' notions that texts should be productively consumed, that labor is exchangeable, that work is re-creative--and that modern aesthetic criticism should attempt to give the same feeling of concreteness to aesthetic response which many feel is a quality of economic response.

At least since Coleridge, aesthetic theorists have been aware of the economic (factualistic) aspirations of their discourse and of the attendant problems: What discourse belongs to whom? Who owns what texts? On what authority is such



ownership to be established? It might be fairly argued that these questions imply a romantic (or perhaps post-Romantic) point of view that is desperately in need of being itself deconstructed. Or, argued differently, that these questions are anti-socialist in being modeled on a concept of the individual's right to property (in this case, to the property of a text) and thus beg the principal question of capitalist production itself. These demurrals, however, no matter how just in themselves, merely prolong discussion of the question of ownership by implying that their mode of argumentation should have authority here--that some questions do not "belong." The intertextuality of aesthetic and economic discourse--and its political effects--is still at issue.

So, we find students (and others--administrators, legislators, alumni) with an intellectually unexamined economic approach to things, including literary works and the activity of reading. And we possess an aesthetic criticism that has grave difficulty making a direct rejoinder to their complaints, much less a successful refutation, because that criticism has not fully examined either the economic status of literary works (as I tried to show in The Economics of the Imagination) or the economic status of its own theoretical discourse (as I have tried to show here).

## NOTES

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5. Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 74.
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7. Karl Polanyi, Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economies, ed. George Dalton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
8. E. P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 10.
9. John Dewey, Art as Experience (1934; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), p. 54.
10. The phrase is David Bleich's. See also Jonathan Culler, "Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading," in The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 46-66.

11. Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 107-110. Page references, cited parenthetically, are to this edition.

12. Iser, The Implied Reader (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 278.

13. Edward W. Said, Beginnings: Intention and Method (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 83.

## READING AS WRITING

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Reading, as Professor Heinzelman points out, is both a kind of labor and a process of consumption.<sup>1</sup> The reader is the consumer of the product of the writer's labor. But really to read imaginative writing, he suggests, is to reenact the writer's work. The reader must labor to perceive the written text as a work of art. Here economic and ethical injunctions coincide. Such labor is its own reward, for it is at the same time production and consumption; and such consumption shares the dignity of work. An economics of the imagination conceived in these terms transcends the getting and spending that lay waste our powers decried by the Romantic poets. In the literary work of art, writer and reader "forge a mutual labor" and hand on an appreciation of fundamental human conditions from one generation to the next.<sup>2</sup>

We are almost equally familiar with another image of the literary work as a privileged form of labor; elegiac and autobiographical modes in particular suggest that writing is a kind of commemoration, a remembrance of things past. Literature is the labor of Erinnerung. As Marx and Ricardo tell of a political economy dependent on labor and consumption, Freud tells of a psychic economy dependent on the pleasure principle and on the "work of mourning," Trauerarbeit. Mourning is tantamount to the process that establishes the individual self, the drawing inward of desire, the assimilation of desired objects into the properties of the ego. The self is engaged from the start in the work of

Er-innerung that Freud terms the process of introjection. Introjecting parental desires and injunctions enables one generation to succeed another. Composing or reading a literary work is a special instance of this fundamental activity of internalization.

Here then are two characterizations of reading, in terms taken from what are arguably the master discourses of the modern period, economics and psychoanalysis. Reading is the consumption of labor and the labor of consumption; reading is introjection. Despite their differences, both conceptions entail two assumptions which are not necessarily inevitable. One is that the subject of reading is a self. The other is that the activity of reading can be assimilated to the process of understanding.

Perhaps we have to begin by assuming the presence of a reader, of a self who understands; but we can do more than take that understanding for granted. Thanks to the terms in which the assumption is posed, we can identify the rhetorical practice it requires. This is, simply, the use of metaphor; the terms labor, consumption, and internalization are all deployed, in the conceptions we have outlined, in a metaphorical sense explicitly or implicitly distinguished from a literal sense which tends to acquire a different name--"work," for example, to designate the actual physical activity distinct from the "labor" that figures in a formal economic discourse. Yet as Professor Heinzelman points out, labor, of all the "unreal words" of economic discourse, resists dissociation from its material, non-technical meanings. We find Marx "measuring mental work against economic principles which it can only metaphorically approximate," Professor Heinzelman writes.<sup>3</sup> To declare that mental "labor" only resembles labor metaphorically

closes off some questions Marx's text would raise. Baudelaire (whom Walter Benjamin introduces as "A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism") claims with comparable insistence that poetry is consumed not merely in a theoretical or a metaphorical sense. "Vous avez besoin d'art," he writes, "Aux Bourgeois," in the "Salon de 1846"; "Vous pouvez vivre trois jours sans pain; sans poésie, jamais." ("You need art. . . . You can live for three days without bread; without poetry, never.")<sup>4</sup>

Not just any metaphor is at stake here, but one which installs the very distinction between literal and figurative instances. The oral metaphor, which stands behind the concepts of consumption and of introjection (and of "taste"), implies both that internalization is the constituent activity of the subject and that insofar as a genuine subject or self is concerned, this activity is minimally material, principally metaphorical. A subject internalizes an object by comprehending it or verbalizing it rather than by eating it. Introjection takes place as a metaphorical ingestion and digestion. In delimiting an inside and an outside and permitting their comparison, it makes metaphor in general possible, together with language. Introjection, in short, is the primary divergence from filling the mouth with an actual edible object to "filling" it, figuratively speaking, with words.

I dwell on the term "introjection" because its anti-metaphorical double has been theorized more explicitly than those of labor or consumption (work, eating, use), and offers another way of thinking about reading--about reading as writing, a not merely ideal mental process but one that leaves a material trace. Reading, then, might be construed not as introjection but as "incorporation." Freud indicates that incorporation forms the corporal

model for introjection. The contrast between the two processes is worked out by Maria Torok in an essay entitled "Deuil ou Mélancholic";<sup>5</sup> it can be traced to Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia.<sup>6</sup> Melancholia occurs as a kind of mourning-sickness when the labor of mourning does not take place. Incorporation occurs when the work of introjection is not carried out. Instead of taking in something, figuratively, the subject actually takes an object into the body--"more or less at the level of fantasy," explain Laplanche and Pontalis.<sup>7</sup> Incorporation takes place as the fantasy of an actual consumption of the lost or desired object. Whereas the work of introjection assimilates losses and integrates desires into the self, the fantasy of incorporation internalizes an object in such a way as to isolate it, to seal it off in a separate portion of the ego. Introjection is a process of comprehending; incorporation is a process of encrypting. Torok's essay describes how the labor of Erinnerung gets displaced by the tokens of commemoration: "A commemorative monument, the incorporated object marks the place, the date, the circumstances in which such-and-such a desire was barred from introjection: like so many tombs in the life of the Self."<sup>8</sup>

Incorporation re-literalizes, or rather dis-figures, the action of ingestion which introjection takes figuratively. The difference between the two modes of internalization is a momentous rhetorical difference. Introjection deals with an object in the form of its representation, as the meaning of a word. Introjection deals with an object as a word; incorporation deals with a word as an object--not just as the object it might seem to represent, but as a linguistic object, a material sign. Hence one might describe as incorporation the operation of reading that issues in writing, in which words form

not just a pretext for understanding, but the material of a mutable text.

Maria Torok and Nicolas Abraham established their conception of incorporation as an encoding or encrypting through a reanalysis of the Wolfman, in Cryptonomie: le Verbier de l'homme aux loups.<sup>9</sup> Wolfman, they determined, had witnessed not simply certain scenes, but certain words, words he could not hope to rearticulate because of their power to endanger the very conditions of proper meaning (in this case, the autonomy of the father). Since their significance could not be assimilated, these words were incorporated instead: preserved and destroyed, translated by the Wolfman into cryptonyms, into a cryptic language made up of other words repeating their material linguistic features. One example urges itself on our attention because it has the same self-designating character as the examples one can adduce from literary texts: Wolfman's recollection of a "Schwalben-schwanz Schmetterling" preserves, in its English translation--"swallow-tailed butterfly"--the syllables of a suggestion by his governess that "it's better to lie," and that he should "swallow the tale." His recollection seems to refer to an encounter with a particular sort of butterfly, but his words function, more importantly, to both preserve the linguistic features of the original phrases and to prevent their meaning from emerging. He swallows the tale instead of telling it, and it returns in rhymes in another language. His analyst faces the return of the text.

Suppose we attempt, then, instead of considering writing from the point of view of reading--as a verbalizing of things, a reading of our fundamental situation in the world--to consider reading as writing: not voicing things, not verbalizing

objects, but eating words.

To analyze reading in such a way we have to posit an act of reading that issues in the writing of a text. We can choose for our purpose texts which explicitly concern consumption, fantasy, and memory: Rousseau's Neuvième Promenade in the Réveries du promeneur solitaire and Baudelaire's essay "Morale du joujou."<sup>10</sup> Baudelaire's essay recapitulates several motifs from Rousseau's, including what he calls "l'idée d'un divertissement innocent": the notion of an innocent, and inexpensive, diversion--a promenade enlivened by the pleasure of offering penny toys to poor children. Such children will carry off these gifts to consume them furtively, writes Baudelaire, like cats with a morsel of food. This part of the essay concludes with the tableau of a rich child and a poor child grinning fraternally at the poor child's toy, a caged rat: not just a toy, but a "joujou vivant," a live creature--food, however, for cats, to whom the children have been compared. The motif of the literally consumable gift, the toy food, comes from Rousseau; the ninth Réverie recites a veritable menu of children's gifts: apples, salty rolls (pains de Nanterre), and cone-shaped waffles or wafers called "oublies."

Pronounced just like oubli--oblivion, or forgetting--this last item comes up strangely in a reverie ostensibly devoted to precious memories of geniality with children. (The ninth Réverie sets out to counter the charge that Rousseau is a child-hating monster, a "père dénaturé.") Rousseau cites as a treasured "souvenir" his investment in "oublies." Baudelaire's essay describes the same kinds of distribution and consumption as Rousseau's. And it also deploys the same kind of paradoxical dual sign: a paragraph on children's play features

the word "diligence"--made to refer not to work but to fantasy, to the game of "stagecoach" played by imaginative children. Baudelaire's "diligence" can be analyzed as a cryptonym for Rousseau's "oublies," and his text can be described as an incorporation of Rousseau's. These texts spell out responses to the questions posed by their conjunction: how does reading turn into writing? By what kind of memory--of forgetting? And a certain question of literary history, or of how generations succeed one another: how does one take in Rousseau's "oublies"?

Toys or gifts, like texts or poems, are to be played with, or admired, only figuratively consumed. But Rousseau and Baudelaire refer to a toy food or edible gift which is consumed literally, like the Wolfman's swallowed tales, like incorporated words. Rousseau represents himself buying and distributing chances on these curious items, sold from a cart equipped with a sort of wheel or turntable by a vendor called an "oublier." The episode takes place on a Sunday excursion to the Bois de Boulogne.

Une vingtaine de petites filles conduites par une manière de Religieuse vinrent les une s'asseoir, les autres folâtrer assez près de nous. Durant leurs jeux vint à passer un oublier avec son tambour et son tourniquet qui cherchoit pratique. Je vis que les petites filles convoitoient fort les oublies et deux ou trois d'entre elles qui apparemment possédoient quelques liards demandèrent la permission de jouer. Tandis que la gouvernante hésitoit et disputoit j'appellai l'oublier et je lui dis: faites tirer toutes ces Demoiselles chacune à son tour et je vous payerai le tout. Ce mot répandit dans toute la troupe une joie qui seule eut plus que payé

ma bourse quant je l'aurois toute employée  
à cela.

Comme je vis qu'elles s'empressoient avec un peu de confusion, avec l'agrément de la Gouvernante je les fis ranger toutes d'un coté, et puis passer de l'autre coté l'une apres l'autre à mesure qu'elles avoient tiré. Quoiqu'il n'y eut point de billet blanc et qu'il revint au moins une oublie à chacune de celles qui n'auroient rien, aucune d'elles ne pouvoit être absolument mécontente, afin de rendre la fête encor plus gaye je dis en secret à l'oublieur d'user de son adresse ordinaire en sens contraire en faisant tomber autant de bons lots qu'il pourroit et que je lui en tiendrois compte. . . . Pendant toute cette operation, il y eut des disputes qui se portèrent devant mon tribunal, et ces petites filles venant plaider tour à tour leur cause me donnerent occasion de remarquer que quoiqu'il n'y en eut aucune de jolie la gentillesse de quelques-unes faisoit oublier leur laideur.<sup>11</sup>

(About twenty little girls being a sort of nun came, some to sit down, others to frolic, quite close to us. While they were playing, a waferman with his drum and board passed by, looking for business. I saw that the little girls greatly coveted the wafers, and two or three among them, who apparently had a few pennies in their possession, asked for permission to play. As the governess was hesitating and arguing, I called to the waferman and said: "Let all of these young ladies spin, each in turn, and I will pay you for the whole thing." This word spread a joy through the whole group which alone would have more than reimbursed me, had I used up all my money.

As I saw that they were milling about somewhat confusedly, with the consent of the lady in charge, I made them all line up on one side and then pass over to the other side, one after the other, as soon as they had made their spin. There were no blanks and at least one wafer came to each of those who would have won nothing, and thus no one could be absolutely discontented; but to make the party still gayer, I secretly told the waferman to use his ordinary skill in an opposite sense by making as many good spins as possible occur and that I would make it up to him. . . . During this whole operation, disputes arose which were brought before my tribunal; and these little girls, coming one after another to plead their case, gave me the opportunity to note that although not one of them was pretty, the sweetness of some caused their homeliness to be forgotten.)<sup>12</sup>

It is tempting to match this anecdote with the distribution of souvenirs that Baudelaire describes in the opening paragraphs of "Morale du joujou." He counts himself one among many of the "gentils petits garçons . . . dont l'insouciéuse enfance a puisé autrefois un souvenir dans le trésor de Mme. Panckoucke" ("nice little boys . . . whose care-free childhood fetched up a souvenir from the treasure of Madame Panckoucke"). This lady invited him to choose from an immense roomful of splendid toys, while his mother wished him to be satisfied with "un objet infiniment médiocre"; so that "pour tout accorder, je me résignai à un juste-milieu." What is "just" is just such a recalcitrant and interested compromise, as Baudelaire ironically underlines with the italicized cliché. Baudelaire's position in the anecdote is the inverse of Rousseau's. Rousseau is the adult who offers "oublies" to the class of children; Baudelaire is the child offered

a "souvenir." Rousseau recounts with satisfaction the transactions carried out at his imaginary tribunal. Baudelaire describes his forced compromise with a cliché of the bourgeois moral code. Rousseau "forgets" the unloveliness of the little girls; Baudelaire remembers the splendor of "la dame habillée de velours et de fourrure, qui m'apparaît comme la Fée du Joujou" ("the lady dressed in velvet and fur, who appears to me like the Fairy of toys"). Should we read Baudelaire's anecdote as a systematic, significant inversion of Rousseau's? Baudelaire represents himself here as drawing up the souvenir of a memorable encounter. Can his engagement with Rousseau's Promenade be conceived in these terms?

More than this is involved. If Baudelaire merely recalled the "oublies" in such a fashion, he would elude the peculiar demands of the text. Instead, in addition to reworking the ninth *Réverie*'s motifs, his essay incorporates the toy food that Rousseau has handed out.

"Oublies" is written into "Morale du joujou" not simply where Baudelaire describes similar items or a comparable scenario, but where he inscribes a word with the same structural relation to its context (rather than with a similar semantic content). Here is the passage:

Les enfants témoignent par leurs jeux de leur grande faculté d'abstraction et de leur haute puissance imaginative. Ils jouent sans joujoux. Je ne veux pas parler de ces petites filles qui jouent à la madame, se rendent des visites, se présentent leurs enfants imaginaires et parlent de leurs toilettes. Les pauvres petites imitent leurs mamans: elles préparent déjà à leur immortelle puerilité future, aucune d'elles, à coup sûr, ne devient une femme.

Mais la diligence, l'éternel drame de la diligence joué avec des chaises: la diligence-chaise, les chevaux-chaises, les voyageurs-chaises, il n'y a que le postillon de vivant! L'attelage reste immobile; et cependant il dévore avec une rapidité brûlante des espaces fictifs.

(Children bear witness in their games to their great faculty of abstraction and their high imaginative power. They play without playthings. I am not speaking of those little girls who play at being ladies, pay visits to each other, present to each other their imaginary children and talk about their toilettes. The poor little things imitate their mothers: they already play the prelude of their immortal future puerility, and not one of them, for certain, will become my wife. --But the stagecoach, the eternal drama of the stagecoach played with chairs: the stagecoach-chair, the horse-chairs, the traveler-chairs; not one but the postillion is alive! The team remains immobile, and yet meanwhile it devours fictive spaces with burning rapidity.)<sup>13</sup>

This contrast between bad and good ways of playing recapitulates the traditional Romantic and Kantian distinction between slavish and free imitation (*Nachmachung* and *Nachahmung* or "Fancy" and "Imagination"). Genuine play displays the creative power that makes man specifically human, distinguishing him from animals and machines (and "little girls") capable only of instinctual or mechanical productivity. This hierarchical opposition between play and work recurs in the distinction between mental and physical work as between imaginative and mechanical labor. Baudelaire reaffirms the distinction and links it with an account of how children become adults. Yet at the same time he disrupts

the account; for what is the name of the supreme game? "Stagecoach," "la diligence"; diligence--a distinguishing trait of work, not play. The distinction is erased at the very moment that it is affirmed most powerfully.

Baudelaire refers in a previous paragraph to "cette admirable et lumineuse promptitude qui caractérise les enfants, chez qui le désir, la délibération et l'action ne font, pour ainsi dire, qu'une seule faculté, par laquelle ils se distinguent des hommes dégénérés, en qui, au contraire, la délibération mange presque tout le temps" ("that admirable and luminous promptness that characterizes children, for whom desire, deliberation and act are only, so to speak, a single faculty, by which they distinguish themselves from degenerate adults, for whom, to the contrary, deliberation eats up nearly the whole of time"). Does the child's "facilité à contenter son imagination" devour space, while the grownup's deliberations "eat" time? But the imaginary stagecoach journey devours time in the form of space. It consumes time by both hastening and prolonging it; it consumes and produces the time of deferring an arrival. Perhaps such a space of time separates childhood from adulthood, and distinguishes imaginative play from mechanical work. Yet it is unclear which children (imaginative or unimaginative) are more genuinely distant from adulthood, or what this means; while the little girls anticipate "their immortal future puerility," in the game of the children who play at diligence, "the team remains immobile." The valorization of childhood and adulthood swings wildly in this passage. The most fundamental categories of "Morale du joujou"--child and adult, work and play--are confused, in stunning and intricate fashion, within the same paragraph that seems to reiterate an obvious contrast.

Haste, of course, is the notion that gives the "diligence" its name: the vehicle could be used to carry out urgent business. "La diligence"--like "oublies"--is what Michael Riffaterre in his Semiotics of Poetry calls a "dual sign": "an equivocal word situated at the point where two sequences of semantic or formal associations intersect."<sup>14</sup> One set of associations comes from the word's immediate context, from its syntactical position; the other set comes from themes active in the passage as a whole. Reading splits: we have to exclude one signification of the word in order to leave the paragraph intelligible, since diligence--care, application, industry--is clearly not what Baudelaire judges admirable in this imaginative children. But his mot also forces us to attend to a meaning so pertinent to the opposition at issue. What Riffaterre calls "another text," the semiotic text located at the level of a paradigm (work versus play), intrudes upon the mimetic text located at the level of syntax. And another "other text" returns as well: Rousseau's Neuvième Promenade, which features just such a dual sign with sets of associations bearing opposite meanings. Thus the very sentences that recapitulate a distinction of Kant's repeat a sign of Rousseau's, and that signalled sign and the reaffirmed distinction are radically incompatible.

Baudelaire repeats Rousseau's imposition on his reader. Baudelaire celebrates play and writes a word that suggests work; Rousseau celebrates a memory and writes a word that sounds like forgetting. One is forced to forget the sense of the word's sound in order to follow its function in the syntax of the passage. What the reader is forced to forget, in this process, is oubli, forgetting; but at the same time, Rousseau's dual sign forces forgetting upon us: a or no e, "oublies" forces forgetting down our throat. Baudelaire's dual sign



too makes us forget, if we would follow his passage. Rousseau's wording forces something down, and Baudelaire's writing forces that out. This requires us to analyze the peculiarly inassimilable status of that element in Rousseau's text, the oublies. Baudelaire's essay ignores or absorbs the rest of the Neuvième Promenade; only the toy food that's a dual sign comes up as if he can't keep it down. I propose that this is an exemplary, not just eccentric, response--that Baudelaire's text's incorporation of Rousseau's is a reading all the more salient for exceeding the process of assimilation or appreciation that we usually assume reading to entail. For the Rêveries revoke that assumption, as we can show in reciting the terms of Rousseau's text.

Consider the context in which that odd dual sign appears. One could say that the way Rousseau distributes oublies makes it hard to keep them down. In his hands, the game of getting a wafer (buying a chance, spinning the arrow on the vendor's board) becomes part of a business of ensuring equal desserts: the little girls have to line up, take turns, and share, and plead their differences at what Rousseau calls his "tribunal de justice." Taking pleasure in giving pleasure takes the form of meting out justice; playing gets bound up with ethical scheming.

Rousseau cites this scene with the oublieur as the kind of thing that induces the "contentement" he is concerned to analyze in the rest of this text. "Contentement" is a crucial category in the ninth Rêverie, where it is differentiated from another condition called "bonheur." To achieve "bonheur," "il faudrait lire dans le coeur" ("one would have to read in the heart"): "bonheur" designates a condition of understanding, and a kind of reading that

must dispense with external signs ("Le bonheur n'a point d'enseigne extérieure"--"Happiness has no external insignia").<sup>15</sup> "Contentement" designates the activity of reading in a more literal sense, as the registering of visible external signs. "Le contentement se lit dans les yeux" ("Contentment is read (reads itself) in the eyes"); its signs are doubly visual, and the reflexive form "se lit" suggests the collapse of the identical symmetrical terms of a seemingly specular process of reflection into a single signalling mechanism or reading machine.

Rousseau goes on to identify "contentement" as the condition inspired in him by the visible signs of other people's contentment, and he makes two claims for this condition. It is, he insists, a physical pleasure in visible signs, a "plaisir de sensation." But he insists as well that it has a "cause morale": he has to know that the signs he reads signify something other than people's malicious satisfaction in others' suffering. His pleasure hangs on the signs' ethical signification. Rousseau dwells, embarrassingly, on something that would misleadingly resemble the moral hygiene we too generally assume to accompany a commitment to reading literature--were it not for the slightly sickening explicitness of Rousseau's text. Rousseau insists that he feels good when he feels good; and this is as much as to insist that his reader do the same: the enjoyment is urged on us with the claim that it's caused by the signs' moral significance, while the moral interpretation is urged on us with the claim that it's a source of pleasure. In these passages where Rousseau dwells on his enjoyment of others' innocent pleasure, one feels forced to enjoy.

Kant comments on this special effect in the section of The Critique of Judgment entitled "Of the

Relation of Genius to Taste": "In this peculiar sensation, which rests on mere imagination, the object is represented as it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment while we strive against it. . . . And the artistic representation is no longer distinguished from the nature of the object represented, and thus it is impossible that it can be regarded as beautiful."<sup>16</sup> We have seen incorporation characterized the same way: the failure to distinguish the "representation" from "the nature of the object represented" takes the form of a failure to distinguish a word from a thing, the dilemma of a linguistic object "obtruding itself" upon us. Rousseau confronts his reader with this predicament. Certainly his obtrusive "contentement" cannot be regarded as beautiful. It is precisely not a matter of taste. Rousseau demands not that we exercise taste, but that we take something in. He exacts an act of reading about the activity of reading, and he situates that activity in the two instances Kant excludes from the aesthetic imagination, moral benefit and physical pleasure. Rousseau forces them together and insists on their coincidence: he urges his reader to swallow the notion of moral gratification.

Under maximum rhetorical pressure, the oral metaphor breaks down. Thus Kant identifies the "peculiar sensation" brought on by a notion that would force us to enjoy in this way as--not distaste, but--disgust, "Ekel." Derrida has stressed the specificity of this effect. "One must be assured," he writes, "that the word disgust (Ekel) does not designate the repugnant or the negative in general. It is precisely a matter of what makes one want to vomit." ("Il s'agit bien de ce qui donne envie de vomir."<sup>17</sup> Forced to swallow Rousseau's moral gratification, forced to enjoy his "contentment"--forced to read him on reading--one

wants, rigorously speaking, to throw up. As Baudelaire does: he throws up Rousseau's plaisirs, Rousseau's "oublies," as an analyzably similar sign: diligence.

"Morale du joujou" enacts the nausea induced by Rousseau's gestures in the Neuvième Promenade. Elsewhere Baudelaire describes the peculiar conditions of "l'immortel appétit du beau." "Le beau est toujours, inévitablement, d'une composition double. . . fait d'un élément éternel, invariable . . . et d'un élément relatif, circonstanciel. . . . Sans ce second élément, qui est comme l'enveloppe amusante, titillante, apéritive, du divin gâteau, le premier élément serait indigestible, inappréciable, non adapté et non approprié à la nature humaine."<sup>18</sup> ("The beautiful is always, inevitably, double . . . made of an eternal, invariable element . . . and of a relative, circumstantial element. . . . Without this second element, which is like the enjoyable, titillating, aperitive envelope of the divine cake, the first element would be indigestible, unappreciable, unadapted and inappropriate to human nature.") The category of the beautiful does not remain intact in this description. "Taste" has to be figurative and not literal for the concept of the aesthetic to be preserved; but Baudelaire's text does not permit us to take the reference to digestion merely figuratively; his account mingles two conflicting rhetorical levels. Baudelaire's "divin gâteau"--and with it, the oral metaphor--splits unevenly: we must take digestion figuratively, and "indigestible" literally. Baudelaire's division between a digestive element and an "element indigestible" can be aligned with the psychoanalytic distinction between introjection and incorporation. And we can take the following--like his own reference to an indigestible element--to describe his text's incorporation

of Rousseau's "oublies":

The fantasy of incorporation . . . transforms the oral metaphor presiding over incorporation into a reality; it refuses to accept (or finds itself prohibiting), along with introjection, the metaphor of the substitutive supplement, and actually introduces an object into the body. But the fantasy involves eating the object (through the mouth or otherwise) in order not to introject it, in order to vomit it, in a way, into the inside, into the pocket of a cyst.<sup>19</sup>

Introjection dis-figured is nothing so sustaining as literal digestion. The end of the reliteralized oral metaphor is not digestion but vomiting. Proper eating must be eating figuratively speaking: as Melanie Klein suggests, ingestion has to be accompanied by the conception of nourishment--by an idea of the good. The disfiguration of the oral metaphor means dispensing with nourishment as well as with understanding.

Such would be the consequences of consuming a toy food. Rousseau writes of handing them out. In what sense does Baudelaire take them in? In the first place, he reworks the same idea of the toy food or edible gift for children. In the second, he plays out the proportions of the linguistic object designating that idea in his own analyzably similar dual sign. Moreover the passage in which Baudelaire brings up Rousseau's toy food in this way describes, as well as enacts, a fantasy of incorporation (just as the Wolfman's reference to a "Schwalben - schwanz Schmetterling" cryptically repeats the injunction to "swallow the tale," even while carrying it out). "L'attelage reste immobile, et cependant il dévore d'une rapidité brulante des espaces fictifs":

transport in the stagecoach game is as instantaneous as the fantasy of incorporation in comparison with the work of introjection; and as interminable ("éternel") as melancholia in comparison with the terminable labor of mourning. Baudelaire's dual sign "diligence" itself stands out as a deliberate pun. It does not, however, allude to Rousseau's dual sign. Rather it encrypts it. While the pun is deliberate, the cryptonym is not.

To decode "diligence" as a cryptonym of "oublies" we must turn back to Rousseau's text. There should be reasons why Baudelaire throws up "oublies," rather than some other item on the menu of moral gratification in the Neuvième Promenade. Evidently this toy food is especially insidious. It operates doubly in the passage we have quoted. Thus the more insistent aural sense of oubli(es), forgetting, comes into the sentences that describe Rousseau's gratification in seeing the schoolgirls take pleasure in their equal desserts: "La gentillesse de quelques-unes," remarks Rousseau, "faisait oublier leur laideur." This sentence cites forgetting as the connection between a moral quality and an aesthetic one. It indicates (like Kant's "First Moment of the Judgment of Taste") that response to a moral quality precludes response to an aesthetic one; they are divided by a moment of forgetfulness, of oubli. Rousseau's way of stating that his interest in the schoolgirls was a moral interest calls attention to what he does not claim, disinterested aesthetic pleasure. Forget that, the sentence says; forget the forgetting entailed in making a judgment of taste; this "oubli" forgets and forgoes that forgetting. Rousseau's text urges on us an oubli(es) that forgoes the suspension of purpose entailed in the purposiveness--without--purpose of aesthetic activity.

The method for deciphering a cryptonym (determined by Torok and Abraham in Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups) is to identify it as a synonym or a transposition of a homophone of the word that it conceals and preserves. Diligence--the quality--could be called a synonym for oubli of the sort at issue in Rousseau's anecdote: forgetting about the forgetting of purpose. The dual sign "diligence" is overdetermined; the word-play is deliberate, the repetition of oubli(es) is not. Baudelaire does not remember "oublies"; he does not understand that he is forgetting it; nonetheless, he repeats it. Oblivious to the oubli(es) he has taken in, he diligently rewrites it as "diligence."

I would suggest that writing of this kind is the most authentic reading of Rousseau. For Baudelaire's incorporative mode accommodates the account of the production of language implicit in the etymology of the dual sign in Rousseau's text. Oublie derives from oblata, the Latin word for the consecrated host, the wafer consumed in memory of the "Word" made "Flesh." Christian and psychoanalytic theories of therapy concur in invoking a spiritual "food," ascribing priority to the "Word" before the sign, the wafer, granting primacy to an introjection accompanying even the earliest ingestion. What gets forgotten with the etymology of oublie is its historicity, its figural status commemorating a disfiguration reconstrued as a transfiguration (that of "Flesh" fixed on a cross). That forgetting leaves oublies, "waffles," edible souvenirs to be consumed forgetfully--literal language, language that can be taken into the mouth without the act of remembering its figural status. The etymology of oublie recapitulates the account in Rousseau's Essai sur l'origine des langues, where the postulate "Que le premier langage dut être figuré" (that language must first have been

figurative) gets illustrated in a parable tracing the origin of the word "man" from the forgetting of a figure for fear (the word "giant").<sup>20</sup> Rousseau confounds the distinction between literal and metaphorical language established with the oral metaphor. The "literal" word for a thing is none other than a self-interested effacement of an erroneous figure, a dis-figuration. Rousseau's account of language as disfiguration is compacted in "oublies." Such a sign must not be assimilated; it has to be encrypted, and it returns, cryptically, in the text of Baudelaire.

No nurturing communion, in literary history, links one generation with the next. Instead, for example, Baudelaire's "morale" repeats Rousseau's Rêverie. Rousseau describes a process that begins with his promise to the "oublieur." With this he says he'll pay for the oublies, not that he'll eat them. One infers, reading "Morale du joujou," that if Rousseau makes promises, it's Baudelaire (for one) who eats Rousseau's words. To read as Baudelaire does is to write under the conditions imposed by the disfiguration of the oral metaphor: the dismantling of the system of "taste," of our conception of the self (the system of introjections), and of the figure of voice, our conception of language as verbalization. Instead of voicing an understanding of the work, one carries out, in Hegel's words, "a deaf reading and a dumb writing."<sup>21</sup>

Language construed as verbalization covers up the figural status of the oral metaphor; ordinary discourse covers up the effects of effaced figures. Literary language cancels the cover and exposes the disfigured figure; forgoes forgetting, and reinscribes the erased disfiguration. One could call this disclosure of the most superficial and far-reaching processes of signification, "diligence."

One can deploy the word diligence, that is, in an account which subverts the oral metaphor and generalizes the concept of incorporation. Yet the very pertinence of Baudelaire's cryptonym sufficiently indicates that the incorporated word, the encrypted sign, may also be made to express an understanding of the process of incorporation. "Diligence" not only incorporates "oublies" but signals its incorporation: inscribes, or simulates, the introjection--the understanding--of that incorporation. As Derrida writes, "the fantasy of incorporation can and even must 'signify,' in its own way, the introjection it is incapable of: its impossibility, its simulacrum, its displacement."<sup>22</sup> The very resonance of that thrown-up word "diligence" sufficiently indicates that the subversion of the oral metaphor can never be completed, only repeated.

Reading as writing may therefore be more like repetition--like recitation--than like any more economical form of labor. It may have less to do with remembrance than with memory--or mere forgoing of forgetting, as in memorization. The reinscription of dual signs is more a method of memorization than a matter of sympathy with a past idea. The anti-metaphorical double of the mental labor of Imagination or Erinnerung is the work of memorizing--or writing, producing pieces of paper of a kind that can be exchanged and stored, if not profitably bought and sold. We inherit not monuments, but cryptic texts that we misread in understanding them--unless, that is, we really take them in.

## NOTES

1. This paper is conceived partly in response to Professor Kurt Heinzelman's The Economics of the Imagination (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1980).
2. Heinzelman, op. cit., p. 218.
3. Heinzelman, p. 140.
4. Baudelaire, Oeuvres completes (Paris: Seuil, 1968), p. 227.
5. "Deuil ou Melancholie, introjecter--incorporer," in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, L'Ecorce et le noyau (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1978), pp. 259-75.
6. "Mourning and Melancholia," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), XIV, 243-58.
7. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 211.
8. Quoted in Jacques Derrida, "Fors," trans. Barbara Johnson, The Georgia Review, 30 (1979), 72.
9. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, Cryptonomie: Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1976).
10. Baudelaire, Oeuvres completes, pp. 358-62.

11. Rousseau, Oeuvres completes (Paris: Pleiade, 1959), I, 1090-91.
12. The Reveries of a Solitary Walker, trans. Charles Butterworth (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1972), p. 128.
13. Baudelaire, "Morale du joujou," Oeuvres completes, p. 359.
14. Michael Riffaterre, Semiotics of Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978), p. 86.
15. Rousseau, Oeuvres completes, I, 1085.
16. Kant, Critique of Judgement, trans. H. Bernard (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 195.
17. Derrida, "Economimesis," in Mimesis Desarticulations, by Sylviana Agacinski et al. (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1975), p. 91.
18. Baudelaire, Oeuvres completes, p. 550.
19. Derrida "Fors," pp. 102-03.
20. Rousseau, Essai sur l'origine des langues (Bordeaux: Ducros, 1969), pp. 45-47. For an analysis of the passage see Paul de Man, "Theory of Metaphor in Rousseau's Second Discourse," in Romanticism: Vistas, Instances, Continuities, ed. David Thorburn and Geoffrey Hartman (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 101-09.
21. Hegel, Enzyklopadie der philosophischen Wissenschaften (Leipzig: Lasson, 1905), p. 401.
22. Derrida, loc. cit.

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## PERVERSE SCENES OF WRITING

A theory may occasionally trigger an observation, perhaps without any connection between the two other than an image, or cluster of images, which acts as a bridge. The structuration of Book II of Rousseau's Confessions can be represented by three scenes of reading from Paul de Man's Allegories of Reading: the primal scene, an illusory scene and the staging by the text of its own textual allegory. The ribbon incident is itself "a truly primal scene of lie and deception" (p.278). The illusory scene is that generated by the indeterminacy of reference: it is the illusion of a subject, a narrator and a reader, "the misleading figuration of a linguistic structure" (p.162). This illusory scene of narrative "telling the story of its own denominational aberration," and repeating it "on the various levels of rhetorical complexity," is that of the whole of Book II (up to the ribbon incident) which undertakes wishfully to denominate the early stages of Jean-Jacques's sexual awakening and first experience of love. In the re-telling of the ribbon incident in the Rêveries, the metaphor of the text as body (corresponding to the illusory scene just mentioned) is replaced by the text as machine, and "suffers the loss of the illusion of meaning," in the text's staging of "the textual machine of its own constitution and performance, its own textual allegory" (p. 298). This "deconstruction of the figural dimension is a process that takes place independently of any desire: as such it is not unconscious but mechanical, systematic in its performance but arbitrary in its principle, like a grammar. This threatens the autobiographical subject not as the loss

of something that once was present and that it once possessed, but as a radical estrangement between the meaning and the performance of any text" (p. 298). That third scene, the scene of the *Rêveries*, is already that of the ribbon episode at the end of Book II of the *Confessions*.

These theoretical scenes of a linguistic structuring of a text which does not structure a subject, evoke our primal scene, our store of unconscious "knowledge" about the coupling, or the estrangement, of emotion and language. The following remarks and queries, made possible by *Allegories of Reading*, turn around this obscure relationship, and bear upon a reading of the whole text of Book II, which readily corroborates Paul de Man's view of the peculiar status of the ribbon incident. I am not so concerned to confirm or not confirm a theory which in either case transforms critical thinking, as to reiterate some of the questions for my own thinking--for which I will juxtapose what de Man puts asunder: what in psychoanalytic writing is called unconscious structure, an what de Man, correcting an error, calls linguistic structure. For de Man's three scenes make clear that the primal scene, being one of lie and deceit, is of the kind which generates perversion: a primal scene in which perception is misconception, distortion, destruction of meaning, like the disavowal of sexual difference in the psychoanalytical primal scene. That primal scene must generate the next scene, the perverse illusion ployed out by the subject who thus maintains the already aberrant perception of the primal scene. But the perverse illusion, and the perverse scene whereby the illusion is ritually, repeatedly enacted, is threatened by its own aberrant nature, and is undone by the scene in which the text as machine takes over

from the figural illusion, somewhat as psychosis might threaten to take over if ever the perverse scene ceased to be perpetually reenacted. Thus the three scenes of reading posit linguistic structure as independent of meaning, independent of psychic structure, by a theoretical metaphor which is nothing other than a metaphor of psychic life; linguistic structure "is" a perverse structure. Yet the accuracy of this paradoxical metaphor cannot be doubted, for the perverse structure is certainly objectively (as well as theoretically) present in other sites than the psyche of the perverse individual. It is present, as it happens, in Book II of the *Confessions*--partially present on the thematic level, but completely present as an analysis of represented emotions.

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The perverse structure in Book II is a rhetorical structure caught between another rhetorical structure, that of religious morality, and a constantly-threatening destructuration. The destructuring factor is that of which the text as a whole is the negation, and which nevertheless irrupts in the confession of the ribbon incident. The perverse structure has to be denied also: "I met no young people who perverted me." It is covered by the conventional religious code of good and evil, instated from the early pages of the book, which has to govern, to the presumed satisfaction of readers, the narration of Jean-Jacques's guilt and the assertion of expiation and reparation by which the book ends. That Manichean religious code is a deliberate borrowing, the sort of thing Rousseau's thinking normally demystifies. From this description,

we see that the entire structuring of the narration is unauthoritative, not accorded truth-value, even if its detailed accounts of self-other exchanges and so on may be regarded as truthful. Two would-be authoritative elements are inserted in the narration, which may be called a moral-psychological story--the portrait of Madame de Warens--and an ethical discourse--the statement of the autobiographer's moral position, his avoidance of any conflict of duty and self-interest, which he gives as a reaction against his father's self-interested dereliction of parental duty in regard to Jean-Jacques. But, coming as they do near the beginning of an account of the adolescent's love fantasies, encounters with women and other sexual events, these highly-controlled passages nonetheless escape into the structure of the sexual initiation, as figures of the idealisation of the mother and denial of the father: the two passages therefore take their place within the perverse structure.

Rousseau deliberately represents four events as inflictions on him of other people's perversions. The other elements which, with those events, complete the perverse structure, are not consciously acknowledged as linked to those four. Jean-Jacques's conversion to Catholicism is the context of three of the events, all perverse scenes; the fourth is an experience of castration in the interaction with a woman. But the completion of the perverse structure, in the rest of the text, has no avowed link with these assertions of the self's status as unwilling victim: the other elements center upon a primal scene which can only be presumed to exist in Jean-Jacques's (or the narrator's) mind, which would then appear to be fictional determinant of the allegedly external perverse scenes. But these links, if considered thus as a causality (either way), are so circular and so obscure that we would certainly do well to abandon the notion of

inside-outside determinism and see the links as those of an observable linguistic structure.

The self-consciously assertive claim of Book II is that, having run away from Geneva, the young Jean-Jacques launched alone into the world survived in himself, survived morally, through the grace of the love of Madame de Warens, which is the definition of salvation. This claim has many marks of the desire for closure, even the wish for a golden guardrail to protect the spot where the two people first met. But this conscious claim is undermined by the equally conscious religious morality of the slippery slope, whereby Jean-Jacques is seen to be progressing from bad to worse, despite his love. Diabolical and angelic principles are at work upon him, proving that he is not really protected by Madame de Warens's love, which (we now read) only seemed to be love, by virtue of the love he bore her. The slippery slope leads straight from the least temptation to the abyss from which there is no returning, since God made us too weak to extricate ourselves, having made us strong enough not to fall in the first place. Thus Jean-Jacques, an innocent in need of benefactors, is transformed, by way of exposure to false benefactors and malefactors, into malefactor in his turn, perversely harming an innocent girl. The moral code of beneficence structures some fifty interpersonal exchanges recounted in Book II, defining each one as true, false or mixed beneficence, and inexorably leading to the ultimate commission of a misdeed by Jean-Jacques, in accordance with the law that he to whom evil is done will do evil in his turn. The theological moral figure of the slippery slope represents and "explains" the individual's automatic and unavoidable intrication in the distorted causality of a hierarchical social code, a code which arises from and perpetuates inequality, which is in Rousseau's analysis, the origin of perversion. The perverse structure governs the representation



of sexual episodes (feelings, fantasies, encounters) and draws the moral interaction into its field. Jean-Jacques is said to be saved by loving Madame de Warens, before entering the hell of the Catechumen's Hospice in Turin for religious instruction and conversion. But the religious instruction is forcibly defined as a sexual attack on young innocents (on two young innocents, Jean-Jacques and a Jewish girl; the other catechumens being as perverse as their instructors), who are manipulated by discredited authority figures. The power relations of the hospice constitute the sadomasochistic scenario. A perverse scene of language, in which sexuality is inserted into discourse (when the administrator instructs Jean-Jacques to be amenable to sexual approach) and is thereby transformed into violence, translates religious instruction itself--effected by submission, instead of the egalitarian discussion to which Jean-Jacques was accustomed--into a fictional seduction worse than the literal act of the homosexual approach which precedes it.

On this steep slope, in this world of no guarantees, the narration re-erects the golden guardrail in the form of a moralised love of women, which inspires the young man to repair with reverent homage the offence done to women by the sexuality of men. Yet that moralization of the sexual is also a sexualization of the moral, since it entails the systematic denial of sexual difference which is necessary for the Moor's homosexual approach to a young man to be comprehended as man's offence against woman. Here is an auto-castration, represented as a self-imposed anti-sexual morality. But the perverse structure will require that the castration be played out as inflicted by the other, and returned to the other.

The primal scene which determines that sexually-segregated perverse scenario of the hospice, and the auto-castration alleged to arise in reaction against that scenario, is embedded in the narration of the journey

to Turin. The internalisation of an ideal image of Madame de Warens after separating from her, and the concomitant denigration of the father are immediately transformed into a de-idealised, mocking picture of a rough country couple, Monsieur and Madame Sabran, by whose diabolical agency Jean-Jacques travels to Turin for conversion. The man is subjected by the text to denunciation, derision and virtual annihilation. His wife has the crucial function of being Book II's first ribbon-stealer, she who divests Jean-Jacques of the silvered ribbon Madame de Warens had given him for his "little sword." The narrator adds that they would have wrested the sword from him too, but he won over the sword. The text's mockery of the couple denies them that degree of castrating power, even though we can read another version of the text that they did get the sword. Let us retain that it was not they, but she, who snatched the ribbon. Other than that, all we read of Madame Sabran is the following paragraph.

"As for Madame Sabran, his wife, she was a decent enough woman, quieter by day than by night. As I always shared their room, her noisy spells of sleeplessness often woke me, and would have woken me much more if I had understood the reason for them. But I had no suspicion even, and was quite stupid on that score until Nature herself undertook the whole task of instructing me."

Oeuvres complètes (Pléiade edition,  
I, p. 57)

The overheard primal scene, when it occurs, is as confused in its language as the boy was in his knowledge. We cannot say whether it is a scene in which the man's role is eliminated entirely, a scene of woman's masturbation,

or whether it is a woman-dominated intercourse in which the man is so passive as to be not worth mentioning. The disavowal of sexual difference is in any case a radical occultation of the virile man in favour of the castrating, phallic woman, "sa semillante compagne" (the Latin root of semillant is semen). The perverse illusion is founded in the representation of ribbon-theft as the destructive act of woman against the sexuality of man, by a conception of feminine favor as maternal giving, opposed to female sexuality, which is conceived as taking. Ribbon-theft is the feminine cause of that anti-sexual morality, that castration later given as self-inflicted to repair an offense against "woman."

The subject, the excluded spectator of this primal scene, is not the pervert of the ensuing sadistic scenario, but the feminised victim of bad paternal figures. The new idealisation of woman which is the consequence of that is more dangerously marked than before by phallic attributes. Jean-Jacques's baptism turns out to be a damnation of the mother by a hostile, humiliating father-figure: the Inquisitor asks Jean-Jacques if his mother was damned, so linking the mother, and through her Jean-Jacques himself, with the Moor, also damned in the reported epithets: "Can [e] maledet [to], brutta bestia," in which the alternating genders, reiterating the disavowal of difference, bring the three figures together under the sign of perversion. The sadistic father-figure gains ground in this ceremony, despite Rousseau's claim that it was based on false rhetoric and was not a true baptism.

The shock of the baptism is closely followed by the most-elaborated love-relationship of the narration. The "wishful synthesis," the self-other identification of Jean-Jacques with Madame Basile, is close to ideal, yet marked by its opposite, by the phallic woman, simultaneously repeating the loving exchange with

Madame de Warens and adding to the negative substitutions that follow it. By this ambivalence, the Madame Basile episode prepares for a long consideration of Jean-Jacques's experience of a castrating woman, Madame de Vercellis. In this whole chain of exchanges, Jean-Jacques does no more than move from one place in the perverse-rhetorical structure to another place in the same structure; there is no progression. But now there is a new textual event, a death, which pushes into the open the murderous aspect of this entire text. Madame de Vercellis is dying, and she is cold to Jean-Jacques. His desire to talk, a crucial factor in all sexual encounters, is replaced this time by a desire to keep silent in order not to be further degraded. The desire to talk is the only desire that the text explicitly assigns to Jean-Jacques in these sexual encounters; but the sexual nature of that desire is not avowed; it is above all when his desire to talk is responded to by sexual explicitness (in the hospice) that Jean-Jacques feels violated. He desires a response which mirrors his own way of speaking as do (seemingly) the responses of Madame de Warens and Madame Basile. But now, we learn that a response which by its coldness totally rejects the sexual aspect of Jean-Jacques's desire to talk, is just as much a violation as the explicitly sexual response: the move is from speech as castration by a manly woman, with Jean-Jacques's heterosexual emotion immobilized between two forms of violence. Rousseau's long moral analysis of the anti-erotic experience at the mercy of Madame de Vercellis is both a denunciation of the masculine woman (an attack on the earlier idealisation of the phallic woman), and a eulogy of her masculinity as such. By this admiration for the hardness of the woman—"sa mort fut celle d'un sage", her death was

that of a sage--her death becomes the sign of the lost love of the father, who has been put to death repeatedly throughout Book II, and at the same time it is a destruction of the castrating mother. But with the mother gone, the loving warmth felt for a departed masculine figure raises the desired and terrifying idea of contact with the denied father, whose return from outside, if it were to happen, might be in a castrating form more deadly than anything else. That is represented in the text by another primal scene, more complete than that involving Madame Sabran since it has a male and female principle, but much more disguised. This other primal scene is represented by a terrible God (the father) allowing the son (Jean-Jacques) to be engulfed forever in the abyss (the mother's body) by a sadistic sentence dressed up as a specious morality: "I made you too weak to escape the abyss, because I made you strong enough not to fall into it" (Ouevres complètes, Pléiade edition, T. I, p. 64). One can see the advantage of the other, manless primal scene, which thus appears not as a gratuitously confused conception after all, but as a powerfully motivated distortion of another conception, which may be gratuitous.

Within the perverse structure, the merest opening in the defences that could allow a gap for that constantly desired by utterly terrifying contact with the father to take form even as an absent thought, is enough to produce intolerable emotional flooding, and--not progress, but the breakdown of the perverse structure. It is in fact at this point in the narration that the preservation of sexuality in a perverse scene is destructured in the concluding ribbon incident, which is a disintegration into destructive acts of a wish for a loving sexual coupling.

\* \* \*

My account of Book II's perverse figuration of sexual exchange meets Paul de Man's account of the "deconstruction of the figural dimension" in the ribbon incident, at the point where I have located what would in psychoanalytical terms be recognised as a depressive deconstruction of the perverse structure as a manic defence. That destructuring has threatened the entire text, which is, *in toto*, its negation, a defensive structure against depression, and psychosis which lies on the other side of it. Since the text does not succeed in negating it, this deconstruction would appear to predominate over the structuring forces, both in moral thinking and the perverse structure.

If the meaning of Book II is what its fantasies of omnipotence, its recurring family romance and lovedreams exist to negate; if the meaning is depression, that is, exactly what no part of the text refers to or, until the last pages, performs--except that it constantly does both by negation--then my reading poses the question of the status of the text in a manner both repetitious of Paul de Man's essay, and significantly displaced. De Man clearly emphasises the emotional relationship of the subject to the text by which it is denied: the subject is deluded or, if aware of the situation, merely under an illusion of which he is conscious. But when the textual machine takes over, when the subject is annihilated in relation to a machine-like linguistic environment, it resembles a child (let us evoke the genetic myth once more, as we already do by the term "primal scene") annulled as subject by a depressed maternal atmosphere, a depressed mother on whom the child's feelings have no impact or effect. In de Man's account, it is not the subject who is depressed; but I designate as depressive the linguistic structure upon which the subject is futilely struggling to have some emotional impact. As such, it is a breakdown of

structure, and psychotic functioning is markedly present, as de Man's account as implying that depressive destructuration affects the linguistic structure of the ribbon episode, but has nothing to do with meaning. The annihilation of the subject in a depressive or psychotic text is the only alternative, in writing and reading, to perversion. But, since the annihilation of the subject is, precisely, psychosis also, it is as if we finally reach some very deadly kind of referentiality once we perceive an insanity of language.

My remarks do not attempt to refute or confirm Paul de Man's deconstructive reading of Rousseau, but to misread it as a way of bringing my own thinking forward. My move to the observation of an "objective" perverse structure of the text was prompted by de Man's theoretical perverse structure of reading, and is no doubt a perverse distortion; but that is at least an event of some kind. My account of the perverse structure of Book II demonstrates, above all, the superabundance of its elements: perversion could be represented at less expense, but, clearly, this is what writing is good at, and what it does with extravagance. That is because representation, even as it fails to represent its ostensible object (Jean-Jacques's moral survival through love, through reparation of harm done, and so on), does represent itself. For the perverse scene is precisely what representation is: a metaphor of a disavowal of meaning--the meaning being a misconception (the primal scene) productive of an illusion (that there is no difference); the disavowal being motivated by another meaning, namely an emotion: the fear of loss. The fear of a loss which happens anyway, which has happened anyway, produces an attack on the links of phantasy which lead to what we call knowing. On the sight of that attack, writing is inaugurated, wherein the subject proposes to call the tune, to dictate by creation that which is to be known, and by what links. But the tune, imposing its

own autonomous links, takes over from the subject--and that, let it be said with some emotion, is just as well. The subject's unawareness or awareness of the tune's autonomous drift functions as a new denial of loss, or as a provisional acceptance of it--an alternative reiterated in reading. The mere possibility of that awareness on the other side of writing, and the possibility of the linking with writing which that awareness entails beyond all of writing's manifest attacks on linking, are to be hailed, again with some positive emotion, as entirely remarkable, if one considers that writing above all does not represent the experience of pain as such, but is a perverse effort to attack that experience.

It appears that the depressive destructuration, by momentarily collapsing the perverse structure and its illusory meaning, does have to do with meaning--with that emotion to which the text does not refer. That is my major divergence from Paul de Man's theory, for I regard the depression as the writer's denied emotion, something which can, if its object "returns from without," cause a break in a linguistic structure, at the very least. De Man's theory, that the break is linguistic (anacoluthon) and independent of meaning, is much more elegant, and I may yet be one of many to concede the point... Emotion produces writing, which is then the occasion of more emotion and (as de Man demonstrates by the instance of the renewed confession of the *Rêveries*) of a new need to write. The relationship of writing to emotion is a relationship to what is alien to it, to what is not included in it, to what is abandoned so that there can be writing. This abandonment of an emotion is doubtless the emotional gesture most nearly inserted in, or constitutive of, writing: that a miss is as good as a mile. It is not surprising, then, that writing should tend above all, despite the subject's wish for pleasure, to represent that abandonment. The theme of loss occurs in any guise: in Book II it occurs in the guise

of ribbon-theft, that is, something one is as likely to do as to have done to oneself. Ribbon-theft entails both desire and loss; in any case it is an erotic action of a perverse kind, performed or undergone, which depicts the subject's transitivity more surely than the pleasurable relationships of possessing, giving, receiving, stealing or blaming, and even more surely than the unpleasurable experience of being robbed (on which point we have two mutually contradictory texts). Thus, between Madame de Waren and Madame Sabran, Jean-Jacques as subject is represented as a little older, not much wiser, and guilty. By the interchangeable ribbons in his hands he links Madame de Waren to Mademoiselle Pontel. Before Rousseau can lift the blame laid at Marion's door, he has to level new blame at the door of Madame Sabran. So much transitivity--which make the subject the sight of repeated losses--is finally productive of an emotional eruption, identified in the text as guilt--an eruption which breaks across the perverse structure of the writing at the point where that structure itself intolerably represents the return of that objects whose denial generates the depression which the perverse structure, the writing, exists to deny. Rousseau hoped that for the thinker, the writer, the passions could be silenced to let the voice of reason speak; but Freud made us give up that daydream and recognized that sublimated activity, thinking and writing, is accompanied by an emotional extravagance. What is remarkable is that so much emotion disrupts the text so little.

Writing is passionate negation, a defensive creation which overrides another emotion that attacks creation and makes it impossible. But the negative creation conforms to a perverse structure which cannot be said to arise from the psychic structure of the narrator or the young hero (for it is spread across many textual elements, persons, and so on); or from that of Rousseau. That

perverse structure is a rhetorical structure of the language of the text. Freud says that "the inconsistencies, eccentricities and follies of men (...) appear in a similar light to their sexual perversions, through the acceptance of which they spare themselves repressions." The deflection of sexuality from ordinary goals into the staging of a scene which is the metaphor of denial of difference following a destruction of meaning, is a distortion which preserves the health of the individual, a defence against depression, a bulwark against insanity. A literary text is an eccentricity, a distortion of this sort. It is a form, a representation that is, an abandonment of an emotion, of a meaning--which the subject accepts, but does not wholly create or compose, and which divides the subject. Writing is a form of splitting, a form of what Wilfred Bion calls miniature psychotic function in the service of sanity; one of many sacrifices of unity for the avoidance of worse ruptures, if even these defences against intolerable emotion were to break down.

## NOTES

- Wilfred R. Bion, Elements of Psycho-Analysis (1963).  
 Sigmund Freud, "Neurosis and Psychosis" (1924).  
 André Green, Freud Memorial Lectures, University College,  
 London, 1978-1980.  
 Joyce McDougall, "Primal scene and sexual perversion,"  
International Journal of Psycho-Analysis  
 (1972) 53, 371-384.

## RESPONSE

Michel Pierssens  
University of Michigan

My reading of the three texts offered for this session of the SCE will have been dominated through and through by the inevitable figure of economics. Every major moment of that experience can be summed up by reference to some economic concept: the title of the session itself invites such an interpretation by focusing attention on the return that can be expected from the text (even though the psychoanalytic connotation cannot be forgotten; but this is Reagan's 80's, not Freud's 20's). This incipient bent of mind was only reinforced when I had to acknowledge to myself that I was at a loss as to how I could respond to such divergent essays. And then, for lack of an incentive in the texts as I saw them, I started trying to invest some meaning into the label of the organization itself, hoping for some semantic return. "Society for Critical Exchange," what does that mean? Criticism as exchange, texts as commodities whose values await their fixing on a peculiar stock exchange. My role was to be that of a broker--but what if criticism would go bankrupt; would I go broke? Which is implied anyhow by the fact of the society being "non-profit"--at least, I suppose.

Then I started rereading the texts, only to discover the obvious. My working through economics as allegory had finally produced a vision of the text as an allegory of economics. If I had more time, I would submit that economics here does not function as a transcendental model, but as a very

peculiar layer in the history of discursive practices which is just now acquiring a very high density and a remarkable productivity, made possible only by its reinterpretation in terms of information and systems. I have been working for some time on the idea that literature (and art as well, in a different fashion) is an epistemic affair: it transforms knowledge and creates it anew. There would be no fiction or poetry without epistemic figuration to play with or against. And I would suggest that what we know, as fantasizing subjects, literature has taught us more efficiently than textbooks or, in the case of economics, the Wall Street Journal. Economics is very much a part of the package making up the private knowledge each one of us has of his world, determining in many ways what our desire will be, will achieve and miss.

What I will try to say will be only partly related to this general epistemic concern, but I hope that it will be clear how that concern informs some of my reactions. Or lack thereof: I have not much to say about Professor Heinzelman's paper, except that I found a great wealth of useful information in it which will indeed guide my own readings. I will say little more about Professor Baker's paper, since again I am in general agreement with her. My only reservation would be that I am more hesitant than I used to be about how the reference to psychoanalytic concepts can help construct a productive model of textual systems outside the context of transference. But it will be evident from what I will say next that I espouse fully her vision regarding the relationship between writing and perversion generally. There is indeed a textual splitting taking place in Rousseau's ninth Promenade, which can account for its perverse rhetoric of jouissance, a goal that is reached only through circuitous libidinal and textual detours where vision replaces impossible "caresses," and where Rousseau travels fantasmatically from

adulthood to youth in a clearly depressive manner, only to achieve a discharge of affect when he starts crying as a child (je pleurai comme un enfant).

This leaves me with Professor Chase's paper, on which I will concentrate a little more attention now, because I see there a number of problems on which I will seek some clarifications. When I say "problems," it does not necessarily mean that the essay has arresting flaws or presents insoluble contradictions or flagrant distortions. I simply mean that it is hard to pin down what it tries to accomplish, and even harder to understand how it is doing it. For example: is it trying to say something about an actual intertextual relation between "Morale du Joueur" and the ninth Promenade? Is it attempting to illustrate an interesting psychoanalytic concept developed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok on the basis of a famous Freudian case-history and relayed by Derrida in Fors? Is it offering a theory of forgetting as writing or of writing as forgetting? It certainly does some of each at various points but somehow never posits a clearly stated affirmation of the ideas it alludes to. One thing is clear, though: the whole paper rests on the notion that Rousseau's text and Baudelaire's can be superimposed. This sounds very much like the structuralist practice used, for example, by Lévi-Strauss in his study on the Oedipus myth and its structurally pertinent features. But then, nothing precise is said about the status of such a superimposition: is it a rhetorical device destined to show that both texts are variants of one Ur-structure? Or is it the methodological consequence of a hypothesis about the actual reading of Rousseau by Baudelaire and the ensuing transformations which could then be interpreted as symptoms of whatever logic is at work in the re-writing process? Are we talking about texts or about subjects? This begs many questions that remain largely unanswered.

For example: can the encrypting movement described by Abraham/Torok/Derrida legitimately be extended to a wholly different situation? It originally concerns one and the same subject; can it be applied to the relationship between two different subjects (in which case Abraham offers a more adapted concept, that of "fantôme")? And what about extending that again to different texts by different subjects? Even though I could see how this might be sustained, many epistemological prerequisites are here ignored and the premises of Professor Chase's paper do not go much beyond a vague analogy between two texts.

As everyone knows, it is always possible to go from one text to any other, however arbitrary the choice; the O.U.L.I.P.O. has amply demonstrated that. Provided that the number of steps is not too strictly limited beforehand, all texts can appear as transforms of one another. But of course, there is a difference between that virtuality encapsulated in textuality and language per se and the reality of textual connection. It should be no surprise that such practices are spontaneously rediscovered in instances of psychotic situations (I have written a book about that, to which I refer the reader).

But let's go beyond generalities, not always in order, to touch upon the detail of Professor Chase's reading (the concept of detail is itself badly in need of a precise exploration, by the way. N. Schor is among those who are presently advancing the subject.) By superimposing Baudelaire and Rousseau, Professor Chase foregrounds two passages, one in each text, that she identifies as carrying all the weight of the incorporation process: the passage in Rousseau dealing with the "oublies," and the one in Baudelaire dealing with the "diligence," and she tells us that both signs are somehow exchangeable, and that moreover, the fact of their exchangeability

is what links up the two texts in the "incorporation" process.

Here, I must ask Professor Chase a few simple questions. It is true that in the ninth Promenade edible objects play a central role, but Rousseau narrates in that text several scenes revolving also around equally edible objects (edibility being here a requisite for incorporation): the "oublies" are only one type, along with "petits pains de Nanterre," "pains d'epices" and apples. Why then emphasize the "oublies" and forget the others? In Baudelaire's text, now, it is true that the "diligence" game figures prominently, but no more so than the war game which is described in the very next paragraph, a much longer one too. So why emphasize "diligence" and not "guerre"? Also, to prop up her reading, Professor Chase asserts that "Rousseau and Baudelaire refer to a toy food or edible gift which is consumed literally." But I note that while this is true in Rousseau (even though one might dispute the fact that the "oublies" are toys), in Baudelaire this is not applicable to the diligence game, even "metaphorically": it is a game, not a toy, and it is not offered, but spontaneously created by children themselves; it cannot be bought and "consumed." The game in Baudelaire functions as the exact opposite of the toy: the game uses anything, while the toy is a thing, a commodity. A game exists outside the circuit of exchange and money, which is why it is so beautiful.

At another level, while it is true that "oublie" is a nicely dual sign and "diligence" also, "guerre" (which doubles as "guère"--in a text dominated by economic considerations) would be equally suitable for the purpose of "throwing out" the incorporated dual sign "oublie."

But then, is all this a proper application of

the incorporation principle, which requires "linguistic features of the original phrases" to be preserved? Practically all signs in language are dual--at least--and can always function as anagrams of others on even a strictly phonological basis. Does semantic duality qualify for the job? In other words: is straight homonymy a sufficient feature for two signifiers to be exchangeable in the encrypting business? I doubt it, even though this might occur in specifically motivated cases. Thus, when Professor Chase asserts that "Baudelaire's 'diligence' can be analyzed as a cryptonym for 'oublies' and his text can be described as an incorporation of Rousseau's," I have to say that this does not make sense for me, however appealing the general gestalt of her argument might be.

The fact is that the analogy (mostly thematic, and on one level only) between the two texts does not carry over into the detail of their respective organization and there is simply no convincing evidence at all that "oublies" and "diligence" should be foregrounded in the analysis at the expense of other elements in the texts, if one insists in bringing them together, whether for intrinsic (similar linguistic features) or extrinsic reasons (similar structural functions). If I may be allowed to pun in such a distinguished session, I would say that "diligence" is definitely "tirée par les chevaux." Or, in Western style, that "elle me reste en travers de la gorge."

In other words, I see here a problem of epistemological accountability, which is not uniquely that of the present paper, but is one that mars a large proportion of critical endeavors. In this particular case, the problem comes from the haste with which a perceived partial analogy between two texts, at the narrative and thematic levels, is interpreted in terms of a sophisticated psychological



mechanism described by analysts on the basis of a very special case, that of the Wolfman. Too many logical and methodological steps have been skipped to make the conclusion acceptable.

I would like to take some risk in my turn, in order to remain a fair critic, and offer a less ambitious reading of Rousseau's text, a more old-fashioned one which will make use, all the same, of a very interesting concept put forward by Abraham and Torok in the same book in which Professor Chase found the expose on incorporation. The concept is that of "co-symbol."

In order to do that, let us accept the undeniable fact that the word "oublie" does indeed play an uncanny role in the ninth Promenade (the Freudian overtone is of course intended), and let us focus on that term in the same way that Abraham and Torok say psychoanalysis looks for co-symbols. What could the co-symbol of "oublies" be, which would make sense of its structural function in the text and account for the uncanny effects it produces?

A moderately careful reading of the text makes this clear. But let us first note that the word most often repeated by Rousseau in the ninth Promenade is "plaisir," a forceful presence if one counts also its associates, such as "jouissance" and "aise" or "contentement." This is indeed an essay on plaisir, what it is and how it is missed or achieved. Still more precisely, it is an essay on the economic status of "plaisir": how much does it cost? Where and how do you buy it? Who produces it? Can it ever be free? "Plaisir" then is perceived as a function of how one fits in society and its "commerce," it is a measure of one's integration in, or rejection from a group, a symbol of what is exchanged symbolically between people to form a relationship. The ideal would be then to "jouir de concert des plaisirs du

jour," with the conclusion that "dans le commerce ordinaire de la vie laissons la bienveillance naturelle et l'urbanité faire chacune leur oeuvre, sans que jamais rien de vénal et de mercantile ose approcher d'une si pure source pour la corrompre ou pour l'altérer" (in the ordinary commerce of life, let us allow natural kindness and sociability each to do its work without letting so pure a spring be changed or polluted by any mercenary or venal motive). What can be less mercantile than a game? Who can be less venal than children? But Rousseau's problem is that he's grown old, so that children do not want to share "plaisirs" with him any more for free: he has to pay their "plaisirs" in order for him to derive some "plaisir de sensation" in seeing them having a good time at his expense. The scopie drive (Lacan) allegorizes itself in the figure of the unconscious economy. And this is where the symbol that "oublie" is (to forget old age and Rousseau's forced retreat from human sociability) meets the co-symbol we were looking for, and produces the semantic infrastructure of that whole piece. What is the other name for "oublie"? Yes, of course, it is plaisir, as historical dictionaries will tell you.

Rousseau cannot have "plaisirs" for himself any more: he has to get them vicariously, by paying for others--children--to get them. He has to give money in order to get anything. Let us not forget that the etym oblata does not refer solely or even primarily to wafer but to a pastry, an oublie meant as "une offrande," an offering symbolically presented by vassals to their lord. Rousseau has met his lord in the figure of children, and his libidinal situation cannot be but that of dependence and vassality, as Professor Baker demonstrates.

Only once in the Promenade can Rousseau have plaisir without paying full price for it: only "deux liards" (two cents' worth) in one installment, the

second being free. It is in the last scene, when Rousseau takes a place in a boat with an old invalid who converses with him in an amiable way: "Je profitai de cet incognito pour converser quelques moments avec un homme et je sentis à la douceur que j'y trouvais combien la rareté des plaisirs les plus communs est capable d'en augmenter le prix" (I took advantage of my incognito to have a few moments of conversation with a man, and the comfort this gave me made me feel how the rareness of the most common pleasures can augment their value/price). Once again, Rousseau pays for the trip (the pleasure), and then thinks of giving some more money to the invalid for him to buy some tobacco. But he stops; and why? "J'aurais pour ainsi dire agi contre mes principes en mêlant aux choses honnêtes un prix d'argent qui dégrade leur noblesse et souille leur désintéressement" (I should have been acting against my own principles, so to speak, by attaching to good deeds the sort of price which degrades their nobility and tarnishes their disinterestedness).

In other words, after experiencing the alienation that distanciates man from man in the first scenes, making it necessary to introduce venality in society in order to get some pleasure out of other people's pleasure, finally Rousseau has hit upon the ideal situation where a person-to-person relationship could be an unmediated pleasure without economic interference. But then, this is made possible only because the initial situation has finally been reversed; Rousseau was at first the old man alienated from children. He is now a child in front of an old man: "comme il était plus vieux que moi [j'eus l'attention] de lui aider à sortir du bateau. Qui croirait que je fus assez enfant pour en pleurer d'aise?" (Since he was older than me, I helped him out of the boat. Who could believe that I was so childish as to weep for joy?).

So this is how Rousseau can forget the complex economy of pleasure, how "oublie" ceases to displace its double: "plaisir"--its "co-symbol." Could there be a more telling symbol of the end of economy than the fact that this last scene takes place at the conclusion of a trip to visit--what else?--"l'île aux Cygnes."

All this sounds very much like the old-fashioned type of reading I said I was going to offer as an alternative to Professor Chase's handling of her texts. Yet I believe that this is not quite a plain interpretation in the style we are accustomed to--at least, not in its intention. I emphasized the dominance of the economic paradigm in beginning, and this is what I want to return to in closing, to indicate how interpretation (i.e. the construction of a semantic model linking a semiotic structure to a discursive archive) does not develop in an epistemological vacuum. A text, I believe, is a parcours (this is a notion borrowed from Michel Serres), or the trace of a parcours which tries to open up a complex path between locally structured discourses and forms, and that path describes the hesitant bearings of a subject as his desire struggles with his decentered savoirs.

In the specific case of Rousseau's ninth Promenade, the peculiar splitting which defines his libidinal stance and produces the rhetorical split between "oublie" and "plaisir" and their derivative textual twists, meshes with the more organized epistemic discursive structure of Rousseau's private representation of economics. So in a sense, economics is an integral part of the text and rules both its economy and its perverse libidinal telos.

A thorough study of the subject would of course require a much more serious examination of the archaeology of the discourse on economics in the eighteenth century, possibly on the basis of

Professor Heinzelman's indications. At the same time, psychoanalysis, as it is put to use by Professor Baker, remains an indispensable frame of reference since it allows us not to lose sight of the dealings and manipulations of desire, nor to fall in the trap of a reductionist reading which would resuscitate in a crypto-jdanovian fashion the invisible hand of socio-economic constraints as a global system of explanation. Althusser and his disciples worked on the concept of a "process without a subject." I prefer to work on the premise that in all symbolic productions there concur both a process and a subject.

Needless to say, the process in question is a polymorphic one, and even though economics was stressed in the particular context of Rousseau, many more discursive systems should be probed, for they intervene in a highly complex and diversified fashion across all linguistic-libidinal activities. To picture this in a more accurate way (but this is still a suggestion, not a fully developed theory), we would then have to turn to what has been called the "new epistemology" of self-organizing systems where structures must be analyzed both locally and globally (cf. M. Serres, H. Atlan, I. Prigogine, E. Morin, and others on that subject). To which yet another concept can add a very significant measure of refinement, the concept of fractal as developed by B. Mandelbrot and put to some fascinating tasks by Serres in Passage du Nord-Ouest.

When more thought has been given to such notions, in a few years, the SCE may want to discuss them further.

## NEWS AND NOTICES

The Annual Business Meeting for the Society will be held at the MLA Convention in New York City at the following time and location:

December 29, 1981

5:15-6:30 P.M.

Clinton Room, Hilton Hotel

### SCE Sessions at MLA:

1: "The Return of the Text," session #145

December 28th, 10:15-11:30a.m.

Room 524-26, Hilton Hotel

2: "Teaching Courses in Criticism: Criticism As a Literary Genre," session 593

December 29th, 9:00-10:15 p.m.

Gibson Room, Hilton Hotel

SCE REPORTS

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