THE OXFORD LITERARY REVIEW

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The journal publishes both general issues and special issues, each of the latter featuring a provocative theme (e.g. ‘The Word of War’, ‘Telepathies’, or ‘Disastrous Blanchot’). It invites relevant contributions across a wide range of intellectual disciplines on issues and writers belonging to or engaging the work of deconstructive thinking (such as Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot, Levinas, Irigaray, and others).

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Analysing Speculative Discourse as Language-Game

Jean-François Lyotard

The following analysis will appear to be guided by an interference: between Hegel’s discourse, which states what speculative language ought to be, and statements (my own) which, in presenting Hegel’s discourse as a language-game or discursive genre, determine its rules. This interference appears to be contingent, just as the meeting of two independent series of events is contingent. Indeed, if the two families of statements, those of the object-language (Hegel’s speculative discourse), and those of my commentary (the language of the ludi sermonis) are as foreign to each other as are types of events such as the fatigue of a solitary car-driver and the presence of a tree on a bend, it follows that the linking (enchaînement) of my statements with those of Hegel is like an accident.

In the Preface to the Phenomenology of Mind,¹ this accidental relation is said to characterise predication in positive knowledge. Hegel describes it as follows: on the one hand the Selbst (what is in question, the subject of the statement) constitutes the base, Basis, an inert support; on the other the contents bearing on it obey an oscillating movement; they do not belong to the Selbst, and can be applied to other ‘bases’, giving rise to other statements. These statements have the form of attributive judgements, and the contents are the predicates. God is good, for example, would be a statement pertaining to positive knowledge, which Hegel also calls formalistic thinking (das Räsonnieren). What he has in view here is the philosophy of the understanding in the Kantian sense of the word, a philosophy which, according to Hegel, gets stuck on the question of knowing what is the nature of the relation between predicate and subject of a judgement. Conceiving thought, das begreifende Denken,
does not take as subject the subject of the statement, the Selbst in repose, ein ruhendes Subjekt, which would support accidents (das unbewegt die Akzidenzen trägt); in conceiving or speculative thought, the concept is ‘the Selbst proper to the object, represented as its becoming’, that is ‘the concept in the process of moving and taking its determinations back into itself’.

From this point of view, if the analysis to follow has an accidental relationship with the subject of its statements (i.e. the speculative statement), this is because it itself belongs to formalistic thinking and has failed to place the subject properly, in the very movement by which it grasps speculative discourse.

The question here is not without analogy with that of the cinema. The analysis of the Koulechov effect shows that the linking of a second shot with a given shot determines the meaning of the first. If you take the first shot as the Selbst, its link with the second is a problem, because many sorts of links are possible, and the actual relation appears to be accidental. That is the case for fixed thought. If on the other hand the Selbst is the movement pulling the shots along, then the determination of each comes from a kind of ricochet (a Zurücknehmen, a Gegenstoss) from the whole. But this whole itself is never given all in one: it is either not yet there, or already no longer there, or both at once (when the film is being projected, or even being made). Thus the speculative subject cannot be assigned once and for all, it is restless, worried, and escapes positive grasp. But at the same time it is without internal contingency, it forms an organism, through a complex relation involving readjustment of the parts onto the state of the whole, and remodelling of the whole according to the ingestion of a given element. Meaning is consequently both ahead of itself and behind itself, anticipating itself in the singular formation, taking itself up again in the ‘life of the whole’. This is why the speculative set-up needs the Doppelsinnigkeit and the Zweifelhaftigkeit: the double sense of element and whole, and their dubious character.

In the Aesthetics, Hegel characterises the symbol by its ‘essentially zweideutig’ nature: the lion I see on a medal is ‘a form and a sensory existence’; is it a symbol? That has to be decided. And if it is, what does it symbolise? What is its Bedeutung? That too has to be decided. There are thus two levels of equivocity: 1. sensory or symbol? 2. if the latter, what is its meaning? We can only decide by saying expressly what the sensory form is, and what the meaning is. But then the symbol is destroyed, and the sensory becomes a form which the explicit statement compares with the meaning.

In this text from the Aesthetics, the equivocality can appear to the reader to be a provisional state of meaning, necessarily bound to disappear as one progresses in clarity, and in particular through the passage from plastic to linguistic expression. Correlatively, this linguistic expression can appear to be subject to the model of predicative judgement: a meaning (a content) is attributed to a subject of a statement (the sensory form of the lion).
The Dream-Work Does Not Think

Jean-François Lyotard

It should come as no surprise that the problematics of work versus discourse is the nub of chapter six of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In the course of this chapter Freud examines the dream-work and enumerates the essential operations by which it proceeds. It is easy to show that each of these operations is conducted according to rules which are in direct opposition to those governing discourse. The dream is not the language of desire, but its work. Freud, however, makes the opposition even more dramatic (and in doing so lets us in on a figural presence in discourse), by claiming that the work of desire is the result of manhandling a text. Desire does not speak; it does violence to the order of utterance. This violence is primordial: the imaginary fulfillment of desire consists in this transgression, which repeats, in the dream workshop, what occurred and continues to occur in the manufacture of the so-called primal phantasm.

The figure is hand in glove with desire on at least two counts. At the margin of discourse it is the density within which what I am talking about retires from view; at the heart of discourse it is its ‘form’. Freud himself says as much when he introduces the term *Phantasie*, which is at once the ‘façade’ of the dream and a form forged in its depths.¹ It is a matter of a ‘seeing’ which has taken refuge among words, cast out on their boundaries, irreducible to ‘saying’. We will dwell a little on secondary revision because the *Fliegende Blätter* inscriptions, in spite of their dismaying aesthetic impoverishment, provide an excellent opportunity

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¹ This text is taken from *Discours, figure* (Paris, Klincksieck, 1971): we gratefully acknowledge the permission of Editions Klincksieck to publish this translation.
for formulating the relationship between image and text. Considerations of beauty aside, art begins here.

I

At the end of chapter six of The Interpretation of Dreams, which deals with the dream-work, Freud recalls the question with which he began: 'whether the mind employs the whole of its faculties without reserve in constructing dreams, or only a functionally restricted fragment of them'. His response is that the question must be rejected: it is badly put, 'inadequate to the circumstances'. On the basis of the terms in which it is stated, the answer would have to be in the affirmative in both cases: the mind contributes both totally and partially to the production of the dream. What Freud calls the Traumgedanke, the dream-thoughts, what the dream thinks, what it says clearly, its latent pronouncement (énoncé), must be attributed in toto to waking thought. It is 'perfectly proper thought' (vollig korrekt) which belongs to the same genus as conscious thought. Even if it retains some puzzling aspects, these have no 'special relation to dreams and do not call for treatment among the problems of dreams'.

What the dream says at bottom is fully intelligible. Its motivating discourse is an intelligent one, subject to the same rules as waking discourse. No doubt that is why Freud believes that an interpretation (something quite different from pure invention on the interpreter's part) is possible, because such an interpretation does not have to recover a meaning (sens), but a signification just as explicit as that which pertains to 'normal' discourse. It is for this very reason, however, that the essence of the dream is not to be found in the dream-thoughts. Freud makes this clear in a note added in 1925:

Many analysts have become guilty of falling into another confusion which they cling to with equal obstinacy. They seek to find the essence of dreams in their latent content and in so doing they overlook the distinction between the latent dream-thoughts and the dream-work. At bottom, dreams are nothing more than a particular form of thinking, made possible by the conditions of the state of sleep. It is the dream-work which creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming (das Wesentliche am Traum) — the explanation of its peculiar nature.

This work, however, does not belong to the category of waking thought: 'it diverges further from our picture of waking thought than has been supposed even by the most determined deprecator of psychical
Post-Structuralism: The End of Theory

Robert Young

The word 'post-structuralism' seems to be used with increasing frequency nowadays — and as the co-editor of a journal that calls itself 'a post-structuralist journal', and the editor of a book that is sub-titled 'a post-structuralist reader', I can hardly claim to be innocent of this tendency. I suggested in the introduction to that book that one simple, general way to characterise post-structuralism would be to say that it involves the incorporation of the problems raised by the work of Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, into our thinking about what we continue to call literature and criticism. What I would like to do this morning is to pursue a little further than I was able to do then the question of the relation of post-structuralism to structuralism, to spell out some of its implications, and to raise some of the questions and difficulties with which it leaves us.

One of the most immediate problems for any understanding of post-structuralism is that it defines itself only negatively, as not being something else. If it's the shade of structuralism's wing that follows on the ground behind it, its name shouldn't be taken to imply a simple progression. Instead, it involves something more like a displacement, the wrinkle on structuralism's Apollonian brow, its wandering into error. At the same time, it shouldn't be assumed that structuralism constitutes post-structuralism's origin. Origin's own origins, one might remark, nicely refuse the very notion of origin: the word shares its etymology with 'orient', and simply comes from the word for the rising of the sun, oriri, which is no origin at all. Origins, then, involve a process of repetition, and so it could be said that post-structuralism is a repetition of structuralism, a repetition that necessarily involves a difference.
How is this possible? And how is it that we find many writers, such as Barthes, Foucault, or Lacan, formerly described as structuralists, but now being heralded as post-structuralists? Perhaps it is just that we have re-read them. But it is also the result of the complex relation of structuralism to post-structuralism, of the fact that they cannot be strictly separated from each other. The name post-structuralism implies, of course, that it has come after structuralism. In relations of time, the prefix ‘post’ implies ‘subsequently’, or ‘coming after’, as in ‘postpone’. But oddly enough in relations of space — and if we switch to space we are switching to structuralism’s own visual metaphor of a geometric or morphological structure — we find that the prefix ‘post’ now means ‘behind’, as in ‘post-jacent’, ‘post-scenium’, or ‘post-oral’. This uncanny antithetical doubling is rather humbly embodied in the word ‘posterior’, which means both ‘coming after’, ‘later in time’, as in ‘posterity’, as well as ‘situated behind’ — and hence its familiar use as one of the tenderest of our euphemisms.

So ‘post-structuralism’ suggests that structuralism itself can only exist as always already inhabited by post-structuralism, which comes both behind and after. It is always already unfolding as a repetition not of the same but as a kind of Nachträglichkeit, or deferred action. In this sense, post-structuralism becomes structuralism’s primal scene — as Barbara Johnson describes it, ‘the first occurrence of what has been repeating itself in the patient without ever having occurred’.2

The problem is perhaps not so much the question of what was wrong with structuralism than the question of what was right with it. Or why Derrida’s words are still appropriate: ‘Since we take nourishment from the fecundity of structuralism, it is too soon to dispel our dream’.3 The criticisms of structuralism are by now familiar: its Platonism or its idealism, the fact that it was still operating under the time-honoured antithesis of the sensible and the intelligible; its assumption of a rational organic totality within the field of texts, objects, or practices, that it analysed; its erasure of history; and its very traditional assumption that criticism is a kind of commentary on, or supplement to, a text, questioning a text as to what it says, what it intended to say, and by doing so revealing a deeper meaning that points to a text’s essential truth. In other words, as Foucault has put it, ‘in stating what has been said, one has to re-state what has never been said’.4 Derrida and Macherey, among others, were producing devastating critiques of structuralism by the early 60s. Why then are we still involved, entangled and implicated in a crime whose file was closed so many years ago? Why, insofar as we use the name ‘post-structuralism’, can we only describe what we are doing by reference back to something that has been discredited — as if Tony Benn were only able to characterise his position by calling himself a post-monetarist?

It seems to me that whether we like it or not, we haven’t gone beyond structuralism. We’re still within it insofar as structuralism and post-structuralism inhabit each other. The reason is that if we want to go
Let us not Forget—Psychoanalysis

Jacques Derrida

Let us not forget psychoanalysis.*

People would like to make us forget psychoanalysis.

Will we forget psychoanalysis?

The forgetting of psychoanalysis could not be one forgetting among others and cannot fail to produce symptoms.

The forgetting of psychoanalysis does not necessarily take place outside psychoanalysis or its institutional space. It can work at the very heart of the psychoanalytical.

So when I say ‘will we forget psychoanalysis?’, this we is not without embracing some psychoanalysts.

I do not know if this question goes along with, or goes to the bottom (Grund) of what René Major is going to say to us, but I should like to take unfair advantage of the fact of speaking now to give voice to a worry I’ve had for several years.

A worry about what I’d call, vaguely, free-floatingly (but the thing itself is vague, it lives on being free-floating, without a fixed contour), the climate of opinion, the philosophical climate of opinion, the one we live

* This is the introduction given before René Major’s ‘Reason from the Unconscious’, delivered on 16 December 1988 in the Amphithéâtre Descartes at the Sorbonne, Paris, as part of the Forum on ‘Thinking at Present’ organised by the Collège International de Philosophie. This introduction was largely improvised, and includes a number of essentially oral features that escape translation.
in and the one which can give rise to philosophy’s weather reports. And what do the reports of this philosophical doxa tell us? That, among many philosophers and a certain ‘public opinion’ (another vague and free-floating instance), psychoanalysis is no longer in fashion, having been excessively in fashion in the 60’s and 70’s, when it had pushed philosophy far away from the centre, obliging philosophical discourse to reckon with a logic of the unconscious, at the risk of allowing its most basic certainties to be dislodged, at the risk of suffering the expropriation of its ground, its axioms, its norms and its language, in short of everything philosophers used to consider as philosophical reason, philosophical decision itself, at the risk, then, of suffering the expropriation of what—this reason very often associated with the consciousness of the subject or the ego, with freedom, autonomy—of what seemed also to guarantee the exercise of an authentic philosophical responsibility.

What has happened, in the philosophical climate of opinion, if I may take the risk of characterising it grossly and macroscopically, is that after a moment of intimidated anxiety, some philosophers have got a grip on themselves again. And today, in the climate of opinion, people are starting to behave as though it was nothing at all, as though nothing had happened, as though taking into account the event of psychoanalysis, a logic of the unconscious, of ‘unconscious concepts’, even, were no longer de rigueur, no longer even had a place in something like a history of reason: as if one could calmly continue the good old discourse of the Enlightenment, return to Kant, call us back to the ethical or juridical or political responsibility of the subject by restoring the authority of consciousness, of the ego, of the reflexive cogito, of an ‘I think’ without pain or paradox; as if, in this moment of philosophical restoration that is in the air—for what is on the agenda, the agenda’s moral agenda, is a sort of shameful, botched restoration—as if it were a matter of flattening the supposed demands of reason into a discourse that is purely communicative, informational, smooth; as though, finally, it were again legitimate to accuse of obscurity or irrationalism anyone who complicates things a little by wondering about the reason of reason, about the history of the principle of reason or about the event—perhaps a traumatic one—constituted by something like psychoanalysis in reason’s relation to itself. This reactive and reactional phase was not unforeseeable: the reaction was ‘on the programme’. Anyone who has any experience of these rhythms and these
For a Heteronomous Cultural Politics:
The University, Culture and the State

Bill Readings

The contemporary situation of the humanities is one of profound legitimization crisis, not merely a crisis in the marginal utility of the liberal arts for a technocratic society. The decline of the nation-state that accompanies the globalisation of the world economy displaces the notion of culture from its central position in modernity. ‘Culture’, that is, as the symbolic and political counterpart to the project of economic integration pursued by the capitalist nation-state, has lost its raison d’être. Economic integration no longer needs to run along channels hollowed out by national culture. The question then arises of how the primary institution of such ditch-digging, the University, can respond to the fact that its conduits and irrigation channels seem less and less necessary.

In the seventies we were (at least, I was) inclined to believe that a mixture of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and semiotics might prove sufficiently volatile to fuel Molotov cocktails. The combination is now sufficiently stabilised to be available over the counter from your local literature department, under a variety of brand names or under the generic label, ‘cultural studies’. To make moral arguments about this process of appropriation is simply futile — it is simply a symptom of what Adorno calls ‘the complicity of cultural criticism with culture’. If circumstances are moving us to abandon that ‘great fetish of cultural criticism’, ‘the notion of culture itself’ (Adorno, 23), then it seems to me that we have to recognise that the grounds on which we used to make large claims for the humanities have been undermined. It could be said that British universities, for example, were unable to mount any effective resistance to Thatcher’s cuts because they could as a group find no better argument for the humanities than vague appeals to ‘human richness’ in a world in which leisure has already become the primary site of capitalist penetration (as
Disney and the Olympics attest.⁴ We have to think very carefully about what the academic study called the human sciences can be, once the notion of culture has ceased to be of vital relevance, and any such reflection must include a reflection on the institution of that study, the University.

Hence the attraction of Bloom’s outrageous and intemperate The Closing of the American Mind, compared with Jaroslav Pelikan’s return to Newman in The Idea of the University, which recalls us to a lost mission of liberal education.⁵ Bloom’s jeremiad at least recognises that the autonomy of knowledge as an end in itself is threatened, because there is no longer a subject that might incarnate this principle: hence his repeated ridiculing of what goes on in the University as unintelligible and irrelevant to any student (read young white male American student). The story of what Bloom calls ‘the adventure of a liberal education’ (336) no longer has a hero. Neither a student hero to embark upon it, nor a professor hero as its end. Some sense of this can be grasped from reading a text such as Jacques Barzun’s The American University: How it Runs, Where it is Going.⁶

This work, which dates from 1968, has recently been reprinted by the University of Chicago Press, a remarkable feat for a text that claims a contemporary relevance and yet which was self-consciously out of date at the time of its first publication. Barzun remarks in a May 1968 postscript to the January 1968 preface (an ironic locus if ever there were one⁷) that he sees ‘no reason to change or add to the substance’ of a text completed six weeks prior to the student ‘outbreak of April 23 [1968] that disrupted the work of Columbia University’ (Barzun, xxxvi). This insouciance might seem strange in a work centred on the question of how an administrator is to act. Yet it is less paradoxical once we realise that the narrative upon which Barzun is in fact engaged is that of the production of the enlightened and liberal administrator as the new hero of the story of the University. Hence Barzun explicitly proposes the formation of an autonomous stratum of non-academic administrators within the University, a ‘second layer’: 
Quinzaine littéraire We are going to begin with ‘Heidegger’s Hand’. You explain that, for Heidegger, the manual craft, *Handwerk*, is a noble craft since it is not ‘conditioned, like other professions, by public usefulness or by the search for profit’ and that this craft ‘will also be that of the thinker or of the teacher who teaches thinking’. Moreover, this craft is always ‘in danger’, in particular of being degraded by the machine. Heidegger is obviously thinking of the typewriter. But what happens to that history with this new machine, the machine that no longer poses an obstacle, that makes the text too readable, too easy, too clear for whoever lends an ear to it, since you have also spoken at length of ‘Heidegger’s Ear’?

Jacques Derrida Even if it was in order to depart from it, one had to begin by analysing Heidegger’s posture or postulation. It belongs to a great interpretation of technics, which calls for so many questions, which calls for them, really, there where they are not as easy to understand as one would sometimes like to think...

In order to tighten the focus on writing, I wanted to mark the way in which Heidegger’s reaction was at the same time intelligible, traditional, and normative. The tradition of these norms is often respectable and it has considerable reserves — as long as it remains vigilant when faced with technological mutation. But it can give way, sometimes in its most naive form, to a confident dogmatism, to an assurance that we ought to question. Heidegger deplores, for example, that even private letters now pass by way of the machine, so that one no longer recognizes the singular trace of the signatory in the graphic forms and the gesture of the hand. Now, when one writes ‘by hand’, one is not just on the verge of technics, instrumentality has not been postponed; rather there is already regular reproduction, mechanical iterability. It is therefore not legitimate to oppose handwriting to ‘mechanical’ writing as one would some pre-technical artisanship to
technics. Moreover, so-called 'typewriting' [écriture dite 'à la machine'], for its part, is also 'manual'.

You wish us to speak about personal experiences. Well, then, yes, like so many others, I have, in sum, gone through this history or have let myself be traversed by it. I began by writing with a pen, and for a long time I remained faithful to it (one has to speak here of faith), transcribing only the 'final versions' on the typewriter, at the point at which I separated myself from them. The machine remains a signal of separation, of severance, the agency of emancipation and of departure toward the public space. For the texts that were important to me, those that I had the somewhat religious feeling of 'writing', I even banished the mechanical pen. I dipped in ink a long penholder that had the slightly curved point of a certain drawing pen, while multiplying preliminary drafts and versions before making them definitive on my first little Olivetti with an international keyboard that I bought abroad. I still have it. I must have had the impression that my artisanal writing cut its path in fact through that space of resistance, remaining as close as possible to that hand of thinking or of the word that we're reminded of by Heidegger in those pages that I later attempted to interpret in 'Heidegger's Hand'. As if this liturgy for a single hand were required, as if this figure of the proper body gathered up, leaning, applied, and stretched toward an inked point were as necessary to the ritual of a thoughtful engraving [gravure pensante] as the white surface of the paper subjectile on the table's support. But I never hid from the fact that, as in every ceremonial, there had to be repetition, and already a kind of mechanization. This theatre of the prosthesis and the graft very quickly became a theme for me, in all its dimensions, and it can be found everywhere to some degree from 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' to 'Archive Fever'.

Later, as history continues, I wrote more and more 'at the machine', as one says, at the mechanical typewriter, then in 1979 at the electric typewriter, finally at the computer, around 1986–87. I can no longer do without it now, without this little Mac, especially when I am writing at home; I can't even remember or comprehend how I could have got along without it before. It's a whole different start-up, a whole different 'getting to work'. I'm not sure that the electric typewriter or the computer makes the text 'too readable' or 'too clear'. The volume, the unfolding of the operation obeys another organigram, another
For Friendship

Maurice Blanchot

To all my friends, known and unknown, close and distant

The thought of friendship: I believe one can tell when friendship comes to an end (even if it still endures), by a dissonance a phenomenologist might term existential, a scene, an unfortunate act. But is it ever possible to say when it starts? There is no such thing as friendship at first sight, rather a gradual occurrence, a slow process through time. We were friends and hadn’t realized.

I first met Dionys Mascolo in the offices of Gallimard, the publisher.1 I would see him from a distance, he struck me as very young. At the time (since from before the war) I had much closer links with Raymond Queneau on the one hand, and Jean Paulhan on the other, both of whom had relatively little to do with one another.2

One day (during the war...), Dionys told me that Gaston Gallimard wanted to publish a collection of the review articles (or some of them) that I was sending into the unoccupied zone by secret channels. ‘But’, I replied, ‘I don’t have a copy, and haven’t been keeping them (from laziness or perhaps prudence).’ But the publishers had got hold of them, all or at least the majority. I am convinced that the task of gathering together and keeping them had been undertaken and carried out by Mascolo on his own.

Here is not the place to describe the shock I felt, which was not without some annoyance on my part. I was working – if it can be called work – without second thoughts or expectations and amidst great uncertainty – and all of a sudden there I was, staring myself in the face, having to make up my mind (perhaps writing does imply the death of the author, but this doesn’t prevent the message from always turning up again).

I shall say no more. I wanted merely to make it clear that if the book Faux Pas exists, it is Dionys Mascolo’s doing – with the help of Gaston Gallimard, of course, who had the initial idea, or took respon-
sibility for it – not that this was without difficulties, since the manuscript was turned down on two separate occasions by the censor.3 ‘They will make life awkward for you’, Raymond Queneau had told me. I think (it’s impossible to be certain) that my review of Ernst Jünger’s On the Marble Cliffs, which had referred ominously to the character of the ‘Head Ranger’ in the novel, who closely resembled the sinister figure who couldn’t be mentioned, that it was this article that had alarmed the functionaries in the censorship office.4 Ernst Jünger was protected by the highest medal that could be awarded to a ‘war hero’, but this meant people could get their own back on others.

I want to emphasis that friendship – an effusiveness of heart and mind – didn’t start then. No doubt there was some complicity but also regret, since I took the view that Faux Pas really was a false step. At the time I had close links with Jean Paulhan who advised me. I remember once, during a trip on the underground, he sidled up to me and whispered in my ear: ‘Look out for so-and-so, don’t trust him, or her.’ That was all, I needed no further explanations and was careful not to ask for any. This was a time for silence, a period of mutual trust. I will recount only briefly the duties which I was almost charged with, if I had agreed to take over the editorship of the NRF which Drieu had assumed, but of which he had become tired.5

How did the offer come about? Before the war, because of an article I had written on his novel Rêveuse bourgeoise, I had first met Drieu, then I saw him again in the early days of the Occupation, when I withdrew from the Jeune France association and resigned from it together with various associates. There were murmurings, he’ll be on the side of the resistance, Drieu said to himself. But why the resignation? The situation was too ambiguous. Jeune France, which had been set up by a group of little-known musicians, who were later to become famous, was funded by the Vichy government, and our naive plan, which was to use the association against Vichy itself (I remember that Jean Vilar, who at the time was more of a writer than an actor, was also involved), failed because of this very contradiction. Paul Flamand also thought our conception of ‘culture’ was too lofty.

So, Drieu’s proposition: ‘as far as the Germans are concerned’, he told me, ‘I will remain in charge, but you will have complete freedom,
Tranced: Melville, Blanchot

Ann Smock

A leaden, spellbound mood comes over Herman Melville’s tales from time to time. In the opening paragraphs of ‘Benito Cereno’, for example, when Captain Amasa Delano’s sealer lies at anchor in the harbour of a deserted island off the coast of Chile, everything is mute, and the wavy surface of the sea looks ‘fixed’, like ‘waved lead that has cooled and set in the smelter’s mould.’ Ocean, troubled birds and troubled vapours all are gray. The ‘strange sail’ which Delano is surprised to observe wavering along uncertainly in his direction ‘show[s] no colors’ either. From her cabin an early morning lamp shines ‘equivocally’ through the mist, and the pale sun – likewise semi-veiled in fog – resembles an eye peering out from behind a mask. I do not know whether Blanchot ever read ‘Benito Cereno’. *Moby Dick* is an important reference for him; so is ‘Bartleby the Scrivener’.

Between him and Melville there is in any case a resemblance, and one senses it, I think, in Melville when the sea lies tranced, when the light is equivocal and the wind baffling – when, for example, a vaporous gray dawn in the ‘Third Sketch’ of ‘The Encantadas’ reveals Rock Rodondo in its ‘dim investiture of wonder’, rising two hundred and fifty feet straight up out of the sea and commanding a comprehensive view of the Enchanted Isles with their ‘air of spellbound desertness.’ The moon persists feebly in the west, while in the east the sun sends pallid hints of its arrival.

In semi-unreal scenery such as this, with its eerie double light and its weak, unsteady wind there lurks, I wish to suggest, a figure from Blanchot, with no name and no face, never quite discernible. It ‘resembles.’ Whoever enters a relation with this ‘likeness’ becomes a stranger to sincerity and altogether unworthy of trust. It requires nothing in particular of him, no special qualifications, but rather that he be incompetent, in no position to speak or vouch for anything, and indeed that he remain without any position at all – like Bartleby, a fixture where he has no business whatsoever being (and whence he always seems to be straying though he cannot be persuaded
to budge) – or like Billy Budd, unqualified for his own innocence, illegitimate.\(^4\)

The wind is almost always unsteady, unreliable and ‘given to perplexing calms’, in the ‘other and darker world’ of the desolate Encantadas. The currents, too, are unpredictable. Sailing ships, Melville says, often would lie ‘tranced’ or becalmed for months at a stretch in their vicinity. At other times ‘a mysterious indraft’ would draw a passing vessel irresistibly in among the islands. Navigators made such different reckonings of the distances between them that many sailors were long persuaded two separate clusters of islands lay a hundred leagues apart, while others doubted the very reality of the group, so ‘wavering’, apparently, was its locality. However – at least once you were ashore – the mute fixity of the isles was just as impressive, it seems, as their ‘fleetingness’, and it too contributed, or so Melville supposes, to the Spaniards’ calling them Enchanted. They appeared ‘invariably the same: fixed, cast, glued into the very body of cadaverous death’ (p. 73).

Unsettled and shifting, then, they also seemed unusually still. Utterly immobile, they appeared positionless as well – rather like the dead body as Blanchot describes it: heavy as lead, glued to its place yet drifting, and setting the place adrift. ‘Immovable, untouchable, riveted to here by the strangest embrace’, but also nowhere, nowhere at all. The cadaver lies in place ‘with the absolute calm of something that has found its place’, Blanchot writes, but it does not succeed in being there convincingly, for ‘death suspends the relation to place’; ‘the corpse is not in its place.’ The deceased seems to have come to rest upon the only basis left him, the sole foundation. But, precisely, this basis lacks. It lacks in a strange way, for it is nowhere, but here. Wherever someone’s remains are lying, the ‘cadaverous presence’, as Blanchot puts it – that unapproachable, inescapable presence that no common category suits – establishes a weird indifference between nowhere and here. ‘The gaping intimacy’ of an undifferentiable grey noplace intrudes.\(^5\)

The ‘effects of enchantment’\(^6\) which I mean to call attention to in Melville’s stories are not peculiar to the Encantadas or to any particular locale. The strange sail, for example, which appears in the still grey of the morning off the coast of Chile to Captain Amasa Delano seems bewitched. It turns out to be the San Dominick, a Spanish
Hélène Cixous or Stroboscopic Writing

Gilles Deleuze

Le Monde, 11 August 1972

Of her latest novel, Neutre, Hélène Cixous says, ‘Neutre is a system of metaphors which evoke the act of appearance [le surgissement], since my intention is to capture the act of writing before anything has yet been written. The conscious, the unconscious and chance each participate in their own way [in the act of writing]’. And also, ‘Neutre is a chasmos’.

And continues, ‘I do not maintain that this type of work is readable overnight, but later on, when a large number of studies will support it. It is a pistol shot aimed at exploding all categories and overturning the limits which constitute them’.

By the discontinuity of discourse, the disparity of motifs and themes, the multiplying of metaphors and of allegories, the absence of any narrative [récit], the book never stops disconcerting.

Gilles Deleuze, the author of Anti-Oedipus, proposes here a (paradoxical) manner of reading in harmony with the (very particular) mode of writing of Hélène Cixous.

For the last several years Hélène Cixous has been building up an underground body of work, badly understood, in spite of the prix Médici of 1969, which honoured Dedans. A body of work which intimately combines fiction, theory, and criticism. Hélène Cixous wrote a fine book The Exile of James Joyce. At first sight her entire oeuvre is of Joycean descent: in the process of being written, and includes itself or takes itself as its object, with a plural author and a ‘neutral’ [neutre] subject, neutral plural, with a simultaneity of all sorts of scenes: historic and political, mythic and cultural, psychoanalytic and linguistic. But perhaps this self-evident, first sight itself creates a
misunderstanding. Namely, the double impression that Hélène Cixous is an author who is too difficult and also that she takes her place in the well-known currents of contemporary literature. The true originality of an author is only evident if one is able to adopt the point of view which the author has himself invented. From this point of view the author becomes easy to read and carries the reader along. This is the mystery: every truly new body of work is simple, easy, and joyous. See Kafka, see Beckett.

The mystery of Hélène Cixous, such as you see it in her narrative _Neutre_, is this: an author who is considered to be difficult generally demands to be read slowly; here, on the contrary, is a work which demands to be read ‘quickly’ (although you may have to reread it, faster and faster). The difficulties that a slow reader would encounter melt away as the speed of the reading increases. This is because, in my opinion, Hélène Cixous has invented a new, original kind of writing, which she grants [donné] an entirely singular place in modern literature: a kind of stroboscopic writing, where the narrative comes alive, and the different themes inter-connect, and the words form variable figures, according to the accelerated speeds.

The extreme importance of Paul Morand, which is badly understood today, was that around 1925 he introduced speed into literature, within literary style itself, in relation to jazz, the auto, and the aeroplane. Hélène Cixous invents other speeds, which are sometimes wild [folle], in keeping with today. _Neutre_ is continually saying: mix colours in such a way that through movements they produce unknown nuances and tints. Writing in the instant [seconde], in the tenth of an instant:

the rule is simple: to jump from one trunk to the other either by exchanging active bodies or by exchanging their substitute terms, or by exchanging the names of the terms which function two by two. All this takes place so quickly that it is difficult to see from the outside which one of the three operations is taking place [en train], and if there is movement from one tree to the other by means of bodies or by names. The effect of movement is such that by stroboscopy the trees produce a kind of smooth paste or barely striped, dark vertical hatchings, spectres of generations: paper... each one plays the
The Unforeseeable

Hélène Cixous

(Dedicated to J. Aubert)

It was a viva at the Sorbonne, serious business in those days of doctorates weighty as destinies. The thesis director was Professor Jean-Jacques Mayoux, a man I venerated, noble and implacable, stern as Saint Just, who called himself J-J in secret in order to share in the rages and indignations of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, something I only heard about later, an upright man, probative as a surgeon’s scalpel, a master who made his disciples feel the cutting edge of his knife, fond of laughter, a chaste lover of literary genius, thus it was that in the final days of his life in a hospital room, on the brink of agony, he bore up with a volume of Blake, a member of the Resistance naturally, though this I was unaware of almost to the day of his death – he wasn’t one to boast.

Curmudgeonly, feared, sublime, and therefore, of course, loyal, a man of absolutes, knight of the realm of literature, knight of the faith, nothing could shake him. As for the shaking that Parkinson’s Disease had plagued him with his whole life long, he never conceded it so much as an inch of his mental life.

For him literature, in the folds of reality literature was the supreme reality.

In those days he was in the middle of old age, it seemed to me, that’s how I saw him, me thirty-five, him having gone past eighty without slowing down.

The candidate was a nincompoop one of those dogged but utter duds capable, in time, of gangrening a professor’s existence.

In those days of the old-fashioned State Doctorate there were some borderline cases: the candidate who spends twenty or thirty years not-writing his thesis right up to the day

Jean-Jacques Mayoux decided that wherever the nincompoop was he hogged all the oxygen, he never lacked the words to vent his disgust and lassitude.
The inflexible professor and the wishy-washy disciple had gone grey together.

At last.

On the thesis committee, two young professors, J. Aubert and myself. Besides which two indifferent old gentlemen, members of the Establishment, aged sheep who would follow the ram.

Joyce was the object of our lucubrations. I was a believer. I believed in literature, justice, rule of law, truth, I believed in their necessity and their fragility. In the name of these absolutes, I took the inane chapters of the nincompoop apart, piece by piece. J. Aubert was another just man. We deliberated. That’s when J. Aubert and I discovered that Jean-Jacques Mayoux was giving every benefit of the doubt to the character he had been railing against for twenty years. I expostulated.

‘I myself am the most flabbergasted of all. I take back everything I said. I abjure and be damned,’ says Mayoux. ‘Here and now I become my opposite. And the reason or the cause is that I have gone over to the other side. From where I am the world looks different, what was important to me does not matter anymore. I see it all.

‘Everything is simple, here where it is old, only life and death change places. What do I care about judgments, values, careers, ambitions? This poor fellow exists for a degree. Let him have it. It won’t kill anyone. The universe won’t even notice. All men are equal, as Genet would say, let all be equal. Let him have First Class Honours.’

And so it was: two Jacques and I against three, the ram and the sheep.

I liked Jean-Jacques Mayoux and I respected him.

So, I pondered, once one is round the bend, one can turn into one’s opposite? Since that day I have never stopped wondering: when shall I turn into my opposite?

I’ll never know who Jean-Jacques Mayoux was, was he J, or rather J.J. was he one or the other or both who didn’t he want to be who will he turn out to have been in fact?

I have nothing in common with Jean-Jacques Mayoux except our love of literature, I’m sure I’ll never turn into my opposite, I tell myself but each time I say ‘I’m sure’ my friend Jacques Derrida responds: don’t say I’m sure I myself am not so sure you are sure of being sure nor that it is safe to be sure.

Who can swear never to leave herself behind, never to contradict
Today, the younger generation is mute; this cannot have escaped the notice of the elder generation. For some time after the Resistance the two generations were fellow travellers. The first had just created for itself the means of expression and of responsibility in the polis [cité], the other was discovering the need for dialogue with the young. Since the first years of Algerian War, however, something has been broken off: young people are no longer expressing themselves.

Many young people certainly express themselves at the level of their professional activities, yet they seem to have relegated to that realm all the intentions and the fundamental (political, philosophical and religious) projects of which they were the bearers. Beyond their specialised domains, they no longer play the role of watchman or no longer act as those who raise the alarm [veilleurs et éveilleurs de conscience], a role which they once assumed alongside others. In taking that role on they had brought to the fore the idea that the young have something to bring us. All of a sudden, they no longer bring anything.

What can explain this silence, and how can it be explained?

Must we conclude that the younger generation has been struck with stupor and impotence following the Algerian War? Testimonies published in this journal have dismissed that explanation. Must we believe that young people are bogged down in the rising material well-being of mass consumption? This might be the case for some of them (young engineers, for example), but the phenomenon is too recent to provide sufficient grounds for understanding.

It may be possible to understand the silence of the younger generation differently, namely, by wondering if it is not language itself that is lacking them.

For fifteen years they have borne and have been borne along by the language of a Liberation which, beyond the liberation of the territory, aimed to launch the profound renewal [renovation] of the country. A sense of history, of education, of responsibility, of democracy, of confrontation was shored up by that construction in progress. Today,
it looks as though that language were still up to the job: many movements, parties, or groups are telling us that it is so. Nevertheless, it also looks as though young people (as well as others) are afflicted, consciously or not, by the extent to which that language is unable to express them, to translate the real, and even less to change it.

I would like to try and analyse the current situation of language, in order to understand the silence of a generation, but also in order to discover the problems which this silence poses to all generations.

* * *

We are dealing with an ambiguous situation: a worldwide civilisation is deployed, for better or for worse [ses heurs et malheurs], and all its energies and generosities are working towards the aim of giving this civilization as positive a face as possible, working towards its future, in order to make of it the advent of man in his fullness [l'avènement de l'homme en plénitude].

At the same time, we are undergoing a violent contestation of our capacity and our right to define man, to speak about man, to speak as man. In philosophy, this comes from Heidegger and his disciples, it is the voice of the Third World translated by Fanon, and finally, the contestation arises in our own literature. The problem is raised of how men can speak about man. It is noteworthy that this problem has been mentioned in each of the three reports of the Esprit conference, whose theme was still 'After the war in France'.

* * *

Today, three styles of language demand our attention:
1. the language of violence, which is to say violence itself. See Frantz Fanon, and Vince Taylor...
2. silence:
   — the passive silence of those who, after the failure of ideologies, feel deeply the impossibility of relying on a norm, a value, and who do not find the recourse to violence in their history.
   — the aggressive silence of those who have set themselves the task of denouncing the whole of our language, the traditions and hopes of humanism: the very people who formulate the contestation
A Question of Tempo
To Lucette Finas
Roland Barthes

Your work belongs to modernity, ties in with it in obvious ways: the authors you have written on are either contemporary (Bataille, Derrida), or a focus of contemporary interest as a result of critical re-working (Sade, Mallarmé); your ‘commentary’ (the word is simply a convenient one here) implies a crossing of Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis; and this commentary accepts itself as a text (a very fine one), bearing witness to the fact that you relinquish the self-righteousness of metalanguage.

All this, however, might well only be — and sometimes is with other people — a manner of proceeding. My own view is that your critical writings (I am speaking about them alone) participate actively and creatively in the work of modernity for a fourth reason, even more decisive than the others: your object — what you work on, with no distinction between theory and practice — is in fact the process of reading. In the past we have managed to acquire a fair understanding of the author, and then of the work itself, but not of reading, except as a simple recording operation. We are now beginning, thanks to work like your own, to picture a reading of a different kind. This reading, which you establish and practise, is a total reading — and not the point of arrival of some tame communication process: it follows in the steps of writing, with love or indeed aggression, it becomes one and the same thing as writing, and even extends beyond it, gets the upper hand: it is this, this relentless pursuit, that you establish, de facto and de jure.

This text first appeared in French as the Preface to Lucette Finas, Le Bruit d’Iris (Paris: Flammarion, 1978). We gratefully acknowledge the permission of Flammarion to publish this, together with Lucette Finas’ ‘The Charge’; © Flammarion 1978.
Structuralism, which basically coincided with the beginnings of your research, is something you have kept your distance from: ‘A “structuralist” reading of Madame Edwarda would seem to me, at least in principle and pending further information, to do (pernicious) violence to a text which, in the transgressive avoidance of all structure, is constantly questioning, neutralising and abolishing the sumulacra of figuration’. All the same I would like to begin with structuralism in order to show how (where) your theory of reading is really new. But before doing this, I would like, in passing, to say that structuralism was right (it needs all the vindication it can get at the present time) on two points, which two quotations from your work will help me make. First: of the expression ‘suie ignoble’ (ignoble soot) (Le Pitre châtié) you write: ‘At first sight (but this is to see poorly), a kind of cliché — the point at which a moral and an aesthetic judgement would creep in . . .’. What structuralism says (or has said) is that no one view of the work can be privileged: what one sees ‘at first sight’ is therefore also seen well: the ‘moral view’ — paradoxically for modern consciousness — is not to be rejected, for with that view I can entertain a perverse relationship: I can enjoy moral interpretations (in the same way that Sade’s libertine enjoyed Justine’s moral virtue); I can fetishize the signified (and hence make it into a signifier). What I mean is that there is (there was) in structuralism a force of perversion which should not be (should not have been) ignored.

Second point: you say (speaking of Salut): ‘My project is to exploit Mallarmé’s text’. ‘Exploit’ is just the right word: your energy is out to oppress the text. It triumphantly replaces ‘explore’, which is a cliché of ordinary criticism. ‘Exploit’ suggests unjust operations: deformation, alienation, appropriation. Now structural analysis also wished to ‘exploit’ and not ‘explore’. There was a structuralist rage; this rage perhaps learned to wear kid gloves (or at least to use tools); but a polite rage is nonetheless a rage.

Having said that, it is obvious that you go beyond structural analysis by virtue of a notion which is the keystone of your reading: the notion of excess.

You talk about excess very well; you talk about it, if I can say this, with restraint, which is one way of getting it across. First of all, you are able to define it: ‘Excess: when the interdependence of the functions and categories of the written text is generalised, and reading is extended as a consequence’. Then, you allow the notion a scientific future (‘. . . which does not mean that a science of the text could not be elaborated, which would be worked on by the idea of excess’). Finally, you guard against the temptation of putting too high a value on excess: ‘If one conceives of excess as that which is (always) right, then it isn’t excess any more, it is the dead woman’s shoe’.1 This is important; for excess must always be detached from its arrogance: to make an image (an imago) of excess would be to destroy its power.

Now structuralism — I am saying this to emphasise the difference —
Analysing Speculative Discourse as Language-Game, Jean-François Lyotard

The Dream-Work Does Not Think, Jean-François Lyotard
Volume 6 Issue 1, July 1983

Post-Structuralism: The End of Theory, Robert Young
Volume 5 Issue 1-2, July 1982

Let us not Forget—Psychoanalysis, Jacques Derrida
Volume 12 Issue 1, July 1990

For a Heteronomous Cultural Politics: The University, Culture and the State, Bill Readings
Volume 15 Issue 1, July 1993

Word Processing, Jacques Derrida
Volume 21 Issue 1, July 1999

For Friendship, Maurice Blanchot
Volume 22 Issue 1, July 2000

Tranced: Melville, Blanchot, Ann Smock
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Hélène Cixous or Stroboscopic Writing, Gilles Deleuze
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The Unforeseeable, Hélène Cixous
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A Question of Tempo to Lucette Finas, Roland Barthes
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